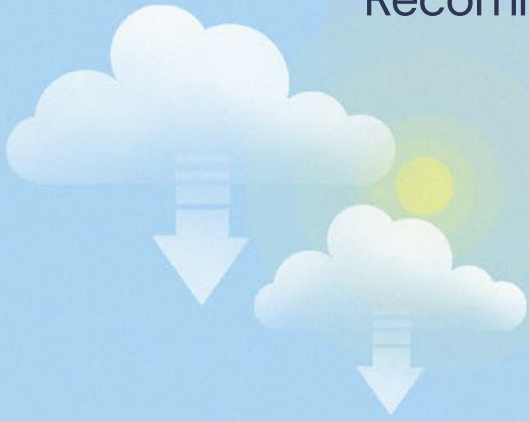


# Skilling Uganda's young creatives for a digital age

## Recommendations



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## Description

This document is the third of three reports analyzing the impact of digitalization on the culture and creative industries (CCI) in Uganda for young creatives.

1. *Uganda's culture and creative industries in a digital age: A landscape review* provides an overview of relevant literature and identifies research questions.
  2. *Skills for a digital age for Uganda's young creatives* shares findings from primary research with young creatives and other actors in the sector.
  3. This report shares recommendations for skilling of Uganda's young creatives.
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# Introduction

This report is the final of three reports exploring skilling for youth in the culture and creative industries (CCIs). The first provides a landscape review of relevant literature, and the second documents research findings. This report offers recommendations for the future of skilling for young creatives in Uganda.

The literature review found a significant knowledge gap on opportunities and challenges for digital skilling in the sector in Uganda in an era where technology is fundamentally changing some creative industries by creating new avenues for producing, selling, distributing, and consuming creative goods and services with the potential to reach a more comprehensive range of consumers globally. A closer reading reveals that what is documented about Uganda's CCIs leans towards the more traditional models of skilling and practice. Furthermore, the literature review found that CCIs in Uganda continue to face challenges including high rates of informality, skills and knowledge shortages among various actors, and an absence of infrastructure for capacity building.<sup>1</sup> Artists lack the business acumen, management skills, and legal knowledge to manage their careers in a manner that makes their artistic careers sustainable, while the lack of formal education in arts management means there are few managers who are able to skillfully manage careers of talented artists.<sup>2</sup> Knowledge and skills around intellectual property rights, including for digital creatives, are scattered. Creatives have to navigate economic, social, and political tensions in the country, as laws and regulations that stifle creativity remain.

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1 Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, *Report on the Mapping of Culture and Creative Industries in Uganda*.

2 Hivos People Unlimited, *The Status of the Creative Economy in East Africa: Ubunfu East Africa Report*.

The following questions guide this research, as detailed in the findings report.

- What are the benefits and challenges of digitalization that young creatives see?
- What skills do youth use and need as creatives in today's digitalized age?
- And finally, do available skilling opportunities address the needs of creatives in a digital age?

To answer these questions, we share findings from around 78 creatives, experts, policymakers, and other stakeholders we engaged between April and June 2023 across the culture and creative industries (from filmmaking to content creators) in Uganda. This dialogue included interviews, a brainstorming session with creatives, and a final research validation workshop to share our findings and invite a discussion on next steps on policy.

## Summary of the findings

### **Digital platforms expand opportunities for young creatives.**

- 1 Young creatives recognize the value of incorporating technology into their work and are leveraging digital platforms in ways that benefit them, such as finding customers online or promoting their talents through social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook. “Digital platforms” include a) marketplace platforms, including those connecting buyers and sellers of goods and services, and b) social media and messaging platforms, which allow for informal exchanges and coordination of all manner of economic activity.
- 2 Digital platforms are an avenue to paid work opportunities for young creatives, such as content creators and gamers.
- 3 However, young creatives face relentless pressure to create in an environment where the digital audience is the first critic. Producing new content, innovating, monetizing their work online, and gaining support and recognition from their families and friends can take a mental toll.

### **Young creatives know the value of having the right skills for a digital age, but skilling challenges persist.**

- 4 Young creatives understand the value of digital skills and are reskilling to be competitive and innovative in a digital age. These skills include digital marketing, graphic design, using a range of digital platforms for various purposes, and more. However, creatives express the need for further digital skills like how to code, how algorithms work, and how to achieve the most from digital platforms.
- 5 In terms of existing skilling opportunities, there is a disconnect between formal education and the skills and knowledge creatives need to thrive in a digital age.
- 6 Although various skilling intermediaries (e.g., development partners, arts foundations, and training initiatives by experienced creatives) exist, young creatives believe there are still gaps to be addressed and that activities could be more cohesive. The gaps involve the absence of mentors and access to spaces for practicing and facilitating peer-to-peer learning. Critics point out that formal training institutions prioritize teaching theory over practical skills and have not kept up with the technological advancements in CCIs.
- 7 Skilling initiatives often operate in isolation, lacking cohesion and collaboration. There is a pressing need for a unified effort to skill youth in CCIs, equipping them with the necessary tools to build resilience and succeed in the digital age.

- 8 Creatives express a desire for locally contextualized and peer-led learning. When seeking to reskill or upskill online, they find that much of the content available is better suited for non-African audiences. (For example, creatives speak of understanding how light falls differently on different skin tones, or how skills taught in a North American context may not be relevant for the Ugandan context.)
- 9 Finally, professionals providing skilling in CCIs express their desire to contribute more, but they require additional support in the form of funding. This is particularly crucial since most young creatives cannot afford the costs associated with available training opportunities. More so, the professionals also require support in understanding the digital transformation in the sector.

### **Young creatives demonstrate awareness of emerging technologies such as AI, while simultaneously grappling with various analog challenges.**

- 10 While attitudes toward artificial intelligence (AI) were mixed, many recognized issues related to safeguarding their intellectual property and navigating the impact of emerging technologies like generative AI and NFTs.
- 11 Young creatives encounter conventional, offline obstacles including a lack of government support, restrictive laws and regulations, irregular or unpredictable income, and, for women, gender-based discrimination.

This brief report presents recommendations from both young creatives and experts regarding the development of skills in CCIs. Additionally, it discusses recommendations from stakeholders who were interviewed and who attended the research validation workshop. Together, this research shows clear calls for action both from those actively earning an income from CCI and from others who support CCI. Finally, it explores the implications of both the research findings and the recommendations for CCIs, along with the challenges that remain.

## Methodology

The research team employed the following methods:

- A **comprehensive literature review** of available online literature on Uganda’s CClIs.
- **Expert interviews with 16 key informants** who work in CClIs, including policymakers, training providers, curators of arts spaces, development partners, and established creatives.
- **One-on-one in-depth interviews with 21 young creatives**, representing various fields within CClIs, including literary arts, visual arts, performing arts (such as literature to film, poetry, theatre), fashion, illustration, audio-visual, music, photography, content creation, and influencing.
- A **brainstorming session with 17 additional creatives** to share findings and invite a discussion on skills gaps and policies held at the National Museum in Kampala. From 58 applications, 20 creatives were selected to ensure a diverse range of creative disciplines, including visual arts, music, performing arts, design, and literature. (Three invitees were unable to attend.) A moderator guided the discussions using a predefined set of open-ended questions. The sessions were audio-recorded by a rapporteur.
- A **final research validation workshop with 25 representatives** from CClIs, including policymakers, the Ugandan National Culture and Creative Centre, training providers, established creatives, and academics.

Therefore, a total of 79 individuals participated.

All interviews were held via Zoom, Google Meet, WhatsApp, or in person. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, a technique where researchers select respondents that are most likely to yield appropriate and useful information.<sup>3</sup> Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes and was audio-recorded with the participant’s consent.

All transcriptions were then coded and organized into themes and subthemes using Dovetail (an online qualitative data analysis platform). The emerging themes were reviewed, refined, and analyzed to identify patterns, commonalities, and variations in participants’ responses.

The study does have limitations; qualitative research by its nature is not intended to be representative. This study concerns a relatively small number of creatives and is largely restricted to Kampala. No doubt in other geographical areas and depending on the creatives’ skills, different issues may arise. However, as described in this report, there is little up-to-date literature on the context of CClIs in the digital age in Uganda and, moreover, the skills creatives need. Therefore, these findings are a critical contribution to the existing literature and provide valuable recommendations for numerous stakeholders to further support and empower young creatives in Uganda.

See Appendix A to D in the findings report for all guides and a list of interviewees.

<sup>3</sup> Campbell et al., “Purposive Sampling.”



# Recommendations

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## From young creatives

Creatives see value in continuous skilling and are looking to various actors in the sector to equip them with the skills and knowledge to prosper in the digital era. Based on their recommendations, a **skills ecosystem** would involve collaboration between various stakeholders including providers offering digital, vocational, and transversal skills; development partners who can fund skilling initiatives; government agencies under which the sector falls; and spaces that facilitate both peer-to-peer learning and practical application of acquired skills. Additionally, the ecosystem would also include industry mentors who can guide and support young creatives on their professional journey.

- 1 **Creatives want more skills for a digital age.** As shared in the [findings report](#), creatives want to acquire a diverse set of skills encompassing both digital and non-digital aspects. This combination of skills will enable them to effectively harness the opportunities offered by digital technologies in the context of CCIs. These skills will play a vital role throughout all phases of the creative process: creation, production, marketing, and sales.
- 2 **Creative want spaces where they can sharpen skills and collaborate,** like arts centers, theatres, and galleries. As per the findings, creatives who have access to such spaces describe how critical they are to honing one's skills and giving one the time to "*just be creative.*" For example, visual artists who have had a chance to be in spaces like arts center [32° East](#) speak highly of the experience of immersing oneself in a project for a long period of time during which they can experiment. In these spaces, creatives engage with peers and learn from each other. Young creatives say there should be more public art centers, galleries, studios, theatres, cinemas and the like. While creatives have access to digital platforms where they showcase their work, having one's work exhibited in a public or private space is equally important.

- 3 **Creatives want more peer-to-peer learning, mentoring, and localized content.** Interviewees frequently mentioned the importance of learning from peers, Ugandan creatives who have “made it” or are succeeding in their craft. Creatives trust that the peers would be more relevant given that the content they find online is not always suited to the Ugandan context. Creatives suggest that these interactions can be in the form of online and offline masterclasses, regular peer-to-peer meetings, or workshops. Some are willing to pay, but many would prefer that the government or development partners fund these opportunities: *“I think as freelancers and as artists, we are not always gonna have a lot of money. So making education more available, easily available is always the best thing that, you know, you can do for someone.”*
- 4 **Creatives value in-person learning.** While many creatives are learning online and appreciate the value of the flexibility it provides, they also want in-person training so they can interact and network with the instructors and peers in a physical space.
- 5 **Creatives say competitions could help encourage skills improvement.** According to young creatives, regular participation in competitions could significantly enhance their skills as they compete and learn from each other. UNESCO acknowledges that skills competitions offer individuals or teams the chance to showcase their talent in a specific vocational skill, contributing to their personal growth and development.<sup>4</sup> To support this, creatives recommend that governments and development partners establish such competitions.
- 6 **Creatives want more platform-led training.** Creatives also want the platforms they use to offer on-platform training to help them navigate the constant changes. They suggested that Google, for example, invests in training young creatives on algorithms, Google Ads, and search engine optimization. However, some young creatives seem to be unaware of the several free online training tools that platforms like Google, Facebook, and YouTube already provide. Skills providers or peers could help point them in the right direction during workshops or facilitate peer-to-peer interactions.
- 7 In 2020, Caribou Digital explored the concept of platform-led upskilling—where digital platforms provide skills to users to enable them to become more adept digital producers.<sup>5</sup> Jumia Uganda, for example, offers business training to vendors on the platform to help them sell more. This in turn benefits both the seller and platform. Additionally, these are transferable skills that users can use outside of the platform.

4 UNESCO-UNEVOC, “Skills Competition.”

5 Caribou Digital, *Platform-Led Upskilling: How Marketplace Platforms Can Transform Emerging Markets by Investing in Skills Development*.



## Uganda Press Photo Awards

The Uganda Press Photo Awards (UPPA) is an annual competition for photographers that has been running for 11 years. It has expanded to include the rest of East Africa. UPPA has played a significant role in elevating the recognition of the art of photography in Uganda, while also fostering a vibrant community of photographers in the East African region. Through its competitions, UPPA has created a thriving community of photographers who learn from each other through the competition, frequent training opportunities for new and upcoming photographers, and networking opportunities. Each year of the competition, judges have noted a marked improvement in the quality of entries, showing that young photographers are improving their craft and looking to photography as a professional career.

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## From industry actors

All the experts who were interviewed agreed that there was a need to continuously provide young creatives with more skills as they navigate the digital transformation in the sector.

- 1 **Training providers need external funding to do more.** Training providers want to do more to build young creatives' skills but need funding to do so. Most say they often rely on external funding to run skilling workshops because many young creatives cannot afford to pay for them.
- 2 **Skilling providers also say they need financial support to buy equipment to offer practical skills to creatives.** Some skills providers run programs that require creatives to have access to audio and video equipment and computers. Most young creatives may not have their own equipment, and many providers don't have the resources to buy the equipment. At the stakeholder workshop, renowned playwright Angela Emurwon suggested that there be more funding for longer-term incubation programs through which creatives have access to resources that can help them improve their skill.
- 3 **More innovative collaborative skilling initiatives are needed.** Some experts identify a need for more collaboration among skills providers, government, and development partners, many of whom are already supporting various initiatives. At the validation workshop, Professor Mercy Mirembe Ntangaare, a performing arts lecturer, suggested a partnership model between private and public skills providers such as Makerere University. Uganda Performing Right Society representative asked skills providers to cooperate with the institution to empower young artists on their royalty rights.
- 4 **Create more spaces and opportunities for creatives to practice and showcase their work.** Both experts and creatives agree that there is a need for more spaces through which creatives can practice and improve their craft. A Parliamentary report urges the government to replicate the Motiv Uganda model that offers space and equipment to various categories of creatives. Such creative hubs can indeed promote creativity, digitalization, and knowledge sharing, according to UNCTAD.<sup>6</sup>

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6 UNCTAD, *Creative Economy Outlook 2022*.

- 5 **Government should invest more in skills development.** Experts tasked the government with playing a more proactive role in training young creatives, calling for more allocated funding. The Uganda Communications Commission runs training workshops and competitions for filmmakers. However, some stakeholders wondered why the regulator was involved in providing training. The chairperson of the Uganda Parliamentary Forum for Creative Industries, Rachel Magoola, described CCIs as an “unfunded priority.” She advocates for CCIs to have a dedicated ministry; it is currently under the Ministry for Gender and Social Development.
- 6 **Donors should make funding requirements less rigid.** A key issue that came up in various conversations with both young creatives and experts was the “rigid funding” available under several initiatives by development partners. Both creatives and experts said that most funders focus on specific agendas leaving creatives and CCI actors little room to be creative.
- 7 **Collect and update data on CCIs.** As mentioned in the [landscaping study and findings report](#), the most recent comprehensive countrywide data on CCIs is from a 2014 mapping study done by UNESCO in conjunction with the Uganda government.<sup>7</sup> More recent data is needed, in addition to more statistics on various aspects of CCIs that can inform policy and action such as: how CCIs contribute to the economy; how creatives are earning through digital means; how many have knowledge of digital tools and how they use them; and who is providing relevant training to creatives and what are the associated costs). Beyond these suggestions, stakeholders can discuss what other data can be relevant to those who support the industry, including government, development partners, learning institutions, art foundations, and others.

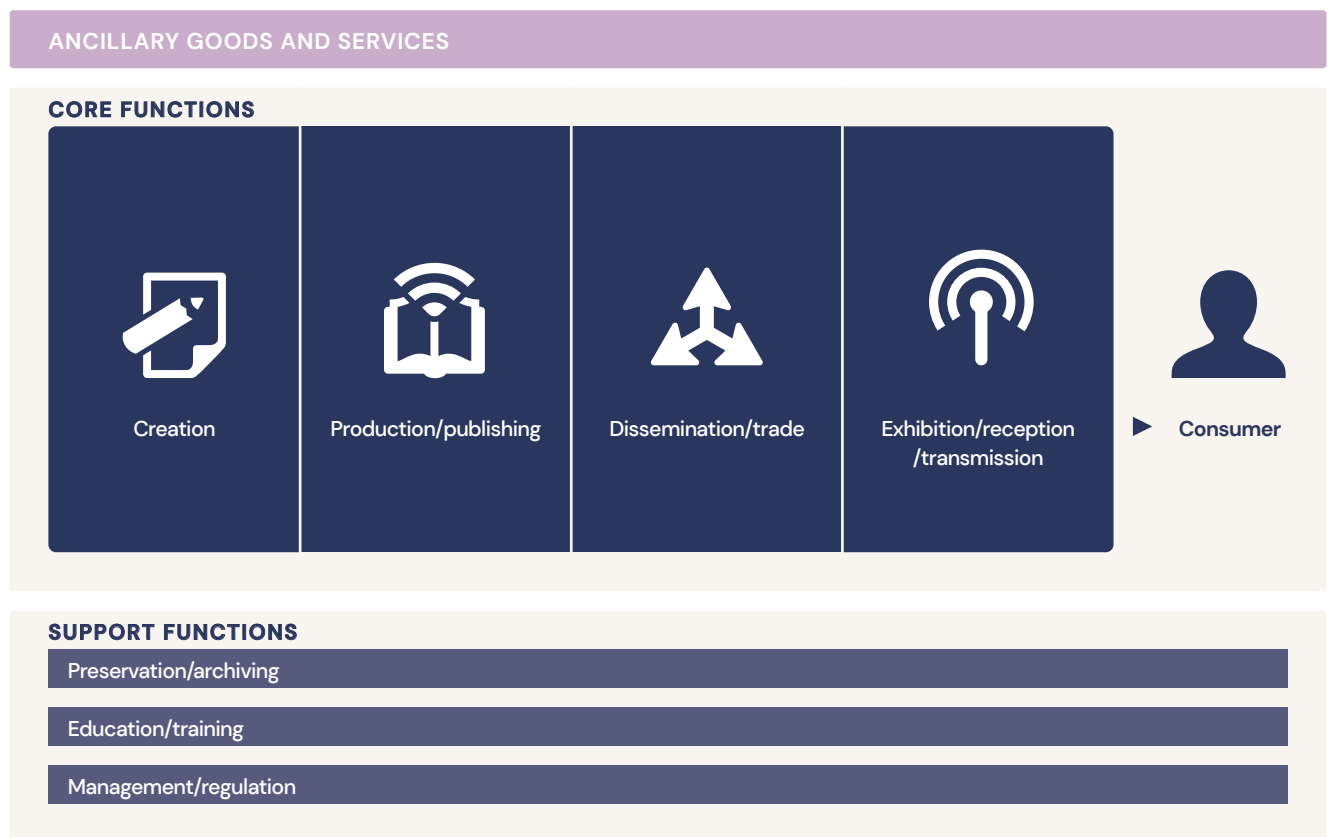
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7 Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, *Report on the Mapping of Culture and Creative Industries in Uganda*.

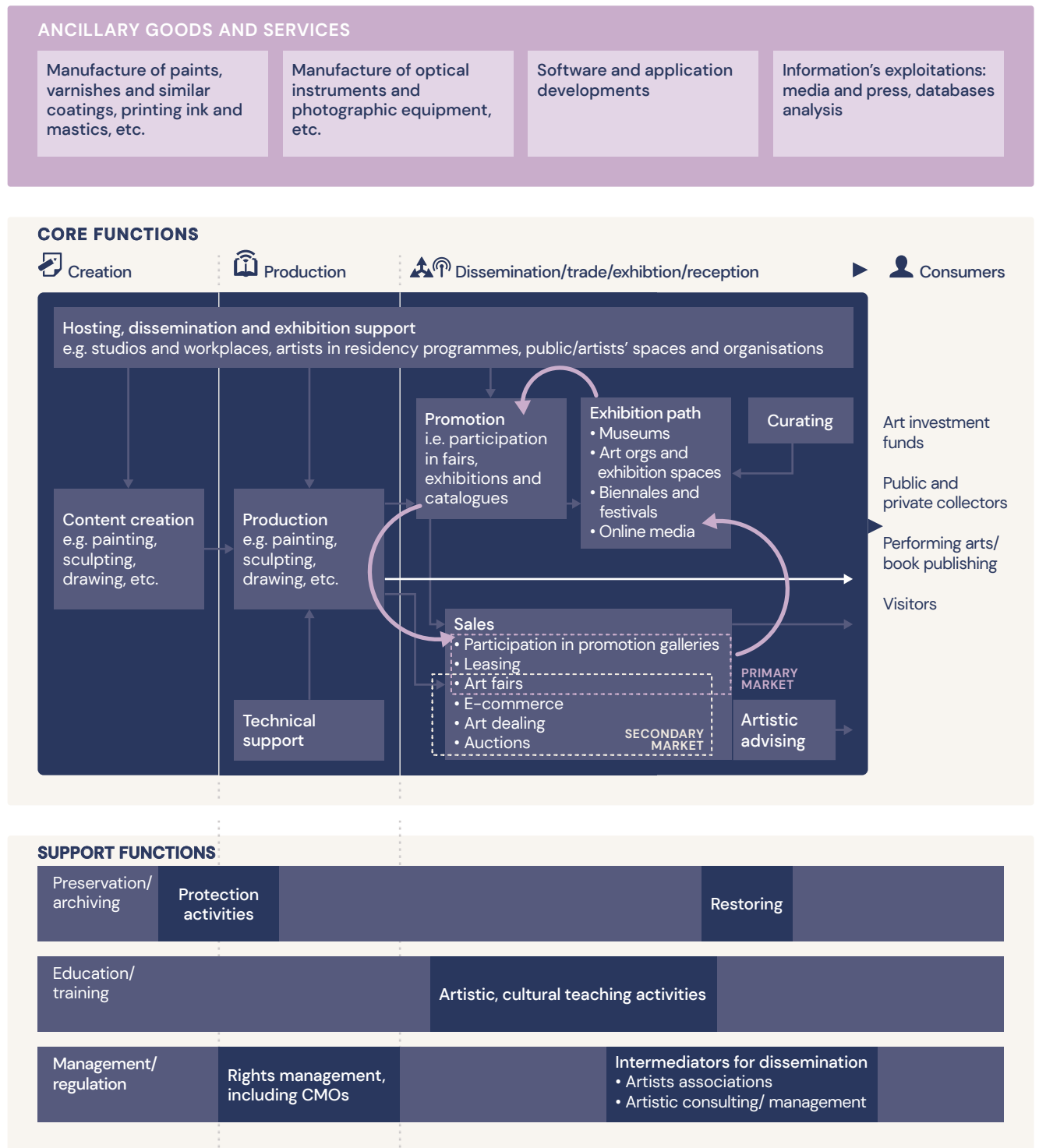
## From the authors

- 1 **Map out skilling opportunities across the value chain.** As stakeholders and skills providers consider providing training opportunities, there is a need to map out where they have the most strength across the CCI value chain. The European Commission’s report mapping the EU’s creative value chain in the digital age provides an example. The report uses the UNESCO culture cycle as an underlying framework. Education and training are seen as key supportive factors across all stages of the value chain (using the visual arts sector as an example).

Figure 1 ▼  
Creative value chain model



Adapted from European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, *Mapping the Creative Value Chains: A Study on the Economy of Culture in the Digital Age*



Adapted from European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, *Mapping the Creative Value Chains: A Study on the Economy of Culture in the Digital Age*

Figure 2 ▲  
Value chain for visual arts

Once the stages are mapped, matching skills can be suggested.

Figure 3 ▼  
Skills along the CCI value chain

Value chain for visual arts	Examples of suggested skills (not exhaustive)
Content creation	Various vocational skills Business and management skills Using digital platforms to create Project management Business registration and taxation Pitching to clients
Production	Intellectual property rights Business and management skills Negotiating contracts Financial management Podcasting Coding and programming Financial literacy
Dissemination, exhibition, and sales (online and offline)	Digital marketing Social media marketing How to set up online exhibitions Storytelling Negotiation skills Communication skills Exporting goods and services Personal branding Networking skills Curating art shows Taxation Copyright online Selling online

- 2 **Support research to explore CCI-specific issues.** There is very little research currently on the CCI in Uganda. We therefore suggest that industry players support research to explore various issues in the sector, such as:
  - The implications of emerging technologies on the creative sector, in the Ugandan context.
  - Potential earnings per CCI along the digital value chain.
  - How CCIs can create fulfilling and meaningful work and what more can be done to support them in a digital age.
  - How creatives with disabilities are navigating the digital age.
- 3 **Convene and facilitate regular conversations or an annual conference,** bringing various stakeholders and creatives together to exchange ideas and chart the way forward for CCIs. Such meetings will also allow various actors to network and create partnerships.

- 4 **Support female creatives.** Young female creatives face several challenges on top of those that effect CCIs more broadly. There is a need to create or fund existing initiatives that support female creatives to create, produce, and disseminate their work.
- 5 **Create national campaigns** that encourage the private sector and the broader public to appreciate Uganda’s CCIs and create a domestic market for them.
- 6 **Consider the African Union’s recommendations on CCIs.** In its 2021 plan of plan of action on CCIs, the African Union makes several recommendations for member states to adopt covering many categories<sup>8</sup>: Markets for Africa’s Cultural and Creative Industries; Education, Capacity Building and Sustainability; Finance and Investment; Intellectual Property Rights; Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs); Cultural Infrastructure; Cultural and Creative Industry Statistics and Social Inclusion and Cohesion. The document is a good reminder of the commitments that member states including Uganda, made to promote CCIs. The implementation framework in the document lays out clear roles for various stakeholders including government, CCI ministries, CSOs, Pan African institutions, revenue authorities, creative hubs, incubators and accelerators, investors, foundations, among several others. All stakeholders should consider the plan of action as they plan and implement programs to support the growth of the CCIs.

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With the right support for CCIs, young Ugandan creatives can improve their livelihoods. As one expert said, *“There are so many creatives that just need the challenge of an industry that wants them to bring themselves to the next level.”*

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8 African Union, “Revised African Union Plan of Action on Cultural and Creative Industries.”



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