
together
we are

**GREATER
MANCHESTER**

Greater Manchester Creative Industries

GMCA GREATER
MANCHESTER
COMBINED
AUTHORITY

Background

Robust Creative Ecosystem

Greater Manchester has a thriving creative sector, second only to London, driving employment and economic growth.

Dispersed Regional Excellence

Creative excellence is present in clusters across the region but to date there has not been a unified strategy to sustain and grow the creative industries in Greater Manchester

Potential for Unified Strategy

A coordinated approach across Greater Manchester can maximize the creative sector's impact and unlock greater regional potential.

Sector Development Plans

- Advanced Materials & Manufacturing, Creative Industries, Digital, Cyber & AI, Health Innovation & Life Sciences, and Low Carbon – identified as having the strongest potential for innovation, productivity and future growth.
- By providing a clear evidence base for where GM should target funding, skills, infrastructure and business support; the plans act as ‘living documents’ guiding how GMCA and partners direct resources over time.
- Nationally recognised R&D strengths, strong industrial and commercial assets, high productivity, and the ability to drive innovation across the wider economy.
- Creative Industries separated from Digital in Autumn 2024 so the sector could be properly recognised as a standalone frontier sector, allowing deeper focus on sub-sectors, growth opportunities and tailored interventions beyond the former combined Digital, Creative & Media category

Creative Industries Sector Development Plan

Comprehensive sector-wide engagement, including bespoke workshops with every major creative sub-sector (music, screen, design, createch, fashion, publishing, performing arts, etc.) to understand needs, barriers and opportunities in detail.

Full participation from all ten GM districts, each contributing local priorities and shaping a unified set of interventions that reflect place-based challenges and strengths across the city-region.

Engagement with anchor institutions and national partners, ensuring alignment with major cultural organisations, universities, broadcasters, funding bodies and government departments.

Two-stage engagement process: broad initial consultation followed by refinement with an advisory group of around 100 sector leaders from across Greater Manchester culminating in a final plan formally adopted as official policy by GMCA, all ten districts and the Mayor in September 2025.

Creative Industries Sector Development Plan

Vision for the Sector

Greater Manchester will be the UK's leading creative powerhouse, where talent and businesses thrive across the city region, supported by inclusive infrastructure and dynamic policy. With deep international links and a bold spirit of innovation, GM will drive global creative excellence and shape the future of cultural production.

Current State of the Sector

GM's creative industries contribute £1.4bn in GVA and support over 48,000 jobs. The sector is anchored by institutions like MediaCityUK and supported by a devolved funding landscape. It is integrated with other frontier sectors and benefits from strong research institutions. However, spatial inequality and underinvestment in some boroughs remain challenges.

Sector Definition

The creative industries are defined by the UK Government as those industries which originate in individual creativity, skill and talent and have the potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property. Sub-sectors include advertising, architecture, crafts, design, film, TV, createch, publishing, museums, music, and performing arts.

Strategic Priorities

1. Build strong sector leadership.
2. Focus on high-growth sub-sectors.
3. Align education and skills with industry and refine research priorities for the city region.
4. Improve access to finance and investment.
5. Promote inclusive and place-based growth.
6. Foster cross-sector collaboration and innovation.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths: Strong talent pipeline, global reputation, internationally significant infrastructure
Weaknesses: Funding constraints, spatial inequality, limited IP support.
Opportunities: AI integration, export growth, regional branding.
Threats: Precarity of work, global competition, economic uncertainty, technological disruption.

Key Actions

Establish a GM Creative Council and Freelance Taskforce.
Develop and implement a Creative Infrastructure plan.
Develop a coherent brand and narrative for the sector
Expand apprenticeships and training.
Support grassroots venues, SMEs, and freelancers.
Secure national and international investment.
Develop priority initiatives in high-growth sectors like music and screen.

Infrastructure and Physical Development

Short-term (0–2 years): Asset mapping, improvements to strategically important existing venues, adapting existing spaces across conurbation for creative use.
Medium-term (3–5 years): Development of new creative work, rehearsal, studio, fabrication, and performance spaces across GM, linked to growth locations and integrated pipeline
Long-term (6–10 years): Large-scale new facilities to increase production capacity of sector

Measures of success

Creative Job Growth
More diverse, high-quality creative employment in GM.
Business Start & Scale
Increase in creative start-ups and scaling businesses.
Global Reach & Exports
More international partnerships and export value.
Skills & Talent Access
Broader access to creative training and career pathways.
Audience & Participation
Growth in local and global engagement with GM's creative output.
Infrastructure Investment
Enhanced spaces and digital tools for creative production.

Creative Places Growth Funding

25 million over three years has been allocated to Greater Manchester through the DCMS Creative Places Growth Fund, with funding devolved to Mayoral Strategic Authorities from April 2026, giving GM flexibility to tailor investment to local barriers and opportunities

The funding approach empowers GM to deliver the ambitions set out in the Creative Industries Sector Development Plan, supporting innovation, business growth, skills, and sector-specific programmes

GMCA can draw on complementary national support including innovation and capacity-building programmes, enabling resource to underpin research, evidence and insight needed to shape and target interventions