

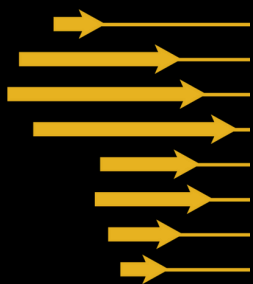


**CREATIVE  
FUTURES  
AFRICA**

From unseen to unstoppable

# CREATIVE FUTURES AFRICA SUMMIT

## REPORT



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# AFRICA'S CREATIVE ECONOMY AT A CRITICAL INFLECTION POINT

Africa's creative economy stands at an exceptional moment where proven potential meets addressable constraints. The numbers are compelling: South Africa's (SA's) creative sector alone contributes ZAR 161 billion to gross domestic product (GDP), while the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) opens access to 1.3 billion consumers, with a combined GDP of USD 3.4 trillion. Research shows that every USD 1 invested in the CCIs generates USD 2.5 in economic output – demonstrating exceptional multiplier effects. Yet current integration into global value chains remains below 15% of GDP, representing billions in value ready to be captured through coordinated action

**Three converging dynamics create particular urgency for the next 24-36 months.**

**1) Artificial intelligence (AI) and platform economics** are reshaping global creative production, creating a critical window for African interests to be embedded in emerging governing frameworks before these structures solidify.

## **2) African cultural products**

from Amapiano's global dominance to unprecedented streaming platform demand for African content – have achieved cultural influence that can translate to economic returns if supported now.

## **3) Major institutions have committed substantial capital**

for example, Afreximbank's USD 3 billion across film and creative programmes; this signals momentum that requires immediate activation before investment priorities shift.

The convergence of youth demographic advantage (with Africa's median age under 20 years compared to 30 years globally), technological access (115% growth in internet users in Sub-Saharan Africa, 2016-2021), African cultural assets achieving global recognition, and opportunities for increasing institutional readiness, creates unprecedented transformation potential. The question is whether stakeholders will act decisively while this alignment persists.



# Executive Summary

The inaugural Creative Futures Africa Summit, convened in Johannesburg on 10 October 2025, brought together visionary leaders from across Africa's creative and cultural industries (CCIs) to establish a transformative agenda positioning the sector as central to the continent's economic future. Hosted by Business and Arts South Africa (BASA) in partnership with Jozi My Jozi, Gauteng Growth and Development Agency (GGDA), Creative Capital, and Andani.Africa (and various supporting partners), the summit was strategically designed to inform international development agendas (such as G20) and continental frameworks, with actionable recommendations for integrating creativity into multilateral development priorities.



This report synthesises insights from high-level summit discussions, positioning papers grounded in international best practices, and desktop research, offering fresh perspectives from the Global South on how multilateral cooperation can unlock the full potential of the CCIs worldwide.



# FROM CONSTRAINTS TO COORDINATED ACTION

Creative Futures Africa Summit discussions identified 11 strategic priorities where coordinated action could unlock Africa's creative economy potential. These are not necessarily resource scarcity problems – substantial capital has been allocated, proven models exist, and policy windows are currently open. The challenge is activation: making existing funding accessible, connecting fragmented initiatives, translating policy commitments into practice, and building the coordination mechanisms that enable systemic transformation.

## **Infrastructure investment as a cross-cutting enabler:**

Before addressing specific priorities, it is critical to recognise that infrastructure deficits constrain progress across all dimensions. Africa's trade costs currently run 50% above global averages due to unreliable electricity, limited connectivity, and underdeveloped production spaces. While closing the continent's energy gap requires USD 190 billion annually, even incremental progress through targeted creative infrastructure investments could unlock significant scale given the sector's proven multiplier effects. Infrastructure is not a standalone priority, but rather an enabling condition that supports intellectual property (IP) protection, (digital systems for rights management), data sovereignty (connectivity and platforms), digital development (foundational infrastructure), intra-African trade (transport and logistics), and virtually every other priority identified. Coordinated infrastructure investment creates the foundation upon which other interventions can succeed.

# THE CALL TO ACTION

This report presents 11 interconnected strategic priorities representing Africa's self-determined development agenda:

- **IP protection and ownership as an imperative foundation**
- **Data sovereignty and research infrastructure**
- **Creative wellness and labour recognition as economic infrastructure**
- **Investment readiness reimaged**
- **Intermediary infrastructure and trusted convening capacity**
- **Cross-sector collaboration over siloed efforts**
- **Digital infrastructure with an African context**
- **Unified African voice on AI governance**
- **Prioritising intra-African trade and pan-African markets**
- **Creativity as a network model (non-linear value chain)**
- **Eco-cultural approaches to climate action.**

These priorities emerged from collaborative cross-sector thinking grounded in both research evidence and implementation reality, addressing the full spectrum from policy frameworks to on-the-ground constraints facing creative enterprises.

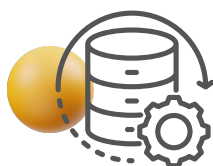
The challenge is not primarily resource scarcity, but activation – making existing funding accessible, connecting fragmented initiatives, translating policy commitments into practice, and building the coordination mechanisms that enable systemic transformation. As the world seeks post-pandemic economic resilience and sustainable development pathways, Africa's creative economy offers a proven model for achieving these goals.

*The question is whether the international community will engage with the urgency, coherence, and partnership this transformative moment demands.*

*The recommendations that follow provide a roadmap. Implementation begins now.*

# FOUNDATION-BUILDING PRIORITIES

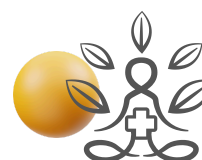
**Require immediate attention:**



- 1 Data sovereignty** emerged as fundamental to economic justice. Currently, African creative content contributes to international platforms, with questions raised about whether creators receive adequate compensation and insights in return. The “Africa Premium” – 30% higher interest rates despite Africa having the lowest default rates globally<sup>[1]</sup> – demonstrates how addressing data gaps could save billions in borrowing costs. With 86% of African women across 52 African countries lacking basic AI proficiency,<sup>[2]</sup> urgent opportunities exist to build data literacy and African-owned platforms that capture value locally.



- 2 IP protection** must remain with creators and be recognised as a capital asset that unlocks financing. This requires IP education (beginning at high school level), robust enforcement mechanisms, enforceable AfCFTA rules of origin, and valuation expertise enabling IP to serve as collateral – transforming creative work into investable assets.



- 3 Creative wellness and labour recognition** deserve attention as economic infrastructure, not social amenities. The absence of insurance products for creative workers, combined with a lack of standard labour protections, risks losing talent through burnout whilst undermining the sector's long-term economic potential.

# SYSTEMS AND COORDINATION PRIORITIES

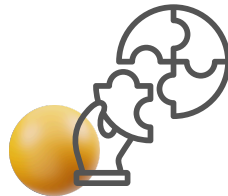
Address how stakeholders work together:



4

## **Intermediary infrastructure**

and trusted organisations capable of convening government, private sector, and creative stakeholders emerged as essential. These intermediaries translate between knowledge systems, consolidate sector voices, and enable coordination across the multiple ministries and stakeholders that creative economy governance spans.



5

## **Bridging the gap between allocated capital and creative businesses**

represents an immediate opportunity. Billions of dollars have been committed to the CCIs, yet optimising disbursement mechanisms requires developing frameworks within financial institutions for accurately valuing creative assets, structuring sector-appropriate financing products, and ensuring creative enterprises become investment-ready through specialised support and targeted business development.



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## **Cross-sector collaboration**

offers advantages over siloed efforts. Rather than seeking single ownership, effective coordination mechanisms can leverage the creative economy's multi-sectoral reality as a strength, enabling the "creative friction" that generates innovative solutions unavailable through isolated efforts.

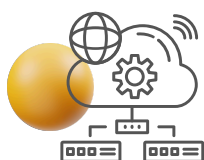


# INFRASTRUCTURE AND INTEGRATION

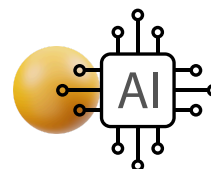
Enable continental and global reach:



- 7 Intra-African trade and pan-African markets deserve priority** over constant orientation toward European (EU) and United States of America (USA) markets. AfCFTA projections show intra-African exports could increase 109% under full implementation. Addressing mobility barriers – including visa liberalisation, cultural passports, and co-production treaties – could activate this potential. Summit panellists noted that African delegates face substantially higher South African visa rejection rates than overseas delegates illustrates how removing such barriers could unlock greater regional collaboration.



- 8 Digital infrastructure development must prioritise African contexts** – reliable connectivity, offline capabilities, platforms for African languages, and African-owned, globally linked distribution systems. While Africa has seen strong growth in internet users, infrastructure should enable local value capture whilst maintaining global integration, building on (rather than being limited to) external platforms.

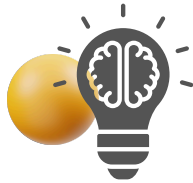


- 9 A unified African voice on AI governance** becomes critical as AI reshapes creative production globally. Coordinating continental positions on accountability frameworks, IP compensation, data sovereignty, and cultural integrity safeguards offers a window for African interests to be embedded in governing frameworks.

# SYSTEMIC THINKING PRIORITIES

## Recognise complexity:

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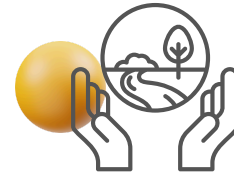


### **Understanding creativity as a network model rather than a linear value chain**

reflects how contemporary creative economies actually function, with multidirectional flows of financial, social, cultural, and data capital. This networked reality explains why priorities are interdependent: IP protection requires data sovereignty; digital infrastructure needs AI governance; investment readiness demands appropriate financing products; and cross-sector collaboration necessitates trusted intermediaries.



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**Eco-cultural approaches to climate action** integrate ecological restoration with creative economy development through bio-design, regenerative materials, and Indigenous knowledge systems. African innovations in mushroom-based materials, plant-derived textiles, and permaculture demonstrate how creative practitioners can drive climate solutions whilst preserving cultural heritage. Growing climate finance streams creates opportunities for eco-cultural projects, positioning Africa's regenerative creative approaches as globally relevant whilst ensuring benefits flow to knowledge holders and communities.



# MOVING FROM PAPER TO PRACTICE

These cross-cutting themes emerged consistently across the Creative Futures Africa Summit, revealing that challenges facing Africa's creative economy are not isolated problems, but deeply interconnected systemic issues requiring coordinated responses.

These insights are relevant whether engaging through national policy development, continental coordination, private sector investment, development finance, or international partnership – each perspective benefits from understanding how different dimensions of creative economy development reinforce or constrain one another.

One of the summit's most powerful messages was a rejection of waiting for perfect conditions. The creative economy has sufficient evidence, allocated capital, proven models, and stakeholder commitment to begin implementation immediately. Success requires moving beyond isolated interventions to coordinated action where infrastructure development, financial product innovation, and policy reform advance together rather than sequentially.

# SEVERAL CRITICAL INTERCONNECTIONS EMERGED CONSISTENTLY

## **Infrastructure-finance-policy**

The infrastructure-finance-policy nexus creates multiplier effects when aligned: These three dimensions reinforce one another – infrastructure enables investment deployment; appropriate financing develops infrastructure; and policy frameworks recognising creative work as legitimate economic activity ensure both are designed effectively. Coordinated progress across all three creates exponential rather than linear impact.

## **Data sovereignty**

Data sovereignty unlocks economic justice and fair value capture: Addressing data gaps could save billions by reducing the “Africa Premium” (30% higher interest rates despite Africa’s lowest default rates globally), while African-owned platforms and data infrastructure would enable creators to capture consistently fair returns from the content and insights they generate.

## **Mobility-identity-market**

The mobility-identity-market triangle demonstrates how removing barriers activates markets: Visa liberalisation directly expands market access and enables cross-border collaboration that builds pan-African audiences. When combined with ownership structures that keep IP with creators, cultural influence translates to economic value that circulates within the continent.

## **Strategic intermediaries**

Strategic intermediaries accelerate coordination and reduce transaction costs: Trusted intermediaries who can translate between knowledge systems, consolidate fragmented initiatives, and enable equitable participation, turn the creative economy's multi-stakeholder complexity from a coordination challenge into a strategic advantage.

## **Regenerative approaches**

Regenerative approaches build long-term value and resilience: Integrating wellness, sustainability, and long-term thinking throughout creative economy development ensures the CCIs remain viable across generations. Sustainable industries require sustainable creators; prioritising long-term value creation over short-term extraction preserves the cultural authenticity and creator wellbeing that make African creative work globally valuable.



# INTERNATIONAL RELEVANCE AND PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Africa's CCI development presents opportunities for international partners, multilateral institutions, and private sector investors, extending beyond traditional development narratives:

- **Economic complementarity** through diverse supply chains and new growth markets, with Africa's youth demographic profile creating enormous domestic markets for creative content.
- **Innovation leadership** in the continent's resource-constrained contexts offers globally relevant solutions, from mobile-first content strategies to community-based financing models.
- **Climate and sustainability models** through eco-cultural approaches provide templates for sustainable creative production.
- **Cultural diplomacy** strengthening international relationships, with global demand for diverse, authentic African content creating opportunities for cultural exchange.
- **Technology governance** frameworks balancing innovation with equity, as Africa's navigation of AI development, data sovereignty, and platform economics can shape global norms.

## BENEFITS?

Supporting African CCIs benefits international partners seeking diverse, authentic content whilst demonstrating commitment to equitable partnerships. The creative economy offers a proven model for generating economic value whilst preserving cultural heritage and fostering social cohesion – outcomes relevant to national policy priorities, continental integration objectives, sustainable development goals (SDGs), and private sector growth strategies.



# OUR SPEAKERS

The Creative Africa Futures Summit is a bold platform for the Global South to set its own agenda, scale innovations, and build a sustainable creative economy.

Grounded in Africonomics, the summit fosters collaboration, closes gaps, and unlocks new opportunities for long-term growth. By reimagining creative industries through a fresh, future-focused lens, it's a space for visioning, strategising, and shaping a globally relevant creative landscape—on our own terms.



**Anwar Jappie**

Head of Industry at Google Africa



**Avril Joffe**

UNESCO Chair Cultural  
Entrepreneurship and Policy



**Bea Swanepoel**

CEO Jozi My Jozi



**Beth Arendse**

CEO of Business and Arts South Africa



**Christine Msibi**

IKS



**Dawn Robertson**

Creative Catalyst - Jozi My Jozi



**Dr Nomhle Ngwenya**

National Advisory Council on Innovation



**Dr Puleng Makhoalibe**

Founder & CEO - Alchemy Inspiration



**Dr Susan Keitumetse**

Botswana University



**Eddie Hatitye**

Director, Music In Africa



**Emmanuel A Gamor**  
AI & Digital Faculty  
Stellenbosch Business School



**Genevieve Pace**  
Senior Manager, British Council



**Gladwyn Leeuw**  
CEO eSquared



**Jolene Roelofse**  
Founder, Fluence Africa



**Joseph Gaylard**  
Creative Economy Consultant



**Lesley Donna Williams**  
Summit Facilitator



**Lonwabo Mavuso**  
Executive Director, Andani Africa



**Malibongwe Nzuza**  
Dealmaker Service SBU IDC



**Marcus Baliso**  
Head of InvestSA, Gauteng



**Marie Lora-Mungayi**  
Founder & CEO Restless Global

# OUR SPEAKERS



**Marta Foresti**  
CEO - LAGO Collective &  
Chair of the Global Creative  
Economy Council



**Mohammed Adbel Dayem**  
Creative Economy Advisor



**Molemo Moiloa**  
Director Andani Africa



**Msaki**  
Composer, singer, and  
songwriter



**Ninel Lara Musson**  
CEO Creative Capital



**Tebogo Moalusi**  
Co-Founder of Creative20



**Nosipho Maketo-Bragt**  
CEO - Chocolate Tribe



**Ojomo Ochai**  
Managing Partner, CC Hubs



**Prof Eschar Mizrachi**  
University of Pretoria



**Sarah Ferdjani**  
AU Development Agency



**Sven Mollgaard**  
Bio-designer - Afrifungi



**Wakiuru Njuguna**  
Managing Partner at HEVA  
Fund

# METHODOLOGY

**This report synthesises insights from multiple complementary sources:**

## **Positioning papers:**

These papers, developed through a desktop review and analysis of international best practices, established the strategic context for the summit and identified key challenges facing the sector, examining eight critical dimensions of Africa's creative economy: infrastructure and value chains, data and research, financing, policy, AI and technology, creative cities, eco-cultural justice, and creative mobility and trade. These informed summit themes.

## **Creative Futures Africa Summit insights:**

On 10 October 2025, the summit convened visionary leaders, policymakers, creative entrepreneurs, investors, and development partners in Johannesburg, for high-level dialogues on creative economy development. Andani.Africa's research team documented these discussions in real-time, capturing stakeholder perspectives, emerging ideas, and practical recommendations that inform this report's content and strategic recommendations. Sessions emphasised cross-sectoral dialogue and thinking beyond traditional silos, catalysing bold ideas and new partnerships for Africa's creative economy.

## **Desktop research:**

Where specific statistics were cited during summit discussions, these have been verified against original sources, with references provided for reader verification.

The combination of research-based context and stakeholder-driven insights enables recommendations grounded in both evidence and implementation reality, addressing the full spectrum from policy frameworks to on-the-ground constraints facing creative enterprises and communities.

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# CONCLUSION

The Creative Futures Africa Summit in Johannesburg on 10 October 2025 marked a pivotal moment for Africa's creative economy – not as another aspirational gathering, but as a practical blueprint for transformation, grounded in the realities of those building the sector daily. The conversations captured in this report reveal an ecosystem poised at a critical inflection point: Africa's CCI's possess the cultural assets, demographic advantage, and technological access to become a global economic powerhouse, yet require coordinated action to capture the full value this potential represents.

The opportunity is compelling. The next 24-36 months offer a strategic window where African CCI's can shape the AI revolution and platform economics, transforming global creative production and embedding African interests in governing frameworks before these structures solidify. This window demands decisive action while institutional momentum, policy frameworks, and market conditions align, making coordinated engagement essential rather than optional.

What emerged most powerfully from the summit was a rejection of waiting for perfect conditions. While stakeholders acknowledged areas requiring strengthened coordination in data, infrastructure, and policy, they equally emphasised that substantial capital has been allocated, proven models exist, and policy windows are currently open. The challenge is not primarily resource scarcity, but activation – making existing funding accessible, connecting fragmented initiatives, translating policy commitments into implementation, and building the intermediary infrastructure that enables coordination.

The 11 strategic priorities identified represent Africa's self-determined development agenda, reflecting what creative practitioners, policymakers, investors, and researchers working within the sector recognise as essential. These priorities are deliberately interconnected: IP protection requires data sovereignty; digital infrastructure needs AI governance; investment readiness demands appropriate financing products; and cross-sector collaboration necessitates trusted intermediaries. Addressing these priorities as an integrated system distinguishes transformative engagement from well-intentioned but isolated interventions that achieve limited impact when pursued without consideration of ecosystem context.

# CONCLUSION

For international partners – whether G20 nations, continental bodies, DFIs, or private sector investors – Africa's creative economy presents opportunities extending beyond traditional development narratives. The continent offers complementary economic partnerships, innovation leadership in resource-constrained creativity, climate and sustainability solutions through eco-cultural models, cultural diplomacy strengthening international relationships, and technology governance frameworks balancing innovation with equity. Supporting African CCIs benefits G20 nations seeking diverse, authentic content for global audiences, while demonstrating commitment to equitable international partnerships.

The summit's emphasis on "creative friction" – productive tension generated when diverse perspectives engage – challenges conventional approaches seeking premature consensus. Africa's creative economy requires nuanced solutions accommodating complexity: formal and informal operations, cultural integrity and commercial viability, continental solidarity and global competitiveness, immediate action, and long-term structural change. This complexity is not a problem to solve but a reality to navigate, generating innovative approaches unavailable through homogeneous thinking.

Critically, summit participants positioned creativity not as cultural amenity requiring subsidy, but as economic infrastructure capable of driving sustainable development. The CCIs offer proven multipliers whilst preserving cultural heritage, fostering social cohesion, and creating employment at scale. As national governments, continental bodies, and private sector entities seek post-pandemic economic resilience and sustainable development pathways, Africa's creative economy demonstrates how to generate value whilst maintaining the cultural authenticity and ecological relationships that make that value meaningful.

The call emerging from this summit is clear: Africa's creative economy development requires partnership more than patronage; systemic change rather than isolated projects; and coordination across infrastructure, finance, policy, data, and governance simultaneously. Partnership and investment that responds to Africa's self-determined priorities – supporting IP protection, data sovereignty, appropriate financing mechanisms, intermediary institutions, cross-sector collaboration, contextually relevant digital infrastructure, unified AI governance, intra-African trade, and ecosystem thinking – can unlock transformative potential benefiting both African partners and G20 nations.

# THE CREATIVE ECONOMY STANDS READY

The question is whether the international community will engage with the urgency, coherence, and partnership this moment demands. The recommendations in this report provide a roadmap for implementation to begin now.



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**TEL: +27 11 447 2295 / 2182 / 2743**