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## How do rural creative firms contribute to growth?

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Creative industries grew by nearly three times the national average 2008-2012 and account for more than 5% of the UK economy. Rural creative firms can make an important contribution but may be overlooked by policies that favour cities.

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### What are the research findings?

Rural creative industries ranging from arts, crafts, design, advertising to software:

- Tend to account for a smaller share of employment in rural rather than urban areas but have grown strongly in recent years in keeping with wider trends in the creative economy.
- Have their highest growth rates (measured by employment) in accessible rural areas. Remoter areas lag behind, but can be important especially for smaller arts-based businesses.
- Find local markets are important but national/international also vital.
- Tend to be dispersed but some have found imaginative ways of networking and accessing more distant markets.
- Can thrive in hubs when located together. Hubs can be valuable to rural economies and help foster growth, acting as vital incubators.
- Include home-based creative workers who may be an important source of growth.

### What are the implications for UK policy?

- More appropriate growth measures are needed. Employment may not be the best way of capturing value when freelancing and self-employment are commonplace.
- Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) should ensure rural creative firms can access support for development and growth, including export promotion programmes.
- Small home-based businesses need facilities and support to help them grow.
- Rural Growth Networks have an important role supporting the development of creative hubs and should feed experience into LEPs.
- Digital technology is increasingly important to rural creative businesses and investment in high speed broadband is vital – community-led solutions are helping to fill a gap but investment by government is needed in areas the market does not reach.

## Further information:

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**CRE Policy Brief No 18**

**July 2014**