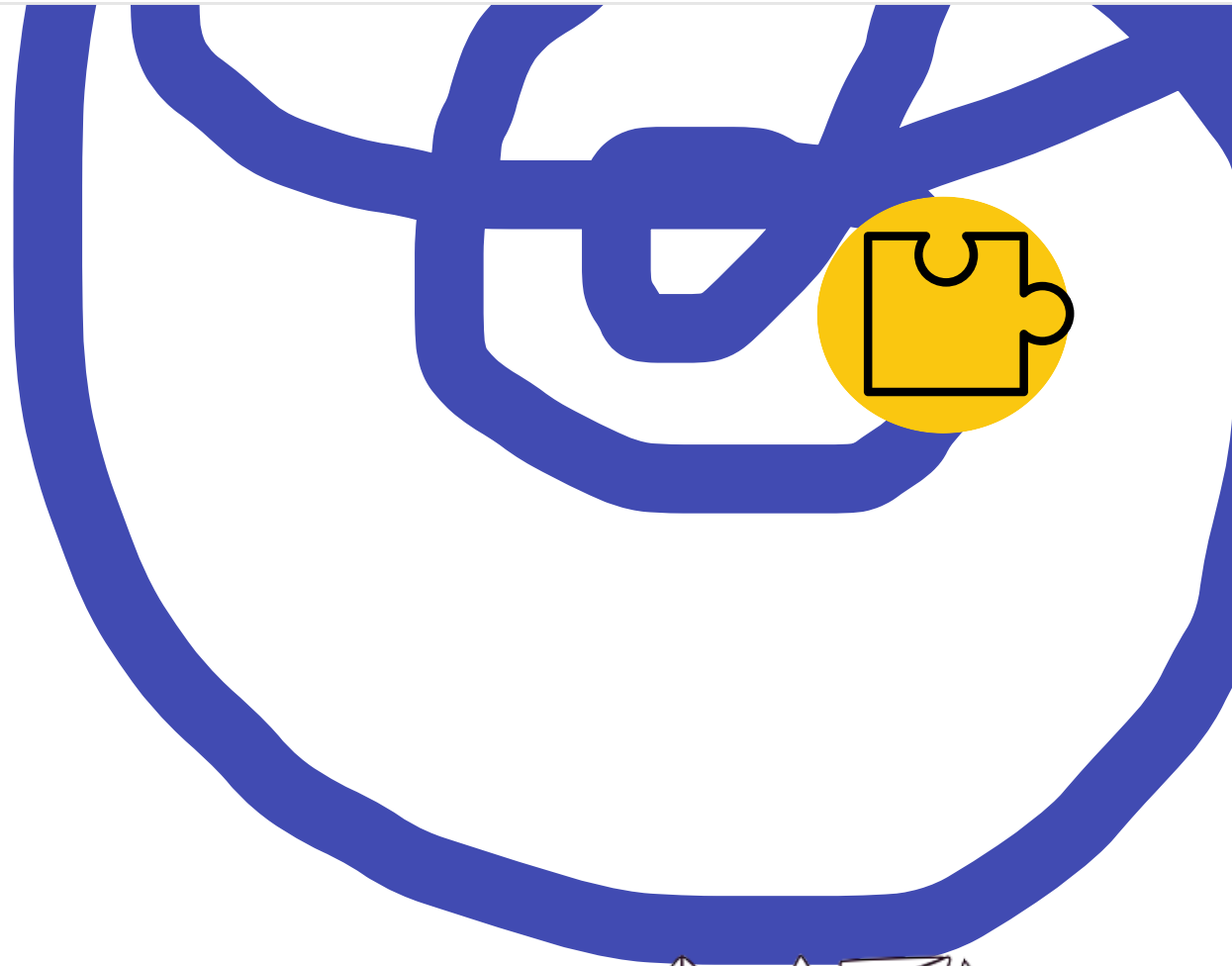


# SKILLS Track 2021

Township economies

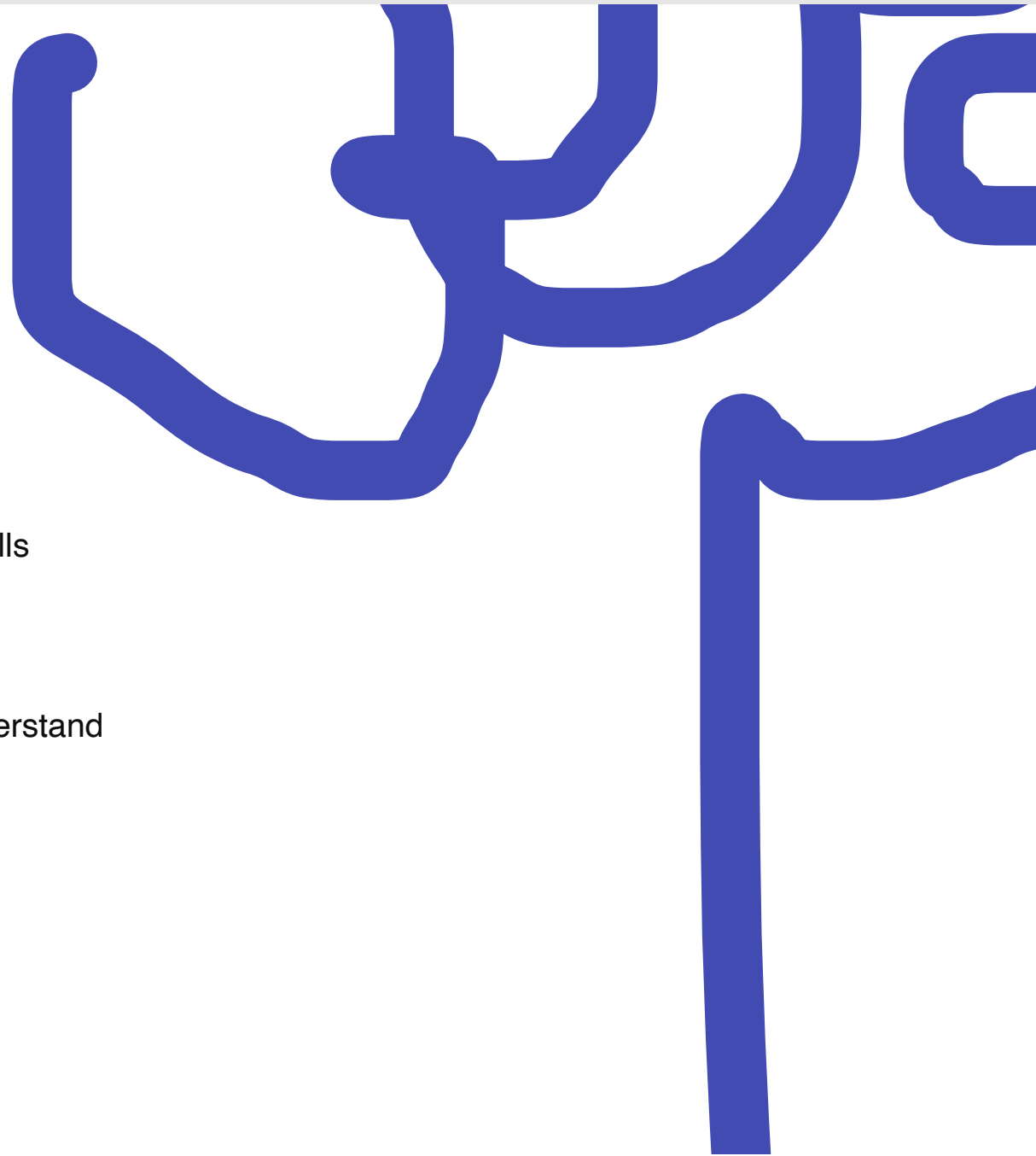


The Creative Digital Skills Report

**ANDANI**  
AFRICA

## Contents Page:

1. Introduction: Digital Skills Track
2. Approach for this report
3. Research Methodology
4. Defining the landscape of digital creative skills
5. Building creative digital ecosystems
6. Mapping skills within the ecosystem
7. The wandering path of creative digital skills
8. Why the wandering path is important to understand
9. The curious course
10. The defining moment(s)
11. The conscious course
12. Thinking about the way forward
13. Bibliography



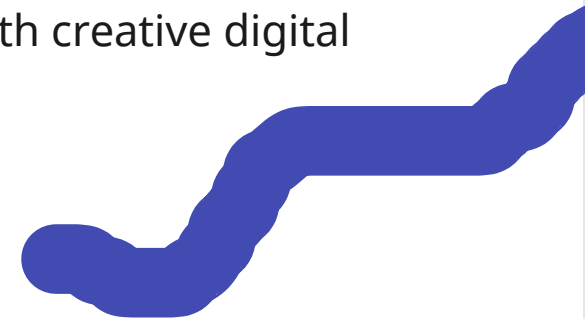
## Introduction: Digital Skills Track

This research is commissioned by the Goethe Institut Johannesburg CAV Creative Economies programme. It looks to understand the nature of digital skills development for creatives based in Townships in South Africa, and from this, to develop strategies and approaches to supporting and enabling creatives through their journeys of pushing this field of practice forward.

Undertaken by Andani.Africa, this research serves as the first step towards a broader tracking of how digital creative skills are growing and impacting the creative economy across the African continent.

The report that follows brings together current literature on the shifts in digital practice and the experiences of digital creative practitioners. Though the report is substantially influenced by digital creative entrepreneurs, the research engaged with employees, employers, educators and hub and incubator managers to better understand the broader environment in which digital creative skills are being developed and put to work.

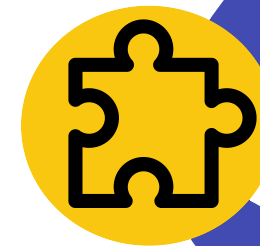
This is therefore the first in a series of reports to come, tracking where we are going and how we are getting there with creative digital skills...



## Approach for this report

Andani.Africa works within the intersection of tradition and culture that we like to call Data Humanism: African forms of storytelling that share insights and knowledge in the tradition of the oral histories of our forebears, and the technological advances afforded us by new digital forms of data analysis and visualisation, harnessing AI for African creative industries knowledge production.

**For this report we focus in on real lives and real experiences - telling the story of what it means to of become young African digital creative entrepreneurs today**



## **Research Methodology**

The research methodology developed by Andani Africa is aimed at compiling a qualitative analysis of the ways in which professionals living or working in townships access, acquire, utilise and upgrade creative digital skills. The approach, which includes surveys, interviews and focus groups aims to offer an analysis of factors influencing the above-mentioned process and to provide insights into little-known or unknown aspects around the status of creative digital skills within Ga-Rankuwa, Eersterust and Diepsloot, in Gauteng, South Africa.

10 entrepreneurs were identified through the Goethe Institut network with the following hubs: Wot-If Trust (Diepsloot), Lima (Eersterust) and E-Kasi Labs (Ga-Rankuwa). Interviews conducted with hub managers sought to gather information about the role played by these hubs within the ecosystem of digital skills training. Focus groups and a validation session were conducted with the aim of identifying common experiences within the path towards acquiring creative digital skills and applying them within an industry as a professional, and ensuring our findings best represented the experiences of digital creative entrepreneurs.



**I needed to function  
differently to what is  
conventionally done in  
my industry  
-Pea**

## Defining the landscape of digital creative skills

**Digital literacy** means having the skills you need to live, learn, and work in a society in which digital spaces and communication increasingly inform our lives (Gay, 2019). Digital literacy skills include the capacity to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring cognitive, technical and social skills. For some (WLF, n.d.) digital literacy can be understood as:

**digital literacy = digital tools knowledge +  
critical thinking + social engagement.**

While we may be more familiar with the technical elements such as capacity to use computers, mobile devices and various software microsoft word or Adobe acrobat or platforms such as twitter, digital literacy also includes cognitive and social capacities such as critical thinking to be able to assess factual information, and social capacities to build safe and supportive online communities and to manage privacy and personal wellbeing. As identified by Donner et al. (2011) acquisition of digital literacy is acquired over time, both within training and through self-development, and are impacted by various factors from symbolism and self-esteem to environmental and structural accessibility.

## Defining the landscape of digital creative skills cont.

**Digital skills** are mainly defined as having knowledge and competencies relating to the use of digital technologies - the ability to use various technologies available. A key part of having these skills includes being technically proficient in accomplishing tasks using Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). While some have described this ability as a form of skill that involves basic understandings of how to use technology, such as having the ability to use the internet and mobile technology, this skill set evolves beyond basic skills.

The World Bank (2019) differentiates between Digital user skills, Digital Specialist Skills and e-Business skills. Globally there is a focus on identifying specific skill areas that will be essential in the future of employment, without naming specific specialities as these are likely to change quickly (DCDT 2020). Findings from a recent Nesta report (2018) indicate that:

**The digital skills most likely to be needed in the future are ones that are used in non-routine tasks, problem-solving and the creation of digital outputs.**





## Defining the landscape of digital creative skills cont.

**Digital Creative skills** are a combination of creative and digital skills. These are skills that have elements of creativity embedded within them. An important part of understanding this skill set includes being able to identify what makes the skill creative and what makes it digital. Relation to the use of a particular piece of software offers one way of identifying digital creative skills. There may also be overlaps, making the process of identifying these skills slightly more complex.

Digital creative skills can also be described as those skills that involve the use of digital technologies to enhance traditional business models. A drone operator who has specialist skills is likely to be required to not only have the skills of a pilot, but also the insight of an experienced camera person and special effects artist. This overlap of skills is where creativity meets technological adeptness.

**creative digital skills = creativity meets  
technological facility**

## Literature on the nature of digital creative skills in South Africa

While there may be the sense that particularly younger generations are naturally inclined to the digital space and naturally acquire skills, this has been debunked by many researchers. From some (Brown and Czerniewicz 2010) "there is a deepening digital divide in South Africa characterised not by age but by access and opportunity; indeed, digital apartheid is alive and well."

In a 2008 study in South Africa only 4.8% of households had a working Internet connection while only 14.8% had computers\*

44% indicated that had not engaged in any digital literacy training before\*

SA ranks 116th out of 140 countries in the World Banks assessment of digital skills among the population \*\*

But South Africa does lead the African continent in terms of available infrastructure, South Africa leads the region in indicators such as Internet (54%), mobile phone penetration (80%) and broadband coverage (99%).\*\*

\*Matli & Ngoepe (2019) \*\*World Bank Group (2019)

**Information is so  
important, you need  
information. Exposure  
changes everything.**

**-Tsakane**



## **Building creative digital ecosystems**

Within the contexts of Townships, creatives are building multi-faceted and intricate ecosystems of individuals (usually a peer-network system), institutions (combinations of formal education institutions, hubs and other skills development sites) and online spaces for support, knowledge development and skills acquisition.

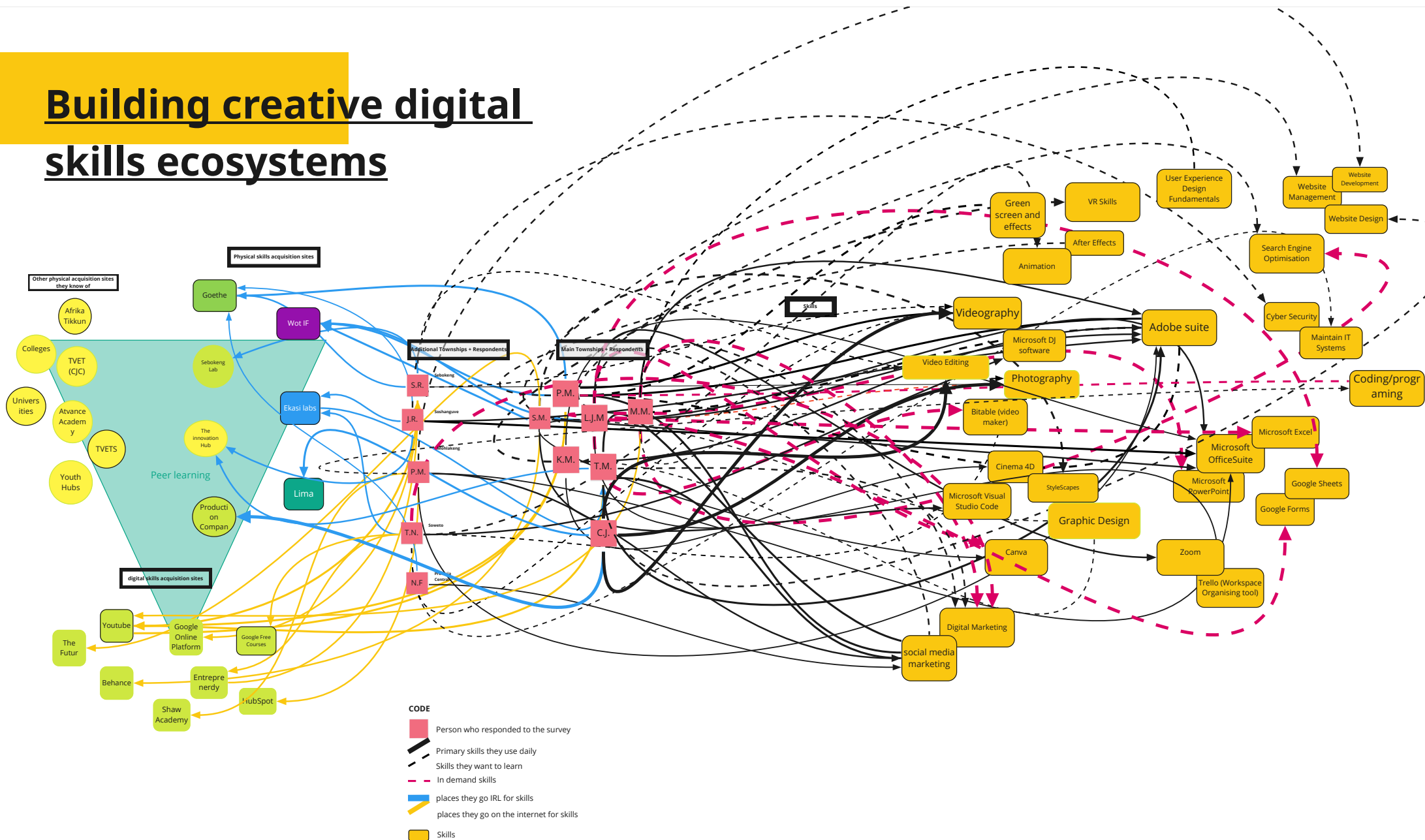
These ecosystems serve as a kind of support framework for career development shifting over time as needs change and access opens up through building greater networks.

The building of these ecosystems is relational, developing connections, networks and especially relying on peer-to-peer training and information access. These ecosystems are also substantially on line - using various digital platforms and YouTube especially - to grow skills and learn more about their fields of practice.

The kinds of digital skills being acquired vary broadly - from specific technical skills within a specialisation, to broader digital literacies around key knowledges vital for operating online today such as digital marketing, privacy and security.



# Building creative digital skills ecosystems



## Mapping Skills within the ecosystem

Much of the literature, including strategy and policy frameworks, around digital skills are hesitant to identify key skills within various industries that are in demand or driving shifts - this is because digital skills and their specific applications change rapidly. Within the creative sector certain skills are certainly focus areas for the moment including gaming and animation (Craffert 2018) as well as web design, digital typography, UX and UI design (Adobe 2020).

Among township based respondents, skills identified included:

Visual and graphics focused digital skills:

- Still and moving image
- Editing and effects
- graphic design

Administrative digital skills

- Word and number processing
- Project management + teleconferencing

Web development

- web design and development
- security and systems management

Digital marketing

- social media
- content creation tools

Most used and in demand: Adobe suite and digital marketing



**I didn't finish my IT programming course due to financial circumstances. Finances are a challenge, just to attend a workshop...**

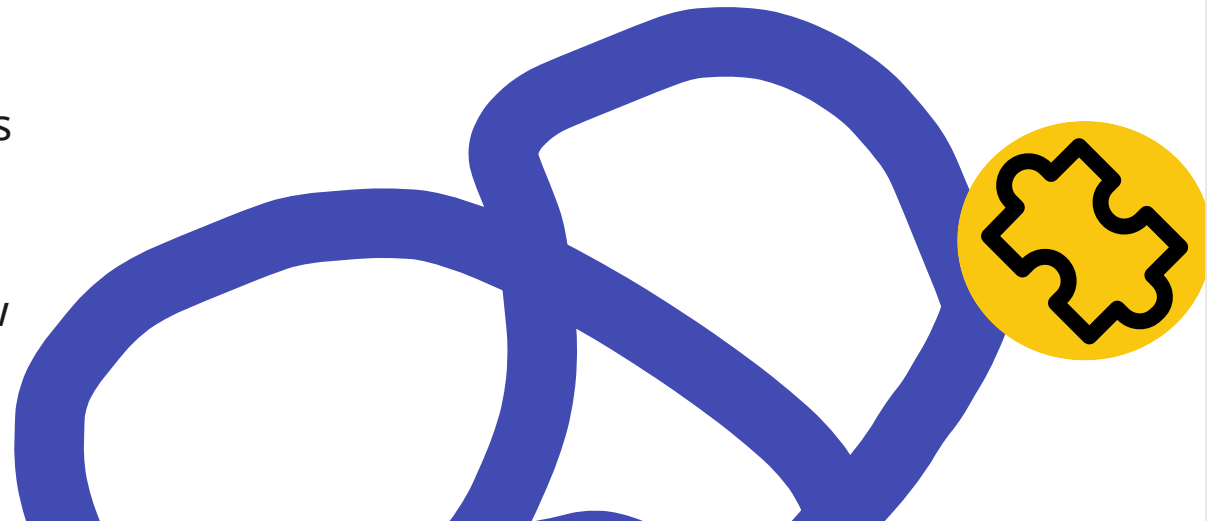
## The wandering path of creative digital skills

Based on data collected from surveys, interviews and focus groups, the process of attaining creative digital skills presents as complex and non-linear. Respondents indicated a largely common experience of seeking creative digital skills in an exploratory way, with multiple turning points and stumbling blocks.

The wandering path of creative digital skills is an aggregate of the experiences of interviewees, survey respondents and focus groups and presents us with the story of how creatives go about building their careers.

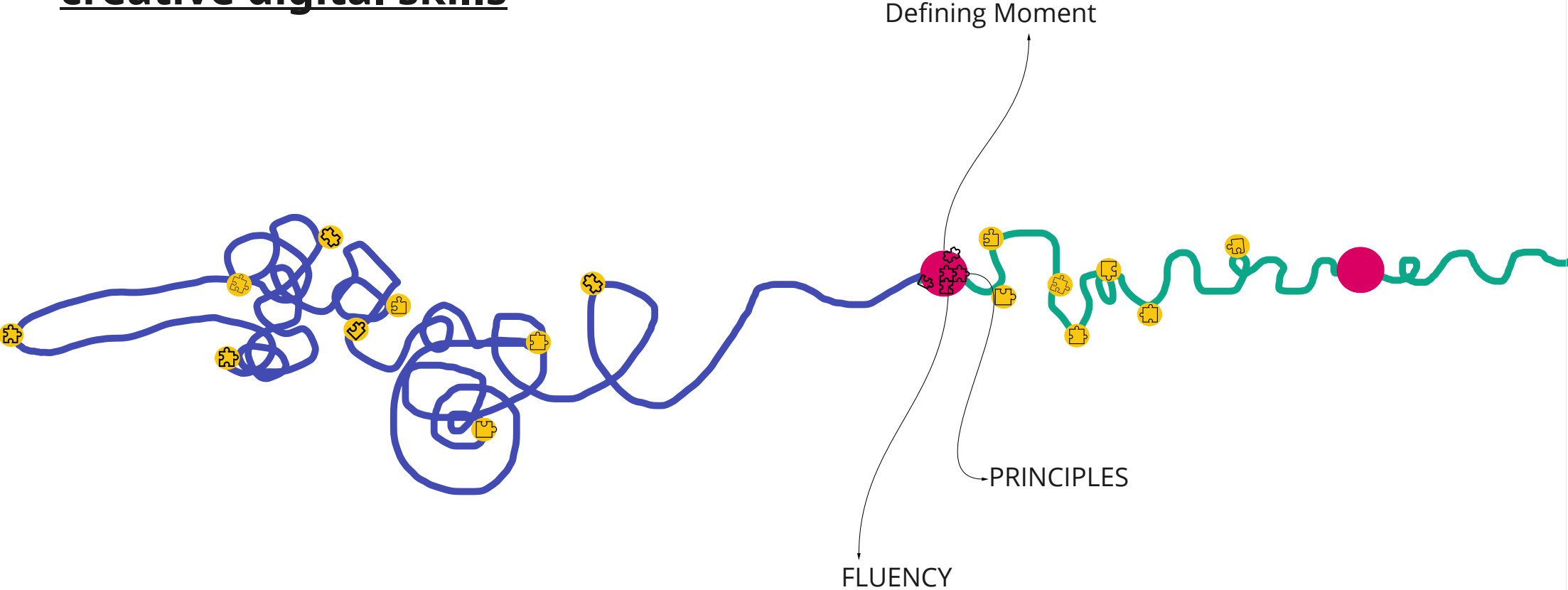
The path is made up of a number of key elements:

1. **The curious course**
2. **The skills, knowledge and capacities learned (puzzle pieces)**
3. **The defining moment**
4. **The conscious course**



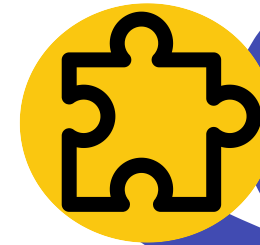


# The wandering path of creative digital skills



## Why the wandering path is important to understand

Most career journeys include their twists and turns, and growth and knowledge development over time - very few are a straight and smooth ride. This is especially the case in the field of digital skills, where technologies are constantly shifting, new software always emerging and the 'move fast and break things' approach results in a fast paced newness-oriented industry. This is also especially the case in the creative sector, characterised by precarity, newness, and a lack of clear pipelines or industry guidelines. Put together, creative digital skills are a wandering landscape.



For many from Township backgrounds, particularly those in low-income contexts, with limited resources and relatively low exposure within the basic education system to both technology and the arts, this wandering process becomes even more acute.

**Staying the course is an indicator of immense commitment and drive.**

## The curious course

**Often within Township contexts, embarking on this advancing and innovative space of creative digital skills careers, the first phase is anchored by curious individuals, driven by necessity, passion and commitment.**

Without substantial exposure and access to information, these creatives have to find their own way - seeking out possibilities, and changing tact according to what they get access to. Much of this period is about chance encounter with various creative digital skills and potential career trajectories, and individuals need to be self-driven in order to take advantage of a wide range of possibilities, opportunities, but also many dead-ends and wrong turns. This usually takes the form of self-training, enrolling in training institutions, undertaking workshops or using hub networks - whatever skills, knowledge and information they can access, they fiercely consume.



# The curious course: characterised by exploration + exposure

## Process

- Peer skills sharing
- Self-teaching
- Online training and info gathering
- Broad range of skills being acquired at intro level
- Testing + trying

## Challenges

- Costs of internet access
- Certain technologies are inaccessible due to the high basic costs
- Many technologies require relatively powerful computers and expensive software

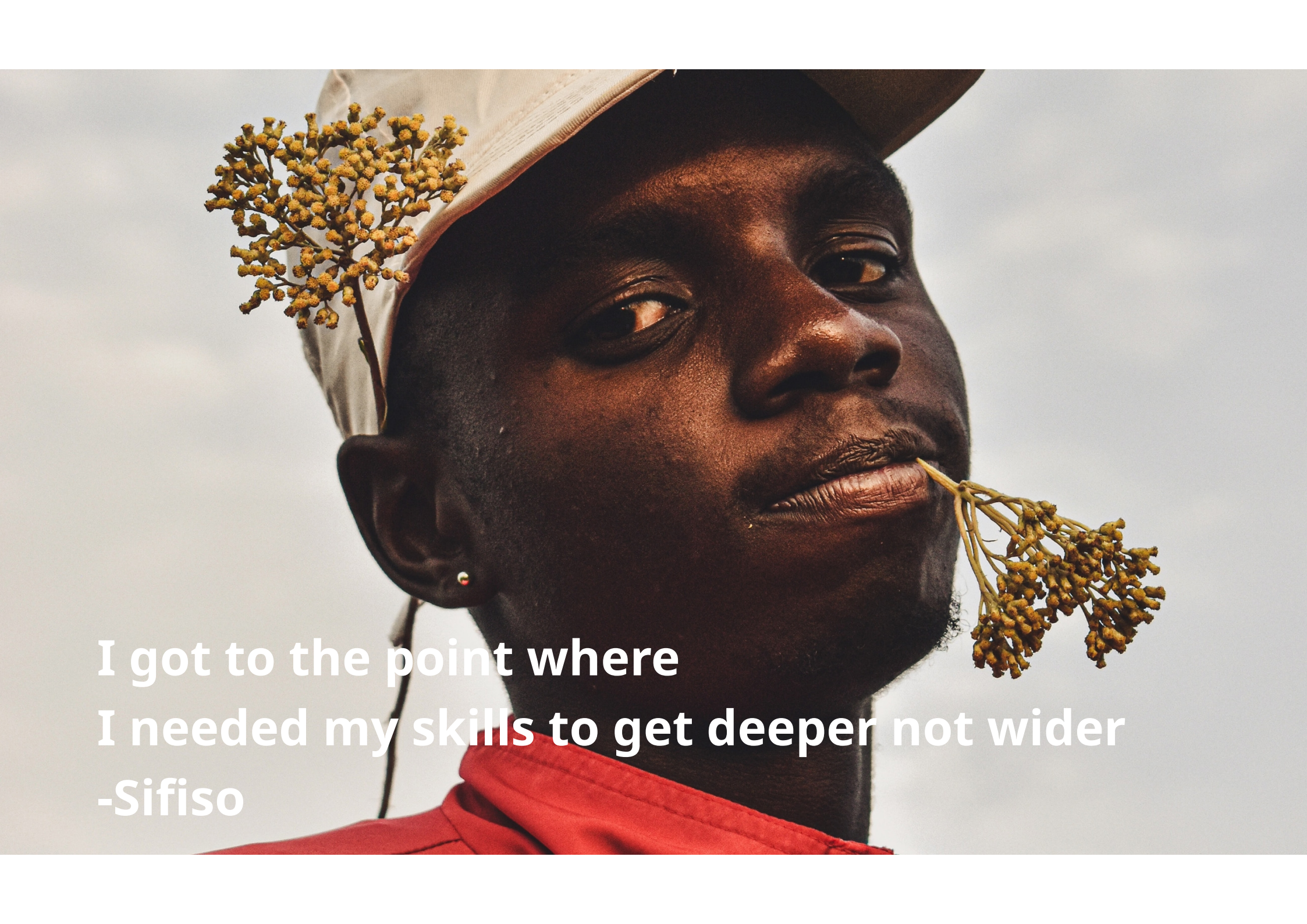
## Needs

- Industry specific information
- Hard+soft ware
- Sustained financing
- Creative Industries specific entrepreneurial support
- Industry specific incomes and work experience opportunities

## Sources of information

- Hubs
- Workshops
- Mentorships
- Peer networks





I got to the point where  
I needed my skills to get deeper not wider  
-Sifiso

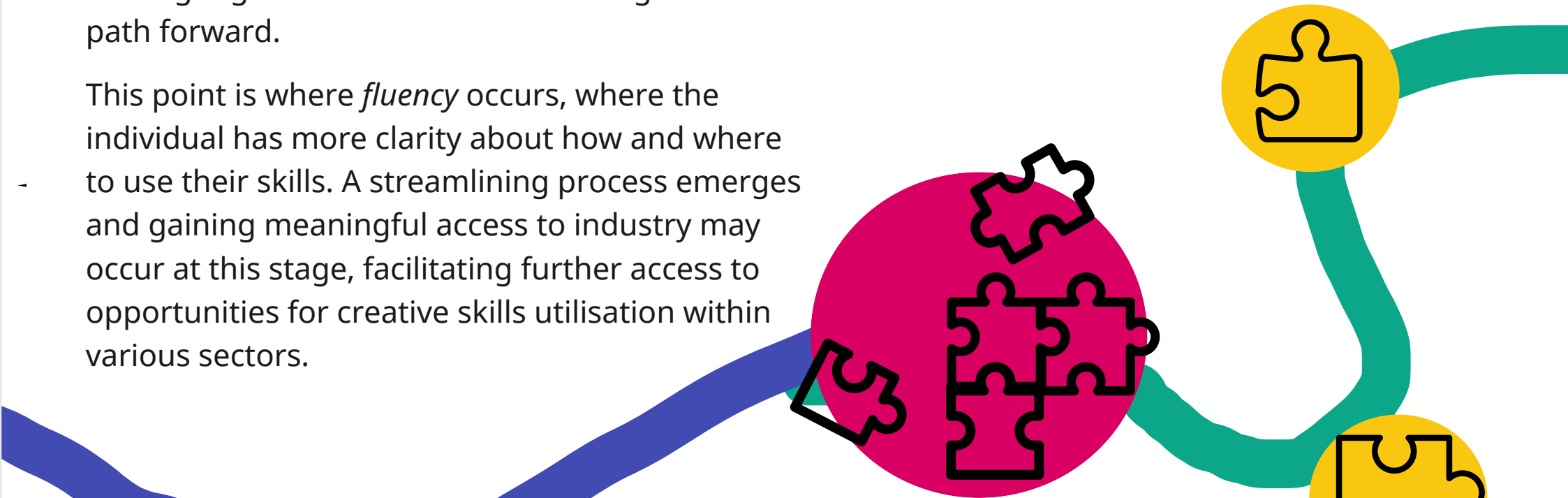
## The defining moment(s)

Along the course of digital skills acquisition, an individual picks up a wide range of capacities, insider knowledges, and better understanding of their own strengths and interests - we see these as pieces to the puzzle. Each time this impacts their route along the curious course. The accumulation of these puzzle pieces eventually results in enough of them coming together to form a clearer image of the future and path forward.

This point is where *fluency* occurs, where the individual has more clarity about how and where to use their skills. A streamlining process emerges and gaining meaningful access to industry may occur at this stage, facilitating further access to opportunities for creative skills utilisation within various sectors.

**DECISION MAKING  
MOMENT INFORMED BY  
KNOWLEDGE OF THE  
BASIC PRINCIPLES.**

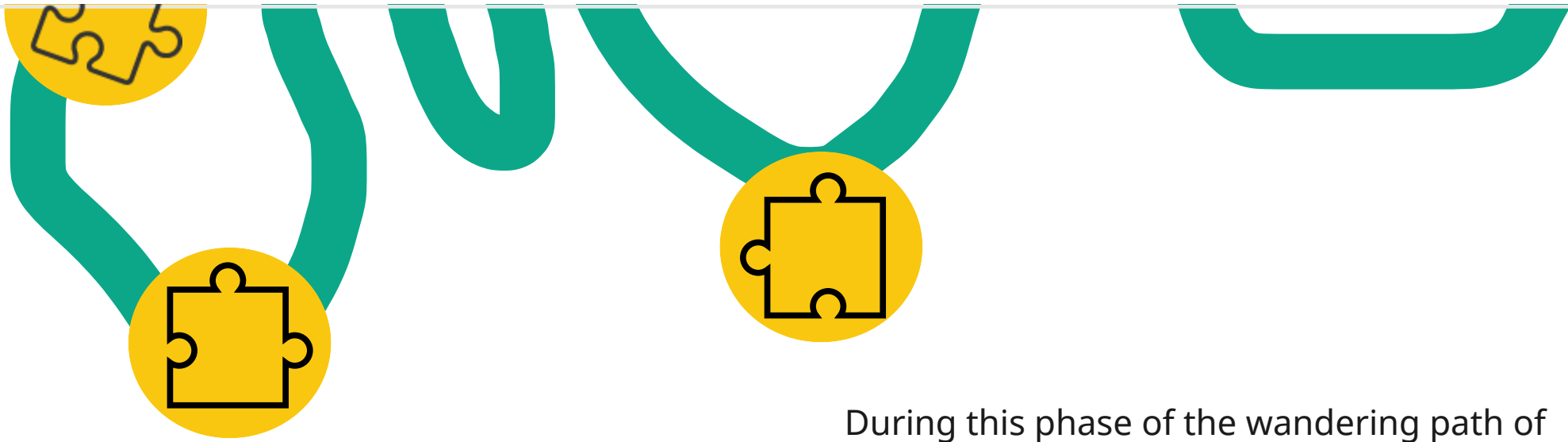
Further moments like these continue at points along the journey



A man with a beard and sunglasses is sitting on a red Coca-Cola crate in a field. He is holding a blue object to his ear. The background shows a sunset over a field with some buildings and trees.

**..and one more thing: Youtube is a friend, that you can ask for all sorts of help and it will show you step by step, how to do what you need to do.**

**-Lerato**



## **The conscious course**

The conscious course comes about as a result of of the defining moment, shifting to a more focused strategy of acquiring creative digital skills and developing a career in this field. Supported by directed network building and the systematic acquisition of advanced creative digital skills, individuals are typically then able to pivot towards a strategic approach to career-building.

During this phase of the wandering path of creative digital skills, there may be fewer course redirections and less wandering. Specialised creative digital skills are deepened, and are applied across various sectors. While a number of the barriers of the previous phase remain, the expansion of networks and clearer plan enable creatives to choose paths that are workable within the constraints they face. This phase is therefore not as wide open, but is driven by a sense of intentionality.



# The conscious course: characterised by focus + specialisation

## Sources of information

- Specific network building
- Strategic training and projects
- Industry income and experience opportunities

## Process

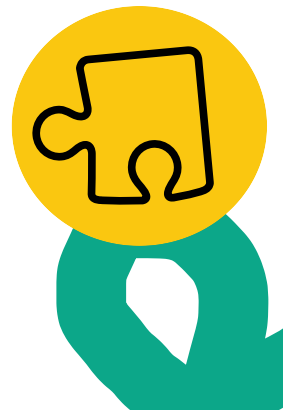
- Narrower range of skills (more advanced)
- Seeking out specific hubs etc to plug identified gaps in knowledge
- Directed information searching: Easier access to information
- Aligning to industry requirements

## Needs

- Specialisation
- Expert or master training
- Dedicated and knowledgeable networks
- Access to up-skilling and information on key identified issues

## Barriers

- Specialist training is difficult to access
- NGO workshops and hub training is usually entry level or too broad
- Soft and Hard ware requirements increase





## Thinking about the way forward

As digital creative skills grow in variation and importance within the creative economy, what do these insights mean for the future?

### Learning to learn

The capacity to teach oneself becomes vital to any environment looking to enable creatives - hubs, incubators + training places. Pedagogically this also means learning the base principles of technologies to enable the capacity to build upon these.

### Connecting

The capacity to learn from peers and professionals is vital to enabling creatives to accumulate skills and make shortcuts along the course of their careers. Supporting digital skills acquisition requires network

### Integrations

The ecosystems being built by creatives point to interwoven and multifaceted sites of learning, exploration and growth. Strategies for enablers - especially at policy and funder level - should echo this, rather than focus on singular sites of development.

## Thinking about the way forward cont.

What might this mean for active, practical shifts to our programming and strategies?

### Teaching to teach

Train the trainer strategies for education programmes enable a greater ecosystem of knowledge. This enables apprenticeship based learning and supports more hubs and Seta's look to enable in-practice educators with pedagogical capacities.

### Redefining

It's vital to develop new frameworks for capacities to learn and absorb skills that are not limited by matric certificates or degrees. Leading tech training hubs are developing aptitude assessments that also recognise 'soft skills'.

### Modelling

There needs to be greater connections made between those with existing workable models for creative digital skills transfers and Setas and TVETS, so as to not 're-invent the wheel'. This includes financing those who are good at what they do.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adobe Blog. "3 Reasons Students Need to Develop Digital Literacy," March 13, 2019. <https://blog.adobe.com/en/publish/2019/03/14/3-reasons-students-need-to-develop-digital-literacy.html>.
- Aboob. "The It's Nice That Creative Skills Report," 2020. <https://www.adobe.com/uk/offer/CCEEnterprise-Its-Nice-That.html>.
- Abrahams, Stella Ndabeni-. "NATIONAL DIGITAL AND FUTURE SKILLS STRATEGY SOUTH AFRICA," 2020, 36.
- Ahmed, Shamira, and Alison Gillwald. "Smart Townships Will Build Smarter Cities." Research ICT Africa, August 2020. <https://media.africaportal.org/documents/Research-ICT-Africa-Smart-Townships-Policy-Brief-3-Aug-2020.pdf>.
- Brown, C., and L. Czerniewicz. "Debunking the 'Digital Native': Beyond Digital Apartheid, towards Digital Democracy: Debunking the 'Digital Native.'" *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning* 26, no. 5 (October 2010): 357–69. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2729.2010.00369.x>.
- Craffert, Leona. "WESTERN CAPE DIGITAL SKILLS SHARED AGENDA FOR ACTION," 2018. [https://www.westerncape.gov.za/assets/skills\\_boost\\_western\\_cape\\_-\\_as\\_is\\_-\\_final\\_report.pdf](https://www.westerncape.gov.za/assets/skills_boost_western_cape_-_as_is_-_final_report.pdf).
- DCDT. "NATIONAL DIGITAL AND FUTURE SKILLS STRATEGY SOUTH AFRICA." *Department of Communications and Digital Technologies Government Gazette* (2020): 36.
- Djumalieva, Jyldyz, and Cath Sleeman. "Which Digital Skills Do You Really Need?" Nesta, 2018. [https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/Which\\_digital\\_skills\\_do\\_you\\_really\\_need.pdf](https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/Which_digital_skills_do_you_really_need.pdf).
- Donner, Jonathan, Shikoh Gitau, and Gary Marsden. "Exploring Mobile-Only Internet Use: Results of a Training Study in Urban South Africa." *International Journal of Communication Copyright* 5 (January 1, 2011): 574–97.
- Easton, Eliza, and Jyldyz Djumalieva. "Creativity and the Future of Skills." Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre, NESTA, n.d.
- "Facebook Get Digital." Accessed July 17, 2021. <https://www.facebook.com/fbgetdigital/>.
- Fourie, Ina. "Suggestions for a Research Framework for South Africa: How Can We Learn from Web Information Seeking/Searching Studies?" *South African Journal of Libraries and Information Science* 69, no. 2 (March 17, 2013). <https://doi.org/10.7553/69-2-711>.
- Matli, Walter, and Mpho Ngoepe. "Capitalizing on Digital Literacy Skills for Capacity Development of People Who Are Not in Education, Employment or Training in South Africa." *African Journal of Science, Technology, Innovation and Development* 12 (July 9, 2019): 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20421338.2019.1624008>.
- MICT SETA. "Information on Sector Skills Planning." MICT SETA, n.d. <https://www.mict.org.za/publications/#34-publications-p2>.
- Twinomurinzi, Hossana, and Nkosikhona Msweli. "Digital Natives Still Need Intentional Digital Skills in the 4IR: Comparing the General and ICT Self-Efficacy of South African Youth." *GlobDev* 2019, December 15, 2019. <https://aisel.aisnet.org/globdev2019/4>.
- Welsum, Desirée van. *Enabling Digital Entrepreneurs*. World Bank, Washington, DC, 2016. <https://doi.org/10.1596/23646>.
- WLF. "What is Digital Literacy And Why Does It Matter? | World Literacy Foundation." Accessed July 17, 2021. <https://worldliteracyfoundation.org/digital-literacy-why-does-it-matter/>.
- World Bank. "South Africa Digital Economy Diagnostic." World Bank Group, 2019. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/33786/South-Africa-Digital-Economy-Diagnostic.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

Photo by [abolova](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Photo by [Rachel Martin](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Photo by [Donovan Sikaona](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Photo by [Joshua Oluwagbemiga](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Photo by [L.Steward Masweneng](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Concept of the Digital Skills Track by Andani.Africa  
Digital Skills Track Township economies commissioned by  
Goethe Insitut CAV creative economies programme

2021

report citation:

Andani.Africa and Goethe Instit (2021) Digital Skills Track:  
Creative Economies. Johannesburg

