

## **EEDA:**

Final Report - an evaluation of EEDA's ESF

Co-financing Programme 2007-12

**TEEVAN**  

---

*CONSULTING  
NETWORK*



**European Union**  
**European Social Fund**  
Investing in jobs and skills

[teevan@attglobal.net](mailto:teevan@attglobal.net)





## Contents

	Page
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1 The purpose and remit of this evaluation</b>	<b>6</b>
1.1 The scope of this evaluation	7
1.2 ESF policy & economic drivers: the method to identify in-depth projects	7
<b>2 The strategic context for this evaluation</b>	<b>10</b>
2.1 Regional Economic Strategy priorities and the ESF	10
2.2 East of England Framework (England European Social Fund 2007-13)	12
2.3 EEDA's European Social Fund Co-financing Plan 2007-2012	13
<b>3 Findings and conclusions</b>	<b>14</b>
3.1 What worked and what did not - key lessons	18
3.2 Cross-cutting themes - achievement against key measures	24
3.3 Summary of participant survey findings	26
<b>4 Recommendations</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>34</b>
16 project level evaluation summaries	35-144

## Executive Summary

The purpose of this project is to evaluate the East of England Development Agency's (EEDA) European Social Fund (ESF) Co-financing Programme 2007-2012. This means evaluating the contribution made by EEDA as a Co-financing organisation (CFO) to its Regional Economic Strategy (RES), the Operational Programme and the regional ESF framework.

The evaluation covers 16 Priority 1 and 2 projects with funding of £23.5 million.

2 projects supported RES 3.4 Resource Efficiency priority - £775,000 funding

5 projects supported RES 3.5 Skills for Productivity - £16.77 million funding

9 projects supported RES 3.6 Economic Participation - £5.94 million funding

We were particularly asked to make positive statements about which projects and approaches would be important in the future, the 'most relevant legacy' projects - and especially what worked and what did not.

The remit did not include new quantitative Gross Value Added (GVA) impact evaluation or evaluation of all projects in equal depth - we agreed with EEDA seven projects for detailed evaluation, where we undertook 445 participant telephone surveys. Against key ESF output measures, the programme was very successful. With a handful of projects to confirm final outputs, aggregate attainment is:

Priority 1 projects achieved 334% of CFO target participant numbers (9221 actual)

Priority 1 projects achieved 157% of CFO target into work numbers (1009)

Priority 2 projects achieved 172% of CFO target participant numbers (28634)

Priority 2 projects achieved 153% of CFO target qualifications (basic skills to level 4)

A key lesson in achieving these high results lies in the tendering process. In project specifications the ESF team routinely asked for output levels higher than their CFO targets would require. Tenders received then frequently offered much higher targets

than that, in order to win the bid. This process might have led to a bias to optimism where providers over-sold what was achievable - this did not occur, due in large part to appraisal by EEDA and consequent understanding of which tenders were realistic.

The above analysis summarises achievement against the *quantitative* ESF targets. We also identified strong patterns of *qualitative* learning (see detail in section 3.1).

A summary of what worked in the programme:

- Tailor support to individuals - individual 'pull' not project 'push'
- Demand led projects work well with employers
- Understand both need and demand - especially 'will the people come?'
- Make outreach highly energetic - go to where individuals are comfortable
- Exploit the power of networks - recruit 1 to many in preference to 1 to 1
- Understand local and regional models - there are not always economy of scale
- ESF funding can be creatively used - meet ESF and EEDA purposes
- Understand established & innovative project models - new approaches more risky
- Take evaluation seriously - obtain ongoing feedback and act on it

A summary of what did not work:

- Tread carefully with short duration projects - more likely to fall behind and fail
- Innovative short duration projects carry most risk where the approach is untested
- Develop an early strategy for evidencing ESF outputs - many were lost
- Focus on outcomes not just activity - manage the end result not just the outputs
- Approach evaluation effectively - use good people, do not let projects self-evaluate
- Beware conflicting aims - economic inclusion and social inclusion are different
- Ensure individual support is *always* tailored - one size does not fit all
- Focus on all outputs equally - 'into work' outputs were most challenging to achieve
- Plan to meet disability targets - the most challenging cross-cutting theme by far

The final point refers to the ESF cross-cutting themes - this programme greatly outperformed all participation targets (lone parents; people aged 50+; women; ethnic minorities) except disability targets where it greatly underperformed. A key lesson is also that with larger projects (particularly Priority 2), scale could be used to create additional outputs. These 'EEDA outputs' added great value to an employer, for example, through 'business assists' where an advisor could provide demand led business advice additional to the immediate purpose of the project concerned.

With an EEDA output such as skills assists, individuals could be given very flexible support where a whole qualification as measured by ESF was not the best solution.

A further approach to identify the learning points is to draw out those that tend to be particularly specific to priority areas of the Regional Economic Strategy.

#### *RES Resource Efficiency priority 3.4 - key lessons*

Two low carbon skills projects were the main interventions under this priority, both aimed at unemployed or economically inactive people, key lessons were:

- risky design - short duration, unformed partnerships, innovative ambitions
- execution - too focused on skills objective, under-achieved on work targets
- 1 project delivered the training - but low employer demand for participants

(See Appendices project summaries 10 and 11)

#### *RES Skills for Productivity priority 3.5 - key lessons*

These five projects were aimed at upskilling employed people, pre-redundancy support and start up support. Key lessons were:

- offer demand led projects
- early stage intervention works best in redundancy situations
- deliver ESF outputs - but also deliver tailored business critical support
- focus on the end result - track redundant people, know if start ups succeed

(See Appendices project summaries 12-16)

### ***RES Economic Participation priority 3.6 - key lessons***

These projects were aimed at the unemployed or economically inactive - key lessons:

- highly energetic outreach achieves great results with the most disadvantaged
- projects have to employ the right project workers who connect effectively
- tailor support to the person and proceed at their pace
- avoid over-complex contracting - contracting through local authorities failed

(See Appendices project summaries 1-9)

## **1 The purpose and remit of this evaluation**

The purpose of this project is to evaluate EEDA's ESF Co-financing Programme 2007-2012. In particular, this means evaluating the contribution made by EEDA (as a Co-financing Organisation) to the Operational Programme and the regional ESF framework. The tender identified areas that were - and were not - priorities. The priorities were to:

- i) review the efficiency of project delivery based on the Impact Evaluation Framework (IEF) - the IEF contains recommended tools and approaches to be used by RDAs to evaluate programmes and projects
- ii) identify and review in-depth those projects the evaluator and EEDA judged to be of particular interest to future funders and those involved in tenders
- iii) identify performance, particularly plan to actual outputs against EEDA's CFO Agreements
- iv) review all project contributions to ESF Cross-cutting themes
- v) produce an evidenced summary of exemplary practice, lessons learned and opportunities for improvement, to inform future skills policy and programmes

We understood from the above criteria that you particularly wished to see clear positive statements about which projects and approaches would be important in the future - the most relevant legacy projects. The learning identified was also to include what does not work - 'do not do it this way'.

The remit did NOT include:

- new original quantitative (GVA) impact evaluation
- evaluation of all projects in equal depth - you suggested the evaluator and EEDA agreed the proposed approach to identifying projects to be examined in detail
- this is in effect an outcome evaluation (excluding GVA impact) - it does not include significant process or formative evaluation elements

### **1.1 The scope of this evaluation**

We undertook the following fieldwork:

- we made site visits and undertook interviews for the 16 projects within the remit of this evaluation (the Invitation to Tender identified 17 projects - after discussion with EEDA the evaluation work undertaken by us on the 17th project was passed to EEDA for a further and separate analysis)
- we conducted original research (in the form of telephone interviews) - 445 participant telephone interviews were completed across 7 projects
- 16 project level summaries were produced (included in the appendices of this report)
- we reviewed the achievements of the 2007-2012 ESF Co-financing programme against three key strategic sources in particular:
  - EEDA's Regional Economic Strategy 2008-2031
  - the East of England ESF Framework 2007-2013

- EEDA's European Social Fund Co-financing Plan 2007-2012

- we suggest the above three sources encapsulated the key strategic analyses and plans that were most relevant to this regional ESF Co-financing evaluation although in some cases wider sources have also been consulted

## 1.2 ESF policy & economic drivers: the method to identify in-depth projects

We proposed the projects for in-depth review (ie. requiring original research in the form of participant surveys) were selected by reference to:

- **current** economic drivers discussed in our proposal, because this represented the latest view of critical economic challenges - we particularly identified future priorities in:
  - supporting entrepreneurship; where most economic and jobs growth is likely to come from SMEs and start ups in the short and medium term, but where failure rates are highest when external advice is not taken
  - mitigating economic shock; particularly growing redundancy levels in the region
  - supporting business critical skills interventions, particularly within key sectors, as part of the future route to growth and balancing austerity measures with a strategy for economic growth
- the priorities in the ESF Regional Framework, because that identifies longer term goals to tackle unemployment/economic inactivity and to increase skills and employability levels

Along with the economic analysis summarised above, we also applied some other tests in order to arrive at the projects where further original research should be undertaken within this evaluation.

Threshold Criteria	A threshold is a pass/fail test of relevance
--------------------	--

<u>Was the project likely to:</u>	<u>to future ESF &amp; other funder priorities:</u>
Have continuing future relevance?	We understood ESOL for migrant workers funding was unlikely to be sustained  CAB unlikely to directly support Financial Capability project following cutbacks
Contain learning about BOTH what works and what does not?	2 Low Carbon projects may be judged to fail this test due to limited positive learning
Have been repeated across the region?	Evaluate 1 of 2 Enterprising Communities projects - Haverhill selected
<b>Key ESF Lisbon goals criteria</b>	
Creating more & better jobs especially for the disadvantaged & economically inactive	Suggested priority projects include: Inspiring Women's Enterprise; Volunteering & The Olympics; Intensive Business Start Up (Priority 1)
Improving skills for business competitiveness	Improving Capabilities (& Beyond 2010)  Intensive Business Start Up (Priority 2)
<b>Current key regional economic criteria</b>	
Mitigation of economic shock	R2R relevant but recent major evaluation, so no need for further new research
Likely reduction in skills investment in key sectors & contract workers	Improving Capabilities in Sectors 2011

The above criteria suggested some clear priority projects for in-depth review.

The seven projects where we undertook original research (telephone interviews with participants) were agreed with EEDA at the outset of the project:

- Project 1      Volunteering & the Olympics (70 interviews)
- Project 4      Enterprising Communities Haverhill (27)
- Project 5      Inspiring Women's Enterprise (70)
- Project 9      Intensive Business Start Up Priority 1 (70)
- Project 13     Beyond 2010 (68)
- Project 14     Intensive Business Start Up Priority 2 (70)

Project 16      Improving Capabilities 2011 (70)

The project numbers referenced above refer to the sequence in which project level evaluation summaries appear in the appendices of this report. There were 16 projects in total within our remit, the further projects where an evaluation was undertaken, (but NOT original survey research) were:

Project 2      Financial Capability & Inclusion

Project 3      Enterprising Communities Bedford

Project 6      Economic Participation Essex

Project 7      Economic Participation Suffolk

Project 8      Economic Participation Norfolk

Project 10     Low Carbon (Bedford College)

Project 11     SMART Life Low Carbon (Cambridgeshire County Council)

Project 12     English Language Training for Migrant Workers

Project 15     Response to Redundancy 2011

## 2 The strategic context for this evaluation

The driver for EEDA to become involved in the European Social Fund (ESF) was the priorities set out in the Regional Economic Strategy 2008-2031 (RES).

### 2.1 Regional Economic Strategy priorities and the ESF

There are three key areas in that strategy that reference areas in which ESF Co-financing offered substantial opportunity to support implementation of strategic aims:

- Resource Efficiency (RES 3.4: 'Benefiting from a low carbon low resource economy')
- Skills for Productivity (RES 3.5: 'Developing Skills for the changing economy')
- Economic Participation (RES 3.6: 'Opportunity for all in the sustainable economy')

In identifying the projects that fitted within these three key policy areas, EEDA was guided by the two Lisbon goals that are at the core of the European Social Fund strategy:

*Creating more & better jobs especially for the disadvantaged & economically inactive (Priority 1)*

*Improving skills for business competitiveness (Priority 2)*

#### **Resource Efficiency (RES 3.4)**

Global climate change both poses a threat and presents opportunities to the East of England. The coastline is vulnerable, the region is low-lying and water resources are already scarce.

Following the Stern Report, climate change has become a central concern of economic policy. The RES sets the ambition of reducing end-user CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to 60% below 1990 levels by 2031. As carbon emissions become constrained, the region

must take resource productivity seriously as a source of competitive advantage. The opportunities are manifold. The global market for environmental goods and services was worth \$548 billion in 2005 and was forecast to grow by 45% to 2015.

The region has the second highest number of companies in the environmental sector in the UK and the third highest level of employment, a strong base on which to contribute to economic growth.

The region supplies nearly half of the nation's domestic gas needs, provides nuclear energy and is the leading region for renewable generating capacity. The RES identifies two particular policy areas that are particularly linked to ESF policy:

- to lead the UK in sustainable energy production
- to increase the share of the environmental goods and services markets

These two aims have significant implications for the future skills required by businesses in the region.

### **Skills for productivity (RES 3.5)**

A more highly skilled workforce leads to enhanced competitiveness and profitability for businesses. For individuals, better skills lead to higher wages and better career opportunities. The RES identified however that the East of England's skills base compares unfavourably with the national average, with a particular need to:

- increase graduate retention rates to above the national average
- increase the share of people gaining higher level skills (in training terms at level 4 and above)
- increase qualification: 40% of adults qualified at least to level 4, 68% to at least level 3 and 90% at least to level 2
- reduce key skills gaps and shortages - through development and use of economically valuable skills

With the majority of the workforce of 2031 already having left compulsory education 23 years previously, it is particularly important that a culture of continuous learning becomes embedded in the workplace.

### **Economic participation RES (3.6)**

Successful regions seek to maximise opportunities for all to benefit and the contribution of the whole population to the economy. Many however face barriers such as lack of appropriate skills; lack of knowledge or confidence; limiting health conditions; lack of access to business support; or employers' attitudes and practices.

Certain social groups face systemically greater barriers - for example, some aged over 50, some black and minority ethnic communities, people with disabilities and lone parents.

In the context of the ESF, particular RES priorities include:

- equipping people with the confidence, skills and choices for employment
- equipping people with the confidence, skills and choices for self employment
- tackling barriers to employment for the poorest 20% of communities
- encouraging employers to value a flexible and diverse workforce, removing barriers to people who are under-represented in employment

## **2.2 East of England Framework (England European Social Fund 2007-13)**

The purpose of the East of England ESF Framework is to establish how ESF funding can support the regional priorities summarised above from the RES in order to tackle:

- worklessness

- low skills

The ESF Operational Programme was developed at a national level and is operated by the Department of Work and Pensions. The Regional ESF Framework then sets the direction for the use of ESF in the region, with the East of England Skills and Competitiveness Partnership (EESCP) having had a clear remit to lead on the design, implementation and monitoring of the Regional Framework. The EESCP brought together the people, businesses and investment to achieve the world-class skills, jobs and growth in line with the East of England RES.

The Lisbon Agenda sets the overall European policy context under which the ESF Operational Programme for England (and therefore the regional framework) has been developed. The key Lisbon goals of generating stronger sustainable growth and creating more and better jobs has led to the ESF focus of:

- attracting more people into employment, especially disadvantaged groups and the economically inactive
- improving the skills of potential and current workers to improve individual progression and business competitiveness

This focused is summarised in the England ESF Operational Programme as:

- Priority 1: Extending employment opportunities
- Priority 2: Developing a skilled and adaptable workforce

### **2.3 EEDA's European Social Fund Co-financing Plan 2007-2012**

EEDA set out in its ESF Co-financing plan 2007-2012 how it as a Co-financing Organisation (CFO) would contribute to the implementation of the ESF Operational Programme and the ESF Regional Framework (see above).

The number and funding levels of projects grew during the 2007-2012 period, so the most appropriate source of reference is to the 16 projects that were eventually funded, which fall under the remit of this evaluation as Priority 1 or Priority 2.

This policy context is manifested in practical terms within this evaluation by the 16 projects in EEDA's ESF Co-financing Programme 2007-2012.

There are eleven Priority 1 projects with a total level of funding of £6.72 million.

There are five Priority 2 projects with a total level of funding of £16.77 million

### 3 Findings and conclusions - EEDA's contribution to the Operational Programme and Regional ESF Framework

In evaluating the contribution of EEDA's Co-financing Programme 2007-2012, one approach is to assess the results in terms of key outputs delivered.

#### Data analysis - Priority 1 projects

The table that follows summarises the output performance of the eleven Priority 1 projects in the EEDA 2007-2012 Co-financing programme.

<b><u>Priority 1 projects</u></b>	<b>1) Actual &amp; forecast</b>	<b>2) EEDA CFO target</b>	<b>3) Contract -ed target</b>	<b>4) % attained of CFO target</b>	<b>5) % attained of contract targets</b>
Participant numbers	9221	2762	8758	<b>334%</b>	<b>105%</b>
In work on leaving	1009	644	1015	<b>157%</b>	<b>99%</b>
Economically inactive in job search or further learning	980	603	976	<b>163%</b>	<b>100%</b>

The definitions in this table may require explanation.

The three measures in the left hand column were applied where relevant to all the Priority 1 projects. In a handful of cases the 'in work' measure and the 'economically inactive in job search/further learning' measure were not targeted because the core

purpose of the project did not lead to these benefits. 8 priority 1 projects had 'into work' targets and 9 had 'economically inactive in job search/further learning' targets.

The *actual and forecast* column (1) is an aggregation of signed off outputs (projects complete) and forecast to completion outputs (where projects complete in December 2011) when final output claims have not been fully signed off at the time of producing this report. There are only three smaller projects that are not yet complete, so we are confident the totals shown are very close to the final outcome.

The *EEDA CFO target* column (2) is in effect the total commitment EEDA made towards the regional CFO targets. Column (4) shows the percent attainment against the CFO targets, actual performance is well ahead on all three measures.

The *contracted target* column (3) is the aggregation of targets agreed between EEDA and the contract holders (ie. the successful bidders). In each case, actual performance is at or very close to target as shown in column (5).

Conclusion: EEDA has delivered considerably above the targets in the CFO agreement. Effective project management is a significant factor in this and a strong clue as to why performance is so high lies in the 'contracted target' measure. The EEDA ESF team aimed to maximise the contribution of its projects, so they set higher output targets in project specifications at tender stage than would be necessary to meet the CFO targets overall. Output targets were then further ramped up by bidders, who in many cases offered still higher levels of output targets in their bids, as a way of increasing their chances of winning the contract. A danger of this may have been a bias to optimism, where the bidders might have over-sold what they were capable of delivering in order to win tenders - however, careful project appraisal by EEDA and prior research and evidence were used to identify what was realistically deliverable in practice. Performance against contracted targets was in the range 99-105% for the three key measures, so the result is very high value for money achieved for the ESF funding under Priority 1.

### Data analysis - Priority 2 projects

The table that follows summarises the output performance of the five Priority 2 projects in the EEDA 2007-2012 Co-financing programme.

<b>Priority 2 projects</b>	<b>1) Actual &amp; forecast</b>	<b>2) EEDA CFO target</b>	<b>3) Contract -ed target</b>	<b>4) % attained of CFO target</b>	<b>5) % attained of contract targets</b>
Participant numbers	28,634	16,645	24,765	<b>172%</b>	<b>116%</b>
Basic skills/Level 1	1176	459	504	<b>256%</b>	<b>233%</b>
Level 2	1435	1237	1332	<b>116%</b>	<b>108%</b>
Level 3 & 4	1873	1229	1643	<b>152%</b>	<b>114%</b>

The definitions in this table may require explanation.

Participant numbers was a measure common to all five Priority 2 projects, then:

- 3 projects had targets at basic skills/level 1
- 3 projects had targets at level 2
- 4 projects had targets at level 3 (and 2 also at level 4)

The columns **(1) - (5)** are defined as above.

*It should be noted that the Beyond 2010 project had a very important bearing on the overall performance of the aggregated Priority 2 projects, as shown in the previous table.*

Beyond 2010 accounted for:

- 56% of total Priority 2 *funding within this evaluation remit* (2007-2012)
- 55% of total participants *within this evaluation remit*

It was therefore important to the success overall of Priority 2 that Beyond 2010 was well managed and that it delivered key outputs, which it did. It was in effect two major projects in one, a pre-redundancy support programme (R2R) and a skills development programme in ten key sectors, so management was particularly complex and challenging. The evaluation summary for this project is at project 13 in the Appendices.

Conclusion: As with Priority 1 projects, EEDA has delivered considerably above the Priority 2 CFO agreement, in the range 116-256%. Effective project management is similarly a significant contributory factor, but the tendering process was likewise important. The EEDA ESF team set higher output targets in project specifications than would be necessary to meet the CFO targets overall. Output targets were then further increased by bidders, who in many cases offered yet higher levels of outputs in their bids as a way of increasing their likelihood of winning the contract. As with Priority 1 projects, a danger of this may have been a bias to optimism where the bidders might have over-sold what they were capable of delivering. In practice, performance against contracted targets was in the range 114-233% for the four key measures, so the result is a very high level of value for money within Priority 2.

The above analysis is based on data about achievement against the priority ESF output targets, clearly a core aspect of this evaluation. There are however two further important aspects to this evaluation:

i) **the quality of the project benefits** (outputs and outcomes) - the above analysis of ESF outputs achieved is a largely volume based analysis

ii) **the achievement against targets for those facing particular disadvantage** - five recurring measures, as outlined in the East of England ESF Framework, ie. key ESF 'cross-cutting themes'

These additional considerations therefore shape the structure of the sections of this report that follow:

section 3.1 analysis of the quality of project benefits (primarily through an analysis of **what has worked and what has not** across the 16 individual projects)

section 3.2 a summary of achievement against cross-cutting themes

### **3.1 What worked and what did not - key lessons**

This evaluation covers 16 Co-financed projects in EEDA's 2007-2012 ESF Programme. The learning points below are a summary of the insights we derive from project level analysis in this evaluation. We do not seek to repeat the evidence behind these learning points, we do however cross-reference each point with the projects that best illustrate the issue - see the detailed project evaluation summaries (projects 1-16) in the appendices.

#### **3.1.1 What worked?**

In this section we summarise key or recurring issues that should help future bidders to understand the helping factors in designing and delivering projects of this type.

We cross-reference each key learning point with examples of projects that best illustrate the point (the project number refers to the sequence of project evaluation summaries which are to be found in the appendices of this report).

## Key Learning Points

### 1 Tailor support to individuals

Projects that offer tailored support based on individual need tend to be most effective. Tailored support usually implies the need for a range of support services - one to ones, group based, networks and support groups. Project 'push' does not work well with most participants - understand a participant's entire need before suggesting specific solutions such as self-employment or a specific training intervention. Long term support ('end to end') works best with the most disadvantaged participants - avoid 'quick hit' project solutions.

Appropriate support is not always linear - many participants, particularly the disadvantaged, may need to revisit earlier steps, change course or change timescales.

[See projects:](#) Enterprising Communities (EC) projects 3, 4; Projects 1, 2, 5, 6; Economic Participation (EP) 7, 8; Business start up 9, 14

### 2 Demand led projects work well with employers

Projects that can deliver what an employer wants are usually more welcomed by the employer and have a greater chance of producing transformational results in the business. This links to point 5 - demand led needs can be better met where mainstream needs are bought in very cost effectively, to free up funding for more costly and impactful support to businesses, particular for SMEs.

[See projects:](#) Beyond 2010 & follow on 2011 projects - 13, 15 & 16; Project 12 - delivery

### 3 Understand both need and demand

Many applicants tend to be better at identifying the need for a project - it can be comparatively easy to identify factors such as disadvantage, low skills or low competitiveness. The key issue is often understanding demand - will the people come? That there is a problem does not imply that the target participants will want the solution offered. Often strategies and plans of funded organisations place great emphasis on identifying the needs in an area, there is rarely a balance of emphasis in planning documents on demand, not least because projects are usually not yet designed at planning stage. So project level research is often required to design a project so it both meets previously identified need and likely local demand.

[See projects:](#) 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 worked well; Projects 10 & 11 struggled with demand, both from individuals and employers; project 6 from employers

### 4 Make outreach highly energetic

Outreach should begin on Day 1 - do not wait for partnership building and detailed project design before making a start with marketing. A fast start to projects nearly always pays, particularly by avoiding falling behind delivery of outputs - develop a Quick Win plan.

In a targeted geographical area (local, sometimes county level), early energetic marketing can have both an immediate effect and helps produce continual word of mouth recruitment at low/no added cost.

'Extreme outreach' pays with Priority 1 hard-to-reach individuals - highly energetic, very local, in non-threatening locations, using project workers with the ability to engage with the disengaged.

[See projects:](#) EC projects 3, 4; EP projects 7, 8; Projects 2, 6

## **5 Exploit the power of networks**

Networks are usually key to participant recruitment - marketing to many usually achieves more than marketing one to one. Some networks can be difficult to engage with, the project team needs to build on prior relationships and ensure their key contact has the background and is accepted by those networks with which the project wants to engage.

Persistence is critical - do not just approach a network once and expect instant results. There can be a tension in short duration projects between the need for quick results and the time it takes to build productive relationships with key or untried networks.

[See projects:](#) Project 2 - a master stroke to provide training for 128 partners who then sold the project on and who now offer debt management capability/signposting; also 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8; + sector groups in 13, 16

## **6 Understand the characteristics of local and regional models**

In this programme, local and county level projects appear to offer better value for money than region wide. Economies of scale do not seem to accrue for regional projects.

A regional project model can avoid a postcode lottery in who is assisted and who is not - and the cost effective work in cities and towns can subsidise costly rural outreach project work.

Value for money projections should be part of initial applications - particularly to identify the cost per output type - often the comparison on value for money factors between local and regional models is very useful for decision-making purposes.

[See projects:](#) 4, 5 (EC); 7, 8 (EP); Projects 5, 9, 14 (business start up); compare project 1 with 3, 4, 6, 7

## **7 ESF funding can be creatively used**

ESF outputs (such as qualifications) can be met while delivering wider purposes of projects. Where employers have a demand for qualifications this should be met but cost effectively through negotiating rates with providers. This can free funding for more tailored, costly but high impact transformational business support.

[See projects:](#) Beyond 2010 & 2011 follow on projects 13, 15, 16

## 8 Understand established & innovative project models

Project models based on previous research and tested models tended to be less risky and produced better outcomes in this programme.

Innovative approaches can be needed but they tend to require more in-depth research to test out understanding of the real causes of market failures; which causes the project can do something about; the likely robustness of proposed partnerships; and whether demand from participants will be there.

[See projects; 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 12, 14;](#) projects 1, 2 - new approaches, on balance they worked well

## 9 Take evaluation seriously

Obtain ongoing feedback from participants to fully understand what works, what does not. Act on that feedback. Consider both formative and summative evaluation - evaluate partway through while there is still time to respond to findings and at the end to learn the lessons.

[See project: 2: excellent research & evaluation from Rocket Science](#)

### 3.1.2 What did not work:

We have been encouraged in this evaluation to focus on what did not work well as well as on what did.

We support this approach, as the areas that are least successful usually offer the greatest potential to improve overall performance in the future. High performing leaders and managers particularly exhibit strong evaluative characteristics - they tend to be open to questioning their own decisions and the extent to which projects and initiatives are delivering the expected results.

The summaries on the following pages summarises the key learning points on what often did not work in the EEDA 2007-2012 ESF programme.

## 1 Tread carefully with short duration projects

Avoid commissioning short duration projects, with unformed partnerships and untested delivery models. Several factors take time, which can hinder delivery of outputs within short timescales:

- building new partnerships
- recruiting a project manager and/or team (and then getting up to speed)
- timely understanding of and dealing with the consequences of new delivery models and any inherent unforeseen problems with them

Targets should be realistic and conservative with such projects.

[See projects: low carbon 10, 11](#)

## 2 Develop an early strategy for evidencing ESF outputs

Project teams need to have a clear strategy from the outset for evidencing ESF outputs, particularly job outputs. Participants can be unwilling to complete daunting forms or to seek written evidence from new employers where they may not want it known they have been 'on a support programme'. Identify what approach will lead to least job outputs being missed - and persist with follow up, use attractive incentives if needed and make it part of the 'contract' with participants.

[See projects: compare project 4 where done effectively with projects 1,3, 8](#)

## 3 Focus on outcomes, do not get hung up on the activity

Particularly within ESF, what gets measured tends to get managed - typically outputs (activity driven) with far less emphasis on outcomes (the main benefits of the project).

Often, unemployed/inactive/redundant individuals *most* want to find a job - project teams should remember that support is judged by most on the end result. For many this is a job or self-employment. Participant destinations should be tracked so the eventual level of success is understood. Individuals can then be further advised where appropriate.

Business support, particularly transformational projects, should identify business level improvement targets and be tracked against targets at the level of each business.

If supporting sustainable business start ups is the key aim, follow up of participants is important to establish whether and where this purpose has been met.

[See projects: 13,15,16; for start ups, projects 9,14 but Acuigen research helpful](#)

#### **4 Approach evaluation effectively**

Project teams need to select appropriate consultants when commissioning external evaluation and should:

- check their track record and expertise in the subject area before commissioning (eg. experience with the IEF? In measuring GVA?)
- relevant referees help to establish competence, follow them up
- EEDA should have been more involved in advising on who was taken on as evaluation consultants
- care should be taken with case studies, they indicate individual success not project success - avoid specific to general conclusions when offering individual case studies as the main evidence about project success; treat case studies as a communications tool not an evaluation methodology
- do not allow projects to self-evaluate ie. project managers not to produce evaluation reports on their own projects with no independent input

#### **5 Develop a strategy to achieve multiple or possibly conflicting aims**

Economic inclusion purposes can sometimes work against social inclusion purposes, where targeting particularly disadvantaged groups could reduce the success in achieving measures such as 'into work' outputs.

If outreach and recruitment of participants is at a high level, then both economic and social inclusion aims can be met - it tends to be in projects that are pushed to deliver their outputs that this can be seen as an 'either/or' choice. The advice is to pitch targets at a conservatively achievable level and then to undertake outreach with such energy that both aims can be met, rather than one aim being seen to detract from the other.

[See projects: 1, 5](#)

#### **6 Ensure individual needs are assessed and support is tailored**

In general, providing tailored and demand led support has been a strength of the EEDA 2007-2012 ESF programme. However, in our surveys of 445 participants across 7 projects, the most commonly occurring criticism of support was that it was 'not tailored to me'.

Sometimes this meant the individual felt they were 'put on a programme' with insufficient consideration of their specific need; sometimes, that the support was too generic (and usually) at too low a level for their experience or level of understanding. Large volume participant projects need to particularly guard against any possibility of a 'one size fits all' response from participants.

[See projects: 1, 5, 9, 14; some aspects of R2R projects 13, 15; some skills support in 13, 16](#)

## **7 Focus on all outputs equally**

Some projects succeeded on the more achievable targets but found the most challenging targets much more difficult. Typically for Priority 1 projects, the 'into work' targets were the most demanding.

[See projects: 10, 11 which were too training focused and failed to address into work targets and mechanisms](#)

## **8 Develop a strategy for meeting disability targets**

The one area where the EEDA 2007-2012 programme under-achieved against CFO cross-cutting themes was the number of participants with disability, in particular Priority 2 attainment against target was very low at 40%.

We have been offered various reasons for this including:

- people with a disability may not always *recognise and report* that they have a 'disability'; or they may *not want to report* this
- some projects may not attract people with disability proportionate to national or regional profile; for example, very mobile migrant workers (project 12) - or construction/installation projects requiring mobility or site based oriented work such as low carbon (projects 10 and 11)

We note that in the previous ESF round there was an EEDA project with Papworth Hospital that helped increase attainment against disability related targets.

The evidence from this evaluation may suggest that a focused project on people with disability would help attain future equality and diversity targets (as the Inspiring Women's Enterprise project in this 2007-12 programme helped attainment against women participant targets).

[See projects: 1,2 as examples where disability targets were effectively met](#)

### 3.2 Cross-cutting themes - achievement against key measures

Overall, the EEDA ESF programme for 2007-2012 has delivered very well against CFO cross-cutting theme targets as shown in the following table.

#### Priority 1:

<b>Priority 1 projects</b>	<b>1) Actual &amp; forecast</b>	<b>2) EEDA CFO target</b>	<b>3) Contract -ed target</b>	<b>4) % attained of CFO target</b>	<b>5) % attained of contract targets</b>
Number with disability	1206	608	1909	<b>198%</b>	<b>63%</b>
Number lone parents	884	331	1036	<b>267%</b>	<b>85%</b>
Number aged over 50	1835	497	1543	<b>369%</b>	<b>119%</b>
No. ethnic minorities	1262	442	1393	<b>286%</b>	<b>91%</b>
Number of women	4773	1712	5480	<b>279%</b>	<b>87%</b>

Conclusion: EEDA as a Co-financing organisation has greatly exceeded all CFO priority 1 targets within the 2007-2012 programme - in the range 198-369%. We conclude that a substantial factor in this has been highly effective project management involving a very clear focus on results and outcomes, to the benefit of participants in the region. The 'attainment against contracted outputs' figures are at a lower level (in the range 63-119%). This is explained in our earlier commentary that the EEDA ESF team tendered for projects at a high level of outputs, then applications received much exceeded output levels specified. Applicants in general were over optimistic about their ability to engage with hard to reach groups, but succeeded sufficiently to over-perform against CFO targets.

Overall, the EEDA ESF programme for 2007-2012 has delivered very well against CFO cross-cutting theme targets for Priority 2 as shown in the following table.

Priority 2:

<b><u>Priority 2 projects</u></b>	<b>1) Actual &amp; forecast</b>	<b>2) EEDA CFO target</b>	<b>3) Contract -ed target</b>	<b>4) % attained of CFO target</b>	<b>5) % attained of contract targets</b>
Number with disability	1018	2497	3715	<b>41%</b>	<b>27%</b>
Number aged over 50	8556	3329	4953	<b>257%</b>	<b>173%</b>
No. ethnic minorities	1827	1332	1981	<b>137%</b>	<b>92%</b>
Number of women	12633	8323	12383	<b>152%</b>	<b>102%</b>

Conclusion: EEDA exceeded 3 of the 4 CFO targets within the 2007-2012 programme - in the range 137-257%, generally a very good achievement which was certainly due in part to the emphasis EEDA placed on these targets.

The outlying measure was clearly those with disability. We remark at several points in project level summaries (see Appendices) that there appeared to be several barriers with this target that were rarely overcome:

- where people might be unwilling to admit to a disability
- some might not have recognised they came within 'ESF's' definition of disability
- in some cases this might have been a problem of project manager understanding

- some projects might be unattractive to many with a disability - eg. the two low carbon projects with their construction emphasis. The Migrant Worker project target group may also have been under-represented by people with a disability.

One solution would be to tender a project focused on disability to tackle the shortfall more broadly predicated projects create - as happened in a previous ESF round.

### 3.3 Summary of participant survey findings

In this section, we briefly summarise key findings from our participant telephone survey of 445 participants across seven projects.

The methodology for identifying which projects required this original research is described in section 1.2

The detailed survey results *by project* appear in the appendices, project summaries 1-16. These results are summarised here primarily for comparative purposes.

Project 1      Volunteering & the Olympics (70 interviews) - **Volunteering & Olympics**

Project 4      Enterprising Communities Haverhill (27) - **EC Haverhill**

Project 5      Inspiring Women's Enterprise (70) - **IWE**

Project 9      Intensive Business Start Up Priority 1 (70) - **Start Up P1**

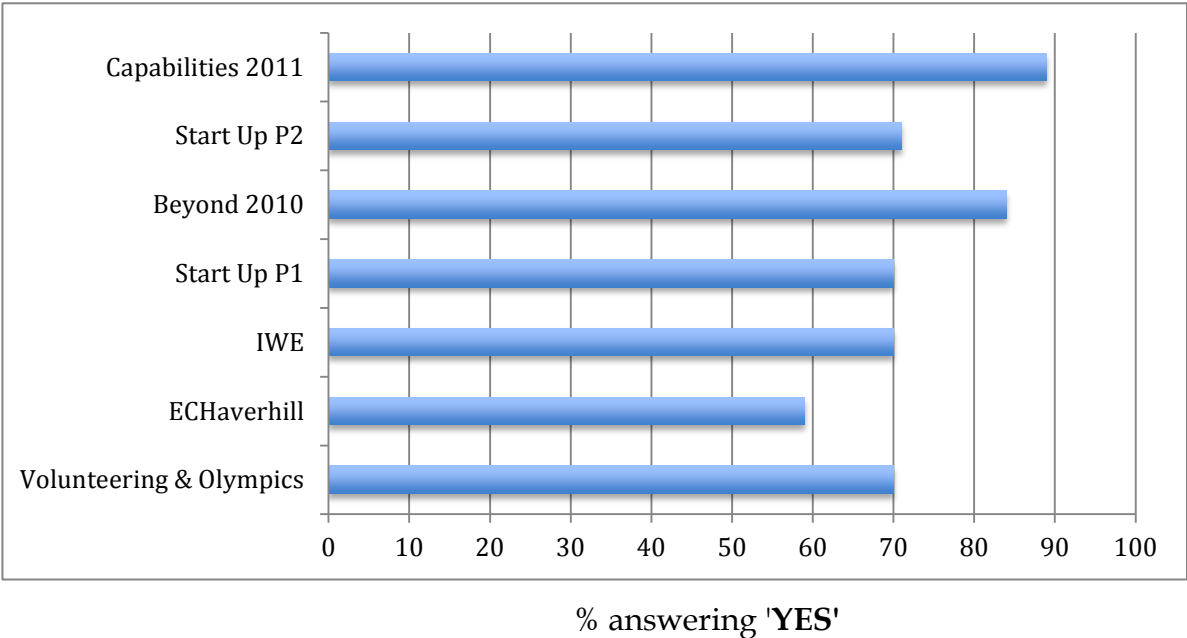
Project 13     Beyond 2010 (68) - **Beyond 2010**

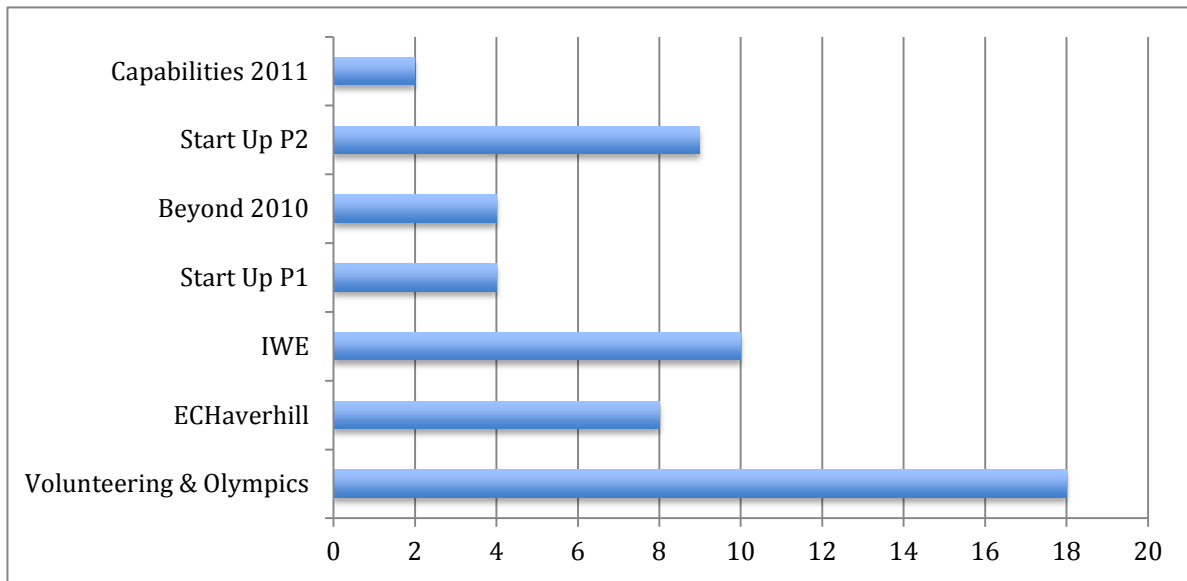
Project 14     Intensive Business Start Up Priority 2 (70) - **Start Up P2**

Project 16     Improving Capabilities 2011 (70) - **Capabilities 2011**

Note: The descriptors above **in bold** refer to the labels on the 'y' axes of the graphs that follow.

**Q Did you achieve what you wanted from being involved? (n = 445)**

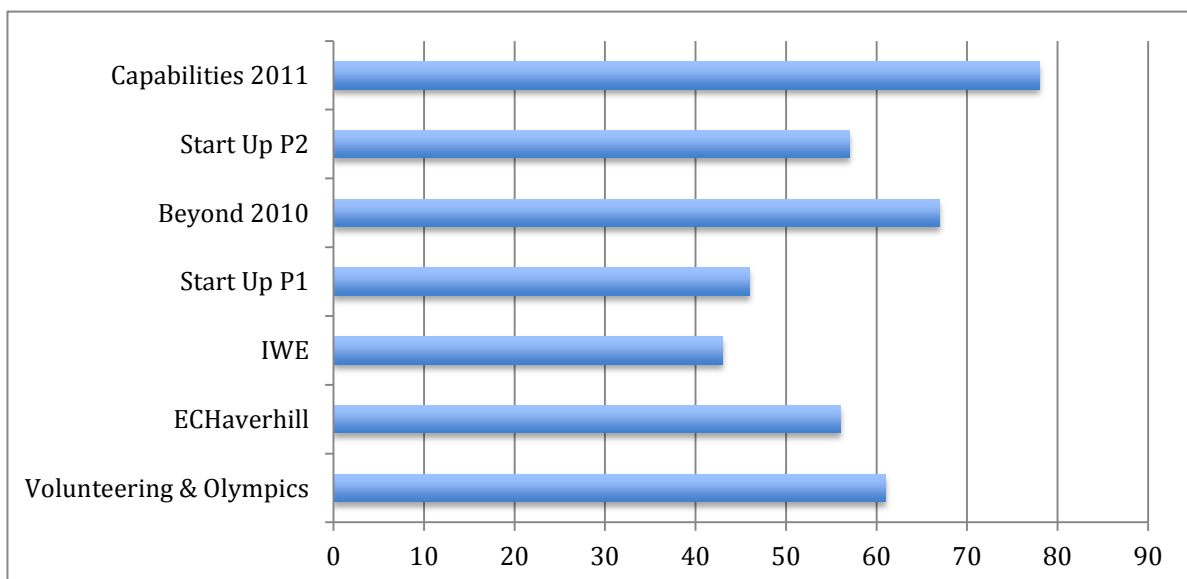




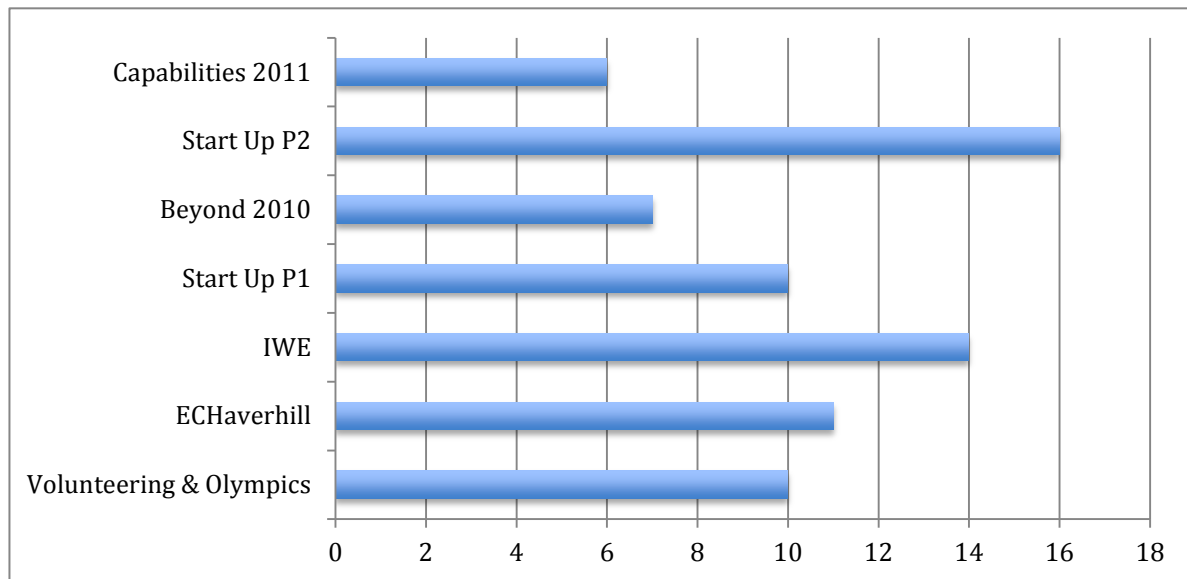
% answering 'NO'

These are high levels of satisfaction with achievement of goals. These are the benefits the participant expected directly from the project (ie. not afterwards, see graphs on the next page). The outlying result on the 'no' graph - Volunteering & The Olympics - reflects a degree of confusion among some participants as to what the purpose of the project was because of its rather complex branding and structure.

**Q Did the experience during the project benefit you in any way (tangibly, after the project)? n = 445**



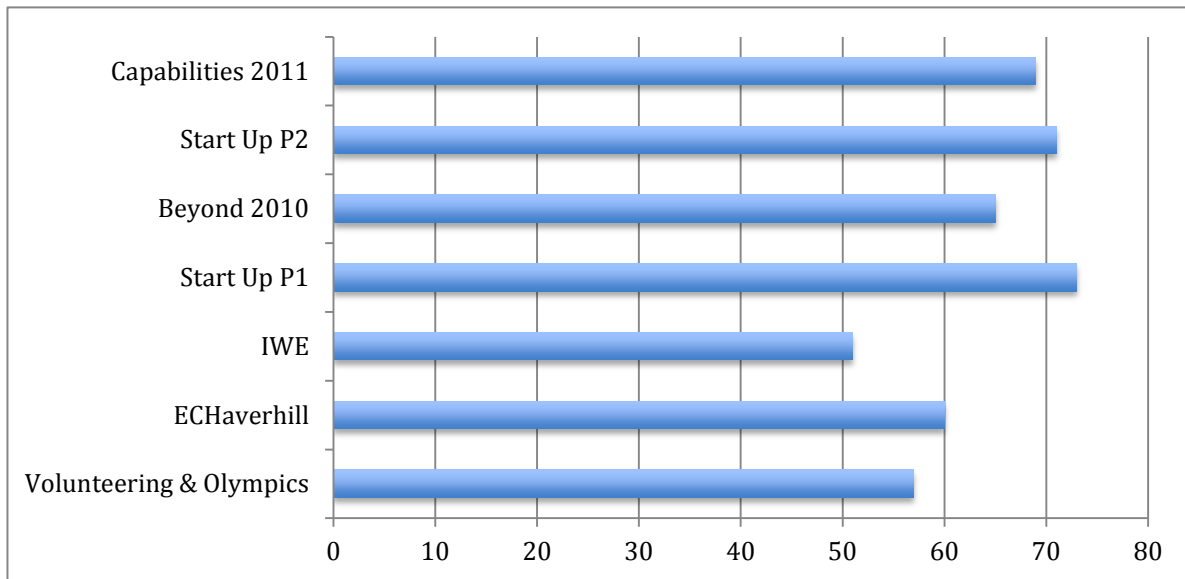
% answering 'YES'



% answering 'NO'

This question was about impact - had the *longer terms benefits* the participant most valued been achieved? Where the participant answered 'no' this might mean they had not achieved their *ultimate goal* (eg. a job or starting a business) rather than necessarily being a sign of dissatisfaction with the project.

**Q In what way could the support have been better? (n = 445)**



% reporting 'SUPPORT COULD NOT HAVE BEEN BETTERED'

This is a key question that demonstrates the widespread high level of satisfaction with participants' project experiences.

This question was open-ended as written above - there were no prompts or menus of options. So when the response is 'support could not have been bettered', this means the participant could *identify no way in which the experience could be improved*.

There were two quite strong patterns about where participants tended to feel support could have been better (in different degree depending on the project):

- where tailoring to individual need or a more bespoke programme was wanted
- or where participants felt the project did not do enough to help them to their main goal (usually a job or to achieve a successful start up)

## 4 Recommendations

As EEDA is closing at the end of March 2012, these recommendations are not directly addressed to EEDA. They represent observations of what the key lessons may be *for future funders and bidders*. Section 3.1 in this report is particularly relevant, because it summarises what worked and what did not over the past five years within this programme. That section contains the most specific recommendations we can provide, particularly at a project level. In this section we are summarising the few key *strategic learning points* for future funders and bidders.

### 1 Optimise productive use of the funding

The two main routes within this programme were:

- developing tenders that, if delivered collectively, would result in significant over-achievement of the overall programme's commitment to ESF - this created both a buffer or safety margin, in case any single project did not deliver to standard; but it also created the opportunity to over-deliver both to the regional framework and the ESF Programme for England as a whole and to a wider number of participants
- the art then was to identify tenders received that committed above the level of outputs specified, *where the co-funder agreed* the case that the successful bidder could actually deliver at the higher level they promised

There is however a caveat - that this does not become a process of provider over-selling, where delivery of the contracted outputs involves a high level of risk. Good discipline at project appraisal stage then became critical:

- checking provider track records
- taking references
- consulting colleagues who may have worked previously with the provider
- examining the proposal in detail, to be convinced demand would be present

Active project management once the contract was agreed was then also vital.

## **2 Design demand led and individual centred projects**

This 2007-2012 programme led to a number of very tailored and bespoke projects that at one level may have pushed the boundaries of ESF programme rules, but at another level have achieved both for ESF and EEDA regional objectives. Particular exemplars of this approach include, although not exclusively:

- Enterprising Communities Haverhill
- Enterprising Communities Bedford
- Economic Participation Suffolk
- Economic Participation Norfolk
- Beyond 2010
- Response to Redundancy 2011
- Improving Capabilities 2011

See the Appendices for the design features that make these projects particularly demand led and centred on need and not led by project driven targets.

## **3 Make outreach 'extreme'**

We are particularly referring to Priority 1 projects, where those furthest from the labour market need to be approached in a way that connects with their lives, in circumstances in which they feel comfortable and through project workers with whom they can relate.

Characteristics of successful projects include:

- making an early (day 1) start
- not allowing partnership building, or contract delay, or other 'excuses' to slow down engagement with the target participants

- willingness of project workers to initiate contact and relationships, often beyond their own comfort zones

#### **4 Exploit the power of networks**

This is a both a practical point about i) recruiting participants effectively and ii) engaging with specific groups that may be harder to reach.

*The practical point* is that marketing projects to many people at a time usually entails a smarter use of resources than marketing to one potential participant at a time. There are examples within this programme where persistence has paid off in working with a key partner (example - JCP) which can have a multiple benefit, where several advisors or several offices can become convinced of project benefits and begin to act as 'agents in the field' for the project. *Persistence* is often the key word - to ask for a single meeting, or make a single presentation does not constitute an effective marketing campaign towards a single partner or a network.

*Engaging with networks that represent the hard to reach* - it is not enough in tenders to articulate an aspiration to work with the hard to reach or to set a target number of disadvantaged individuals who will be engaged. Relationships are key - where they do not pre-exist, projects will often struggle to both establish relationships and then succeed in recruiting sufficient levels of active project participation within the timescale of the project. The implication is that project tenders will need to demonstrate active and vibrant relationships with key networks - if that is a future aspiration, then success is much harder to achieve.

#### **5 Focus on results, don't get hung up on the activity**

We have been surprised how often even very successful projects tended to lose sight of their core purpose. Contracts that pay on outputs - not results - are the key reason for this we believe. No project has to settle for this narrow focus.

This observation includes pre-redundancy support projects such as R2R (Beyond 2010 and R2R 2011) that delivered very good work supporting people but then did not track their outcomes so they i) did not know *what level of success they achieve as a project* or ii) they did not know who needed further support, which sub-contractors were most or least successful. Therefore how did project managers make informed decisions about what leads to continuous improvement?

This observation also includes projects supporting enterprise and start ups where because they are not paid to do so, none of these projects appear to have a clear idea about the level of start ups they create or how many are sustained. An evaluation can attempt retrospectively to capture this information, but it would be helpful if the project was focused on results achieved along the way, so it can affect results along the way.

## **6 Convince on demand for the project as well as the need**

Most publicly funded organisations tend to be more effective and more engaged in identifying the *needs in an area than in establishing the demand* for proposed interventions. This can be because need is often more easily observable and measurable - low skills, levels of deprivation, low levels of entrepreneurship, economic inactivity are all factors that are relatively easy to identify. In part, the emphasis on identifying need is also due to the initial emphasis on planning in the strategy lifecycle. This could be evidenced within the ESF process where there were often six layers of planning - European; national (UK); regional; institutional eg. Co-financers such as EEDA; project level - eg. the design of 16 projects within this programme; project management level (ie. the funded organisation responsible for planning and delivering the specific project outputs).

**This 2007-2012 programme has been largely effective in our view at achieving a programme of relevant and well designed projects, in particular because it was very demand led** - projects were able to steer a course through the rapids of change and multiple planning priorities. Local research, pilot projects and prior projects all helped to identify in the region not just where need was present but also what project design and activities best stimulated demand, so that outputs and outcomes could be met in the majority of projects.

The challenge for future funders is to achieve a similar balance between what an area needs and what demand individual projects can attract.

This requires rigorous testing at the project development and appraisal stage. The strategy and planning cycles tend to emphasise *need within the spatial area* (country, region or area). The project and programme development stages should clearly establish demand that involves most often a more local and specific analysis.

## Appendices

**Project 1:** *Volunteering and the Olympics (led by Cover)*

**1 Project aims and objectives:**

This pre-employment volunteer programme aimed to encourage workless and socially excluded individuals to gain new skills, engage in their communities, raise their aspirations and in some cases move into the jobs market.

It targeted individuals 16 years and over who were out of work and looking for employment, or returning to work after a break, or out of work considering self employment. Participants had to be eligible to work in the UK and particularly seeking volunteering opportunities.

Funding was £2,000,000.

**2 Project design and delivery:**

Team East for Skills was the lead brand for the project consortium that included arts, sports and voluntary organisations. Individuals targeted were those who would not normally apply for a volunteer role or who would feel they would not be considered for such a role, in particular, those furthest from employment.

The project offered training, mentoring, volunteering placements and qualifications, primarily using sports or arts programmes as the means to deliver the support.

There were three delivery hubs (Momentum Arts, Theatre Resource now Zinc and Creative Arts East) that led on sub-regional recruitment of participants from organisations such as JCP, volunteer centres, The Prince's Trust and private sector providers.

The delivery model comprised three main strands:

- i) a day 1 ILP assessment, open to all, which culminated in an individually centred learning plan
- ii) delivery of the support through courses as diverse as general employability support, to specialised projects such as event management, planning and delivery of an arts project or sports events; warm up, bronze and silver level participants received up to 10, 30 or 60 hours of support depending on need

iii) further support if required to achieve a positive destination including volunteering/further volunteering

### 3 Project outputs and outcomes:

The figures below are forecasts to completion from the project team where final numbers are yet to be confirmed.

- 1500 participants (target 1500)
- 200 in work on leaving (target 200)
- 300 economically inactive people in job search/further learning (target 300)

#### Equality & diversity outputs:

Projected attainment against the disability target (see box below) is clearly the outstanding achievement and it stands out not least because the other four targets are all in the 67-75% range of attainment. These four targets are between 25 and 33 percentage points below actual participant attainment.

	Target	Actual	% attainment
Disability	330	435	132%
Aged 50+	270	180	67%
Women	960	660	69%
Lone parents	180	135	75%
Ethnic minorities	240	165	69%

### 4 Value for money (VfM):

The application did not attribute the cost to achieve a job output versus the cost to support a participant (non work outcome). The best route we can identify to assess VfM is therefore to make a retrospective judgment about the cost to support an individual into a job versus the cost to support other participants. We note that this project has experienced similar problems to other projects in this evaluation in terms of evidencing progression,

(particularly job outputs), so reported figures are likely to be an under estimation of actual results achieved.

In other priority 1 ESF projects in this evaluation, we have arrived at an estimate based on project level analysis that it takes approximately twice the level of activity to support an individual into work compared to other participants, in which case the read across value for money picture is as follows:

<u>Total funding: £2,000,000 (1500 participants)</u>	
Funding <i>profile</i> to support 200 people into work	= £2352/head
Funding <i>profile</i> to support 1300 other participants	= £1176/head
Participants <i>actually</i> into work	= 200
Other participants <i>actually</i> supported	= 1300
Actual value achieved = (200x£2352) + (1300x£1176)	= <b>£1,999,200</b>
Value for money compared to profile	= <b>100%</b>

This value for money analysis identifies the achievement against *the contractual outputs that were agreed by funders*. This is in effect a VfM analysis within the project's agreed funding profile.

When comparing this project to other priority 1 projects within this evaluation, there are questions about value for money. For example, the total profiled cost per participant on average was £1333, which compares to a profile of £572 in the Enterprising Communities Bedford project (see project 3 summary). In the Enterprising Communities project Haverhill (project 4 summary) the profiled cost per participant was £740 compared to this project's profile of £1333. We view the Enterprising Communities client groups as the closest in characteristics to this project's participants (of any in this ESF programme). Indeed, in the EC projects, the level of outreach was greater and project benefits are higher. We question therefore the original cost per participant profile of Volunteering and the Olympics, at around twice the level we would expect.

There are some differences between these projects discussed above:

- Volunteering and the Olympics is a region wide project - requiring a more extensive (and expensive) network

- Enterprising Communities projects are very local and targeted - easier to achieve extensive and sustained outreach
- however the Enterprising Communities projects' level of outreach was considerably greater
- the level of project outputs in the EC projects is higher
- the achievement of EC outputs against harder to reach equality and diversity groups is higher

### 5 Additionality:

This project targeted a high proportion of individuals who were a considerable distance from the labour market, many of whom required interim steps of assessment, guidance, support and activity such as volunteering to build confidence and employability to a level they could realistically consider employment. The level of outreach was quite high, penetrating many difficult to reach groups around the region. We suggest for the future that the VfM analysis in section 4 prompts considerations about *what type of projects* provide the greatest additionality of project benefits (cost per output & outcome).

### 6 Project sustainability:

The infrastructure within the voluntary sector remains largely in place so there are more extensive opportunities to maintain partnership working compared to most other sectors. In many cases the extent of volunteering can be somewhat hidden to the layperson - for example, few will know that 4000 people volunteer for the National Trust alone in this region. This project grew a cadre of individual volunteers, substantial numbers in areas such as event management, arts organisations and in coaching local sports, much of which can continue on a non-funded, sustainable basis.

Funding constraints will restrict larger scale projects in the future, but benefits from this project did not dissipate when the project ends. However, the legacy for the Olympics in particular is thin, although less so for the Cultural Olympiad. We comment below about the plethora of brands, straplines and organisations involved in this project that confused some participants as to

the purpose or design of the activity they undertook. The Olympics link is tenuous, there is evidence it attracted some people to explore the project, but the route from this project to volunteering in the 2012 Olympics is unclear. For many, work, training or other commitments mean it will not be possible. For others it may not be a particular priority, many participated because of the arts connections, the sports element may be of lesser attraction for these participants. When Olympics volunteers only receive a London Travelcard and £2.50 lunch allowance there are indeed barriers to most in terms of cost and travel time from this region. This project is approaching new funders to continue some elements of the project and arguably with less onerous criteria than within this project (eg. Legacy Trust UK drove additional criteria that will not be present in any future project).

### 7 Strategic Added Value:

This project created strategic added value by aligning a wide range of partners to achieve support to individuals who were often difficult to reach.

In particular, volunteering through sports and arts demonstrated a model that was innovative. Feedback from many long term unemployed people in our survey suggested a very different model of support from what they had seen in the past. One area of potential for strategic added value has not been realised. Often, by scaling up projects to a beneficial level and by operating regionally, economies of scale can be created. As demonstrated in our VfM analysis, this did not occur, indeed it seems a particularly expensive model relative to others, in the level of benefits it created for the cost.

### 8 Participant feedback:

This was one of seven projects where we were asked to undertake a telephone evaluation interview, in this case with 70 participants. The key points were:

**33%** of all participants found out about the project through JCP (usually their local job centre). **47%** heard about it through word of mouth, either a friend, family or colleague, or an agency which signposted them to the project.

Did you achieve what you wanted from being involved?

YES **70%**

NO **12%**

PARTLY **18%**

Did the experience during the project benefit you in any way (tangibly, after the event)?

YES 61%	NO 9%	TO SOME EXTENT 29%
What was the MOST important help or advice you were given?		
Support looking for/finding work		30%
Help building my confidence		29%
Working in a team/networking with others		16%
Personal support/the people who helped me		7%
Enjoyment of the project		4%
All other factors		14%
In what way could the support given to you have been better? (MOST important factor)		
Support could not be bettered		57%
More tailored content/pitched more at my level/more in-depth		14%
Clearer roles/organisation of the project		13%
Ongoing/longer term support		6%
Other		10%

Key survey findings:

1 This project was successful at engaging with JCP in many areas - in our sample, JCP was responsible for a third of all introductions, with all other organisations such as The Prince's Trust and private providers (such as A4E) producing almost as many introductions.

2 The level of direct benefit to participants was high with more than 6 times as many individuals reporting they did benefit materially from their involvement as did not.

3 Although volunteering was the primary mechanism in the project, the feedback acts as a reminder that most participants wanted to find work and they most valued the support that directly helped looking for work (30%) or which *built confidence* such that they could move significantly towards their ultimate goal, which was usually employment or self employment (29%).

4 The innovative nature of their activity, usually team based, caught the imagination of many participants who found it resulted in an enjoyable way of learning, teamworking benefits and better understanding of themselves.

5 The delivery model (primarily through involvement in a sports or arts related project) did cause some confusion, around a third of participants described initial sense of doubt as to what the project's purpose was or what the benefit of the outcome would be.

6 Around half of those who were initially confused as to the purpose of their involvement report that during the course of the project they came to understand the linkage between the activity they were involved in and how it related to their individual aspirations.

7 Of those still reporting lack of clarity at the end of the project there were three main stands:

- those who still did not understand the overall purpose ('why am I doing this as opposed to any other activity?')
- those who felt the *project team* became 'hung up on the activity' - eg. 'running the event' became such a focus that why they were doing it became blurred as the project progressed
- those who felt the *tutors or mentors* became too activity focused, generally supporting the project well, but not sufficiently drawing out what the lessons were or the practical application from the experience for the participants

8 40% of survey participants were in self employment or employment at the point of being surveyed, with 43% unemployed, which appears a good outcome

#### 9a Key learning points - project design:

- the project was tailored to individual need with a wide variety of courses and team events to provide support
- therefore there was no fixed or inflexible 'menu of courses'
- the innovative nature of much of the provision made it stand out for most, many reporting they drew deeper lessons from the experience than they had from conventional support
- that a cohort stayed together through the project was usually a benefit, but it was important that an individual ended up with the right project and cohort

- that events were held in community venues helped outreach and encouraged individuals to participate - this also limited displacement, there was very little competing provision

#### 9b Key learning points - project delivery:

- JCP referrals paid off with close working relationships in many areas although JCP reorganisation partway through reduced the overall level of referrals
- some strands of provision grow significantly during the project often by word of mouth recommendation, for example, event management
- the volunteering option was a new idea for many and most realised the potential in helping to make them productive for the benefit of others and that they have a story to tell, for example in job interviews
- this contributed to a low drop out rate of under 5%
- the pool of volunteers for the future was greatly increased, particularly where full time employment was not the long term aim of participants

#### 9c What did not work:

- the branding of the project was confusing - Olympics; volunteering/skills/employment/enterprise; Team East For Skills; sub-regional leads (Momentum Arts, Theatre Resource then rebranded Zinc, Creative Arts East); also a sport focus; and delivery organisation brands eg. The Prince's Trust; and delivery level 'brands' (eg. 'Get in the Game')
- this was not simply a communication issue, more individuals were confused about the purpose or outcome from their involvement than any other project in this regional ESF programme
- some of the branding lacked brand truth and some participants noticed - eg. this project had little to do with the Olympics

- evidencing job outputs was difficult despite the financial inducements offered to encourage a response, this is a common issue reported in ESF projects
- the project team believed that social inclusion and economic inclusion purposes were often very different, so that ESF output targets could work against each other - for example, the project manager reported they stopped recruitment of lone parents when it became clear that success with this group diluted likely job output achievement
- the complex structure of this project was a key factor in the value for money being low compared to other projects with similar client bases - it cost a high amount relative to the benefits

## **Project 2: *Financial Capability and Inclusion (led by CAB)***

### **1 Project aims and objectives:**

The project had three key aims:

- i) to develop the financial capability of individuals through relevant high quality training, focusing in particular on areas of great need as identified in a research report undertaken for EEDA by Rocket Science
- ii) to develop the knowledge and confidence of frontline organisations about financial inclusion and capability so they can better deal with their clients
- iii) to evaluate the impact of financial capability training both at an individual and economic level

Citizens Advice Bureau wanted to communicate to partners and beyond that financial capability is a core skill such as literacy and numeracy and that debt is also a barrier to job search. Research evidence strongly suggests this is the case, for example, the *Out of Work and Out of Money* project undertaken by Manchester City Council which found that debt creates barriers such as lack of confidence, time distraction in dealing with debt related problems and cost implications of job search, such as travel, cost of appropriate dress and telephone calls. The benefits trap can act as a disincentive to take work, as well as individuals' concern that job income may only be consumed by creditors. There are also many people in work who are in poverty due to debt. One in two people with mental health problems are in debt. EEDA's Financial Inclusion Group acted as a steering group.

Target participants were unemployed or economically inactive people.

Funding was £400,000.

### **2 Project design and delivery:**

The project comprised 4 main strands:

- i) marketing and recruitment, primarily through existing partner organisations, leading to personal contact with the individual and a training need analysis

ii) delivery of training to partner frontline workers, from 128 different organisations (580 people trained), most of whom worked with social housing tenants, people with disability/heath problems and parents and families

iii) delivery of training to participants (962)

iv) an in-depth evaluation by Rocket Science

### 3 Project outputs and outcomes:

The project over achieved against its participant target by 20% - "this...underlines significant and consistent efforts made by providers to pursue existing leads as well as adopt new and different marketing strategies" .

*Rocket Science evaluation report (April 2011)*

Job search targets fell short by 28 due to a combination of factors:

- unemployed people tended to be already receiving job search support as part of existing employment interventions
- economically inactive people (51% of beneficiaries) tended to not want to work
- a handful of errors on forms, with some outputs discounted

•	962 participants (target 800)
•	0 in work on leaving (target 0)
•	72 economically inactive people in job search/further learning (target 100)

Equality and diversity results are particularly impressive:

	Target	Actual	% attainment
Disability	176	397	226%
Aged 50+	144	272	189%
Women	512	576	113%
Lone parents	96	214	223%
Ethnic minorities	128	162	127%

The equal opportunities cross-cutting themes performance reflects excellent levels of engagement with communities across all target groups.

#### 4 Value for money (VfM):

The Rocket Science evaluation investigated the economic impact of the project. They found a financial return of £4.50 for every £1 spent on training based on the following assumptions:

- 20% of individuals would act on the financial advice and training received *for the next 5 years*
- each individual would be £5000 better off as a result
- at the project level £930,000 of additional income would have been saved

The evaluation report tends to draw on other studies to reach assumptions underpinning this analysis, but if it is approximately accurate, value for money can be viewed as very high.

#### 5 Additionality:

The analysis in section 4 above incorporates an assumption of additionality. That is, 20% of participants will act on their advice and training for 5 years (ie. compared to what they would have done without intervention of the project). Rocket Science also report 'the vast majority' would not have known where to go for help had they not engaged with the project.

#### 6 Project sustainability:

In the Rocket Science evaluation there are some important clues about sustainability beyond project end:

- i) 8 of the 11 partners (eg. CAB local offices and credit unions) reported they would continue to train individuals following this model
- ii) 5 of 12 partners reported they would continue to train frontline workers, a further 3 said this was possible
- iii) 4 Financial Capability Forums continued despite funding cuts, not least for CAB

We conclude there was high commitment to the purpose of this project. The initial research and end of project evaluation produces compelling evidence of the value of this project's approach. Much of the learning can be built into the ongoing work of organisations such as CAB. However, we do not discount dilution of the level of formal training activity over time if funding continues to be as constrained as it is at the current time.

### 7 Strategic Added Value:

The strategic added value of this project lies primarily in our view in the impact that it will continue to have on the behaviour of partner and stakeholder organisations (and their frontline staff) into the future. This project has demonstrated an approach to growing financial capability that clearly works.

It also highlighted the importance of factors that may not have been well appreciated by many stakeholders, for example, the impact of debt on job search, mental health, social inclusion and other worklessness issues (such as the benefits trap). It also therefore helped to provide a service that worked in a joined up way so that prevention of debt related problems became more possible. It will no longer depend on whether an individual with debt issues has approached CAB as to whether they will receive financial capability support. An increasing range of partners can identify the problem and better signpost individuals in the future.

### 8a Key learning points - project design:

- recruiting and training frontline workers first and using them as gateways to beneficiaries worked well
- the timing, duration and venues for training events created easy access for participants, in a way that made them feel most at ease
- the training was designed to use clear and accessible language that avoided stigmatising individuals (eg. not 'you are in debt') and made the key points easy to understand
- the investment in the development phase to make the training material as appropriate as possible resulted in an interactive, engaging and customised content
- County Financial Capability forums tended to work well, achieving a good balance of strategic and operational level representation

- partnership working and outreach was targeted so that all main disadvantaged groups participated, as evidenced by the over achievement against each ESF equality and diversity target

#### 8b Key learning points - project delivery:

- the engagement with a variety of networks on a wide scale enabled the project to over deliver on participant numbers
- often this involved use of existing reliable networks and encouraging key decision makers' support; engaging with existing networks rather creating new networks also paid off well
- beneficiary feedback was very positive, particular value was attached to: the empathetic trainers; a non-threatening environment; crisp relevant content covered in short focused sessions; the level of interaction achieved; and practical advice and signposting
- 67% of participants set up a budget as a direct result of the training; 83% of participants (in an 11% sample) had already taken at least one financial action; on average, each participant had taken 1.6 practical steps to tackle their financial issues
- this is critical feedback, where the agenda was crucially about addressing real problems people faced and encouraging them to take action to alleviate their situation
- frontline workers reported similar positive messages about the training content as beneficiaries
- additionality was very high where a large majority reported they would not have known otherwise where to seek help and so were unlikely to have taken helping actions
- there is a cause for some optimism about sustainability, most partners indicated their willingness to continue to train participants and frontline workers - how reliant this is on future funding is unclear
- the evaluation by Rocket Science was of high quality, in-depth, informed and clear in its analysis and conclusions

#### 8c What did not work:

- employment support and referral did not work as well as hoped
- relating financial capability and job search support tended not to work well because two large groups did not contribute to job outcomes - the economically inactive (not seeking work); and the unemployed (already in some form of employment support)
- therefore any future project would have to consider how it might better fit with a funding stream such as ESF Priority 1 where employment outputs tend to be an expectation
- a core training content could make it difficult to add value equally to participants with varying levels of prior knowledge - this issue was best tackled by trainers with the flexibility and skill to assess each audience and to adjust content to suit understanding and interest
- although County Financial Capability Forums generally worked well, engagement was least successful with PCTs and local authorities; JCP tended to engage well at strategic and regional levels, but restrictions on training places for frontline workers limited engagement at an operational level

### **Project 3: *Building Enterprising Communities (led by Exemplas)***

#### **1 Project aims and objectives:**

Promoting enterprise in disadvantaged communities is a national policy priority and a priority for EEDA in the Regional Economic Strategy. Enterprise helps create employment and stimulates innovation and competition, while providing access to goods and services to the benefit of the community. The Building Enterprising Communities project built upon the conclusions from the Enterprise Road programme and expert seminars. The lessons included how to forge better links between specialist and mainstream services, to encourage enhanced collaborative working between organisations with similar client groups and to reward organisations that work with client groups that have greater support needs. This project was a pilot to test out a true partnership approach to the Government's new Solutions for Business Enterprise Coaching product. The project focused on deprived areas of Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough, targeting disabled people, lone parents, older workers, ethnic minorities, people with low/no qualifications, ex-offenders and people facing isolation, language or cultural barriers. The partnership comprised Exemplas, Wentra, The Prince's Trust, Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council.

Funding was £134,465.

#### **2 Project design and delivery:**

There were three main strands to the project design - engagement, coaching (one-to-one) and network events. The Solutions for Business Enterprise Coaching product proved insufficient for the client group because although designed to promote enterprise in disadvantaged communities, it did not provide the level of support most needed. So the project was creative in the ways support was delivered to clients. We describe what worked within this three stage approach in the *Key Learning Points* section (section 8).

#### **3 Project outputs and outcomes:**

The project outperformed against the participant target by 57% but the in work figure was below target.

- 370 participants (target 235)
- 40 in work on leaving (target 52) - see project manager comments below
- 72 economically inactive people in job search/further learning (target 106)

The Project Manager estimated the 'real' figure for those in work on leaving was around 80, which would represent a considerable over-achievement. The problem the project reported (which is common in many ESF projects) is that participants had been daunted by the complexity of the paper forms required to evidence an ESF into work output, so many did not reply to requests for such evidence. Some individuals were also reluctant to admit to their employer that they have been through a support programme such as this. We conclude the project needed to develop a more robust approach to evidencing project outputs (as some other projects in this programme have done) so that outputs could have been evidenced.

Equality and diversity results are generally impressive:

	Target	Actual	% attainment
Disability	52	25	48%
Aged 50+	42	75	179%
Women	150	173	115%
Lone parents	28	29	104%
Ethnic minorities	38	85	224%

#### 4 Value for money (VfM):

Assessing value for money is rather clouded by three factors.

i) Exemplas put far more resource into the project than the level of funding would suggest. They did not cease recruiting when the 235 target for participants was reached but carried on to 370. In part, this was because they wanted to fully develop their Enterprising Communities model - one benefit being the ability to win future funding on the basis of a successful and large scale model developed through this ESF programme.

ii) Exemplas have suggested (see previous section) that the 'in work on leaving' actual figure was around 80, not the 40 in the final claim. We suggest

the lower figure is used for VfM purposes, as that is what funding was based on and paid against.

iii) the original proposal did not attribute the cost to achieve a job outcome versus the cost to support a participant (non work outcome).

The only route we can identify to assess VfM is therefore to make a retrospective judgment about the cost to support an individual into a job versus the cost to support other participants.

In the Haverhill counterpart project we arrived at an estimate with the project manager that it takes approximately twice the level of activity to support someone into work compared to other participants, in which case the read across value for money picture is as follows:

<u>Total funding: £134,465 (235 participants)</u>	
Funding <i>profile</i> to support 52 people into work	= £937/head
Funding <i>profile</i> to support 183 other participants	= £468.50/head
Participants <i>actually</i> into work	= 40
Other participants <i>actually</i> supported	= 330
Actual value achieved = (40x£937) + (330x£468.50)	= <b>£192,085</b>
Value for money compared to profile	= <b>143%</b>

Put another way, the project achieved £57,620 greater value than was contracted for based on funding of £134,465. This is clearly due to the much higher level of participants, 370 rather than 235. The cost of that additional support is not accounted for in the above VfM analysis because it was borne by Exemplas. They in effect put much more time into the project but did not pass that cost on to the funders. One consequence of this analysis we suggest is that future Co-financed projects should clarify at proposal stage what the cost per output assumption is, where there are two or more output types. This would enable VfM comparisons at appraisal stage and at project end.

## 5 Additionality:

We assess the level of outreach achieved by this project as highly exceptional, which leads us to conclude that a very high proportion of participants would not have benefitted from similar support had this project not existed.

The most successful routes to engage individuals within this programme were where the Exemplas team took responsibility for engagement and reached out to community groups and events on a highly energetic and sustained basis, the three most successful recruitment channels being very local in character:

- school fetes and functions
- local libraries - 'walking the floor'
- local places of business eg. supermarket car parks, local trader markets

The Impact Evaluation Framework for RDAs, as a generic approach to identifying additionality and 'gross to net effects' on measures such as people into work does not in our view cater for such a localised and effective engagement approach. The EEDA Invitation to Tender and the Exemplas proposal also emphasised the importance of not solely measuring success by employment/self employment, but also by measuring progress made by individuals on the route to economic activity. The project results achieved (see performance against equality and diversity targets above) lead us to conclude that **this model works exceptionally well and is an exemplar** - that any effects such as substitution are negligible and that the over-delivery against participant targets renders any netting down effects as minimal in the context of overall project benefits. The sustainability of project benefits is discussed in the next section.

## 6 Project sustainability:

This delivery model has led to three further projects to date based on the Exemplas Building Enterprising Communities model:

- a similar EEDA supported project in the Luton area
- an extension of this project funded by Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council

- a recently won five year contract with The Work Programme (where although the referral mechanisms are somewhat different, the project model is essentially the same)

This ESF/EEDA Co-financed project was one of five shortlisted in the Start Up Britain Best Enterprise project competition sponsored by Ernst and Young. The judges in the Ernst and Young competition were particularly impressed by the quality and energy of the outreach aspects of this project, as are we - this stands out from our past evaluations of similar programmes and is the key learning point from this project.

### 7 Strategic Added Value:

In terms of SAV we note two particular long term and significant effects:

- the building of effective partnerships where individual partners were already effectively engaged with target disadvantaged groups and through this project their mutual education into what delivery models work best with disadvantaged groups
- the strategic role that Exemplas created to represent enterprise growth issues, for example, in the Bedfordshire Strategic Enterprise Group and emerging LEPs

### 8a Key learning points - project design:

#### **Engagement**

- partners selected already had significant experience with many of the target groups
- there was no learning on the job or need to experiment with how to engage or deliver
- this helped achieve against the diversity targets - eg. links with BME groups were very strong (127% of profile achieved)
- Exemplas also had very strong links with the local Youth Offending Team, helping achieve success with their client group

#### **End to end support**

- the project supported an individual from 'beginning to end'
- including individual needs analysis, support with an enterprise coach and ongoing support from local networks

- a 'quick hit' approach was avoided where participants exit with no ongoing support
- groups often managed and ran their own networks, eg. many mums' clubs and BME groups.
- the two individuals who ran the workshops had experience with similar groups, had run their own businesses and were not 'conventional business advisors'
- in Central Bedfordshire, the individual could access £500 support which helped prompt many into taking action

### 8b Key learning points - project delivery:

#### Engagement

- the highly energetic *engagement approach* taken by the project team, they took personal responsibility to make a fast start
- they did not over rely on other agencies and did not allow partnership building to slow down the delivery process
- engagement went far beyond typical business and skills events and networks
- among the more successful venues for finding participants were school fetes, public libraries and community centres
- other engagement included venues such as supermarket car parks, markets, kite festivals and emergency services open days
- venues offered practical benefits eg. libraries had free parking, many unemployed people were regular users of libraries and several libraries had training rooms which could be used
- persistence was key - the team regularly attended and presented at JCP Patch and Keep In Touch Meetings
- this 'dripping tap' approach communicated the message continuously eg. in Leighton Buzzard it created many referrals

#### An individual centred approach

- the approach at first contact was not 'project push' (do you want to run your own business?) but a 'pull' process of responding to individuals' personal situations
- tins of Roses helped, as well as informal dress for staff
- an early recognition that the delivery model needed to be tailored to each group eg. a bespoke model was developed for market trading, beauty and hairdressing

#### 8c What did not work:

- the evaluation process lacked structure, the project team felt the consultants did not understand the project context, evidenced by the low quality of the interim report and that the evaluation had no bearing on project design or delivery - we concur
- evidencing of into work outputs, where the project team believed that numbers were well beyond the claim, because participants were reluctant to complete evidence forms but also because participant tracking was the key issue (see next point)
- the counterpart Haverhill project was more successful in evidencing job outcomes by offering substantial inducement (a £10 voucher) and more 'door step' follow up

**Project 4:** *Building Enterprising Communities (led by Menta)*

**1 Project aims and objectives:**

Promoting enterprise in disadvantaged communities is a national policy priority and a priority for EEDA in the Regional Economic Strategy. Enterprise helps create employment and stimulates innovation and competition, while providing access to goods and services to the benefit of the community. The Building Enterprising Communities project built upon the conclusions from the Enterprise Road programme and expert seminars. The lessons included how to forge better links between specialist and mainstream services, to encourage enhanced collaborative working between organisations with similar client groups and to reward organisations that work with client groups that have greater support needs.

The project was a pilot to test out a true partnership approach to the Business Enterprise Coaching product. The project focused on deprived areas of Haverhill, targeting disadvantaged individuals who would not normally be able or inclined to access mainstream start-up support. The aim was to help those people assess their own abilities and motivation, so they could decide if running a business was right for them and depending on their conclusion, to introduce them to appropriate sources of help. The core partnership comprised Menta, Business Link, Menter, West Suffolk College and St Edmundsbury Borough Council. The two local secondary schools were also active partners, as was the Wednesday Club (lone mothers) and SAVO (volunteer project).

Funding was £130,255.

**2 Project design and delivery:**

There were three main strands to the project:

- i) outreach - advisors visiting groups and venues in the town
- ii) individual needs assessment based on a 10 point self assessment profile, then signposting to an appropriate source (mainstream; or for those not wanting to pursue self-employment, signposting to agencies such as Job Centre, voluntary agencies)

iii) or into support for development of the business idea and subsequent flexible one to one and network events.

All participants could access several hours of one to one advice, with a personalised plan and support.

### 3 Project outputs and outcomes:

The project outperformed against ESF contracted outputs, particularly so against the into work target of 40 (102 actually achieved).



Equality and diversity results were variable:

	Target	Actual	% attainment
Disability	39	24	62%
Aged 50+	32	53	167%
Women	113	100	89%
Lone parents	21	36	170%
Ethnic minorities	28	8	28%

The reasons for variable achievement appear to be rooted in the success that the team achieved (or did not achieve) in engaging with networks where the target groups could be found in good numbers. Lone parents attainment for example is high because of the work with The Wednesday (lone mothers) Club, in coffee shops, schools and libraries.

The BME target however was difficult to attain because we were informed that the BME population in the target area was 1.8%, so the numbers were not there in the first place and as the economic climate worsened, many migrant workers who may have become participants simply fell out of the system, usually returning home. We are satisfied outreach was even-handed and that the client group comprised overall a high proportion of disadvantaged people.

#### 4 Value for money (VfM):

The core method to complete the VfM assessment is the same as with project 3 (Exemplas). The original Menta proposal did not attribute the cost to achieve a job output versus the cost to support a participant (non work output). The best route we can identify to assess VfM is therefore to make a retrospective judgment about the cost to support an individual into a job versus the cost to support other participants.

For this Haverhill Menta project we arrived at an estimate with the project manager that it takes approximately twice the level of activity and cost to support someone into work compared to other participants, in which case the read across value for money picture is as follows:

<u>Total funding: £130,255 (176 participants)</u>	
Funding <i>profile</i> to support 40 people into work	= £1206/head
Funding <i>profile</i> to support 136 other participants	= £603/head
Participants <i>actually</i> into work	= 102
Other participants <i>actually</i> supported	= 118
Actual value achieved (102x£1206 + £603x118)	= <b>£194166</b>
Value for money compared to profile	= <b>149%</b>

A value for money comparison between the Exemplas and Menta *proposals* would question the difference in unit cost between the two, as they were based on a very similar model and in arguably fairly comparable areas of the mid Anglia region. The Menta project profile required around 25% more funding per unit output than Exemplas. However, the over-performance of the Menta project (particularly the 102 participants into work) more than compensates for the apparent higher unit cost compared to Exemplas.

That 44% were employed and 41% were self employed at the point they were surveyed in our telephone sample (see section 8), further supports this conclusion.

This analysis confirms our suggestion in section 4 of the Exemphas summary (project 3) that future projects should clarify at proposal stage what the cost per unit output assumption is, *where there are two or more output types*. This would enable VfM comparisons at appraisal stage and at project end.

### 5 Additionality:

We assess the level of outreach achieved by this project as highly exceptional, which leads us to conclude that a very high proportion of participants would not have benefitted from similar support had this project not existed.

We estimate perhaps 5-10% might have accessed mainstream or other comparable routes.

The most successful routes to engage individuals within this programme were where the two Menta key workers took responsibility for engagement and reached out to community groups and events on a highly energetic and sustained basis, the most successful recruitment channels being very local in character:

- school fetes and community/church based events, JCP
- local libraries, local sports clubs
- mums, lone parent and toddler groups

The EEDA Invitation to Tender and the Menta proposal also emphasised the importance of not solely measuring success by employment/self employment (which appears to be very significant in this project), but also by measuring progress made by individuals towards economic activity. The project results lead us to conclude that this model works - any effects such as substitution are negligible and that the over-delivery against output targets renders any netting down effects as minimal in the context of overall project benefits.

### 6 Project sustainability:

While this delivery model worked well, there is no evidence that its benefit will be sustained without successfully accessing additional funding in a very difficult funding climate. The demise of Business Link as an advisory based service also removed one of the key mainstream referral routes. While contact with many participants continues to some extent in the local community, the

short to medium term ability to maintain partnerships and this level of service is in our opinion very questionable.

### 7 Strategic Added Value:

In terms of strategic added value (SAV) we note one particularly long significant effect:

- the building of effective partnerships where individual partners were already effectively engaged with target disadvantaged groups and through this project their mutual education into what delivery models work best with disadvantaged groups

### 8 Participant feedback:

We were asked to undertake original research in the form of a telephone evaluation interview, in this case with 27 participants. The sample is limited because project records contained very few useable telephone contacts.

The key points from the research were as follows.

44% of participants heard of the project through local advertising or events.

37% of participants found out about the project through JCP (usually their local job centre); with 19% hearing by word of mouth.

Did you achieve what you wanted from being involved?

YES 59%

NO 7%

PARTLY 33%

Did the experience during the project benefit you in any way (tangibly, after the event)?

YES 56%

NO 11%

TO SOME EXTENT 33%

What was the MOST important help or advice you were given?

All my questions answered/comprehensive

33%

Quality of presenter/ project worker	22%
Marketing/ customer related advice	15%
All other categories	30%
('All other' included diverse answers such as peer support; confidence building; specific areas such as compliance advice)	
<b>Respondents tended to link the first two categories above - that the services and information were comprehensive <u>and</u> that project workers they encountered were very helpful, this then often led to comments that the experience built self confidence.</b>	
In what way could the support given to you have been better? (MOST important factor)	
Support could not be bettered	60%
No funding available to me	20%
All other responses	20%

### Key survey findings:

- 1 This feedback confirms how successful the project was at engaging with individuals in local events and venues in Haverhill and that JCP was also a very valuable source of referrals.
- 2 The level of direct benefit to participants was high - where respondents respond 'to some extent' (above), it was usually because they found a job before they could progress to self employment.
- 3 Participants tended to link the comprehensive and useful nature of the service with the personal qualities of the project workers offering it.
- 4 The mix and range of services was commented on with some frequency - the range of workshops, one to one sessions, networking opportunities and signposting to other partner services.

5 This pattern of feedback suggests to us that initial needs analysis was generally excellent and that the project avoided over-reliance on workshops as a 'one size fits all' delivery vehicle.

6 The destinations of respondents in our sample are also noteworthy:

- 44% were in employment at the point of survey
- 41% were in self employment at the point of survey
- 11% were unemployed
- 4% other

This suggests to us a highly successful project in terms of outcomes for participants. While some of those in work were part time and some of the start ups were very modest in scale/return, these destinations suggest to us great distance of travel for a very significant proportion of participants.

#### 9a Key learning points - project design:

##### **Engagement**

- partners selected already had significant experience with many of the target groups
- there was no learning on the job or need to experiment with how to engage or deliver

##### **End to end support**

- the project supported an individual from 'beginning to end'

- including individual needs analysis, support with one to one advice and ongoing personal and network based support
- a 'quick hit' approach was avoided where participants exit with no ongoing support
- the two main project workers had excellent community links and backgrounds such that participants could empathise well with them

### 9b Key learning points - project delivery:

#### Engagement

- the highly energetic *engagement approach* taken by the project, the key workers had clear target networks and were very active in marketing, with materials, on web sites and in person
- engagement went far beyond typical business and skills events and networks
- among the successful venues for finding participants were coffee shops, schools, public libraries and community/sport centres, LEAP (enterprise access point), mums groups
- word of mouth then started to attract many participants because of the extent of communication in the town about the project
- a key worker at JCP was convinced early about project benefits and as a result signposted many people to the project
- in a smaller compact geographical area, early and sustained marketing created a ripple effect and the project was easy to access

#### An individual centred approach

- the approach at first contact was not 'project push' (do you want to run your own business?) but a 'pull' process of responding to individuals' personal situations
- this meant however that it took more time to achieve success and outputs with this approach because the timescale was driven by the individual's pace not the project's timeline

- the three stage model was extremely flexible with the ability to change sequence of steps, repeat steps and vary time spent according to individual need
- enterprise coaches worked well, having the right skills and background, conventional business advisors would not have worked well
- that 44% of our telephone sample were working at the point of survey and a further 41% were self employed suggests this individual centred approach worked particularly well (although a limited sample of 27 participants)

#### 9c What did not work:

- some forms of outreach proved to not work well, in some cases these might be viewed as surprising
- email outreach did not work well - where perhaps 40% of potential participants did not have an email address and/or regular access to a computer
- social media did not work well for potential participants, although these channels could work well with partners
- the project web site and 0800 number similarly brought scant return
- but handing out project worker mobile numbers and use of texting worked well in maintaining communication with people, many of whom lead chaotic lives and can be difficult to track down
- the evaluation process lacked structure, the project team felt the consultants did not understand the project context, evidenced by the low quality of the interim report and that the evaluation as far as it went had no bearing on project design or delivery

**Project 5: *Inspiring Women's Enterprise (led by NWES)***

**1 Project aims and objectives:**

This project supported unemployed or economically inactive women living in the East of England to enter into employment or start a business. At November 2009 the Government's response to the Women's Enterprise Taskforce summarised the position as follows:

- women were much less likely to start/own a business than men
- women made up 51% of the UK population and 47% of those active in the labour market
- but women only constituted 28% of the self employed in the UK
- just 15% of UK SME businesses were majority women led

The project aimed to help tackle this imbalanced picture.

Funding was £1,020,000.

**2 Project design and delivery:**

The project was led by NWES, with the main active project partners being WENTA, Shaw Trust, The Princes Trust, with WEETU and JCP particularly active in signposting individuals.

The principles behind the delivery model were:

- i) face to face outreach maximises participant enrolment
- ii) the programme should be tailored and delivered by women with experience of self employment
- iii) a support network of women enhances outcomes
- iv) ongoing feedback ensures the programme meets participants' needs
- v) the programme should fit the geographical and socio-economic nature of the area

The project entailed:

- outreach - aimed at all areas of the region, in non threatening venues, working extensively through existing networks
- one to one sessions identified needs of clients and their ambitions, resulting in a tailored programme, signposting to other partners such as Business Link if that was more appropriate
- group training and development activities based on existing courses, backed up with job search and employability support
- mentoring options through The Princes Trust Ambassadors, 120 NWES mentors and EEDA's Women's Ambassadors
- local peer support networks, ideally self managed

### 3 Project outputs and outcomes:

Participant numbers achieved were 102% of target, while the into work achievement was 113% of target. The economically inactive in job search/further learning target was also exceeded.

- 1442 participants (target 1418)
- 512 in work on leaving (target 454)
- 197 economically inactive people in job search/further learning (target 187)

Equality and diversity results were variable:

	Target	Actual	% attainment
Disability	312	105	34%
Aged 50+	255	228	89%
Women	1418	1442	102%
Lone parents	170	251	148%
Ethnic minorities	227	202	89%

See section 9 as to some conclusions about this variable summary.

#### 4 Value for money (VfM):

The core method to complete the VfM assessment is the same as projects 3 and 4 (Exemplas and Menta).

The original NWES application did not attribute the cost to achieve a job output versus the cost to support a participant (non work output).

The best route we can therefore identify to assess VfM is to make a retrospective judgment about the cost to support an individual into a job versus the cost to support other participants. For the Haverhill Menta project we arrived at an estimate with the project manager that it takes approximately twice the level of activity to support someone into work compared to other participants, in which case the read across value for money picture for this project is as follows:

<u>Total funding: £1,020,000 (1418 participants)</u>	
Funding <i>profile</i> to support 454 people into work	= £1090/head
Funding <i>profile</i> to support 964 other participants	= £545/head
Participants <i>actually</i> into work	= 512
Other participants <i>actually</i> supported	= 930
Actual value achieved (512x£1090) + (930x£545)	= <b>£1,064,930</b>
Value for money compared to profile	= <b>104%</b>

Therefore the project achieved £44,930 greater value than was contracted for based on funding of £1,020,000. This is almost entirely due to the higher level of job outputs, because under this method a job output is 'worth' (or costs) twice as much as a non work output.

One issue this VfM method does not address is the value for money inherent in the original contractual arrangements ie. the cost per output agreed up front.

In this project the average cost per participant is £719. This compares to other Priority 1 enterprise projects as follows; Enterprising Communities Bedford (£572/participant); Enterprising Communities Haverhill (£740/participant);

Business Link Intensive Start Up (£553/participant); and Volunteering and The Olympics (£1333/participant).

We suggest that as a region wide project with the additional cost of building region wide processes and partnerships, the £719 per participant as contracted is reasonable, particularly when the project subsequently over-performed by 4% against the contracted VfM profile.

A consequence of this analysis we suggest is that future Co-financed projects should clarify at proposal stage what the cost per output is, by output.

### 5 Additionality:

The extended outreach of this project to community level (and across the region) suggests to us that additionality is very high. We conclude that many participants would either have been unaware of any comparable support (limited in any case), or many individuals would have experienced difficulties if they had tried to receive such support due to access issues. This programme was unusual also in the depth of support it could provide, with many women accessing multiple strands of support, up to 20 contacts in some cases. Economies of scale made it possible to offer range, there was always a wide range of events and workshops taking place with advisors/mentors who could be called on to supplement core provision.

In assessing the additionality of project benefits, it is a very positive result that 36% of participants were in work on leaving - particularly given the clear emphasis in this project on inspiring *enterprise*. In our telephone survey of 70 participants, we found that 70% were in work at between 3 and 18 months post completion. Of the 70%, 37% were in self employment and 33% in work. Furthermore, 79% expect to be in work in 6 months time, a not unreasonable scenario given the level of progress into work from project exit to destinations at 3-18 months. While most individuals in our survey were unwilling or unable to *specify* their likelihood of being in work had they NOT participated in this project, most indicated this project was a very important factor in decisions they took and the consequent outcomes that benefitted them.

### 6 Project sustainability:

We make a distinction in considering sustainability between the likelihood of continuing benefit and the very good level of success the project achieved.

For example, the project team reported that JCP were still referring individuals several months after the project ended - NWES responded that there was no funding to sustain support under this project, but that people could at least be advised under the Business Link voucher scheme. With the ending of that opportunity, it seems unlikely that the demand still present can be met.

## 7 Strategic Added Value:

The main evidence of SAV in this project is around influencing a wide range of partners, who now better understand the issues facing women contemplating self employment, the particular barriers women face and optimum solutions. This is an important achievement because of the evidence about the low level of enterprise creation among women - therefore there is a need for tailored solutions, where the support removes barriers to women's enterprise.

## 8 Participant feedback:

We were asked to undertake original research in the form of a telephone evaluation interview, in this case with 70 participants. The key points were:

<b>37%</b> of participants heard of the project through JCP.		
<b>31%</b> of participants found out about the project through other partners/word of mouth, with <b>9%</b> having seen advertising or promotion.		
Did you achieve what you wanted from being involved?		
YES <b>70%</b>	NO <b>10%</b>	PARTLY <b>20%</b>
Did the experience during the project benefit you in any way (tangibly, after the event)?		
YES <b>43%</b>	NO <b>14%</b>	TO SOME EXTENT <b>43%</b>
What was the MOST important help or advice you were given?		
All my questions answered/comprehensive		<b>19%</b>
Compliance/tax/financial advice		<b>19%</b>
Marketing/website/customer related advice		<b>19%</b>
Realising my business idea was a bad idea		<b>7%</b>

Confidence building (to take proactive steps)	6%
Valued advice of the advisor/project worker	6%
All other responses	24%
('All other' included diverse answers such as peer support; a grant; job search support)	
<b>Respondents tended to link the first two categories above - that the services and information were comprehensive <u>and</u> that areas in which they MOST needed help were available, particularly compliance issues and marketing (including internet/web based marketing issues).</b>	
In what way could the support given to you have been better? (MOST important factor)	
Support could not be bettered	51%
Poor course/poor presenters	10%
Wanted more ongoing support	10%
Wanted more tailored/practical help	7%
All other responses	22%

Key survey findings:

- 1 This feedback confirms how successful the project was at engaging with JCP.
- 2 The level of direct benefit to participants is high - where respondents respond 'to some extent' (above), it is usually because they found a job or they had quickly progressed into self employment, so the project experience was not always seen as the main factor in a successful outcome for the individual.
- 3 Participants tended to link the comprehensive and useful nature of the service with the quality of the project workers offering it.
- 4 The mix and range of services was commented on with some frequency - the range of workshops, one to one sessions, networking opportunities and signposting to other partner services.
- 5 This pattern of feedback suggests to us that initial needs analysis was generally excellent and that the project avoided over-reliance on workshops as a 'one size fits all' delivery vehicle.

6 The destination of respondents in our sample (at 3-18 months post completion) are also noteworthy:

- 37% were in employment at the point of survey
- 33% were in self employment at the point of survey

This suggests to us a highly successful project in terms of outcomes for participants. While some of those in work were part time and some of the start ups were very modest in scale/return (often reflecting individual preference), these destinations suggest to us great distance of travel for a very significant proportion of participants.

#### 9a Key learning points - project design:

- the outreach into drop-in and community centres worked well as a point of first contact, a non-threatening environment
- it was particularly important not to create a business environment in which to engage with long term unemployed people
- a regional contract worked well, where access was open to all and there was no postcode lottery as to who could be assisted
- one to one sessions identified needs of clients and their ambitions, resulting in a tailored programme, signposting to other partners as appropriate
- group training and development activities based on existing courses were backed up with flexible job search and employability support
- The Princes Trust Ambassadors, 120 NWES mentors and EEDA's Women's Ambassadors offered a considerable range of options to support individuals through mentoring and coaching
- local peer support networks helped provide ongoing assistance, these worked particularly well when self managed

#### 9b Key learning points - project delivery:

##### **Engagement**

- in some areas JCP referrals worked well, this tended to be in areas where there were up to 13 years of project level contacts between JCP and NWES
- the project team found that active feedback to JCP about the successful outcomes from referrals they had made encouraged a continuing supply of referrals
- initial engagement was referred to by the project team as 'gentle' - not pushing enterprise, but understanding an individual's wider aspirations and needs and then introducing enterprise options if and when appropriate

### Delivery

- the project exceeded all three key ESF measures and the contract was increased twice because this project had a very clear focus on meeting outputs
- if individuals preferred to work exclusively one to one or in a group the project was flexible to meet such requirements
- ongoing support to participants helped ensure outputs were met, the range of activity and advisory staff that could be called on made a difference compared to 'fixed support' projects.
- consequently additionality was also enhanced because the economies of scale of a well funded and region wide project meant that those requiring a depth of support could access just that
- specialist needs could be met within project resources, as shown in our survey; marketing, Internet/web support, compliance issues and grant support could all be made available where appropriate
- co-operation with families and carers proved very important, for example welcoming carers to meetings and workshops and offering a childrens' corner at drop in locations

### 9c What did not work:

- women only courses were contentious - NWES made a case for mixed courses but the contract did not allow for this

- feedback from many women's networks was that this could be too restrictive and was a narrow view given that women mix with men in business as a matter of course and some women's networks did not participate because of this restriction
- the project could not assist those at risk of redundancy, so many people under notice for up to 6 months (for example in Peterborough City Council) could not be assisted
- some participants were inappropriately routed towards workshop based provision when alternative, quicker or more direct support routes would have been appropriate (c. 10% of participants in our survey sample)
- performance against disability targets was particularly low, the project team reported that one issue was that many individuals could be reluctant to report they have a disability eg. dyslexia, or did not recognise that their condition is classed as a disability
- however, other projects have succeeded with this client group so we conclude that engagement with disability networks was insufficient to achieve more than 34% of target
- the project team felt that the ethnic minority target did not reflect the composition of those groups in the region and that although they missed the target, they achieved well (at 89% of target), considering the size of the group that could be assisted
- the external evaluation process did not work well, the final evaluation stage was cancelled
- interim evaluation reports lack structure, clear conclusions and recommendations
- there was no sound evaluation methodology and an apparent lack of understanding of the RDA IEF framework

**Project 6: *Economic Participation - Essex (Led by Essex County Council)***

**1 Project aims and objectives:**

In previous Co-financing programmes, EEDA's main focus had been to develop schemes that were delivered at a regional level to ensure that the ESF programme was able to directly help implement regional strategies and national policies. However, as a direct result of the outcome of EEDA's *Enterprise Road* programme and also influenced by the Houghton Review, EEDA's Co-financing Programme began to explore local projects such as two Enterprise Coaching pilots. In late 2009, discussions commenced with a small number of top tier local authorities that were prepared to deliver enterprise development, skills and employability activities in their respective areas. This was one of the EP projects funded using EEDA's 2010/11 Economic Participation budgets to support the ESF activity under Priority 1. The project aimed to reduce the NEET group (not in education, employment or training) in five areas of Essex through a programme that had the primary aim of encouraging more disengaged young people to progress to Level 2 Apprenticeships. The project aimed to engage with 120 young people, with 96 progressing onto the core pre-Apprenticeship programme, 75 of those to achieve ILP outcomes (including level 1) and 50 to progress to Apprenticeships within the duration of the project. Essex County Council's tender was won by Harlow College, with the college delivering in three areas, Groundwork delivering in Basildon and Catch 22 in Colchester.

Funding was £288,000.

**2 Project design and delivery:**

There were four main strands to the project design:

- i) outreach - Groundwork acting as project advisors to other organisations on how to achieve best results through very localised outreach

ii) individual needs assessment through the Pathways to Employment programme, leading to an individual learning plan

iii) one-to-one pre-Apprenticeship support which could include varying combinations of soft skills, key/functional skills, short course training, work placements/voluntary opportunities and specific vocational training linked to planned Apprenticeship destination

iv) achievement of Level 1 qualifications and progression for some onto Apprenticeships

### 3 Project outputs and outcomes:

The project was unusual in that only one of three typical ESF outputs were part of the contract.

- 115 participants (target 120)

The primary aim of this project however, particularly for Essex County Council, was to ensure participants were better equipped and prepared to progress to a Level 2 Apprenticeship.

The project manager at Harlow College has reported the follow outcomes along the progression route:

- 115 participants (target 120)
- 97 entered the pre-Apprenticeship programme (target 96)
- 73 achieved ILP outcomes including Level 1s (target 75)
- 12 progressed to Level 2 Apprenticeships (target 50)

The level of attainment against targets tends to closely follow the intended route until the final stage, where only 12 participants progressed onto Level 2 Apprenticeships compared to a target of 50. This is the reason we assess project outputs and outcomes as quite low because the *primary purpose* as expressed in the tender was to contribute to progression to Level 2 Apprenticeships.

*The big stumbling block in the project was demand from employers.* The project team encountered considerable difficulties in persuading employers to take on apprentices from this participant group - reasons for this are discussed in section 8 (below). Other project benefits can be viewed as significant, where for example 51 individuals were in work on leaving (42 in jobs with training). As this was not the priority target however, we place more emphasis on the attainment against the Apprenticeship target, which is low at 24% of target.

Equality and diversity output attainment was low:

	Target	Actual	% attainment
Disability	26	8	31%
Women	61	39	64%
Lone parents	14	0	0%
Ethnic minorities	19	11	58%

The main reason behind the low outputs appears to be that there was only a limited period during which the project was recruiting young people, in effect from September 2010 to January 2011, due to delays in contracting. This hindered any efforts to undertake the fieldwork required to build effective relationships with representative groups and networks - in effect, the project had to recruit on a first come first served basis and even so fell 5 participants short of the total participant target.

#### 4 Value for money (VfM):

The core method used to assess value for money in other Priority 1 projects can be applied in this project, but adjusted to reflect that the main benefit from this project was intended to be Level 2 Apprentices (rather than into work outputs).

Essex County Council paid a bonus of £600 for every individual progressing to a Level 2 Apprenticeship, so this is the best proxy for 'value' that we can attach to the 'into Apprenticeship' participants.

<u>Total funding: £288,000</u> (120 target participants)	
Funding <i>profile</i> to support 50 into L2 Apprenticeship	= £2750/head
Funding <i>profile</i> to support 70 other participants	= £2150/head
Participants <i>actually</i> into L2 Apprenticeship	= 12
Other participants <i>actually</i> supported	= 103
Actual value achieved (12x2750) + (103x2150)	= 254,450
Value for money compared to profile	= 88%

The project scores below 100% on value for money because participation was slightly under target (by 5) - and the level of participants into Apprenticeships was considerably down, reducing value for money by £600 per head for the shortfall of 38 Level 2 Apprenticeships.

This calculation may seem to indicate a higher value for money than might be expected given that only 24% of the key Apprenticeships target was achieved. However, the level of input to the project was close to original expectation with numbers entering the pre-Apprenticeship programme at the expected level and indeed 'other' positive outcomes such as into work at a good level considering the characteristics of the client group. Overall, this VfM calculation is most affected by the 'additional value' that Essex County Council places on a progression to a Level 2 Apprenticeship (£600/head). We conclude this is reasonable given that levels of engagement are quite good, with distance travelled on areas such as soft skills very good and a high level of positive destinations overall.

### 5 Additionality:

We assess the level of outreach achieved by this project as quite high which leads us to conclude that a high proportion of participants would not have benefitted from similar support had this project not existed. Outreach among the hardest to reach groups (see equality and diversity targets, section 3) was however very limited.

On the key measure of *additionality of project benefits*, this project scores very low on additional Level 2 Apprenticeships achieved, but quite high on attainment at Level 1, soft skills and key destinations such as into work.

Overall, we assess the additionality as moderate because the main benefit being targeted was missed by a considerable margin, but other (less intended) benefits were quite high.

#### 6 Project sustainability:

There has been a considerable amount of learning from this project that should assist the Apprenticeship programme into the future with NEETS groups. The value of tailored pre-Apprenticeship support has been largely proven, although there is evidence that 13 weeks may be insufficient for many, particularly to make them job ready for most employers. Two outstanding questions remain to be answered in terms of sustainability:

- i) will future projects target the NEETS groups and with the high level of support required (£2400 per head in this project) where there is also a conclusion that more support than this project offered is typically needed
- ii) the extent to which solutions have been found to employers' reluctance to take individuals on from this (higher risk) client group and in the difficult economic climate

#### 7 Strategic Added Value:

In terms of SAV we note one particularly significant effect:

- the project work which has demonstrated to a range of partners how to engage with the NEETS group and provide individualised support which makes a considerable difference in terms of distance travelled and a variety of positive destinations

Our reservation is as expressed at section 6 (above), that if the demand for apprentices from a NEETS background cannot be better stimulated among employers, then the benefit of this project learning in terms of Apprenticeships is likely to be limited.

#### 8a Key learning points - project design and delivery:

- Groundworks helped develop understanding among Harlow College and Catch 22 about how to engage this NEETS group and help them into pre-Apprenticeship support
- engagement was very localised and involved going to where young people congregated and were comfortable

- the most successful marketing event was a 'Britain's Got Talent' competition in Basildon which led to other eye catching events such as Dragons' Den in the Youth East programme
- individual learning plans were highly personalised and ranged across a variety of support including soft skills, key/functional skills, short course training, work placements/voluntary opportunities and specific vocational training linked to planned Apprenticeship destination
- the project team considered that the growth in soft skills among many participants was particularly high, an innovative software package was used to assess soft skills which worked particularly well
- the evidence for this lies in the second programmes that many moved onto, such as Foundation learning courses, where the participants' communication skills, levels of confidence and employability were assessed as considerably closer to job readiness
- positive destinations were at a high level, although not always anticipated - for example 51 participants into work
- the learning includes that young people in this group often do not have a clear aspiration regarding work, so a specific apprenticeship that may have initially appealed could become secondary if a 'better offer' came along - such as a job

#### 8b What did not work:

- that the project outreach work only took place from September to January limited the ability to recruit
- some participants changed their minds during the course of the project, with an unintended consequence that high numbers of individuals moved into other positive destinations rather than Apprenticeships
- the project paid insufficient attention to employer demand - lack of demand was by far the largest factor in under-achievement of progression into Apprenticeships
- employers may not always identify all their concerns in dealing with the NEETS client group, but some may have genuinely thought young people offered to them were simply not workplace ready

- there may be truth in this as the 13 weeks for the pre-Apprenticeship programme was not always sufficient, whereas great progress has been made with those staying on for a second preparatory programme
- some employers may have had concerns about committing to an Apprenticeship in a difficult economic climate; they may also have been reluctant to release individuals for a day per week
- we would have expected an FE college to have recognised the likelihood that matching individuals with a NEETS background to an employer might prove more difficult than with the mainstream
- we suggest there was an imbalance of attention between creating flexible tailored provision (which worked generally well) and engagement with employers (which did not)
- solutions to employer engagement have not really been tried; some potential avenues for the future might include:
  - extending the period for pre-preparation of NEETS groups
  - earlier engagement with employers to achieve greater numbers
  - more use of Groundwork's other projects as a potential employer of apprentices, including the environmental and horticultural sectors
  - more targeted engagement with employers, including with those that have a strong social responsibility policy and working with partner organisations that themselves work with such employers
  - consideration of non-traditional forms of employment such as the co-operative formed by individuals at Harlow College on a painting and decorating programme

**Project 7:** *Economic Participation - Suffolk (Led by Suffolk County Council)*

**1 Project aims and objectives:**

In previous Co-financing programmes, EEDA's main focus had been to develop schemes that were delivered at a regional level to ensure that the ESF programme was able to directly help implement regional strategies and national policies. However, as a direct result of the outcome of EEDA's *Enterprise Road* programme and also influenced by the Houghton Review, EEDA's Co-financing Programme began to explore local projects such as two Enterprise Coaching pilots. In late 2009, discussions commenced with a small number of top tier local authorities that were prepared to deliver enterprise development, skills and employability activities in their respective areas. This was one of the EP projects funded using EEDA's 2010/11 Economic Participation budgets to support the ESF activity under Priority 1. Promoting enterprise in disadvantaged communities is a national policy priority and a priority for EEDA in the Regional Economic Strategy. Enterprise helps create employment and stimulates innovation and competition, while providing access to goods and services to the benefit of the community. Suffolk County Council's tender (which Menta won) described a need for an innovative approach to stimulating entrepreneurial activity among unemployed individuals in the county, particularly the hardest to reach groups that would not normally engage in a start up, nor be able to access appropriate support. Menta contracted the Workhouse Group to undertake very energetic outreach activity, with the project running from September 2010 until March 2011.

Funding was £100,000.

**2 Project design and delivery:**

There were three main strands to the project design:

- i) outreach - the Workhouse Group advisors undertaking outreach

ii) individual needs assessment, then signposting to an appropriate source (mainstream support where an individual might have good business skills already; or for those not wanting to pursue self-employment, signposting to agencies such as Job Centre, voluntary agencies)

iii) or into the project with subsequent flexible one to one sessions and workshops, the core workshop being *Living Your Dream*

All participants could access one-to-one advice, with personalised support.

### 3 Project outputs and outcomes:

The project performed well against ESF contracted outputs.



Equality and diversity results are variable:

	Target	Actual	% attainment
Disability	77	40	52%
Aged 50+	63	51	81%
Women	179	195	109%
Lone parents	42	47	112%
Ethnic minorities	56	22	39%

The reasons for the two *above target* achievements in the table appear to be due to success that the team had in engaging with networks where some of the target groups could be found in good numbers. Lone parents attainment was high because of the work in schools and libraries - the approach worked well in coffee shops for example, where individuals were bought a cup of tea with a message of 'Is Enterprise your cup of tea?'

The BME target however was difficult to reach because we were told by the project team the BME population in the target area is about 2.5%, so project

participation rates among this group were higher than the county profile - however, the project team reported difficulties in gaining the interest of BME representative groups they did work with, with a slow response in the context of tight project deadlines.

The project forged good links with a disability charity Destiny CIC and achieved high levels of cooperation.

However they found the time available for outreach work in the field often did not match how long it can take to forge relationships, gain access (eg. events) sign individuals up and help them complete the project. We are satisfied the project team reached out in an even-handed way and the client group was comprised mainly of disadvantaged people.

#### 4 Value for money (VfM):

The core method to complete the VfM assessment is the same as with project 3 (Exemplas). The original Menta proposal did not attribute the cost to achieve a job output versus the cost to support a participant (non work output). The only route we can identify to assess VfM is therefore to make a retrospective judgment about the cost to support an individual into self employment versus the cost to support other participants. For this Suffolk wide Menta project we are applying the same estimate as the Haverhill Menta project (project 4), that it takes approximately twice the level of activity to support someone into work compared to other participants, in which case the read across value for money picture is as follows:

<u>Total funding: £100,000</u> (350 target participants)	
Funding <i>profile</i> to support 77 people into work	= £468/head
Funding <i>profile</i> to support 273 other participants	= £234/head
Participants <i>actually</i> into work	= 80
Other participants <i>actually</i> supported	= 328
Actual value achieved (80x468)+ (328x234)	= <b>£114,192</b>
Value for money compared to profile	= <b>114%</b>

The project scores positively on value for money because it slightly over-achieved against the into work target (by 3) and supported 55 more participants than profiled.

**5 Additionality:** We assess the level of outreach achieved by this project as very high which leads us to conclude that a high proportion of participants would not have benefitted from similar support had this project not existed. We estimate perhaps 5-10% might have accessed mainstream or other comparable routes, mostly through other Menta services.

#### **6 Project sustainability:**

While this delivery model worked well, there is no evidence that its benefit will be sustained without successfully accessing additional funding in a very difficult funding climate. The demise of Business Link as an advisory based service also removed one of the key mainstream referral routes, as well as suggesting that a small organisation such as Menta will not be able to take up much of the demand for start up support which Business Link will no longer meet. While contacts with participants continue to a limited extent in the county, the short to medium term ability to maintain partnerships and this level of service is in our opinion very questionable.

#### **7 Strategic Added Value:**

In terms of strategic added value (SAV) we note one particularly significant effect, which is however in question where, if projects supporting this client group are not maintained into the future, the partnerships will almost inevitably become looser over time:

- the building of some effective partnerships where individual partners were already effectively engaged with target disadvantaged groups and through this project their mutual education into what delivery models work best with disadvantaged groups

#### **8a Key learning points - project design and delivery:**

- the Workhouse Group selected already had significant experience with the typical target groups within this project

- there was no learning on the job or need to experiment with how to engage or deliver, the model has been fairly well established by Menta in its Haverhill ESF project and work prior to that
- the highly energetic *engagement approach* taken by the project - the main idea was 'go where they feel safe' so locations such as coffee shops, libraries, schools, markets and car boot sales were productive sources for referrals into the project
- engagement went beyond business and skills events and networks, person to person contact in a social environment worked best although the project team did not have the time to develop brand awareness through spreading word of mouth, the 'tread softly' approach to engagement was not feasible in this project - engagement nevertheless worked well
- the three stage model was flexible with the ability to vary the type and nature of support as individuals required
- it proved important to signpost individuals very quickly to the most relevant next stage as they entered the project, so the drop out rate was as low as possible
- sometimes that meant doing an individual needs assessment at the first time of meeting
- individuals could be helped with subsidiary problems that may have been holding them back such as the lack of a bank account or banks not willing to open an account for them, where introductions to a credit union could be the solution
- the project worked better in more populated areas where marketing and outreach was more cost effective and the subsequent location of events was less likely to cause issues with travel time or cost
- there were unmeasured benefits to this project such as dissuading those with a poor business idea and building confidence so that individuals were more prepared to 'have a go' with self employment

#### 8b What did not work:

- that the project outreach work only took place from September to January limited the ability to recruit; more could have been achieved if outreach had occurred at key Summer events around the county
- some forms of outreach proved to not work well, for example email - where perhaps 30% of potential participants did not have an email address and/or regular access to a computer
- relationships with some equality and diversity groups were not sufficiently established to enable delivery within the timescale
- the project was asked to target young people, an approach was developed to engage at a nightclub, which did not work well - the project team conclude that 'reaching out too far' could occur if attendance at a location was seen by individuals as intrusive
- the project team would have liked to apply a pre/post tool to identify distance travelled but concluded there was not sufficient time
- the EEDA skills development targets around qualifications were missed because of the short duration of the project compared to the length of time required to gain most qualifications - although there were significant numbers of participants in college provision

**Project 8: *Economic Participation - Norfolk (Led by Norfolk County Council)***

**1 Project aims and objectives:**

In previous Co-financing programmes, EEDA's main focus had been to develop schemes that delivered at a regional level to ensure that the ESF programme was able to directly support and help implement regional strategies and National policies. However, as a direct result of the outcome of EEDA's *Enterprise Road* programme and also influenced by the Houghton Review, EEDA's Co-financing Programme began to explore local projects such as two Enterprise Coaching pilots.

In late 2009, discussions commenced with a small number of top tier local authorities that were prepared to deliver enterprise development, skills and employability activities in their respective areas. This was one of the EP

projects funded using EEDA's 2010/11 Economic Participation budgets to support the ESF activity under Priority 1.

Project participants were expected to be adults (18+), in receipt of employment support benefits, living within South and Central Yarmouth or North Lynn. The target areas experienced particularly high levels of worklessness according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation. The project aimed to provide 'neighbourhood' and flexible support to individuals who were usually a long way from entering the labour market. Individuals needed tailored support to enhance their employability, the project provided specialist input (or experience such as volunteering). In most cases, individuals would be moved closer to the job market, with 40 targeted to enter paid employment.

Norfolk County Council's tender was won by a partnership of Great Yarmouth Borough Council, Voluntary Norfolk and the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk.

Funding was £70,000.

## 2 Project design and delivery:

The project model was based on the previous Target Opportunities Project in Great Yarmouth and the Norfolk IiC Pre-employment Support Partnership. The key design principles were that the community should be at the heart of and accountable for delivery; that the approach should be very targeted; and that services needed to be joined up and integrated. There were three main stages to the project:

- i) pre-employment support including confidence building and communication skills
- ii) recruitment using support services as a single point of contact
- iii) ongoing support to the individual

The tangible activities were:

- 300 individual support plans

- 215 people receiving training and job skills
- 40 people into sustained paid employment
- 70 people taking up volunteering places
- 60 people accessing specialist support services (to ensure increased independence of individuals and a reduced risk of homelessness)

### 3 Project outputs and outcomes:

81% of the participant target was achieved and 83% of the into work target.

- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 244 participants (target 300)</li><li>• 33 in work on leaving (target 40)</li></ul> |
|---|

### 4 Value for money (VfM):

The project application suggested estimating value for money based on a simple ratio of total project cost divided by the target number of into work outputs achieved - which suggests a target cost per job of £1750. 33 jobs were reported which suggests a project value of £57750, or 17% below contracted value for money.

### 5 Additionality:

We assess the level of outreach achieved by this project as high which leads us to conclude that a high proportion of participants would not have benefitted from similar support had this project not existed, being very far from the job market in most cases. The additional benefits are however reduced because participant numbers and into work numbers were significantly below target.

### 6 Project sustainability:

There is some evidence that partner organisations have learned from this project model. For example, JCP have recognised that this project is squarely aimed at stimulating economic development and they have tendered since for projects of a similar type.

### 7 Strategic Added Value:

This project further strengthened partnership working and understanding of what constitutes a successful delivery model with the target groups. This model was based on the previous Target Opportunities Project in Great Yarmouth and the work of Norfolk iC Pre-employment Support Partnership. Partners actively working together include Norfolk County Council, Great Yarmouth Borough Council, Voluntary Norfolk, Norfolk Adult Education Service and the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk. These partners also brought a significant number of funded programmes to the network in Norfolk in the past, both in terms of local and neighbourhood experience and financial resources.

#### 8a Key learning points - project design and delivery:

- the two project workers recruited already had significant community development backgrounds and experience with the typical target groups within this project - 'ready to go'
- the project helped to tackle a specific problem in the area where the growth of some employment sectors (eg. energy) could largely bypass local residents when the skills were frequently imported through recruitment from outside the area
- this model then became important in trying to demonstrate '1 or 2 people from your street have found work' - that the local population could obtain work despite the competition from further afield
- there was no need to experiment with how to engage or deliver, the model had been fairly well established by the project team eg. in the Target Opportunities project
- this was evidenced by the additional time it took to form partnerships and develop the project in Kings Lynn where there was not the history of similar project engagement on the ground
- the neighbourhood basis to the model meant that there was no need for extensive and expensive marketing tools;
  - the project message spread within the communities through the residents who lived there
- the various project strands worked well together eg. some participants became volunteers within the project itself and some then went on to form or participate in jobs clubs

- the support was genuinely tailored on a one-to-one basis
- the range of partners engaged who could help deliver skills support was large, particularly in Great Yarmouth
- residents were genuinely involved in shaping the project eg. through becoming learning champions and initiating self employment groups in the form of enterprise networks

#### 8b What did not work:

- it is currently difficult to assess the level of success of this project specifically, because it was so bound up with wider IiC outputs and some measures are absent
- that output reporting was still being queried seven months after project end suggested that the monitoring and reporting specific to this project should have been separate from other projects
- the project team reported that there was significant under-reporting of the actual results of the project because of difficulties in evidencing and obtaining completed ESF forms before some had left the project - there is no method to establish the level or veracity of these assertions

## **Project 9: Intensive Business Start Up Priority 1 (led by EEIDB Ltd)**

### **1 Project aims and objectives:**

3250 individuals were assisted under the Intensive Start Up Support Programme. The key aim was to increase the level of businesses that start up and were sustained. The project itself was a test of the viability of an individual's business idea, there was no initial screening of viability. Not proceeding with an inadvisable business idea could represent success as much as helping to launch a start up.

Funding is £1,800,000.

### **2 Project design and delivery:**

The core support was the delivery of free workshops, where there was a portfolio of seven ranging from starting up to more specific content. In the Eastern region EEIDB Ltd added three workshops to the Government's core national Starting a Business programme - covering additional subjects of franchising, business ideas and the internet. One to one support was available in addition to workshops, including intensive support and a bootcamp. The information service was then an ongoing source of support that participants could access as required. The Business Link web site was increasingly the channel that attracted the most participants, with online bookings rising from an initial 12-14% to 33% in the last year, although our original research shows word of mouth recommendation often preceded web based search and booking.

Redundancy networks and various forms of outreach were also channels to attract participants with JCP being an important source of referrals. There was a routine follow up of participants at 4-6 weeks as well as evaluation feedback from each workshop. An evaluation of Business Link overall (including this service) was undertaken by EEDA in mid-2011, but after the announcement that the regional Business Link service was to close.

### **3 Project outputs and outcomes:**

There was only one output agreed for this project, the participant target:

- **3250** participants (target 3250)

Equality and diversity figures can be viewed as reliable because the contract has ended and final claims agreed:

	Target	Actual	% attainment
Disability	715	103	14%
Aged 50+	585	883	151%
Women	1658	1524	92%
Lone parents	390	140	36%
Ethnic minorities	520	514	99%

Achievement against disability and lone parent targets is particularly low and noticeably lower than those start up projects that demonstrated 'extreme outreach' eg. Enterprising Communities in Bedford and Haverhill. We conclude this project was over-reliant on conventional outreach methods to succeed with these two under-represented groups - insufficient partnerships were built to achieve participant levels and advisory/project staff are unlikely to have been best placed to engage with some of the most disadvantaged groups.

#### 4 Value for money (VfM):

In section 5 (additionality) we identify that Business Link assisted start ups are 18 percentage points more likely to survive three years than the average for the region. In the Acuigen 2010 Survivability report, the consultants also identify the turnover of Business Link assisted start ups. The average annual turnover per start up from the Acuigen research data is approximately £212,000 in year 3 of trading. From the number of participants (3250), this data suggests that 585 additional start ups survived compared to what would have happened had they not accessed support. This equates to £124 million of additional annual turnover in assisted businesses - compared to ESF funding of £1.8 million between April 2010 and November 2011. The *annualised* comparison between additional turnover generated and ESF funding is therefore £124 million to £1.08 million.

There are two caveats. Firstly, this calculation assumes that the only substantive factor that leads to a Business Link survivability rate of 84% is the support itself. Might those with a propensity to seek support be more likely

to seek other support or survive anyway? Secondly, the Acuigen research does not identify whether their sample contains priority 1 participants, priority 2 or both. We would expect the year 3 annual turnover of a priority 1 start ups to be lower than a priority 2 sample, although there is no data to prove this. Indeed from our sample of 70 interviewees (see section 8 below), that 64% had moved out of unemployment within around 12-15 months of participation in the project is in our view a high and surprising proportion - and itself good evidence of value for money.

Our calculated ratio of return of 115:1 between year 3 annual turnover of start ups and funding to support them suggests very high value for money - even if this ratio might reduce somewhat for a purely priority 1 sample, if reliable data was available.

### 5 Additionality:

EEIDB extended its share of the start up market from 8% initially to 16% in the final year, this is both a test of demand and additionality.

Acuigen Ltd reported in September 2010 on a project to identify the business survivability rates of Business Link East customers. They found among a sample of 300 participants that the survival rate of those that started up was 84% (+/- 4.5%). This compares to The Office of National Statistics three year survival rate of 64.7% nationally (66% in the Eastern region).

Therefore the three year survival rate for Business Link customers compared to all start ups in the region is therefore approximately +18 percentage points.

### 6 Project sustainability:

While this delivery model worked well, there is no evidence that its benefit will be sustained without successfully accessing additional funding in a very difficult funding climate. The demise of Business Link as an advisory based service removed the vehicle to deliver this support on a widespread regional basis. Enterprise agencies are of a scale that they could support only a fraction of Business Link's numbers, even if further funding was successfully secured. There is considerable evidence that start up support has to be free of charge if the market is to be penetrated on a significant scale, including from our own survey, so most start ups are unlikely to seek extensive support from commercial sources such as accountants, consultants and legal advisors.

## 7 Strategic Added Value:

In terms of SAV we note one particularly long significant effect:

- the building of effective partnerships where individual partners engaged with very significant numbers of potential entrepreneurs and through this project their mutual education into what delivery model work best with start ups

The downside is that the main delivery organisation (Business Link) has ceased to exist as an advisory based service and was in any case the only publicly funded body with the capacity to provide the service across the region on this scale.

## 8 Participant feedback:

This was one of seven projects in the ESF Co-financing evaluation where we were asked to undertake original research in the form of a telephone evaluation interview, in this case with 70 participants. The key points from our research were as follows.

**46%** of all participants found out about the project through recommendation - word of mouth, former colleagues, partner organisations (other than JCP).

**20%** of all participants found out about the project through JCP (usually their local job centre).

**24%** could not recall where they heard of the project.

Did you achieve what you wanted from being involved?

YES **70%**

NO **4%**

PARTLY **26%**

Did the experience during the project benefit you in any way (tangibly, after the event)?

YES **46%**

NO **10%**

TO SOME EXTENT **44%**

What was the MOST important help or advice you were given?

All my questions answered/comprehensive

**27%**

Marketing (inc. social media, web, finding customers)

**27%**

'Compliance' (tax/co. formation/accounts/HMRC)	19%
All other categories	27%
('All other' included diverse answers such as peer support; confidence building; avoiding a poor decision,/bad business idea/under funded idea).	
In what way could the support given to you have been better? (MOST important factor)	
Support could not be bettered	73%
More tailored content/pitched more at my level/more in-depth	17%
Provide grant/financial assistance	7%
All other responses	3%

#### Key survey findings:

1 This feedback confirms how successful the project has been given the large proportion of word of mouth type recommendations.

In our sample, word of mouth from friends, family and former colleagues was responsible for more introductions than any other channel.

2 The level of direct benefit to participants is high, with 90% of respondents indicating they had benefitted tangibly from the project either greatly or to some extent.

3 Where individuals report they only partly achieved what they wanted from participating (or benefitted to only some extent) the main reason was that they had either found a job or decided not to proceed with self employment - it was not often dissatisfaction with the process.

4 The strongest pattern of feedback about what could be improved was not strong - 17% wanted content or advice that was more specific to them or their type of business idea.

5 That 73% could identify no area in which support could be bettered suggests to us that this proven model has been well developed to meet the needs of unemployed and economically inactive people.

6 57% of our sample went on to establish a start up business, which we consider to be a high level of success - with a further 7% in paid employment (30% were unemployed at the time of survey).

7 76% of respondents expected to be either self employed or in paid employment six months time after we surveyed them, with 20% expecting to be still unemployed; so optimism about the future increased over time among our sample of 70 respondents.

#### 9a Key learning points - project design and delivery:

- regional commissioning of start up services (such as appointing delivery contractors) helped local delivery - workshops could be run at a loss in more isolated areas if the overall package was cost effective; local authorities would not have this flexibility if they were to deliver start up support in the future
- in dealing with the long term unemployed, provision had to be very localised, in considerably more depth and cost considerably more
- several mechanisms were key to engaging on a wide scale, particularly the power of word of mouth, the web site and JCP as the most active among several signposting organisations
- that the service was free and usually very local were key factors in persuading individuals to engage - there were no barriers of cost and few barriers of 'travel time to event'
- displacement is therefore likely to be negligible, there is no meaningful private sector provision (offering this depth of support on a free basis) to regard Business Link as a competitor with an unfair funding advantage
- the model was established and developed across a prolonged period so that it had become very robust by the time of this funding round
- start up support rarely involved a linear process where an individual moves seamlessly from broad idea to launch - so support needed to be blended to flex the depth or type of support
- confidence building was an integral part of supporting most individuals so they could attain their ultimate goal
- support to individuals was as specific or in-depth as required, from provision of information requests to in-depth advisor support and boot camps - satisfaction rates averaged 95-96%

- women particularly appreciated networking as a form of support and confidence building, as increasingly did many men
- workshop presenters needed to have inspirational personalities, to have run their own business and to understand the client group well
- sectoral experience of advisors was not so important, individuals tend to value the factors specific to start up - sectoral experience was more important in services for established businesses
- evaluation was built into the process after each workshop and at 4-6 weeks post completion, which was valuable in identifying individuals who needed further support
- three additional workshops were provided based on demand identified, which were well supported
- marketing related workshops were particularly valued - finding more business became an increasingly important factor during the economic downturn, as well as the growth in importance of social media and search engines
- the proportion of women to men evened up considerably due to extensive efforts to engage with women's groups
- participants usually came to appreciate being told - or better, concluding for themselves - that their business idea was inadvisable, several people reported to us that 'disaster was averted'

#### 9b What did not work:

- some outreach proved difficult, for example rural areas where access was an issue despite delivery in over 60 locations
- where there was a pattern of what could be improved, making the service more tailored to the individual or their business idea was the most prevalent feedback
- achievement against disability and lone parent targets was low and noticeably lower than those start up projects that demonstrated 'extreme outreach' (eg. Enterprising Communities in Bedford and Haverhill)

- this project was over-reliant on conventional outreach methods to succeed with these two under-represented groups - insufficient partnerships were built to achieve participant levels and advisory/project staff were unlikely to have been best placed to engage with some of the most disadvantaged
- telesales succeeded at gaining bookings but failed overall because a large number did not show up to events
- this support required a high level of face to face contact, a future web based service be will cost efficient but not effective

**Project 10:** *Low Carbon Skills 2011 (led by Bedford College)***1 Project aims and objectives:**

The project aimed to re-skill or up-skill unemployed or economically inactive people to prepare them for jobs in the low carbon sectors of the economy. It also aimed to develop relevant training provision that meets identified employer needs within low carbon sectors.

Funding was £650,000.

**2 Project design and delivery:**

The project entails four main strands:

- capacity development in training providers
- client engagement
- IAG and skills development
- utilising pathways into low carbon jobs

Industry needs for low carbon skills were identified through research and the application of a skills training needs analysis framework. A prospectus of courses was developed with seven participating colleges. JCP and other partner groups helped to identify referrals (as well as referrals being identified among colleges' former students who were unemployed). Individuals were matched to courses through an IAG process, the course was delivered to the individual who was then assisted with progression to employment or further training if required. *We note in section 8 (learning points) that there was at this stage a rather limited emphasis on helping people into work that tended to lead to the project functioning as primarily a training project.*

**3 Project outputs and outcomes:**

The project team estimates that the revised target of 479 participants will be met, they expect the in work target to be missed by a considerable margin.

**Figures below are 'forecast to completion' not finalised outputs.**

- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 600 participants (target 479)</li> </ul> |
|---|

- 35 in work on leaving (target 130)
- 80 economically inactive people in job search/further learning (target 91)

The short duration of this project resulted in a heavy emphasis on recruitment to the project in the second half of the year, where signing up participants was the key driver, much less so targeting specific disadvantaged groups. The need to build networks with disadvantaged groups and the time this takes also meant that in most cases the project fell short of equality and diversity targets.

	Target	Actual	% attainment
Disability	105	60	57%
Aged 50+	86	80	93%
Women	244	60	25%
Lone parents	58	30	52%
Ethnic minorities	77	90	117%

The project team has observed that the equality and diversity targets and the 'into work' target can work against each other. For example, when the supply of low carbon jobs is still thin, employers can be very selective in recruitment - or where some of the jobs require attributes (such as offshore working or mobility around the UK) that is difficult to match with many of the disadvantaged groups.

People who might naturally put themselves forward tended to be from construction, installation and related backgrounds where the workforce is heavily weighted towards men and those who can offer mobility and flexible patterns of working - which are typically not characteristics of target groups of disability, 50+, lone parents and women.

#### 4 Value for money (VfM):

There is a good case with this project for following the value for money method applied in the two Enterprising Communities projects, which displayed similar characteristics being:

- priority 1 aimed at those not working
- with a key outputs of participant numbers
- and a second key output of numbers into work

For the Enterprising Communities projects we arrived at an estimate that it takes approximately twice the level of activity to support someone into work compared to other participants, in which case the read across value for money picture for this project is as follows:

<u>Total funding: £650,000 (479 participants)</u>	
Funding <i>profile</i> to support 130 people into work	= £2134/head
Funding <i>profile</i> to support 349 other participants	= £1067/head
Participants <i>actually</i> into work	= 35
Other participants <i>actually</i> supported	= 565
Actual value achieved = (35x£2134) + (565x£1067)	= £677,545
Value for money compared to profile	= 104%

Therefore the project achieved £27,545 greater value than was contracted for based on funding of £650,000. This is entirely due to the higher level of participants, because the team projects 121 more participants than contracted for. The large projected under-achievement against the into work target then reduces value for money back to 104%. In practice, we have suggested that this project was overly focused on the training element and that benefit beyond value for money would have been much greater if the project had tackled the issue of finding a job for many more participants.

### 5 Additionality:

In recent years RDAs clarified the definition of additionality to mean the 'additionality of project benefits' - benefits being outputs and outcomes over and above what would have accrued without the intervention of the project.

On this definition, the skills benefits can be considered to have been somewhat additional because the target group is the unemployed and economically inactive during a period of substantial and rising unemployment - and falling funded skills opportunities. Additionality of *project benefits* is reduced however, where the following factors combine.

i) employer feedback in this and the other low carbon skills project suggests that demand for low carbon skills is likely to be primarily as an add-on to other skills, particularly craft and installation skills. Where participants in this project do not have those craft and installation backgrounds, the evidence is that employers do not generally believe that the combination of being 'generalist' unemployed plus having taken a specialised low carbon course creates the skills combination they need.

ii) where the extent of provision becomes weighted towards very short course interventions that do not up-skill *the unemployed* sufficiently to contribute greatly to into work targets (or employment in low carbon sectors).

Where there is an excess of labour, as currently, we would expect individuals recently in work who take a short course to be more likely to find work than longer term unemployed even if they have taken a more in-depth course. This is because employers are likely to recruit on expected efficiency and most take long term unemployment as a proxy for inefficiency. However, as suggested in the previous point, the duration of unemployment may itself be fairly irrelevant where low carbon skills are *not attached to* the right kind of craft or installation background.

The wider benefits from this project - people into work and the economic payback from that - are projected as low because of the likely under-achievement against the into work target. Recent changes in the solar PV industry resulted in a short term spike of work to meet the December 2011 deadline (which had been brought forward from April 2012) but a medium to long term reduction in activity because of the dilution in Government subsidy which will slow demand for new labour in this field.

## 6 Project sustainability:

The low carbon provision across the region is improved although patchy. Some FE colleges have done well against their individual targets, for example Lowestoft, Bedford and in a more limited way, Colchester Institute.

Bedford College organised an event for December 14th to address the sustainability issue. They were seeking to amalgamate with other low carbon groups or to identify the functions of different groups to enable development of general and specialist low carbon curricula initiated by this project. They were also seeking to consolidate the learning from dealing with the

unemployed client group, most colleges found they were short of networks and capability in this area.

Workforce development in the future is therefore likely to be of a top-up nature for those in work and experienced. For new entrants (particularly the young) we expect existing courses will be increasingly adapted to include low carbon technologies as part of their core learning.

While this project may have identified some of the lessons about low carbon skills and the unemployed the hard way, there is some scope, perhaps kick-started by the Bedford College initiative, to build on those lessons to ensure:

- that capacity achieved in FE through this project continues to be developed
- that those who have been upskilled do help to meet future employer needs

## 7 Strategic Added Value:

In terms of strategic added value (SAV) we note some effects

- the enhanced provision that can service the emerging demand for low carbon skills among employers
- the opportunity for other providers (including FE) to understand the level of skills required by employers to consider employing an unemployed person for a typical low carbon job
- colleges' learning about the particular needs of inactive and unemployed client groups
- initiating a broader debate and awareness in FE about low carbon opportunities and what provision might look like for different markets (the young, in-work already skilled, craft, design services, operational services)
- there may be some consideration of collaboration in specialist areas and competition in generic areas and where the boundaries are between the two, as well as the role of the private sector in the future

### 8a Key learning points:

- a growing awareness has been created among partners that 'low carbon' is not simply about plumbing and electrical skills, but that a range jobs will exist as diverse as facilities managers, greenhouse workers, energy advisors and procurement workers
- most partners and participants have agreed that there is the core of a sound proposition within the project, ie. the principle of upskilling those without work into those areas that offer most promising levels of future job growth
- there is also a high level of commitment to the ethos of the project in that it contributes in substantial part to the implementation of the green agenda
- the partners have worked well together in identifying industry needs and developing provision
- some colleges have achieved well against their targets for skills delivery, notably Lowestoft, Bedford and Colchester
- in some areas, referrals from JCP have been at a good level, where colleges have recognised the need for constant communication with job centres, typically at least once per week

#### 8b What did not work:

##### **Project design**

- the project model was highly challenging - a short duration project (1 year); the need to build a college delivery partnership from scratch; the need to build partner relationships locally and regionally; with management time lost due to the need to recruit a project manager
- partnership building and the need to develop a prospectus of courses across several colleges took several months and reduced time for delivery in a project with already confined timescales
- in a broadly based partnership, with colleges at different stages of development, the tendency has been to move at the pace of the slowest eg. in finalising a prospectus of provision
- this then put pressure on participant numbers, to the extent the target was eventually revised

- we suggest the partnership could have benefitted from private sector representation where i) gaps in provision could have been met ii) where the private sector could have stepped into geographical areas that were not well served by the FE colleges (most of the populous South of the region) or iii) areas where colleges struggled to recruit
- the location of provision was patchy, in a populous county such as Essex, where Colchester Institute was the only college based in the county many were excluded by either how far they were from the provision or because courses they may have favoured were not offered in the county at all
- we noted in section 3 that this project was positioned primarily as a training project with a too limited emphasis on helping people into work - this is evidenced by a projected over-achievement of the participant target by 25%, but an under-achievement against the forecast into work target of 73%
- putting people through training did not greatly help with the problem of helping participants find a job - other factors come into the finding a job challenge, including experience, attitude and job search skills
- the project might have addressed the experience levels of many participants by designing in more practical experience - eg. building buildings or doing installations, with less emphasis on participant numbers, more emphasis on helping people into jobs

### **A slow start**

- one example of the 'slow start' in delivery was the response to 100 hot leads that were supplied by an external consultancy to colleges so they made a fast start in February and March 2011
- most colleges were not ready to deliver courses at that time, most leads were parked and many individuals were lost to the project because of the time delay
- some colleges also found that where they were referred small *initial* numbers from various agencies, they could not establish a sufficient quorum to run a viable programme and so courses were often delayed and participants lost

### **Project delivery**

- there is some evidence that the bite sized course such as Colchester's does not translate well into job outcomes - it may be that longer courses resulting in qualifications are more successful in leading to job outcomes
- the project team views demand from employers for low carbon recruits as more latent than hoped for - therefore they have projected very low into work outputs (35 against a target of 130)
- however, we expect there were many more than 130 new jobs created in the low carbon sector in the region during this period, the project needed to better identify where these jobs were and to ensure 'their people' took up the jobs in greater numbers
- colleges expect the situation to be much easier when the low carbon economy is more established on the ground - and if construction and related sectors have recovered from current reduced levels of activity
- we expect that there are similar issues in this project to those found in project 11 (Low Carbon in Fenland and King's Lynn) where the skills of previously unemployed individuals have not grown sufficiently to meet the skills shortages that most employers have
- performance across the FE colleges has been variable - if a college did not offer a substantial low carbon related provision, it quickly had to establish a niche - Colchester did, with a short renewable energy course, most others did not

**Project 11:** SMARTLIFE Low Carbon Skills for Work *(led by Cambridgeshire County Council)*

### 1 Project aims and objectives:

The project was based in the Fenland and King's Lynn areas. It aimed to re-skill and upskill unemployed individuals to prepare them for jobs in the emerging low carbon sector and to then offer support into those jobs, through developing a clear pathway to assist individuals from 'no work to being in work'. In order to achieve this, training provision had to be expanded and enhanced to be more flexible and relevant to meet employer needs within low carbon sectors of the economy.

Funding was £125,000.

### 2 Project design and delivery:

Three main referral agencies referred unemployed potential participants to the Adult Guidance Service - JCP, FACET and the Ferry Project. Participants were offered training opportunities in innovative methods of construction, retrofitting and renewable technologies. A one to one skills analysis assessed both soft and technical skills and participants were able to choose from a flexible menu of support with guidance, worth up to £800 per person.

To support access to training, travel costs and childcare vouchers were also offered. Participants also received employability training - job search, interview and CV writing skills. The project worked with Cambridgeshire Regional College and The College of West Anglia to develop the technical training (low carbon construction).

### 3 Project outputs and outcomes:

The figures below are estimates to completion.

Any estimate of final outputs should bear in mind the project manager has now left and previous under achievement against targets.

- 110 participants (target 130)
- 7 in work on leaving (target 22)

- 15 economically inactive people in job search/further learning (target 15)

Equality and diversity results are also based on the project team's estimate to completion.

	Target	Actual	% attainment
Disability	11	9	82%
Aged 50+	12	13	108%
Women	33	4	12%
Ethnic minorities	12	3	25%

The project team found the targets for women and ethnic minorities particularly challenging in terms of performance against equality and diversity targets. They reported:

- only around 1% BME population in the target area
- great difficulties in attracting women to the largely construction environment
- difficulties in attracting people with disabilities to the largely construction environment

#### 4 Value for money (VfM):

There is a good case with this project for following the value for money method applied in the two Enterprising Communities projects, which have similar characteristics being:

- priority 1 aimed at those not working
- with a key outputs of participant numbers
- and a second key output of numbers into work

For the Enterprising Communities projects we arrived at an estimate that it takes approximately twice the level of activity to support someone into work compared to other participants, in which case the read across value for money picture for this project is as follows:

<u>Total funding: £125,000 (130 participants)</u>	
Funding <i>profile</i> to support 22 people into work	= £1644/head
Funding <i>profile</i> to support 108 other participants	= £822/head
Participants <i>actually</i> into work	= 7
Other participants <i>actually</i> supported	= 103
Actual value achieved = (7x£1644) + (103x£822)	= <b>£96,174</b>
Value for money compared to profile	= <b>77%</b>

Therefore the project achieved £28,826 less value than was contracted for based on funding of £125,000. This is due to both a lower level of participants and fewer people into work than contracted for.

### 5 Additionality:

In recent years RDAs clarified the definition of additionality to mean the 'additionality of project benefits' - benefits being outputs and outcomes over and above what would have accrued without the intervention of the project.

On this definition, the skills benefits can be considered to have been somewhat additional because the target group is the unemployed and economically inactive during a period of substantial and rising unemployment - and falling funded skills opportunities.

Additionality *of project benefits* is reduced however, where the extent of provision becomes weighted towards very short course interventions that do not up-skill sufficiently to contribute greatly to into work targets (or employment in low carbon sectors). The wider benefits - people into work and the economic payback from that - is projected as very low because of the likely

under-achievement against the into work target and the lack of contribution to employment in the target construction related sectors.

## 6 Project sustainability:

The low level of achievement of this project and an absence of follow on projects or funding mean any benefits of this project are unlikely to endure.

## 7 Strategic Added Value:

We can identify no significant SAV effects because this model did not work. The project team concluded that attempting to match low carbon skills to the unemployed was a false premise, particularly at a relatively early stage of development for low carbon employment on the ground. Previously enthusiastic employers concluded only during this project that the unemployed people they were offered were still under-skilled for the jobs where they had skills gaps and shortages. (See discussion about the Bedford College low carbon experience, project 10). We would have expected Smartlife to have been more aware of the issues likely to be encountered, particularly about the inactive or unemployed as a potential source of labour for their sector, given that their agenda is all about low carbon. We would also have expected more emphasis on the finding of work target for this project, when the emphasis for most of its duration was trying to establish the training model.

We expect that a project such as this would work more effectively as an upskilling project for those already in construction, particularly with a craft or installation background. Or, for new entrants, especially the young, as an integrated low carbon element of existing courses.

## 8a Key learning points - what worked well:

- the **need** for the project was well argued with good evidence of high deprivation indicators in the area and major projects likely to help the construction industry such as Northstowe new town, several large schools projects and major construction projects in King's Lynn

- many employers signed up to the model, with eventually over 70 involved
- major regional and national players such as Kier Group PLC and Galliford Try offered the potential to create jobs within local supply chains
- employers were also attracted by the idea of a free recruitment service for an emerging low carbon workforce
- when low demand for the project became clear - particularly from unemployed people - the project changed its delivery model to reach out more effectively into places such as hostels, to make 'low carbon' more real for people with construction site visits built into initial awareness events

#### 8b Key learning points - what did not work well:

##### Need and demand

- the project proposal produced good evidence of need (deprivation, future low carbon jobs) it did not address the **demand** side at all well
- while the target area for the project was clear, the size of the area has been a limiting factor in attracting enough participants
- in order to create the outputs, the project had to succeed with an ever diminishing pool of individuals:
  - unemployed in the target area
  - also willing and able to work
  - also able to understand a low carbon proposition
  - also open to working in construction
  - also open to investing in their skills
  - also willing and able to turn up to initial events
  - also able to complete the programme

- it was not sufficiently established at the outset whether unemployed people would understand or sign up to the project
- lack of demand took two main forms:
  - i) low levels of interest from unemployed individuals, many were more disengaged than expected
  - ii) lack of demand from employers for completers because of their unsuitability for the skills shortages in construction
- an example of disengagement was the high proportion of people who failed to turn up to their initial guidance session - training sessions also suffered from cancellations and low attendance
- the economic and construction downturn was particularly badly timed for the project

### **Partnership**

- projects such as this are high risk where they develop and offer untried provision within a short fixed timescale
- this specific partnership was largely unformed and had to be built mostly from scratch, taking time out of the project and reducing time available to deliver outputs
- referrals from JCP were low - the project team did not persist sufficiently to make the project visible to JCP staff
- an example of this: 'we invited ourselves to a JCP meeting a good while ago and are still waiting for a response'
- only Next Steps of the referral agencies worked well
- the focus of the project seemed to change as the difficulties in creating sufficient job demand in the 'sustainable built environment' became apparent
- so that there are few projected job outcomes and 'into work' will mostly mean any work



**Project 12:** *English Language Training for Migrant Workers (led by The Learning Partnership Ltd)*

### 1 Project aims and objectives:

This project aimed to remove barriers for migrants and enhance social cohesion targeting employed migrants aged 19+. It provided English language training at several levels, but with a primary focus on basic skills and assisting learners to a stage where they could access mainstream learning opportunities. It also provided opportunities for migrant workers to work as support teachers by encouraging those with teaching skills and experience to qualify as ESOL support teachers.

Funding was £629,309.

### 2 Project design and delivery:

The Learning Partnership had delivered approaches to ESOL through work with the LSC in Bedfordshire and Luton (and then Hertfordshire) that led to the development of the TransQual brand. TLP was the lead partner and project manager, with a Steering Group and sub regional leads and task groups. The project team worked with a wide range of partners to identify individuals who required English language training and support to improve their skills and it worked with partner databases and contacts with groups such as the Chambers of Commerce and trade union learning representatives. The core project involved four main strands:

- i) outreach to identify participants through the partners described above
- ii) an induction session, eligibility check and an initial assessment to identify their needs together with an IAG session
- iii) development of an individual learning plan to identify aspirations, career goals, their training and additional support needs
- iv) delivery of courses - employers were encouraged to offer access to ESOL classes on their premises and in many cases the employer offered an equal employer/employee learning time contribution.

### 3 Project outputs and outcomes:

Participant levels are 17% above target, while those gaining a basic skills/level 1 qualification were 126% above target. The area of under performance was level 3 qualifications, at 70% of target.

The project team suggested that the main reason was a number of beneficiaries were assessed as not meeting project criteria who could not then count towards outputs.

- 913 participants (target 780)
- 697 gained basic skills/level 1 qualification (target 309)
- 28 gained level 3 qualification (target 40)

Equality and diversity results were generally good with the noticeable exception of the disability target at only 3% of target. We conclude that this particular target was not pursued with any additional effort, but also that the nature of migrant workers is such that levels of disability are likely to be very low among such mobile workers and in any case the understanding of what constitutes disability is not likely to be high.

	Target	Actual	% attainment
Disability	117	3	3%
Aged 50+	156	168	107%
Women	390	489	125%
Ethnic minorities	62	74	119%

#### 4 Value for money (VfM):

Assessing value for money is rather clouded by three factors:

i) The evaluation report (*ELTMW final report*) was produced by the organisation that led the project. Although it contains a section on impact, there is no substantive assessment of project benefits or impact beyond performance against output targets and a participant satisfaction rate assessed through surveys as 98%

ii) the project team know of no prior research that identifies the benefit of taking individuals from basic entry level to entry level 2 and particularly not in an ESOL context

iii) the project application did not identify the cost of supporting an individual to achievement at Basic/level 1 level compared to the cost to support to level 3

Therefore a *cost per output type* analysis is not possible, nor a value for money assessment related to value or outcome/impact.

The most reliable approach is therefore to take the profiled cost per participant in the contract and compare it to the actual cost per participant as delivered in the project.

<u>Total funding: £629,309 (780 participants)</u>	
Funding <i>profile</i> to support 780 participants	= £807/head
Participants <i>actually</i> supported	= 913
Actual value achieved	= £736,791
Value for money compared to profile	= 117%

Put another way, the project achieved £107,482 greater value than was contracted for based on funding of £629,309. This is clearly due to the higher level of participants, 913 rather than 780. Any additional cost of that support is not accounted for in the above VfM analysis because it was borne by The Learning Partnership. They in effect put more time into the project but did not pass that cost on to the funders.

They also supported Level 3 learners to completion where they had been identified as not meeting ESF criteria, a benefit to the individuals that cannot be accounted for in a project level VfM assessment.

One consequence of this analysis we suggest is that future Co-financed projects should clarify at proposal stage what the cost per output assumption is, where there are two or more output types. This would enable VfM comparisons at appraisal stage and at project end. Also, for this type of project, we suggest that the value of upskilling (between the levels into which the great majority of participants fall) should be identified either from existing research, failing that, by project level analysis and modelling as the project progresses.

## 5 Additionality:

We assess the level of outreach achieved by this project as very high because there was no other provision or project tackling the core pre-entry level ESOL need.

Some of the leadership and management and higher level support might have been met, but this provision accounts for only 4% of the total and even then some of that higher level provision would have been additional.

## 6 Project sustainability:

Our conclusion is that competence, capacity and delivery have all been enhanced by this project. However the Coalition Government's policy is that all migrants are required to achieve a threshold level of English to be able to obtain a work permit or to live in the UK.

The policy suggests that this type of provision is going to be required, especially when individuals are required to complete an accredited course. Project partners agreed that the funding of beginner level ESOL provision should be continued as there are many unable to pay, or hard to reach groups that are unlikely to engage with mainstream provision. However cuts in the comprehensive spending review (October 2010) reduced funding rates by 4.3% compared to 2010/11. The review also removed funding for ESOL delivered in the workplace and only allowed co-funding Level 2 provision in SMEs, as well as identifying several other cutbacks. There is a commitment to this form of project support in the region - the issue will be to sustain the work on the ground where funding and other cuts suggest affordability is going to be the key issue for a number of years to come.

## 7 Strategic Added Value:

In terms of strategic added value (SAV) we note two particular long term and significant effects:

- the project enhanced supply side provision to the long term benefit of those in similar client groups in the future, both in terms of the capacity in the region and the quality to deliver Transqual type provision
- sub regional or county level partnerships have the opportunity to work together into the future and to explore areas where funding might be

available, such as from local authorities or through local Co-financing or possibly direct ESF contracting

#### 8a Key learning points - project design:

- partner organisations were chosen so they worked very locally in their community
- local partnerships worked well with around 30 organisations attending meetings at the height of the project
- delivery agents all had experience of delivering ESOL provision
- specialist IAG was important, all learners were offered a full assessment and sessions at the beginning middle and end of course
- The Learning Partnership played a key role in leading the project but also helped the often quite small delivery organisations by coaching them to understand the requirements of an ESF project and/or shielding them from some of the time consuming reporting requirements so they were free to deliver
- IAG was important because describing the group as 'pre-ESOL' did not imply learning difficulty, it simply meant the learner was pre-literate in English, many participants were well educated

#### 8b Key learning points - project delivery:

##### **Engagement**

- engaging with networks was the most effective recruitment method, particularly those that worked with migrant groups
- word of mouth then helped greatly to promote the project once some in a key network had learned about the project
- companies were very supportive in the programme particularly where they understood that the training was very flexible and could for example be fitted around their shift patterns or staff rotas (example: Stansted Airport)
- additionality was high, there was no other provision aimed at the core target group

- completion rates were good at 81% considering the commitment to 36 hours+ of learning and were exactly on target
- beginner level ESOL materials were commissioned from NIACE to ensure latest, most appropriate content
- tutors could also tailor materials by embedding key employer policies and practices such as health and safety, safe handling and signage
- bi-lingual tutors often delivered courses and bi-lingual learning support assistants also played a key role

#### 8c What did not work:

- some level 3 qualifications were lost because a number of learners did not meet ESF programme criteria
- participants were not tracked in terms of destinations, there may well have been a good level of success in terms of progression (where migrants had stayed in this country during the economic downturn); but as they were not tracked, one proof of success as evidenced through progression at work is not available
- TLP produced an evaluation report for their own project - while there is merit in an end of project report identifying lessons learned, to position that as an evaluation can be misleading; knowing *how* to evaluate is an issue, the team did not address how to identify impact or outcomes either upfront (to establish baselines and tracking) or in the evaluation
- the use of case studies in an evaluation can be particularly misleading, they can imply a kind of specific to general logic about the success of a project
- whereas an evaluation should be concerned with project wide benefits - case studies have their place (in marketing for example), but individual cases should not offered as evidence of success in a project wide evaluation

**Project 13:** Improving Capabilities - Beyond 2010 *(led by Essex County Council)*

**1 Project aims and objectives:**

In 2008 EEDA contracted with a consortium led by the Essex Development and Regeneration Agency (ExDRA) for the delivery of a programme that consisted of two key elements:

- skills development of employees in companies in key sectors
- a response to redundancy (R2R) service to individuals who had been formally notified by their employer of their likely redundancy

ExDRA was subsequently subsumed back into Essex County Council which then became the contract holder. This programme was EEDA's primary vehicle for influencing and delivering skills development in the workplace and for providing a skills response to a region suffering the impact of wider economic shock. The key aims of the programme included:

- improvements to regional productivity, competitiveness and economic resilience
- particularly creating upskilling prior to redundancy taking place
- a direct impact on the capabilities of the leaders of their organisations and consequently a greater medium term impact on their organisations
- skills infrastructure benefits including sustainable capacity and capability building for the providers and their key partners and an impact on the longer term provision of higher-level skills development
- improved flexibility in delivery of training

Funding was £9,339,187, increased from £6.2m originally, to support increasing R2R work due to the economic downturn.

**2 Project design and delivery:**

Core elements of the programme included: Beyond 2010

- i) the involvement of sector partners as the key channels of communication to promote the programme, engage with companies and assist with the preparation of applications for funding

- ii) the provision of subsidies for skills development programmes commissioned by beneficiary companies within ten key sectors
- iii) an agreed intervention rate set at 50% (later adjusted upwards to 70% in some instances)
- iv) support for accredited and non-accredited training up to and including courses deemed to be at level 4 or equivalent

### R2R

- i) to identify companies eligible for R2R and convince the employer about the worth of training and support for those in their workforce facing redundancy
- ii) to arrange individual Matrix accredited Skills Training Analysis (STA) for all affected individuals asking for assistance
- iii) to provide support to individuals that could be drawn from a wide range of sources; benefits presentations (JCP); soft skills courses; start up advice; employment related training; skills for life support; referral to executive and professional support; and any secondary or follow up one-to-one support

### 3 Project outputs and outcomes:

- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 15871 participants (target 11500)</li> <li>• 145 gaining basic skills inc. L1 145 (target 195)</li> <li>• 1095 gaining L2 qualification (target 950)</li> <li>• 899 gaining L3 qualification (target 517)</li> <li>• 377 gaining L4 qualification (target 710)</li> </ul> |
|--|

The main reason for the participant numbers being so high was the ability of the project team to procure courses at very favourable rates, through business-like negotiating tactics, buying in bulk or negotiating lower rates for in-house training where provider costs are much lower. Providers also became aware in large numbers about the business opportunities beyond Train To Gain (and particularly as that programme started to wind down). Many helped publicise Beyond 2010 to their customers, although generally the unit cost was less beneficial because this project worked on negotiated costs rather than set, high (ceiling) costs as in Train To Gain.

### **Benefits of linking redundancy support (R2R) and skills provision (Beyond 2010)**

The figures in the box above are aggregated to include both R2R and Beyond 2010. A breakdown between the two strands of the programme illustrates strategic benefits of

linking the two strands to provide flexibility on where provision was prioritised at different times. For example:

- provision was weighted more towards R2R as the recession took hold and demand for redundancy support grew rapidly
- for Level 4 qualifications targets, companies had to be below 50 employees to avoid State Aid restrictions, so R2R helped considerably with level 4 attainment as smaller R2R companies took up Level 4 provision
- the early redundancy caseload typically involved organisations making up to 20% of the workforce redundant (bigger redundancies increased in number in the latter half of the programme) - so Beyond 2010 provision was introduced to initial R2R supported companies who then had a need to upskill or reskill those who remained in their reduced workforce

•	15871 participants:	R2R:	11098
		Beyond 2010:	4773
•	145 basic skills + L1	R2R:	145
		Beyond 2010:	0
•	1095 L2 qualifications	R2R:	755
		Beyond 2010:	340
•	899 L3 qualifications	R2R:	661
		Beyond 2010:	238
•	377 L4 qualifications	R2R:	107
		Beyond 2010:	270

### The value of EEDA outputs: Beyond 2010 - an illustrative example

This project is an example of how EEDA could use its contracts to obtain project benefits beyond the core ESF outputs (which for priority 2 were typically participant numbers and NVQ qualifications achieved). In Beyond 2010, the key additional outputs which EEDA helped to fund and drive were:

- 5940 people assisted to get a job
- 2010 businesses assisted to improve performance
- 9767 people assisted in skills development

- 145 people gaining basic skills (Skills for Life strategy)

In other projects, EEDA outputs could target additional key outputs such as:

- jobs created/safeguarded
- businesses created demonstrating growth
- new businesses attracted to the region
- private and public sector leverage
- businesses assisted to engage in collaboration with the UK knowledge base

We have not replicated the many and various 'EEDA output' targets and achievements across the other 15 projects covered by this evaluation, in order to avoid overload of data in this report. Our main conclusion however is that flexibility in project design and contracting for additional outputs beyond ESF can and did produce significant additional project benefits.

Equality and diversity figures were:

	Target	Actual	% attainment
Disability	1725	635	37%
Aged 50+	2300	5284	230%
Women	5750	6478	113%
Ethnic minorities	920	902	98%

The main issue with under-performance against equality and diversity targets is that this was a demand led project. Within the overall target group of the employed and self employed, the characteristics of participants were largely determined by where demand came from. Most disadvantaged groups are in any case significantly under-represented in the *working* population of the region and are under-represented in the region compared to the national profile. These factors made the generic targets particularly difficult. We conclude that the underlying rationale of this project would have had to be significantly changed to achieve these targets - that is, to have created four targeted supply led sub-projects which specifically aimed to recruit participants from the various disadvantaged groups.

We also note that the targets in the above box are the agreed targets between EEDA and the contract holders, which are much larger than the CFO agreement targets. Within this 2007-2011 programme, the priority 2 projects

(when aggregated) significantly exceed equality and diversity targets on all measures except disability.

#### 4 Value for money (VfM):

We suggest that value for money within this project is best assessed in terms of the numbers of participants achieved for the level of funding - an economy method.

The GVA calculation in Versa's evaluation of the Beyond 2010 element of this project used a skills uplift method based on qualifications gained.

While this followed IEF guidance, qualifications accounted for only 16% of Beyond 2010 participants, so to use any similar basis to assess value for money missed the benefit that accrued to the other 84% of participants. It would also miss the fundamental point that in this demand led programme, qualifications were not the primary purpose or benefit.

In learning points (section 9) we summarise our views as to how benefits might be assessed in future demand led projects. However, sensitive measurement requires company specific baselines and tracking through the life of the key business critical interventions - which did not take place in this project. We note that targeting and measuring project benefits at the company level was always the preferred Treasury method to achieve the most sound assessment of GVA - but that examples of this approach appear to be rare in England, although it is common practice in some other places, notably Scotland through Scottish Enterprise. Value for money in this section is therefore assessed on an economy basis - what the funding bought above the original contract.

<u>Total funding: £9,339,187 (11500 participants)</u>	
Funding <i>profile</i> to support 11500 participants	= £812/head
Participants <i>actually</i> supported	= 15871
Actual value achieved	= £12,887,252
Value for money compared to profile	= 138%

#### 5 Additionality:

The Versa evaluation of Beyond 2010 found that 79-80% of training undertaken had been prompted in part or in full by the availability of funding. This equated with findings from our survey of 70 participants in the 2011 project, where particularly very small businesses (under 10 employees) and third sector organisations were very likely to assert that they could not have considered undertaking any of the training without funding support. Many described the funding as the deciding factor in their decision to proceed, even though many smaller businesses described the intervention as very important for the business as a whole. We also suggest the additionality was increased by the way in which EEDA outputs were targeted in addition to ESF outputs (see example in section 3 above).

## 6 Project sustainability:

This project was followed by two one year projects which were separate but derived very closely from it.

So for 2011, there was both a follow on one year R2R project (project summary 15) and a very similar project to Beyond 2010 (Improving Capabilities in sectors 2011, project summary 16). In the Versa survey of employers in 2010, 85% stated they were more likely to consider further training as a result of their participation in the programme. 12% said their experience had not encouraged them. Care needs to be taken with this response because it is not clear whether the employer was assuming that future training would be subsidised. Given that the most valued feature of support was identified in that same survey as the financial assistance, this is a rather important consideration in assessing future business behaviour. However in our survey of 2011 project participants (where around 25% were the 'employer' or owner manager), we did find that a substantial proportion described themselves as committed to future investment in training and skills on the basis of the business benefit they had derived. This group was responsible for the large majority of the business critical interventions we describe in section 9.

There is also likely to be some enduring benefit where sector lead bodies have become more convinced of the value of demand led skills interventions, together with some of their partner organisations. However, with the demise of many referral agencies and the Co-financed demand led projects, it is likely the level of activity will fall away significantly and will be largely confined to market rate projects that employers are prepared to fully fund themselves.

## 7 Strategic Added Value:

This project created significant learning across a wide range of partners:

- i) that demand led training was particularly welcomed by employers
- ii) that funding could be utilised to deliver the ESF outputs (eg. qualifications), but through intelligent procurement driving down costs, a significant surplus could be created to support business critical projects which tended to be highly tailored, often expensive and not qualification driven
- iii) that significant numbers of employers came to view investment in skills as a key driver of business performance and far less as a cost that was necessary for people to do their jobs
- iv) that early intervention models for redundancy support are significantly more likely to assist individuals into work than post redundancy support models and where referrals to key agencies such as Business Link were strong
- v) that by linking the redundancy support strand and the employer skills strand, the two parts of this project could dovetail together in some cases to create increased demand (eg. for both services rather than just one) or by being able to move provision from one programme to the other to reflect where demand was growing or falling

### 8 Participant feedback:

The key points from our research were as follows.

**22%** of all participants found out about the project through recommendation - word of mouth, former colleagues and partner organisations, with referrals from or prior knowledge of Business Link being the most significant.

**68%** of all participants found out about this project from their employer, in most cases this involved the employer organising training for a group of staff and then sending them together or in cohorts to a programme of training.

**2%** could not recall where they heard of the project.

Did you achieve what you wanted from being involved?

YES **84%**

NO **4%**

PARTLY **12%**

Did the experience during the project benefit you in any way (tangibly, after the event)?

YES **67%**

NO **6%**

TO SOME EXTENT **26%**

What was the MOST important help or advice you were given?

Transformational content/business wide benefits	21%
Breadth of input from trainers/presenters	19%
Compliance (certificate to practice/of competence)	19%
Training to understand people/teams/behaviour of others	6%
No useful benefit	6%
All other categories	29%
('All other' included diverse answers such as gaining a very specific skill)	
In what way could the support given to you have been better? (MOST important factor)	
Support could not be bettered	65%
Duration (usually needed to be longer/less intense)	12%
More tailored content/pitched more at my level/more in-depth	10%
Better trainer/presenter	7%
Other	6%
91% of respondents were employed, 9% self employed/owner managers.	

#### Key survey findings:

1 A large majority of participants were satisfied with their experience, 84% agreeing they achieved what they wanted from being involved.

2 The level of direct benefit to participants was high, with 67% of respondents indicating they had benefitted tangibly from the project either greatly or to some extent.

3 Where respondents viewed the benefit to themselves as limited or non-existent (32% in total) this response usually meant that they have not gained any tangible benefit because they have not had the opportunity to apply new skills in their job.

4 We interviewed 68 participants from this project, which was completed in March 2011. In order to ensure good recall (and that respondents were correctly identifying Beyond 2010 training rather than confusing it with other provision they may have accessed), we interviewed those who had completed between last quarter 2010 and 1st quarter 2011 ie. c. 9-15 months ago.

5 This produced a sample that seemed unduly weighted towards a few larger organisations that sent many employees on the same or similar courses. Examples included many supervisors and team leaders on ILM courses from Bernard Matthews; dozens of staff from the Crossroads charity attending courses on specific conditions such as epilepsy and autism; dozens of staff from housing associations attending ILM and Prince 2 type courses.

6 We believe that this sample may have been weighted towards such provision as the project was striving to achieve overall output targets and specifically qualification targets towards project end.

7 The proportion of business critical projects is certainly lower when compared to Capabilities in Sectors 2011 (see project summary 16). These were projects where respondents describe 'success' in business terms - profit, turnover, new products/opportunities, not in terms of inputs eg. new skills.

8 We recommend for future similar projects that safeguards are put in place to ensure an appropriate balance between business critical projects and the cohort development model prevalent in this sample, where the impact was considerably lower and fewer SMEs/self employed were involved.

9 The most common pattern of feedback about what could be improved was not strong - 12% wanted a different duration of project, usually longer or with content being less intense. This outcome was influenced by a number of Prince 2 participants making the same point.

10 That 69% could identify no area in which support could be bettered suggests to us that this proven model worked well overall.

### 9a Key learning points (R2R)

EEDA and the contractor worked hard to differentiate their redundancy support offer from the others in the region, notably JCP and SFA.

The partnership negotiated EEDA's offer with partners so that it clearly targeted the 'at risk' participants and used technical assistance funding to produce marketing materials and channels to clarify the unique EEDA offer to the market (employers and at risk employees).

Partnership working was generally effective across SFA, Next Steps and JCP - cross referral of individuals and employers was at a good level and generally worked well.

Early intervention in redundancy support was a significant benefit of EEDA's offer, for several reasons:

- pre-redundancy, individuals are often in a better mental state to take the necessary steps to help themselves
- of all the regional redundancy support programmes, EEDA R2R helped a higher proportion of people find new jobs (see *Teevan Consulting Network evaluation 2010* - 66%)
- the training was flexible to help people with what most wanted - a new job - so secondary issues such as gaining an NVQ did not take precedence over the main purpose

With a demand led project participants generally needed quick support (when redundancy was looming) so much of the provision was from the private sector that generally demonstrated it could move quickly to support individuals.

The main subcontractor in R2R (TCHC) was only allowed to deliver soft skills under the contract, so conflicts of interest were avoided because they could not refer training opportunities to themselves.

Individuals who favoured 'vocational' or job related training as a priority (eg. ACE, security cards, Prince 2, Offshore tickets) were almost twice as likely to find a new job quickly compared to those favouring 'non vocational' training.

Those taking vocational training options were usually clearer about what new work they wanted to find - prospective employers could also more easily match their vacancy with the updated skills that the individual had gained.

Respondents were generally very positive about provision received under EEDA R2R. The area perceived to require most improvement was to make the provision less generic and better tailored to individual need - professionals and executives tended particularly to this view.

Increasing numbers of people expressed interest in self-employment. Flexibility could be offered to support this group, some training that might appear to be 'nice to have' (personal interest) was supported because that was the area in which the individual wanted to set up a business.

It was important to give individuals free choice in where to source their training - compared to colleges, the flexibility and speed of private sector response was usually a positive factor.

Trust was important between funder and project manager - EEDA had a continuous improvement approach, always open to change and suggestions, raising a constructive criticism was never an issue.

Much training under EEDA R2R was level 3 and above, these individuals were usually more able to brace themselves for change and more able to go through the TNA, CV preparation, committing to training and considering alternative jobs - people at Level 2 and below found this a more daunting process.

R2R better supported individuals who were more self-motivated, it was less easy to access than single provision programmes, but was more flexible for those prepared to explore the various types of support.

In the regional redundancy support evaluation (*Teevan Consulting Network 2010*), 32% of respondents finding a job (who found support useful) described R2R support as a 'very useful' factor in finding a job, with 68% describing the support as 'quite useful' in finding their job.

EEDA R2R data on beneficiaries was excellent, TCHC's systems facilitated easy access to contacts, following up individuals in an evaluation was much easier than for other regional redundancy support programmes.

However, the opt-out on completion of provision clause was offered to all beneficiaries *at the point of completing the programme*, so 40-50% of beneficiaries could not be subsequently contacted. We proposed in our 2010 evaluation that the opt-out should be changed to 13 weeks *post completion*, so follow up and evaluation was facilitated and the intended results better understood.

### 9b What has not worked (R2R)?

Quality of careers advice was often good, but sometimes variable, eg. the project evaluation identified high level of concerns among professional people that advice or training was not tailored; or of too low level; or their sector was not understood by the advisor.

Many IAG networks were not as up to date with labour market intelligence as might be expected. Where a provider was Matrix accredited, that should imply keeping abreast of the labour market, but often providers seemed to

expect this was someone else's task to provide labour market data - the private sector market was better on this score.

Success at working operationally with JCP was variable - advisor knowledge (eg. of non JCP offers) was frequently limited, with a high churn of staff in many offices presenting an ongoing challenge to ensure JCP advisors could properly present options to those at risk of redundancy.

There could have been more hands on management of providers at local level, particularly QA follow up.

TCHC did not always know where any problems with provision were occurring, in some cases these issues were only identified when the project evaluation identified them.

There was no follow up on individuals trained (as introduced for R2R 2011). This could lead to a loss of focus on the *outcome*, ie. most people's desire to find a new job - *which could result in a lack of understanding of the end result achieved*, who needed more help, what worked and what did not.

In a demand led project, it was difficult to set population based targets for equality and diversity, which may not correlate well to the business profile. Demand drove the eventual profile of participants, not the targets. Targets could be monitored and managed, but the ability to affect them was limited.

The universal offer appeared inequitable to many - where individuals took high 5 or 6 figure redundancy payoffs, many questioned why they also could access the £700 R2R support. However there would have been problems in engaging in 'means testing'.

R2R had a chequered track record of supporting small companies who were undoubtedly difficult to identify where they were variously:

- unlikely to fill in HR1s
- likely to make redundancies quickly and cleanly, not a drawn out timescale to facilitate an extended support process
- less willing or able to release staff to do training anyway, particularly when the business was struggling

The likely result is that larger organisations obtained better support, usually because R2R either did not find the smaller company at all, or could not act fast enough to support it.

There were some geographic blackspots where provision was too distant; the college network did not help this, tending to be:

- geographically based
- not highly responsive to urgent customer needs

- with a high cancellation rate due to the need to run courses with a minimum level of numbers
- only operating for 35-40 weeks per year

Colleges were usually highly motivated to access ESF funding and their reach and scope of provision could appear impressive - the reality was less satisfactory for the above reasons.

There was no contract (eg. 'SLA') where it was clear what the expectations were of the individual and what they could expect in return; there were SLAs with partners but not with 'customers'.

It would have been helpful to clarify for participants "If you don't receive this, here's what you can do" - along the lines of the JCP jobseekers agreement.

### **9c Key learning points (Beyond 2010):**

Beyond 2010 filled a key gap beyond Business Link's start up support, to those businesses that could respond to flexible, demand led training support.

The project resisted the idea of approved training providers, this would have resulted in no negotiation on project level pricing, paying full rates, with dangers of provision becoming increasingly supply not demand led.

In this project, the business paid the training provider directly, that was much more of a quality assurance mechanism, employers invested their own money.

Versa drew some key learning points from their (2011) final evaluation:

- the overall effectiveness of engaging with employers through relevant sector organisations
- the power of financial intervention to stimulate training often in companies where there was not a culture of continuous professional development
- the influence that a programme such as this had to influence the practices of training providers
- the attractiveness of non-accredited training rather than the purely accredited programmes funded through other schemes such as Train To Gain
- the link between targeted professional development/training and improved productivity

Value for money on training has been very high - in some publicly supported programmes, training is paid for at a ceiling rate; in the Beyond 2010 model, partners negotiated for better rates, for example with in-house training where it could be efficiently organised with full numbers per session.

This led to the ability to over-deliver on outputs to a much greater extent than would otherwise be the case when working with fixed unit costs.

A positive was that there was no conflict of interest or vested interest, the fundholder had no opportunity to be involved in delivery - the Project Director and Essex County Council had to be credible with such large funding at stake and the Project Director possessed a very good knowledge of the costs of various training provision and could use this to negotiate favourable rates where the surplus could be reinvested into bespoke projects.

This project grew understanding about how long culture change takes, so companies understand provision available, (that alone perhaps 2-3 years), to then exploring provision, to eventually accepting major external support.

Business Link did come to refer many organisations to Beyond 2010, it was important as a Government backed business-facing organisation that they were brought actively into the programme.

It is difficult to assess deadweight and substitution within this programme - some level must have occurred. It was important to trust those doing the training needs analyses, that they tried to minimise deadweight.

When working with partners on skills related training, it was important to provide regular updates on the provision available so they knew what was available and what was coming.

Approximately 4 out of 5 companies had not worked with funded training before, demonstrating a high level of additionality.

The Versa evaluation (2011) identified much increased likelihood for supported businesses to invest their own money in future training priorities.

Networks mostly worked - a partner was selected in each sector, organisations were then strongly encouraged to work through that partner. Good practice was actively shared across and within networks.

Future projects will have to find a way to identify the most viable networks and build and support that. Marketing budgets devolved to networks worked generally quite well prior to 2010.

The programme was seen as a business improvement and training project not a qualification driven programme. Qualifications had to be appropriate if they were relevant at all.

There is a need to continue to push the boundaries within ESF on 'or equivalent' approaches to qualifications, to use QCF for example as a modularised system. Qualifications most often do not fit the timeline of the business priority or the individuals' needs. For example, the Level 4 target was unlikely to be attainable for this reason.

Qualifications can mean much or nothing - the individual who achieves a qualification for the first time ever, including school, can see it as a life changing experience.

The key question was 'what difference will this experience make to the individual?' If it made a lot of difference, it was relevant, if not flexibility was key; accreditation of prior learning tended to not assist the reputation of qualifications in employers' eyes because it did not add anything, it did not demonstrate a distance travelled.

The decision to not fund mentoring and coaching was appropriate - this type of programme should fund a specific business/individual need and result.

ESF made no distinction about who delivered training, so there was no concept of good value, the managing agent had to minimise the risk of poor value and optimise the extent of business critical training being delivered.

#### 9d What did not work (Beyond 2010):

There was very little evidence that small companies wanted level 4 qualifications, especially in the prevailing economic climate; the Leitch report encouraged it, a target was set, but what companies might need and what they demanded tended to be different.

The biotechnology sector experienced particular problems, it was seen as a wealth creating sector, Government was willing to put money into it, but the companies tended to want something else, for example, wet labs but not this type of skills support. Many companies were also ineligible, either their parent company was too large or the company itself was too large, so targets for the sector were missed.

Sector membership organisations could find it difficult to sign up participants, often funding did not support a dedicated person, so the focus could be part time. If members saw a network working with non-members they could view that as a problem. Some networks came to view the Beyond 2010 as an opportunity to extend their membership, by introducing additional funding.

Colleges often found it difficult to work with an individual company - when they identified a need, they had to ensure an economically viable programme, working with many not the few - so tailoring and working with small groups and individual company needs could prove difficult.

#### The future:

The current strategy towards fewer larger contractors who can deliver across 3/4 regions as a minimum raises considerable issues - that excludes most organisations with local knowledge, there are questions about what it would add to the capacity of the region if a national operator takes over.

National operators might eventually gain the knowledge and experience but to come into the region with no local knowledge and no real commitment to economic development of the region is, at the outset, counter-productive. They may well deliver the outputs, but it is questionable what would be added beyond narrow contract delivery.

Partnership working is already failing in the region mostly due to the Government's austerity programme - degradation in grass roots partnerships makes it more difficult to engage with smaller companies, particular through transformational business skills support.

Linking R2R and Beyond 2010 was helpful - it saved back office costs and encouraged flexible cross-referral of employers from R2R to Beyond 2010 (and vice versa). The two projects were separated for 2011 because the complexity of the arrangement might have dissuaded some bidders from tendering. This is a lesson for the future of scale benefits from a large project investment.

#### **Project 14:** Intensive Business Start Up Priority 2 (*led by EEIDB Ltd*)

##### 1 Project aims and objectives:

2700 individuals were assisted under the Intensive Start Up Support Programme. The key aim was to increase the level of businesses that started up and were sustained. The project itself was a test of the viability of an individual's business idea, there was no initial screening of viability. Not proceeding with an inadvisable business idea could represent success as much as helping to launch a start up.

Funding was £1,800,000.

## 2 Project design and delivery:

The core support was the delivery of free workshops, where there was a portfolio of seven ranging from starting up to more specific content. In the Eastern region EEIDB Ltd added three workshops to the Government's core national Starting a Business programme - covering additional subjects of franchising, business ideas and the internet.

One to one support was available in addition to workshops, including intensive support and a bootcamp. The information service was then an ongoing source of support that participants could access as required. The Business Link web site increasingly attracted the most participants, with online bookings rising from an initial 12-14% to 33% in the last year, although our original research shows word of mouth recommendation often preceded web based search and booking.

There was a routine follow up of participants at 4-6 weeks as well as evaluation feedback from each workshop.

## 3 Project outputs and outcomes:

There was only one output agreed for this project, the participant target:

- 2700 participants (target 2700)

Equality and diversity figures can be viewed as reliable because the contract has ended and final claims agreed, with 3 of 4 targets being well exceeded:

Achievement against the disability targets is particularly low and noticeably lower than those start up projects that demonstrated 'extreme outreach' eg. Enterprising Communities in Bedford and Haverhill. We conclude this project was over-reliant on conventional outreach methods to succeed with this under-represented group - insufficient partnerships were built to achieve participant levels and advisory/project staff are unlikely to have been best placed to engage with some of the most disadvantaged groups.

	Target	Actual	% attainment

Disability	405	41	10%
Aged 50+	540	635	118%
Women	1350	1567	116%
Ethnic minorities	216	341	158%

#### 4 Value for money (VfM):

In section 5 (additionality) we identify from previous research that Business Link assisted start ups were 18 percentage points more likely to survive three years than the average for the region. In the Acuigen 2010 Survivability report, the consultants also identify the turnover of Business Link assisted start ups (in bands). We assess the average annual turnover per start up from the Acuigen research data as £212,000 in year 3 of trading.

From the original target number of participants of 2700 this data suggests that 486 additional start ups survived compared to what would have happened had they not had Business Link support. This equates to £103 million of additional annual turnover in assisted businesses - compared to ESF funding of £1.8 million across a period of April 2010 to November 2011 (approximately 20 months). The *annualised* comparison between additional turnover generated and ESF funding is therefore £103 million to £1.08 million.

There are two caveats. Firstly, this calculation assumes that the only substantive factor that leads to a higher than average Business Link survivability rate of 84% is the support itself. Might those with a propensity to seek Business Link support be more likely to seek other support and/or survive anyway? Secondly, the Acuigen research does not identify whether their sample contains priority 1 participants, priority 2 or a mixture of the two. We would expect the year 3 annual turnover of a priority 2 sample of start ups to be higher than a similar priority 1 sample, although there is no data to prove this.

Our calculated ratio of return of 95:1 between year 3 annual turnover of start ups and funding per participant to support them suggests very high value for money.

**5 Additionality:** EEIDB extended its share of the start up market from 8% initially to 16% in the past year, this is both a test of demand and additionality. Acuigen Ltd. reported in September 2010 on a project to identify the business survivability rates of Business Link East customers. They found among a sample of 300 participants that the survival rate is 84% (+/- 4.5%). This compares to The Office of National Statistics three year survival rate of 64.7% nationally (66% in the Eastern region). The three year survival rate for Business Link customers compared to all start ups in the region is therefore approximately 18 percentage points.

#### **6 Project sustainability:**

While this delivery model worked well, there is no evidence that its benefit will be sustained without successfully accessing additional funding in a very difficult funding climate. The demise of Business Link as an advisory based service removed the vehicle to deliver this support on a widespread regional basis - enterprise agencies are of a scale that they could support only a fraction of Business Link's numbers, even if further funding was successfully secured. There is considerable evidence that start up support has to be free of charge if the market is to be penetrated on a significant scale, including from our own survey.

#### **7 Strategic Added Value:**

In terms of strategic added value (SAV) we note one significant effect:

- the building of effective partnerships where individual partners engaged with target groups and through this project their mutual education into what delivery model work best with priority 2 participants

The downside is that the main delivery organisation (Business Link) has ceased to exist as a regional advisory based service and was in any case the only publicly funded body with the capacity to provide the service across the region on this scale.

## 8 Participant feedback:

This was one of seven projects in our ESF Co-financing evaluation where we were asked to undertake original research in the form of a telephone evaluation interview, in this case with 70 participants. The key points from our research were as follows.

**56%** of all participants found out about the project through recommendation - word of mouth, former colleagues, partner organisations, prior knowledge of Business Link.

**14%** of all participants found out about the project through BL marketing - advertising, leaflets, events.

**19%** could not recall where they heard of Business Link/the project.

**11%** found out through an internet search or BL web site.

Did you achieve what you wanted from being involved?

YES **71%**

NO **9%**

PARTLY **20%**

Did the experience during the project benefit you in any way (tangibly, after the event)?

YES **57%**

NO **16%**

TO SOME EXTENT **27%**

What was the MOST important help or advice you were given?

All my questions answered/comprehensive **37%**

Marketing (inc. social media, web, finding customers) **29%**

'Compliance' (tax/co. formation/accounts/HMRC) **10%**

All other categories **24%**

('All other' included diverse answers such as peer support; confidence building; avoiding a poor decision, bad business idea/under funded).

In what way could the support given to you have been better? (MOST important factor)

Support could not be bettered **71%**

Provide ongoing advisor assistance	11%
More tailored content/pitched more at my level/more in-depth	7%
All other responses	11%

### Key survey findings:

1 This feedback confirms how successful the project was given the large proportion of word of mouth type recommendations. In our sample, word of mouth from friends, family and former colleagues was responsible for more introductions than any other channel.

A sizeable proportion already knew of or had used Business Link before this project.

2 The level of direct benefit to participants was high, with 84% of respondents indicating they had benefitted tangibly from the project either greatly or to some extent.

3 Where individuals reported they only partly achieved what they wanted from participating (or benefitted to only some extent) the main reason was that they had either found a job or decided not to proceed with self employment, it was not often dissatisfaction with the process.

4 The most common pattern of feedback about what could be improved was not strong - 11% wanted ongoing access to a business advisor so they could have help to resolve business issues as they arose.

5 That 71% could identify no area in which support could have been bettered suggests to us that this proven model had been well developed to meet the needs of this client group.

6 66% of our sample were in self employment at the point we surveyed, which we consider to be a very high level of success - a further 23% were in paid employment (9% were unemployed).

7 93% of respondents expected to be either self employed or in paid employment in six months time, with only 3% expecting to be still unemployed; so optimism about the future increased over time among our sample of 70 respondents.

### 9a Key learning points - project design and delivery

- it was important that the process could identify individuals who had specialised needs that were best met through signposting to other agencies - for example, 'entry level' workshops were unlikely to meet the needs of a university spin out business or a senior manager or a specialist such as an accountant
- regional commissioning of start up services (such as appointing delivery contractors) helps local delivery - workshops can be run at a loss in more isolated areas if the overall package is cost effective;  
  
local authorities would not have this flexibility if they were to deliver start up support in the future
- several mechanisms were key to engaging on a wide scale, particularly the power of word of mouth, the web site and previous Business Link clients
- that the service was free and usually very local were key factors in persuading individuals to engage - there were no barriers of cost and few barriers of 'travel time to event'
- displacement was therefore likely to be negligible, there was no meaningful private sector provision (offering this depth of support on a free basis) to regard Business Link as a competitor with an unfair funding advantage
- the model was established and developed across a period of time so that it had become very robust by the time of this funding round
- start up support rarely involved a linear process where an individual moved seamlessly from broad idea to launch - so support needed to be blended to flex the depth or type of support
- confidence building was an integral part of supporting most individuals so they could attain their ultimate goal
- support to individuals was as specific or in-depth as required, from provision of information requests to in-depth advisor support and boot camps - satisfaction rates ran at 95-96%
- women particularly appreciated networking as a form of support and confidence building, as increasingly did many men

- workshop presenters needed to have inspirational personalities, to have run their own business and to have understood the client group well
- evaluation was built into the process after each workshop and at 4-6 weeks post completion which was valuable in identifying individuals who needed further support
- three additional workshops were provided based on demand identified, which were well supported
- marketing related workshops were valued - finding more business became an increasingly important factor during the economic downturn, as well as the growth in importance of social media and search engines
- the proportion of women to men evened up considerably due to extensive efforts to engage with women's groups

#### 9b What did not work:

- where there was a pattern of what could be improved, providing ongoing access to a business advisor was the strongest theme
- some outreach proved difficult, for example rural areas where access was an issue despite delivery in over 60 locations
- achievement against disability targets was low and noticeably lower than in those start up projects that demonstrated 'extreme outreach' (eg. Enterprising Communities in Bedford and Haverhill)
- this project was over-reliant on conventional outreach methods to succeed with this under-represented group - insufficient partnerships were built to achieve participant levels and advisory and project staff were unlikely to have been best placed to engage with some of the most disadvantaged
- telesales succeeded at gaining bookings but failed overall because a large proportion did not show up to events
- this support required a high level of face to face contact, a future web based service be will cost efficient but not effective

## **Project 15:** Response to Redundancy 2011 (*led by TCHC*)

### 1 Project aims and objectives:

EEDA was seeking to assist individuals facing redundancy who were not sufficiently supported by their employer. Participants in the project had to be employed but at risk of redundancy to be eligible for support. The project was aimed at small companies (SMEs) and at the public sector and at supply chains that did not have the resources to offer training, advice and guidance and soft skills to enable individuals affected by redundancy to move quickly into alternative sustainable employment.

The aim was to offer and complete the majority of training while the individual was still with their employer. This suggested the need for strong working relationships with a variety of referral agencies around the region. It also suggested the need to liaise with the Skills Funding Agency and Jobcentre Plus to ensure the most appropriate intervention was chosen, without the three main regional redundancy offers in the region causing undue confusion among employers and potential participants.

At least 200 companies were to be supported, with 50%+ of those being SMEs. There were specific targets for the numbers to achieve a Level 2 and 3 qualifications.

Funding was £2,800,000.

### 2 Project design and delivery:

The project comprised four main strands:

- i) to identify companies eligible for R2R assistance and convince the employer about the worth of training and support for those in their workforce facing redundancy
- ii) to arrange individual matrix accredited Skills Training Analysis (STA) for all affected individuals asking for assistance
- iii) to provide support to individuals which could be drawn from a wide range of sources; benefits presentations (JCP); soft skills courses; start up advice; employment related training; skills for life support; referral to executive and professional support; and any second or follow up one-to-one support.

iv) to track participants up to 13 weeks post completion in order to understand outcomes for the individual and to identify impact of the programme.

### 3 Project outputs and outcomes:

The project has not yet finalised final outputs, as it concluded at the end of 2011. The figures below are therefore the project team's best estimate to completion.



One of the key factors affecting performance in this 2011 project was the tightening of public funding which has resulted in fewer staff being available in key agencies to develop co-operative networks. As contracts became fewer and funding reduced, there were fewer contractors who saw the need to co-operate to achieve their targets. In this tightening funding environment, contractors have tended to maximise benefit to themselves (eg. profit or funding income). In an area such as redundancy support, the ideal is for multiple specialisms to be deployed in a coherent way, but as organisations' 'selfishness' increased this disrupted the networks that previously allocated work and clients to organisations better placed to meet their needs. The result was fewer referrals. This was in the context of a significant ramping up of targets for R2R 2011 compared to previous years. Also, public sector redundancies became an increasing factor through 2011. It also became increasingly difficult to persuade employers and trades unions to opt for EEDA R2R support (in the first year of a round of redundancies) to then have to switch to another offer as EEDA R2R came to an end in December 2011.

**Equality and diversity *estimate to completion* figures from the project team were:**

	Target	Actual	% attainment
Disability	1085	278	26%
Aged 50+	1447	2012	139 %

Women	3618	3169	88%
Ethnic minorities	579	421	78%

The main issue with performance against equality and diversity targets was the demand led design of the project. Within the target group (those at risk of redundancy), the characteristics of participants were largely determined by where demand came from. Most disadvantaged groups are in any case significantly under-represented in the *working* population of the region.

These factors made the generic targets particularly difficult. We conclude that the underlying rationale of this project would have had to be significantly changed to achieve these targets - that is, to have targeted disadvantaged groups at risk of redundancy, which would have been very difficult to achieve where the offer was open to all at risk employees once the employer has agreed to participate.

In any case, the project is projected to fall 10% short of target participant numbers, so the ability to target certain groups specifically was limited by the overall shortfall in participant numbers.

We also note that the targets in the above box are the agreed targets between EEDA and the contract holders, which are much larger than the CFO agreement targets. Within this 2007-2012 programme, the priority 2 projects (when aggregated) significantly exceed equality and diversity targets on all measures except disability.

#### 4 Value for money (VfM):

We suggest that value for money within this project is best assessed in terms of the numbers of participants achieved for the level of funding - an economy method. There is a more interesting question about additionality of project benefits - particularly what proportion of participants found a new job compared to what would have happened without the R2R project intervention, see section 5 below.

Value for money in this section is therefore assessed on an economy basis - what the funding bought compared to the original contract.

<u>Total funding: £2,800,000 (7235 participants)</u>	
Funding <i>profile</i> to support 7235 participants	= £387/head
Participants <i>actually</i> supported	= 6500
Actual value achieved	= £2,515,500

Value for money compared to profile	= 90%
-------------------------------------	-------

*One source of value that this analysis does not recognise is the level of qualifications achieved, where actual qualifications from Level 1 to Level 4 totalled 897 against a target of 483 (see section 3 above). It might be possible to identify the added value of achievement across levels 1-4 if reliable data was available but it is not. The Leitch report quantified the value of an employee holding an NVQ level 3 qualification as opposed to a level 2 as around £3500 in terms of wage uplift (additional annual salary through being higher skilled). However this is a broad estimate, it does not provide insight to wage uplift from other lower to higher NVQ levels - and such assumptions have been overtaken by very significant slowdown in wage increases in the economic downturn of the last three years.*

### 5 Additionality:

In our evaluation of regional redundancy support (*Teevan Consulting Network 2010*), we found that 66% of EEDA respondents were working at typically between 3 and 12 months post completion - a very high figure both in absolute terms and when compared to the other main regional redundancy support offers (JCP and SFA).

From our evaluation, we then identified that the net annual GVA impact per individual finding work was £15020.

While a GVA assessment is not part of this ESF programme level evaluation, when our 2010 analysis is compared to the £387 per head of funding in this R2R 2011 project, the additionality of project benefits appears to be very high. The fundamental project model has not changed from the R2R element of Beyond 2010 so we would expect the level of additionality to be similar.

A key point in this analysis is the extent to which if these supported individuals had NOT taken available jobs, whether those vacancies would have been filled anyway, by non-supported individuals.

Those made recently redundant are generally unlikely to be in great demand for hard to fill vacancies from other employers. As unemployment levels have increased steeply since 2008, this substitution effect becomes more problematic for redundancy support programmes.

The IEF guidance for RDAs sidesteps this important point rather unconvincingly - "there are evident difficulties in assessing how provision of training for individuals from target groups affects the employment prospects of others".

### 6 Project sustainability:

The SFA is currently procuring a new programme that covers the 'at risk' segment of individuals facing redundancy that was the EEDA R2R focus. So there is the possibility of retaining some of the benefits described earlier of early stage intervention. A key question is to what extent the SFA offer will also be able to retain the demand led aspect of EEDA R2R. This was an important factor in persuading employers to participate. It also enabled 'at risk' employees to have support in the specific areas they were considering ie. for most, this helped target the area where they wanted to find a new job.

### 7 Strategic Added Value:

The key learning is that early intervention models for redundancy support are significantly more likely to assist individuals back into work than post redundancy support models. There is an argument about how many of those helped back into work by R2R resources would have found work anyway within about the same timescale. The difficulty in that argument is there is no reliable evidence or measure of this 'deadweight' - the comparative level of success achieved by early intervention seems to us to be a sound and more measurable basis to continue this type of support.

### 8a Key learning points - project design and delivery:

Are as summarised in the R2R section of the Beyond 2010 project (see project summary 13).

### 8b What did not work:

The one year timescale for this project was not helpful to a large proportion of participants who wanted higher level training - plus the need to track their extended training period to establish outcomes and the level of success.

The agreed 13 week tracking of participants by the main contract holder, as introduced in this 2011 contract, did not take place - apparently on the grounds that TCHC felt it was not a core contractual agreement. The lesson is to make the requirement contractual.

This meant that achievement of the critical outcome for most participants - a job - was not understood or followed through.

This also meant that those requiring additional assistance in their search for a positive outcome went largely unassisted, unless they proactively pushed for further support.

This is a significant failing in our view, where the need to understand the **key results** from the 2011 programme (and the return on investment from large sums of funding) are greatly hindered because TCHC did not track outcomes for participants, whether positive or not.

Tough targets may have contributed to this great focus on outputs with much less emphasis on understanding benefits. So we do not know what proportion of 2011 participants has found a new job. Or, which groups or individuals are experiencing most barriers or difficulties.

Whereas the key recommendation from our 2010 evaluation of regional redundancy support was precisely to focus project level support on the whole project experience, not just the input (IAG, soft skills, training) - there was also a vital need to focus on the output, **which critically for most people is a new job.**

**Project 16:** Improving Capabilities in Sectors 2011 *(led by Essex County Council)*

### 1 Project aims and objectives:

This project was EEDA's primary vehicle for influencing the nature and delivery of skills development in the workplace in the region. The broad purpose was to improve gross added value and the productivity, competitiveness and economic resilience of the regional economy. It sought to achieve that by improving managers' and employees' capabilities to improve the performance of businesses. Re-skilling and upskilling employees was the core of the project. A subsidiary element was to improve understanding that investment in training can deliver bottom line improvements to business and the wider economy, not least by creating demonstrations of that effect. An indirect improvement was to encourage the training system to move towards world class training demonstrably needed by businesses.

The project needed to be able to deliver a wide range of interventions in line with the requirements of employers, employees and supply chains in the sectors and clusters that were the focus of the project. Increasing exports was also a particular aim. The sectors or clusters were:

- life sciences
- energy (including retrofitting & sustainable communities)
- ICT (including the audiovisual industries)
- food science and farming (including food & drink manufacturing)
- advanced manufacturing (including low carbon vehicles)
- tourism in support of the Olympics
- financial & business services
- transport gateways & logistics
- social enterprise (inc. 3rd sector development - 'Big Society' capability)

Funding was £2,200,000.

### 2 Project design and delivery:

This project was an extension of the sector skills element of the Beyond 2010 project (see project summary 13). *We therefore only identify in this section how this one year extension (for 2011) differed from the pre-existing 2011 programme.*

### 3 Project outputs and outcomes:

The project has not yet finalised overall outputs, as it concluded at the end of 2011. The figures below are therefore a best estimate to completion.



The project seems very likely to over-achieve on the main ESF targets based on the project team's estimates to completion. This is a significant achievement as these were high targets in a single year, the team's experience of working with a very similar model in the Beyond 2010 project clearly helped delivery. There is also an issue in a project of one year's duration, where the fixed period may not fit the timescales of some companies that may have wanted to delay due to changing priorities or problems in the business. The project team made the timescales very clear and encouraged as many employers as possible to complete on time. Achievement was also notable because some sector lead bodies (reliant or reliant in part on funding) had funding reductions due to changing Government policy and faced difficult market conditions - a handful either reorganised or did not survive.

Equality and diversity estimate to completion figures are:

	Target	Actual	% attainment
Disability	383	61	16%
Aged 50+	510	457	90%
Women	1275	930	73%
Ethnic minorities	204	89	44%

The main issue with under-performance against equality and diversity targets is that this was a demand led project. Within the overall target group of the employed and self employed, the characteristics of participants were largely determined by where demand came from. Most disadvantaged groups are in any case significantly under-represented in the *working* population of the

region. These factors made the generic targets particularly difficult. We conclude that the underlying rationale of this project would have had to be significantly changed to achieve these targets - that is, to have four targeted supply led sub-projects which specifically aimed to recruit participants from the various disadvantaged groups.

We also note that the targets in the above box are the agreed targets between EEDA and the contract holders, which are much larger than the CFO agreement targets.

Within this 2007-2012 programme, the priority 2 projects (when aggregated) significantly exceed equality and diversity targets on all measures except disability.

#### 4 Value for money (VfM):

We suggest that value for money within this project is best assessed in terms of the numbers of participants achieved for the level of funding - an economy method.

We note the GVA calculation in Versa's evaluation of the Beyond 2010 element of the programme used a skills uplift method based on qualifications gained. While this follows IEF guidance, qualifications account for only 13% of 2011 participants, so to use any similar basis to assess value for money misses the benefit that accrued to the other 87% of participants. It would also miss the fundamental point that in this demand led programme, qualifications are not the primary purpose or benefit.

In learning points (section 9) we summarise our views as to how benefits might be assessed in future demand led projects. However, sensitive measurement requires company specific baselines and measurement through the life of the key business critical interventions, which did not take place in this 2011 project. We note that targeting and measuring project benefits **at the company level** was always the preferred Treasury method to achieve the most sound assessment of GVA (and other benefits) - but that this approach appears to be rare in a large majority of business support projects in England (eg. through Business Link), although it is common practice in some other locations, notably Scotland through Scottish Enterprise.

Value for money in this section is therefore assessed on an economy basis - what the funding bought above the original contract.

Total funding: £2,200,000 (2550 participants)
---

Funding <i>profile</i> to support 2550 participants	= £863/head
Participants <i>actually</i> supported	= 2650
Actual value achieved	= £2,286,950
Value for money compared to profile	= 104%

### 5 Additionality:

The Versa evaluation found that 79-80% of training undertaken had been prompted in part or in full by the availability of funding.

This equates with findings from our survey of 70 participants in the 2011 project, where particularly very small businesses (under 10 employees) and third sector organisations were very likely to assert that they could not have considered undertaking any of the training without funding support. Many describe the funding as the deciding factor in their decision to proceed, even though many smaller businesses described the intervention as very important for the business as a whole.

### 6 Project sustainability:

In the Versa survey of employers in 2010, 85% stated they were more likely to consider further training as a result of their participation in the programme. 12% said their experience had not encouraged them. Care needs to be taken with this response because it is not clear whether the employer was assuming that future training would be subsidised. Given that the most valued feature of support was identified in that same survey as the financial assistance, this is a rather important consideration in assessing future business behaviour. However in our survey of 2011 participants (where around 25% were the 'employer' or owner manager), we did find that a substantial proportion described themselves as committed to future investment in training and skills on the basis of the business benefit they had enjoyed through this project. This group was responsible for the large majority of the business critical interventions we describe in section 9. There is also likely to be some enduring benefit where sector lead bodies have become more convinced of the value of demand led skills interventions, together with some of their partner organisations. However, with the demise of many referral agencies and the Co-financed demand led projects, it is likely the level of activity falls away

significantly and will be largely confined to full market cost projects that employers are prepared to fully fund themselves.

### 7 Strategic Added Value:

This project (building on the work of its predecessor project) has created significant learning across a wide range of partners:

- i) that demand led training is particularly welcomed by employers, particularly SMEs in a climate where there was no other funding of this type
- ii) that funding can be utilised to deliver the ESF outputs (eg. qualifications), but through intelligent procurement driving down costs, a significant surplus was created to support business critical projects which tended to be highly tailored, often relatively expensive and not qualification driven
- iii) that many employers now view investment in skills as a driver of business performance and far less as a cost that is necessary for people to do their jobs

### 8 Participant feedback:

The key points from our research were as follows.

**36%** of all participants found out about the project through recommendation - word of mouth, former colleagues and partner organisations, with referrals from or prior knowledge of Business Link being the most significant.

**50%** of all participants found out about this project from their employer, in most cases this involved the employer organising training for a group of staff and then sending them together or in cohorts to a programme of training.

**7%** could not recall where they heard of the project.

Did you achieve what you wanted from being involved?

YES **89%**                      NO **3%**                      PARTLY **9%**

Did the experience during the project benefit you in any way (tangibly, after the event)?

YES **78%**                      NO **6%**                      TO SOME EXTENT **16%**

What was the MOST important help or advice you were given?

Transformational content/business wide benefits **32%**

Breadth of input from trainers/presenters	29%
Marketing/ web based marketing help	13%
Training to understand people/teams/behaviour of others	7%
'Compliance' (certificate to practice/of competence)	6%
All other categories	14%
('All other' included diverse answers such as gaining a very specific skill and in a minority of cases, no discernible gain was felt by the individual).	
In what way could the support given to you have been better? (MOST important factor)	
Support could not be bettered	69%
More tailored content/pitched more at my level/more in-depth	13%
Simplify funding/related paperwork	9%
69% of respondents were employed, 23% self employed/owner managers and 4 of the 70 respondents had been made redundant since participating in the project.	

### Key survey findings:

- 1 A large majority of participants were satisfied with their experience, 89% agreeing they achieved what they wanted from being involved.
- 2 The level of direct benefit to participants was high, with 78% of respondents indicating they had benefitted tangibly from the project either greatly or to some extent.
- 3 Where respondents viewed the benefit to themselves as limited or non-existent (22% in total) this response usually means that they had not yet gained any tangible benefit because they had not the opportunity to apply new skills in their job.
- 4 There was a clear pattern where business critical projects were targeted by employers to have a transformational effect on the business - around a third of projects fall into this category.

5 With these business critical projects, the level of success is assessed to be very high in most cases and respondents describe 'success' in business terms (profit, turnover, new products/opportunities) not in terms of inputs (new skills).

6 The most common pattern of feedback about what could be improved was not strong - 13% wanted content more tailored to their needs or pitched to their level of experience and knowledge. This factor was strongest where a whole group or cohort of individuals was 'sent' on a course without significant assessment of individuals' needs.

7 That 69% could identify no area in which support could be bettered suggests to us that this proven model has been well developed to meet the needs of the client groups - if upskilling was the purpose, this was largely met, if business transformation, the model could deliver this also.

8 23% of our sample were in self employment at the time we interviewed, with 69% in paid employment (6% unemployed) - it was very noticeable that it was the smaller employers or the self employed who were most likely to be seeking support for a transformational project, where impact and value for money was likely to be greatest.

#### 9a Key learning points:

*In this section we summarise only the few learning points that are additional to the Beyond 2010 project (summary 13).*

#### **Targeting and measuring benefit**

There is one major learning point about the targeting and measurement of benefit that emerges particularly from this project evaluation *because* we undertook original survey research among 70 participants.

Within our interview sample we found three strong patterns of types of intervention:

*business critical* - a transformational intervention aimed at achieving a stepped change in business performance ('business performance' usually defined as increased profitability, increased turnover, or ability to launch new products or tender for new business)

*cohort development* - where an entire level or group of employees undertakes development for group as well as individual upskilling purposes

*skills development* - where an individual or very small group are upskilled, with the skills input being the espoused purpose rather than any intended direct effect on business performance

The characteristics of each of these types of interventions differ significantly when we consider impact.

**The business critical interventions** were frequently high impact, they took the business significantly forward - although disappointingly few senior people we interviewed felt able to quantify the project specific contribution where performance improvement was affected by many factors, not just skills.

**Cohort development** was usually a skills intervention where the main value was perceived to lie in a group gaining common skills and approaches - training at ILM Level 3 for all team leaders would be an example of this. Improvements in outcome (improved performance on some measure) were very difficult to identify with this type of intervention, because the primary focus was on the skills input, *application* of new skills was rarely a focus of the employer.

**Skills development** was typically a very focused skills uplift, usually functional in nature, where an employee filled a gap in their job knowledge - for example, learning new marketing techniques or new job related software. It is in the latter two categories that most of the qualifications were achieved, however qualifications were achieved (at level 2 and 3) for just 13% of participants overall in this 2011 project.

The Impact Evaluation Framework identifies a wage uplift method for calculating GVA in skills projects, which might be adaptable for value for money purposes, but given only 13% achieved full qualifications, this would greatly undervalue the project.

This is compounded where the business critical projects were usually those that created the most significant benefits, but these would be missed entirely when focusing on a qualification based wage uplift method. While the business critical interventions were assessed initially as to whether they

should be funded, no baselines were set or measurement undertaken through the life of these projects to track the various business wide benefits being targeted and in many cases created. **The absence of such data from this most impactful set of interventions is both a barrier to assessing true value for money and impact and a key learning point for future similar projects.**

- overall, targets for this 2011 project were very demanding but very likely to be met
- EEDA compiled a database of training courses that could be equivalent to an NVQ qualification to encourage the ESF to recognise that where an employer did not value an NVQ, that the national framework (ie. QCF in the UK) could provide an equivalent that a business *might* want

#### 9b What did not work:

- full year achievement may have been affected somewhat by the need to complete the training by November 2011 - advisors were very clear about the deadline and reminders sent out, but companies distracted by other priorities may have limited achievement
- paying the sector lead bodies on outputs appears to have reduced the commitment of some to marketing the project where they no longer had a post or part post funded - if the business model could not deal with output related payment, results in some sectors were reduced
- this was a demand led project, the characteristics of participants were largely determined by where demand came from - this significantly reduced achievement against the equality and diversity targets
- this project would have had to be significantly changed to achieve these targets - that is, to have four targeted supply led sub-projects which specifically aimed to recruit participants from the various disadvantaged groups, to a level where they were over-represented against the profile of the region's workforce as a whole