

SELEP CV19 Recovery Funds Update

Executive Summary

1. Overview

- 1.1. In 2020, Strategic Board (the Board) approved the use of £4.4 million Growing Places Fund to establish two Covid-19 (CV19) Recovery Funds. Service providers were contracted in June 2021 to deliver six projects, three supporting skills development and three providing business support for SME recovery. Due to some underspend and agreement for some funding to be returned to reserves, total spend is £3.9 million.
- 1.2. The projects had a delivery timeframe of 12 months for delivery, with an additional 12-months for impact evaluation. Most projects have now completed their activities and have completed, or are in the process of undertaking impact evaluations, except for the Supporting the Visitor Economy project for which destination management campaigns continue. The Digital Bridge project is also continuing to provide support within the original budget and is set to finish by the end of the financial year.

2. Summary of update

- 2.1. Further to the previous update report for the June 2022 Board meeting, this report provides a high-level update on each project and a summary of the remaining work to be completed.

3. Rationale for update

- 3.1. Since the programmes were launched in Quarter 1 of 2021/22, it was agreed that the Board would receive regular updates relating to the delivery of the funds.
- 3.2. The projects have now completed their 12-month delivery phase and the Dashboard has been updated to show progress and key activities. This is provided in Appendix A.

Further Information

4. Update 1: General update

- 4.1. The suite of CV19 Recovery Funds support programmes was launched in May 2021 and five providers were contracted to deliver six individual support programmes, each with a 12-month delivery period, with up to a further 12 months for impact evaluation. The project suite comprised:
 - Starting and Succeeding in Business (£565,000) – WSX Enterprise Ltd.
 - Adapting with Digital (£750,000) – WSX Enterprise Ltd.
 - Supporting the Visitor Economy (£1,050,000) – Visit Kent and consortium partners
 - COVID Recovery Academy (£1,045,000) – Shaw Trust (including a £100,000 contribution from Essex County Council)
 - Digital Skills Programme (£279,960) – Tech Talent Academy
 - The Digital Bridge (£300,000) – We are Digital



- 4.2. Most activities completed by June 2022 and, for providers running a grant scheme (WSX and Visit Kent), financial administration completed by 30 September 2022 to enable the defrayal of all grants. In addition to this, the Supporting the Visitor Economy programme continued to run place re-boot campaigns through Quarter 2 and Quarter 3 of 2022/23 to reinvigorate the visitor economy.
- 4.3. All providers will complete an impact evaluation of their project(s) by a date agreed between SELEP and individual project providers and by 7th June 2023 at the latest, which will report on progress, benefits and lessons learned. Evaluation reports have already been submitted for the Digital and Covid Recovery Academy skills projects and the business support projects will report by Quarter 1 of 2023/24.
- 4.4. All projects have successfully ensured a fair spread of delivery across the SELEP geography, and have fully delivered against their agreed KPIs, apart from the delivery of evaluation reports as per 4.3, for which 10% of overall budgets is being retained. This is shown in the Dashboard in Appendix A.

One of the most significant benefits of the CV19 Recovery Funding was the flexibility it provided compared to national and European funding streams for this type of activity. This gave SELEP the ability to work with providers to adapt the projects quickly and where necessary, to respond to the impacts of the pandemic and other emerging external factors. This ensured support was targeted towards those who needed it most, when they needed it most, and impact evaluations are expected to demonstrate this.

5. Update 2: Business Support Projects

5.1. Starting and Succeeding in Business:

- 5.1.1. Over 1,500 businesses and individuals registered with WSX to access the CV19 recovery funding support and of these, 463 were actively engaged with the Starting and Succeeding in Business course to assess whether they were eligible and whether the support was right for them. The large majority of these (over 70%) were 'self-referrals' and the remainder were referrals from the Growth Hub. Where relevant, self-referrals were referred on to the Growth Hubs for alternative support.
- 5.1.2. A total of 126 businesses were safeguarded by the support element of the project, and a further 66 businesses were created through the start-up element. Beneficiaries attended live events, however most of the learning took place on-demand. The project recognised this shift in preferred learning styles early on and adapted quickly by providing more digital on-demand resources. A total of 1,759 hours of learning were taken up by businesses looking to recover and a further 935 hours were taken up by start-ups.
- 5.1.3. The 100% grant offer was open from October 2021 to June 2022, to those completing a minimum number of learning hours and able to demonstrate a related need. A total of 129 grants were defrayed, totalling £ 196,088 and averaging £1,520 per applicant. This represents 97% of the pot originally allocated for the project, for small business grants.
- 5.1.4. The provider has produced an interim evaluation report and is scheduled to produce a final evaluation in early June 2023. A selection of case studies for the project can be viewed at: [Case Studies Archive - South East Business Hub : South East Business Hub](#)



5.2. Adapting with Digital:

- 5.2.0. Businesses accessed this support through a shared WSX registration portal for Adapting with Digital and Starting and Succeeding in Business. 1-2-1 support was provided to advise interested businesses on eligibility and suitability and, where relevant, businesses were referred to the Growth Hubs for alternative support.
- 5.2.1. A total of 362 businesses were safeguarded through the Adapting with Digital project and, as per 5.1.2, most of the learning took place on-demand. Across those businesses safeguarded, 1,874 hours of learning were taken up.
- 5.2.2. The 100% grant offer was open from October 2021 to June 2022, to those completing a minimum number of learning hours and able to demonstrate a related need. A total of 164 grants were defrayed, totalling £258,894 and averaging £1,578 per applicant. This represents 99.5% of the pot originally allocated for the project, for small business grants.
- 5.2.3. The provider has produced an interim evaluation report and is scheduled to produce a final evaluation in early June 2023. A selection of case studies for the project can be viewed at: [Case Studies Archive - South East Business Hub : South East Business Hub](#)

5.3. Supporting the Visitor Economy:

- 5.3.1. Element 1 of the project, the Revi-VE 100% business grant scheme for the South East visitor economy, launched in July 2021 and closed in June 2022. It received 325 expressions of interest, well in excess of that expected.
- 5.3.2. The grant scheme was initially administered by Southend City Council for a contracted period of six months. Smarter Society – an established business support and grant administration provider – then took over to process the remaining application pipeline, implementing a 3-day turnaround time with businesses still seeking a grant.
- 5.3.3. A total of 166 grants were awarded to visitor economy businesses, totalling £437,530. This fulfils the KPI target and represents 98% of the allocated grant pot, with an average grant payment of £2,635 per business.
- 5.3.4. Element 2 of the project successfully engaged with 114 stakeholders and businesses, principally via workshops that ran from January through March 2022 across greater Essex, Kent and Medway, and East Sussex. These were facilitated by Toposophy, an independent place-making and marketing agency.
- 5.3.5. The workshop reports were then used to develop re-boot campaigns and shared marketing assets for the developing network. This work identified the need to broaden the scope of such campaigns to go beyond 'tourism' and put 'place' on a bigger scale at the heart of the marketing model. Place campaigns have subsequently been designed and launched for the three geographical federated areas of SELEP and will run throughout the remainder of the year.
- 5.3.6. An Evaluation Framework has been agreed, setting out the methodology by which the success of the 'place' campaigns will be measured, to generate the impact evaluation assessment in Q4 2022/23, and promoting collaboration across members and beneficiaries of the network.



6. Update 3: Skills Projects

6.1. COVID Recovery Academy:

- 6.1.1. This programme was designed to support 1002 residents across the SELEP geography in key sectors. Final numbers of people supported totalled 1011 so the original recruitment target was exceeded. The contract stipulated that as a result of the programme, there should ultimately be at least 340 people retrained and into jobs.
- 6.1.2. Progress is still being monitored and final outputs recorded but at the time of writing, 131 people had been upskilled, 340 had completed training and secured employment and the remainder had withdrawn from the programme. The target was therefore met and is likely to be exceeded.
- 6.1.3. An evaluation report has been produced, with case studies and a breakdown of the programme (at upper tier local authority level) and which illustrates a good conversion rate of people going into employment as a result of the programme, exceeding that of similar programmes. This will be shared via the SELEP website once all results are collated.
- 6.1.4. The bespoke nature of the programme and being centred around the individual has been very positive as well as the ability to support over a sustained period. For example, one of the case studies outlines tailored support provided to an individual in Essex with Asperger's and who has recently secured employment.

6.2. Digital Skills Programme:

- 6.2.1. This programme was designed to support individuals into Tech roles. Originally targets were set at 200 individuals to be enrolled of which 70% would complete the course and 75% of those to secure employment. These targets were revised as agreed at the [March 2022 Board](#), due to changing circumstances and higher costs incurred as a result of the type of tech training being requested.
- 6.2.2. The revised targets were agreed to be 60% of the original numbers, which would be 120 enrolments and 60 job progressions. This programme has now completed and progress is still being monitored but at the time of writing, 138 people had been enrolled with 106 people completing training so revised targets were exceeded. Employment outcomes are still being monitored with the current number at 44.
- 6.2.3. An evaluation report has been produced and a breakdown of the programme (at upper tier local authority level). Case studies are also being provided. These will be shared via the SELEP website once all results are collated.
- 6.2.4. Once the final 10% payment has been made, the programme will deliver for £23,955 under the original allocated budget, partly due to the reduced outcomes and which will represent an under-spend in the overall programme.

6.3. The Digital Bridge:

- 6.3.1. This programme has been able to extend within the original budget and is therefore still delivering, due to complete by early 2023. This was originally set up to support 750 people with kit and connectivity (according to need) and 1000 with basic digital skills.
- 6.3.2. Through a contract change award and due to the changing nature of support



requested (for more in-depth, bespoke support), the original targets were revised in February 2022 to enable 400 individuals to be trained in basic digital inclusion skills, with an equipment offering. This is estimated to still ensure support for 600 individuals and the more in-depth nature of support means that total training hours exceeds the original programme.

6.3.3. To date (as of 31st October) there have been over 610 referrals and 156 people booked on training, with 125 completing, representing 572 hours. 153 tablets and 27 SIMs have been allocated.

6.4. Underspend

6.4.1. £45,000 of the Covid-19 skills reserve was set aside as match funding for the Digital Skills Partnership. £10,000 of this has been confirmed as match funding for the Digital Skills Partnership roll out across the Catalyst South geography, helping to secure a £60,000 contribution from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. The remaining £35,000 will be returned to the SELEP Operational Reserve to support the on-going SELEP budget. As per section 6.2.4, there will also be an additional underspend of £23,995 against the Digital Skills Programme. Any further underspend against other projects will be confirmed once all programmes have reported outputs.

7. Next Steps

7.1. The SELEP Secretariat CV19 Recovery Funding leads will continue to oversee delivery and closure of the programme contracts. Budgets have now largely been spent, with 5%-10% contractually retained for those projects yet to complete their evaluation reports. If any risks materialise before closure of the overall programme, these will be brought to the attention of the Board as soon as possible to ensure continuity of delivery and proper use of funds.

7.2. General updates on delivery of the programmes will continue throughout the financial year 2022/23. Information on the programmes can be found on the [SELEP](#) website.

8. Comments from the Accountable Body

8.1 The Accountable Body entered into contracts with each of the selected suppliers, on behalf of SELEP in June 2021, to support delivery of each element of the Programme. The table below summarises the spend profile of the funding against each of the schemes; this includes an additional £100,000 contribution from Essex County Council which asked SELEP to expand delivery of the Skills programme in Essex to include this contribution.

Table 1: Summary Spend of the Covid-19 Recovery Funds

	2020/21 £'000	2021/22 £'000	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000	Total £'000
Business Support					
Spent / Forecast Spend	4	1,184	1,123	66	2,377
Returned to reserves		23			23
Total	4	1,207	1,123	66	2,400
Skills					
Spent / Forecast Spend *	4	1,006	613		1,623
Returned to reserves		418	35		453
To be requested to be returned to reserves			24		24
Total *	4	1,424	648		2,076
Total Spent / To be Spent on scheme delivery *	7	2,190	1,736	66	4,000
Total Returned to reserves					476
To be requested to be returned to reserves					24
Total *					4,500

* Includes £100k of Essex County Council funding contribution applied in 2021/22

- 8.2 A total of £476,000 of uncommitted Covid-19 Skills and Business Support funding was appropriated to the SELEP Operational Reserve across 2021/22 and 2022/23 following endorsement by the Board in October 2021 and Accountability Board approval in November 2021 and July 2022, to help support SELEP to fulfil its future responsibilities. A further underspend of £23,995 has been identified in the Skills programme and is also intended to be requested to be returned to the SELEP Operational reserve to support future activities of the SELEP.
- 8.3 All remaining programme funds are anticipated to be spent during 2022/23, with the exception of £66,000 of the Business support fund, which is expected to be spent in 2023/24 to support the evaluation of the Programme. This value is currently being held in the Covid-19 earmarked reserve to ring-fence this funding for this purpose in 2023/24

9. Appendices, Supporting Documents and Previous Decisions

- 9.1. Appendix A – SELEP CV19 Recovery Funds Dashboard December 2022
- 9.2. Strategic Board Agenda pack setting out the Skills COVID-19 Recovery Fund:
https://www.southeastlep.com/app/uploads/2020/08/SELEP-Strategic-Board-Agenda-Pack_Sept-2020.pdf (page 6)
- 9.3. Strategic Board Agenda pack setting out the COVID-19 Business Support Fund:
https://www.southeastlep.com/app/uploads/2019/11/SELEP-Strategic-Board_Oct-20_Agenda-Pack.pdf (page 5)
- 9.4. Accountability Board Agenda pack setting out the award agreement and delegated authorities for the Skills COVID-19 Recovery Fund:
https://www.southeastlep.com/app/uploads/2019/09/Accountability-Board-Agenda-Pack_Sept-20-WITHOUT-confidential-appendix.pdf (page 250)
- 9.5. Accountability Board Agenda pack setting out the setting out the award agreement and delegated authorities for the COVID-19 Business Support Fund:
<https://www.southeastlep.com/app/uploads/2020/07/Agenda-Document-Pack-16.10.20-WITHOUT-CONFIDENTIAL-APPENDICES.pdf> (page 85)
- 9.6. Strategic Board Agenda pack, for information item providing an update on the CV19 Recovery Funds:
https://www.southeastlep.com/app/uploads/2019/11/SELEP-Strategic-Board-Agenda-Pack_Dec-2020.pdf



2020.pdf

- 9.7. Strategic Board Agenda pack, for information item providing an update on the CV19 Recovery Funds: <https://www.southeastlep.com/app/uploads/2020/10/SELEP-Strategic-Board-Information-Items-Pack-June-2021.pdf>
- 9.8. CV19 recovery Funding Decision Report as published for Accountability Board 15 December 2020.
- 9.9. Strategic Board Agenda pack, for information item providing an update on the CV19 Recovery Funds October 2021: <https://www.southeastlep.com/app/uploads/2020/10/For-Information-CV19-Recovery-Funds-Update.pdf>
- 9.10. Strategic Board Agenda pack, for information item providing an update on the CV19 Recovery Funds: https://www.southeastlep.com/app/uploads/2020/10/SELEP-Strategic-Board_Information-Pack_Dec-21.pdf
- 9.11. Strategic Board Agenda pack, for information item providing an update on the CV19 Recovery Funds: https://www.southeastlep.com/app/uploads/2020/10/SELEP-Strategic-Board_Agenda-Pack_March-2022.pdf
- 9.12. Strategic Board Agenda pack, for information item providing an update on the CV19 Recovery Funds: https://www.southeastlep.com/app/uploads/2022/02/Strategic-Board_June-2022_Agenda-Pack-1.pdf
- 9.13. For further information please contact Jo Simmons, Business Development Manager (jo.simmons@southeastlep.com) or Louise Aitken, Skills Lead (louise.aitken@southeastlep.com).



PROJECT	VALUE AND SPEND TO DATE	ACTIVITIES	KPIS AND PROGRESS TO DATE	RAG RATING
<div>Starting and Succeeding in Business (SSiB)</div> <div>WSX Ltd: Business Support</div>	<div>£565,000</div> <div>£541,187</div>	<div>✓ Shared SSiB and AwD Programme Portal for business registrations and CRM</div> <div>✓ 100% small grant scheme October 2021 – June 2022</div> <div>✓ On-demand video production</div> <div>✓ Direct-to-business social media marketing, drop-in sessions, and grant campaign</div> <div>✓ Interim evaluation report</div>	<div><div>Grants awarded</div><div>Business safeguarded</div><div>Businesses created</div><div>Businesses engaged</div><div><div><div></div><div></div></div><div><div>To date</div><div>Target</div></div></div><div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div><div><div>0</div><div>100</div><div>200</div><div>300</div><div>400</div><div>500</div></div></div>	<div>Green</div>
<div>Adapting with Digital (AwD)</div> <div>WSX Ltd: Business Support</div>	<div>£750,000</div> <div>£637,500</div>	<div>✓ Shared SSiB and AwD Programme Portal for business registrations and CRM</div> <div>✓ 100% small grant scheme October 2021 – June 2022</div> <div>✓ On-demand video production</div> <div>✓ Direct-to-business social media marketing, drop-in sessions, and grant campaign</div> <div>✓ Interim evaluation report</div>	<div><div>Grants awarded</div><div>Businesses safeguarded</div><div><div><div></div><div></div></div><div><div>To date</div><div>Target</div></div></div><div><div></div><div></div></div><div><div>0</div><div>100</div><div>200</div><div>300</div><div>400</div></div></div>	<div>Green</div>
<div>Supporting the Visitor Economy</div> <div>Visit Kent: Business Support</div>	<div>£1,050,000</div> <div>£807,804</div>	<div>✓ Revi-VE 100% grant scheme July 2021 – June 2022</div> <div>✓ Facilitator onboarded to develop visitor economy network, promotional toolkit, and place re-boot campaigns</div> <div>✓ Workshops held across Kent and Medway, Greater Essex, and East Sussex</div> <div>✓ Re-boot campaigns launched from July 2022 and running throughout the year</div>	<div><div>Grants awarded</div><div>Organisations engaged</div><div><div><div></div><div></div></div><div><div>To date</div><div>Target</div></div></div><div><div></div><div></div></div><div><div>0</div><div>50</div><div>100</div><div>150</div><div>200</div></div></div>	<div>Green</div>



PROJECT	VALUE AND SPEND TO DATE	ACTIVITIES	KPIS AND PROGRESS TO DATE	RAG RATING
COVID Recovery Academy Shaw Trust: Skills	£1,045,000* £1,004,672 *£100K ECC / £945,000 SELEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 1011 enrolments (exceeding 1002 target) ✓ Bespoke, tailored approach proved effective ✓ 131 people upskilled ✓ 340 people completing training and securing employment (on target) ✓ Programme now completed with final progressions being collected ✓ Evaluation report and case studies produced 	<p>Individuals into jobs</p> <p>Enrolments</p> <p>■ To date ■ Target</p>	Green
Digital Skills Programme Tech Talent Academy: Skills	£279,960 £228,000* *final 10% payment £27,995 imminent which will leave £23,965 under-spend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Revised target of 120 enrolments exceeded (actual number of 138) ✓ 106 people have undertaken training ✓ Programme now completed and with 44 people supported into tech roles and final progressions still being collated ✓ Evaluation report and case studies produced 	<p>Individuals into jobs</p> <p>Completed training</p> <p>Enrolments</p> <p>■ To date ■ Target</p>	Green
The Digital Bridge We Are Digital: Skills	£300,000 £193,863	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Revised version of programme still delivering offering more in-depth support to fewer individuals - extended within original budget ✓ 610 referrals to new programme, 156 booked on courses, 125 completions ✓ 153 tablets awarded in total to date ✓ 27 SIMs awarded in total to date 	<p>Individuals receiving basic training</p> <p>Individuals supported with kit / ...</p> <p>■ To date ■ Target</p>	Amber