



SOUTH EAST
LOCAL ENTERPRISE
PARTNERSHIP
COVID-19
**BUSINESS SUPPORT
FUND**



ADAPTING WITH
DIGITAL

ADAPTING WITH DIGITAL

FINAL PROGRAMME REVIEW
1st July 2021 – 31st March 2023



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The Adapting with Digital Programme was funded by the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and targeted people who have been running their own business for at least a year but need advice and support to transform the digital aspects of their business.

WSX Enterprise secured the contract to deliver the programme which ran from 1st July 2021 to 30th June 2022. During the programme there were significant changes to the economy because of the pandemic and the introduction of Government policy responses, as well as wider global factors that have affected, and continue to affect, the economic landscape.

The Adapting with Digital Programme (LOT 2) was highly successful in delivering business advice and support to businesses in the SELEP region who wanted to make, or learn about, digital changes in their business. Over 500 businesses were actively engaged with the programme with 30% being awarded a grant.

In a survey of participants six months after the programme ended, 83% of respondents said that their business had been partially or directly influenced by working with us, with 80% of them saying that they had implemented the advice we had shared with them. 63% said that they anticipated that their business would grow as a result of our advice and/or grant.

Since the end of the programme there has been even more upheaval within the economy which has included a number of parliamentary changes, various budgets, further hikes in energy bills and the continuation of rising inflation. A lot of the happenings are 'once in a generation' occurrences, which have all occurred within the same time frame- something that is unprecedented and has led to concern all around.

Despite all of this, we have received an overwhelmingly positive response from the programme both during and afterwards with our feedback suggesting that whilst some businesses have unfortunately gone on to fold, we have helped more people sustain their businesses during these turbulent times. An incredibly positive result for SELEP.

It was an honour and a privilege to be able to deliver this programme on behalf of SELEP and to feel that we have reached, supported and helped businesses who truly needed it along the way.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robyn Brookes', followed by a period.

Robyn Brookes
Programme Manager
March 2023



157

GRANTS AWARDED

AGAINST A KPI TARGET OF 130



362

BUSINESSES SAFEGUARDED

AGAINST A KPI TARGET OF 308



508

BUSINESSES ENGAGED

AGAINST A KPI TARGET OF 308



633

BUSINESSES REGISTERED

AGAINST A KPI TARGET OF 308

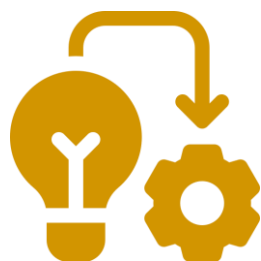
The support from the programme enabled Ramsgate Arts Barge to create a fully functional and informative website with e-commerce facilities. The knock-on effect is that we have been able to generate funds for the project directly through our website via Founding Memberships and artwork sales.

Thank you so much to WSX Enterprise for supporting the Ramsgate Arts Barge.

KEVIN O'CONNOR – RAMSGATE ARTS BARGE

”

2. POST PROGRAMME BUSINESS STATISTICS



80%

OF RESPONDENTS ON THE PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTED RECOMMENDATIONS SUGGESTED TO THEM.

68%

OF RESPONDENTS ANTICIPATED THEIR BUSINESS TO GROW AS A RESULT OF THE PROGRAMME ADVICE AND/OR GRANT



70%

OF RESPONDENTS HAD EXPERIENCED OR EXPECTED INCREASED SALES



30%

OF RESPONDENTS HAD CREATED OR EXPECTED TO CREATE NEW JOBS



60%

OF RESPONDENTS WERE MORE INSPIRED TO GROW THEIR BUSINESS



37%

OF RESPONDENTS WERE BETTER ABLE TO SPOT OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

AS A RESULT OF THE PROGRAMME AND/OR GRANT...



88%

OF RESPONDENTS IDENTIFIED A POSITIVE CHANGE AS A RESULT OF THE PROGRAMME



47%

OF RESPONDENTS SAID THEY WERE AWARE OF HOW TO BETTER RUN A BUSINESS



27%

OF RESPONDENTS SAID THEY WERE ABLE TO SAFEGUARD JOBS

3. POST PROGRAMME IMPACT

The support programme and grants covered a wide range of activities and businesses. Some of our favourite examples are:

MAVERICK BOAT ADVENTURES



Applied for a grant which went towards improving the website with a new online booking system to simplify the customer journey

Paul Burns runs a water sports and guided trips company, Maverick Boat Adventures in Seaford, East Sussex. Paul said: "The support from WSX Enterprise involved speaking to champions of industry. This gave us confidence towards our business plan ideas and growth moving forward. The discussions with WSX followed up with a small grant to help us build a resilience towards Covid by implementing an online booking system. This removed the need for cash handovers and generated an increase **il would say the most beneficial help WSX provided was the one-to-one conversations freely discussing ideas and plans for company growth. I have learned such a lot**"

[CLICK TO WATCH OUR VIDEO CASE STUDY](#)



PIPERONI

Simon Taylor is the founder of Piperoni, a mobile artisan pizza business in Southend that caters for events and celebrations. He said: "Before the pandemic I hadn't really needed to use social media in any big way but since then it has become massively important to my businesses.

The brilliant resources and support available on the programme played a big role in making that happen. The grant allowed me to invest in camera equipment to improve my digital output inspired by the learning resources on the programme. **The support team were brilliant and always on hand to help whenever needed.**"

[CLICK TO WATCH OUR VIDEO CASE STUDY](#)



MALDON DECKCHAIR COMPANY

Meryl Dobson, who runs a deckchair hire and sales firm in Essex, the Maldon Deckchair Company, said: "**Right from the start, our advisor got behind our concept, kept us motivated and showed confidence we could go on and create a lovely business.**"

The online training resources were brilliant, helping us with everything from sorting out accounts to finding tips on photography. We devoted our grant to improving our website. It's all about getting awareness out there and making sure people can find us."

[CLICK TO WATCH OUR VIDEO CASE STUDY](#)



RAMSGATE ARTS BARGE

The Ramsgate Arts Barge is a community interest company creating an arts centre and community space through the renovation of a 133-year-old Dutch barge moored in Ramsgate harbour.

The centre launched in autumn 2023. Kevin O'Connor and his partner Natasha became directors in March 2020 just 72 hours before the first UK lockdown was announced. "It was probably the worst time in history to try and start a capital works project," Kevin recalled. "Lots of grants that could have been available were paused or removed and it became a real struggle to keep it moving forward."

Reflecting on the impact of the Covid recovery programme on the company, Kevin said: "**The programme was very easy to follow and I think its long-term impact will be huge.** You could pick the most appropriate resources from the online training modules and apply them direct to your business, bringing you up to speed on areas you are not too strong on. It's so important to be able to find the right knowledge and skills set. Our advisor really took the time to understand what we were trying to achieve and together we decided how best to spend the grant money. We had no available funds for website development so we worked on that aspect."

[CLICK TO WATCH OUR VIDEO CASE STUDY](#)

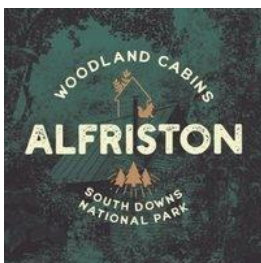


PASTA RASTA

Medway food business Pasta Rasta is a specialist in Italian-Caribbean fusion dishes through its restaurant, takeaway and event catering services.

While the programme provided a specific grant towards a website launch, the business also accessed wider advice and guidance particularly on the best use of digital resources. Pasta Rasta Co-founder Henry Horton said: "**The advice and support available was great. It enabled us to think strategically** in order to turn our attention to growth and what we wanted to achieve for our business. We wouldn't have got this far without the help from WSX Enterprise."

[CLICK TO WATCH OUR VIDEO CASE STUDY](#)



ALFRISTON WOODLAND CABINS

Mandy Foss, who runs a South Downs holiday let business, Alfriston Woodland Cabins, with her partner Darran Foss, used their grant to invest in computer equipment which was essential to improve their website.

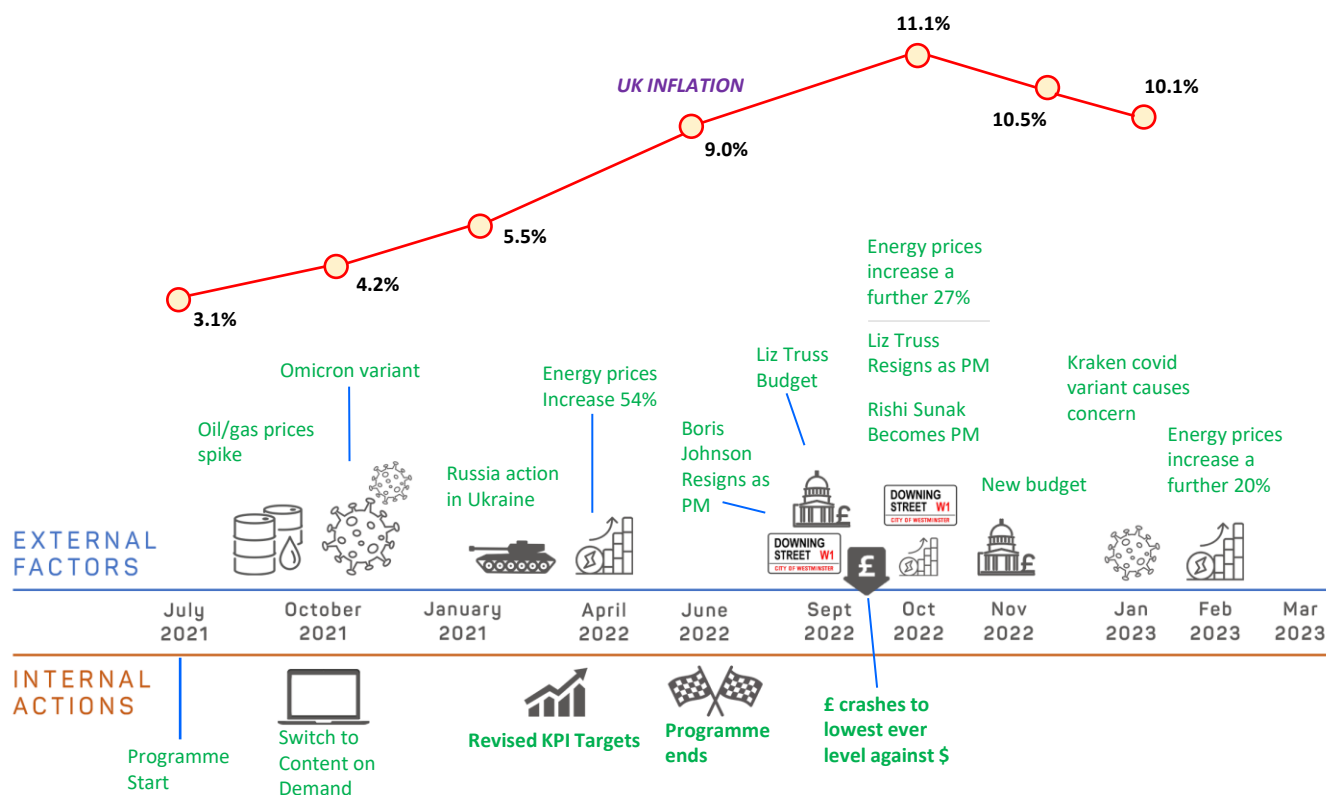
"The brilliant resources and support available on the programme played a big role in making that happen. The grant allowed me to invest in camera equipment to improve my digital output inspired by the learning resources on the programme. **The support team were brilliant and always on hand to help whenever needed.**"

[CLICK TO WATCH OUR VIDEO CASE STUDY](#)

4. BACKGROUND

The Adapting with Digital Programme was funded by the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and targeted people who have been running their own business for at least a year but need advice and support to transform the digital aspects of their business.

WSX Enterprise secured the contract to deliver the programme which ran from 1st July 2021 to 30th June 2022. During the programme there were significant changes to the economy because of the pandemic and the introduction of Government policy responses, as well as wider global factors that have affected the economic landscape.



Against this backdrop, modifications were made to the original programme design as follows:

- Recognising that people didn't want to attend courses on set times and set days, but were happy to watch the same event in their own time as a recording, led us to transfer all modules of our business support courses to video content that could be accessed at anytime of the day or night. We found that this approach increased engagement.
- By swapping our virtual courses to online learning that was accessible 24/7 meant that clients were unable to ask questions 'live' whilst attending events. This led to an increase in clients wanting calls with us which led to us increasing the number of Business Advisors that were allocated to the AWD programme.

- By January 2022, it had become clear that given the continued uncertainty in the economy that some clients were unable to stay in their business or felt that now wasn't the time to launch a new business. We had an increase in the number of people who after participating in the programme decided to return to salaried employment for stability of income, something Business Advisors were also recommending to those who needed security of an income. This led to a change of contract to amend the KPI targets, reducing the numbers for the Business Start Up Programme and increasing the target of the Business Success programme.
- We had a number of grant applicants who underspent on their allocation. To ensure the maximum number of successful applicants had access to funding, we re-allocated money as it came back to us, allowing us to support businesses who had passed the application process but weren't allocated money due to oversubscription- this ensured we helped as many businesses as possible and only returned a very small amount of grant money.
- We tracked Clients at three points during the course of the programmes, January 2022, July/August 2022 and finally December/January 2022/2023. Whilst we tried to work with the same clients at each point to monitor the impact of the programme, this wasn't always possible for various reasons varying from illness, businesses shutting or just a lack of interest in talking to us after the end of the programme. However at each point we did speak with people who had been through the programme and in some cases had also received grants.

5. THE PROGRAMME

The Adapting with Digital Programme required businesses to have been trading for at least a year, and to be appropriately registered with HMRC or Companies House (depending upon their business set up).



WSX enterprise

FREE

FULLY-FUNDED

24/7 SUPPORT

EVENTS

RESOURCES

YOUR BUSINESS IS READY TO THRIVE

REGISTER NOW

ADAPTING WITH DIGITAL

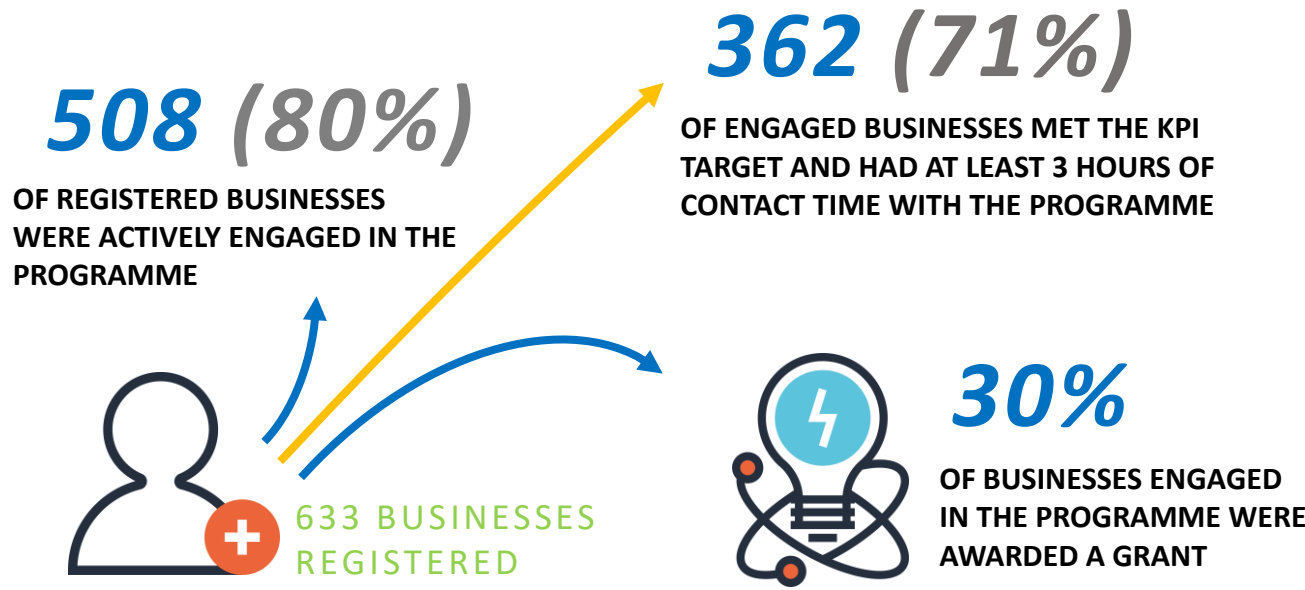
Successful completion of the programme required at least 3 hours of active engagement with the programme (through 1-2-1 meetings and online content), typically with at least one meeting with a business advisor.

Those that did successfully meet these criteria were eligible to apply for a grant of between £500 and £2,000.

Over the course of the programme six businesses advisors provided tailored sessions to our clients. Most of our advisors had personal experience of running a small business, and all were able to provide general business advice. In addition, our advisors had specialisms covering the following areas:

- Accounting and finance
- Strategy
- Business planning
- Sales and marketing
- Purchasing and logistics
- Turnaround
- Technology
- Media
- Brand and market planning
- Sales campaigns
- Change management
- Organisational design
- Learning and development

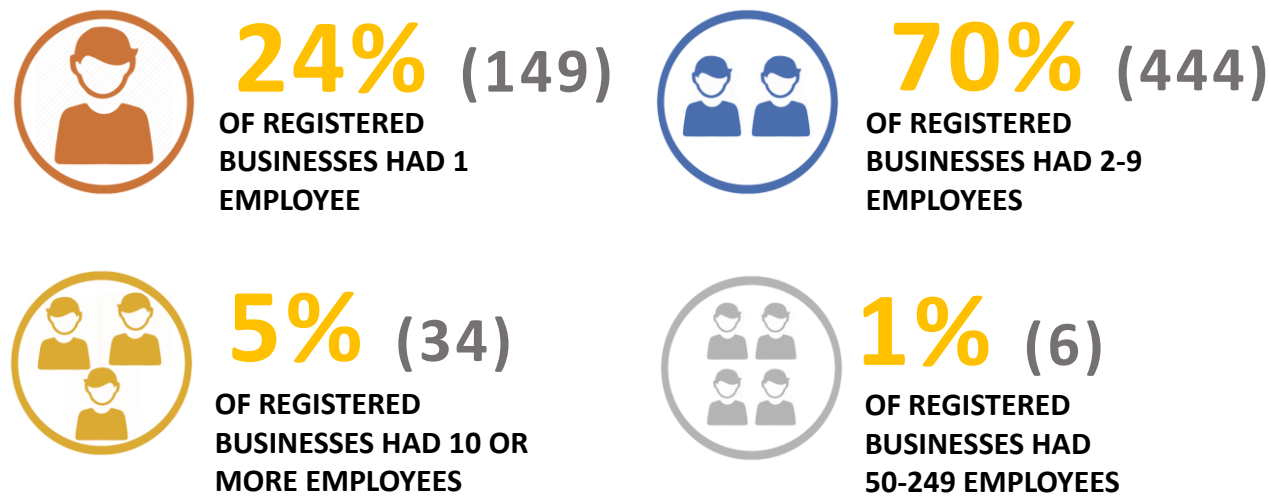
6. BUSINESS PROFILES



Video on Demand

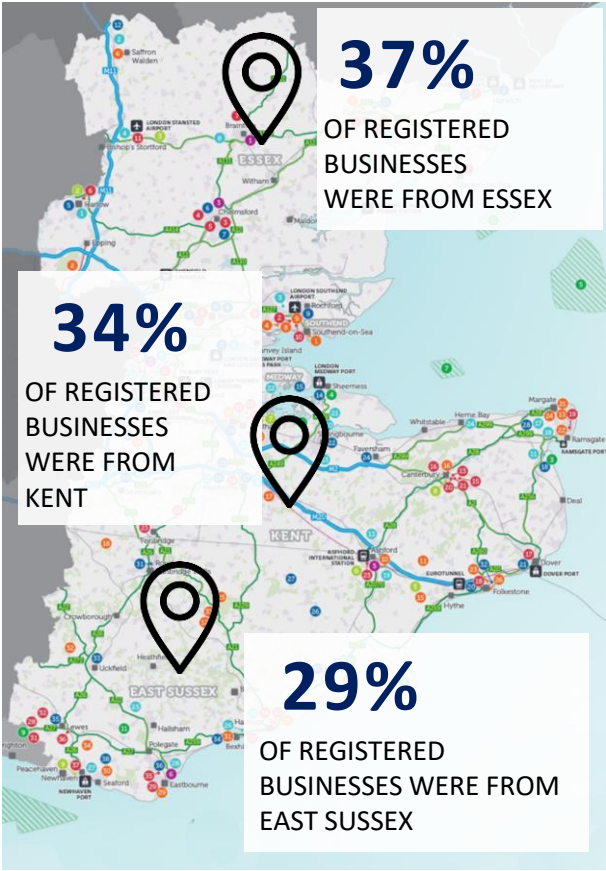


Business Size

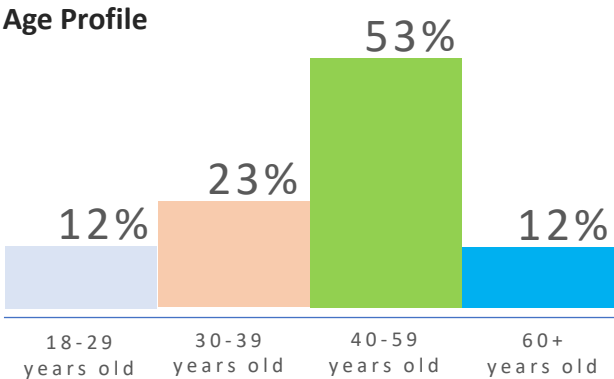


6. BUSINESS PROFILES

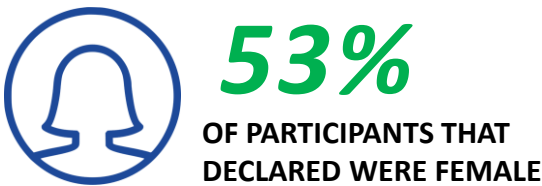
Business Location – Geographic Profile



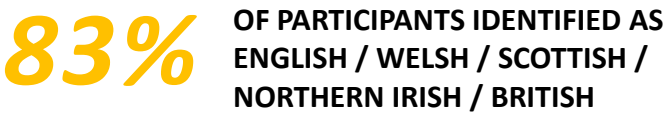
Age Profile



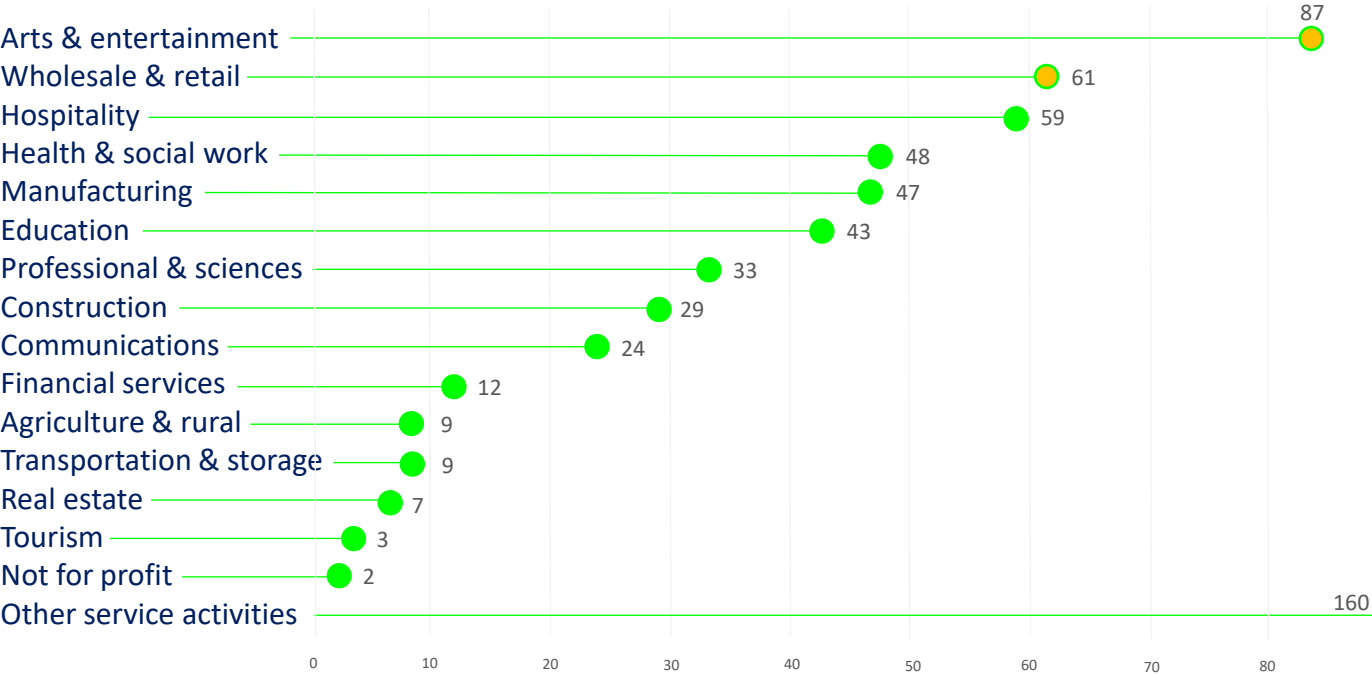
Gender Profile



Ethnicity



Business Type – Businesses came from a broad range of sectors / industries



7. 12 MONTH BUSINESS FEEDBACK

A comprehensive survey of registered clients was carried out via Survey Monkey. In accordance with GDPR we only requested feedback from clients that opted in. Therefore 589 clients were approached. Of these, 78 clients (13.2%) responded.

In addition, 23 clients were approached via telephone for their feedback on the programme.



“ I would definitely recommend this programme to others - its value is certainly not reliant upon the grant. If anything, the grant itself is more valuable when alongside the programme as you gain access to objective - and knowledgeable - perspectives on how you intend to invest the grant. I feel more confident now with my proposed plan.

”

- Daisy Stapley-Bunten via Trustpilot

From the survey and interviews, the feedback was overwhelmingly positive:

QUESTION: HOW SATISFIED WERE YOU WITH THE PROGRAMME?



56%



26%



8%



4%



6%

More than 80% of respondents were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the programme. This reflects the quality of the business advisors and the content provided through videos and webinars. Those that were not satisfied generally cited unclear processes or the failure to receive a grant.



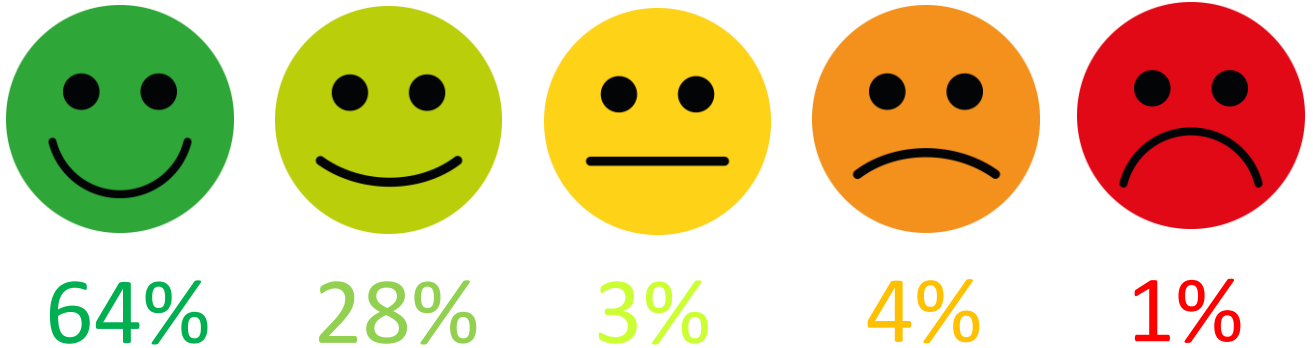
“ Exceptional business support. Can't recommend highly enough - outstanding!

- Outreach Tuition via Trustpilot

”

The quality of the business advisors is illustrated by the second question of the general survey. Over 90% of respondents were satisfied with their advisor and the advice they gave.

QUESTION: HOW SATISFIED WERE YOU WITH YOUR BUSINESS ADVISOR AND THE ADVICE THEY GAVE?



“

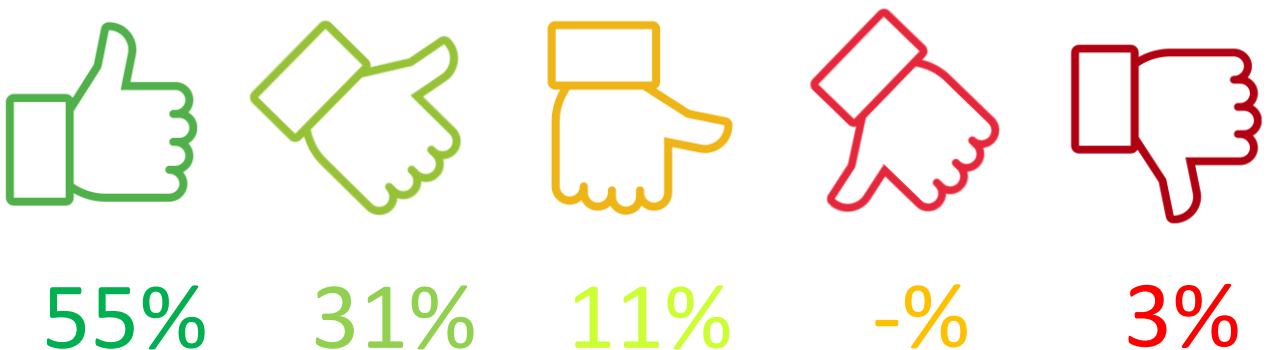
Steve was incredibly helpful and friendly and I felt supported through the process as he communicated everything so well.

- Tansy Dowman via Trustpilot

”

Outside of the individual meetings, learning opportunities were provided by online webinars and a library of over 200 videos. The videos in particular proved popular with clients as they could be accessed at any time, and many clients reported rewatching some of them to make further notes to follow up on.

QUESTION: HOW SATISFIED WERE YOU WITH THE ONLINE CONTENT AVAILABLE (VIDEOS AND EVENTS)?



Measuring a programme against expectations can be challenging, as it is a judgement not just on delivery of the programme, but also on what clients thought they would get by subscribing. In that context, 85% of respondents stating that the programme met or exceeded their expectations is a promising result.

QUESTION: HOW WELL DID THE PROGRAMME MEET YOUR EXPECTATIONS?

EXCEEDED
EXPECTATIONS



31%

MET EXPECTATIONS



54%

BELOW
EXPECTATIONS



15%

“

I have benefited hugely from the programme, I have learned a lot from the resources available and a very knowledgeable and helpful mentor.

- Survey respondent

”

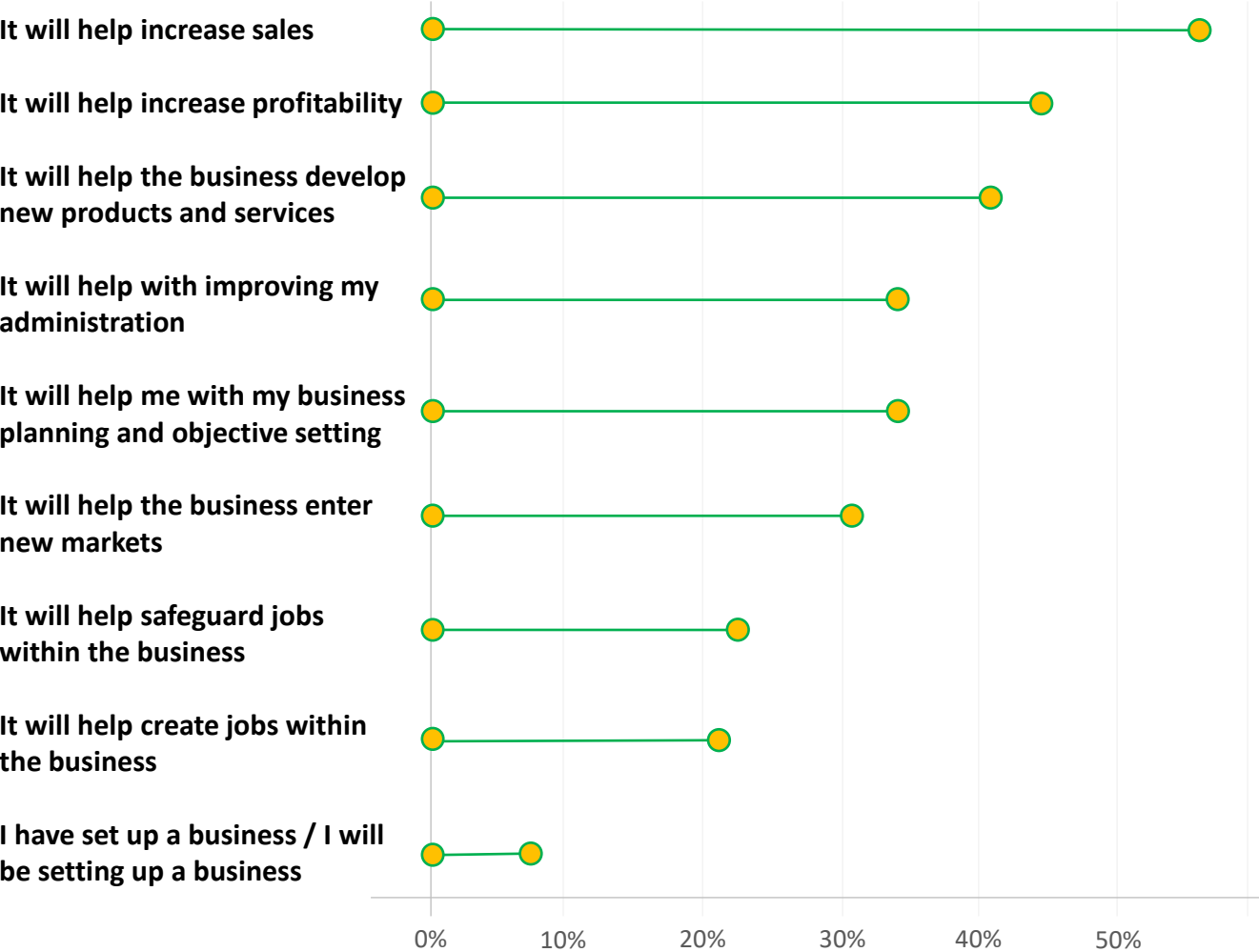
6. BUSINESS BENEFITS

In attempting to capture the tangible benefits of the programme, within the survey we included a question that categorised the most common opportunities in our experience. There may be other benefits not captured in this chart; for example, many clients just appreciated the opportunity to share their challenges with someone and be listened to.

Over half of respondents felt that the programme will help them increase sales, which is a very satisfactory outcome for the programme. Furthermore, over 40% felt it would increase their profitability, which we believe reflects the increased digital awareness promoted by the programme, leading to greater profit margin for our clients through more effective working.

There were also significant reports of clients developing new products or markets, and of improvements to administration and business planning.

QUESTION: HOW DO YOU THINK YOUR BUSINESS WILL BENEFIT FROM YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THE PROGRAMME? (TICK AS MANY AS APPLY)



From an employment perspective it is encouraging that a fifth of respondents reported that jobs will have been safeguarded and/or created as a result of their participation in the programme.



“ The Adapting to Digital course at WSX has completely changed my approach to growing my young, small business during such a difficult economic and social climate. The new skills that the consultants (notably David Taylor) were able to share and develop with me over the 1-2-1 sessions were invaluable and beyond informative including a vast range of free seminars via the website.

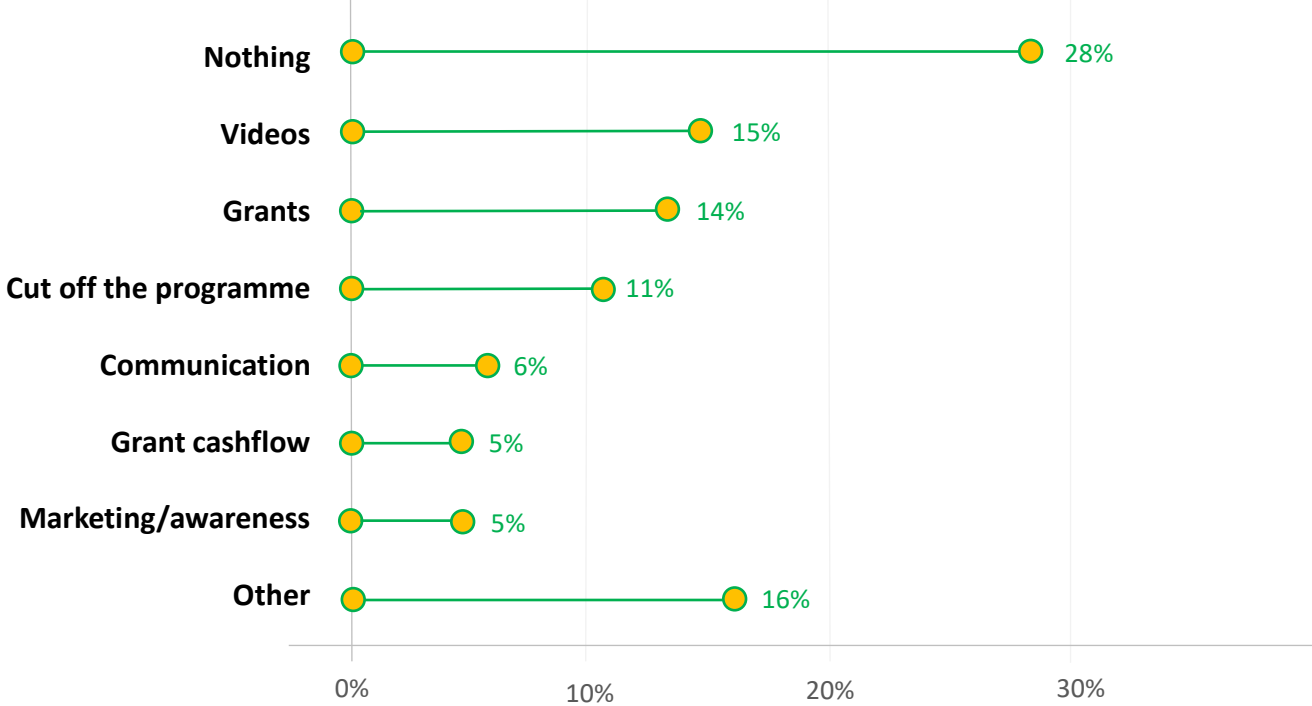
”

- Emma Valentine via Trustpilot

Making the programme even better

As part of the survey, we gave our clients the opportunity to share their thoughts on how the programme could be improved. This was a free-text response field in the survey, but we have clustered the responses as follows.

QUESTION: HOW COULD THE PROGRAMME BE IMPROVED



“ Possibly a bit more personalisation of the programme to suit your individual business needs.

”

- Survey respondent

Whilst it is pleasing to note that almost 30% of respondents thought the programme could not be improved at all, there were some suggestions.

The videos were the most common theme, with some respondents saying they wanted more videos, others saying there were too many. Some felt the style could be improved.

Grants feedback was commented on by those who did not receive one, primarily, and who felt there should have been more funding available, or it should have been guaranteed on application, rather than assessed. Grant complaints were particularly acute towards the end of the programme. Whilst funds had been held back to ensure grants were consistently allocated, the volume of applications increased significantly in the last two months of the programme, and inevitably many applicants were going to be disappointed.

In addition, 3 respondents felt that they could not complete the grant process due to the requirement to fund the initial expenditure which would then be reimbursed within 10 working days. These respondents said they could not afford the initial outgoings, and their feedback is shown as grant cashflow in the chart.

The programme ending on 30th June 2022 was also referenced, with many clients saying they wanted the programme to go on longer. They valued the advice, videos, and grants, and wished for more. WSX have partially addressed this by launching the Transformational Business Programme, which allows for 1-2-1 advice and access to the videos, albeit for an annual fee.

Other comments included a range of individual ideas including extending the geographic coverage of the programme (beyond the SELEP region), more coaching, and more technical and bespoke advice.

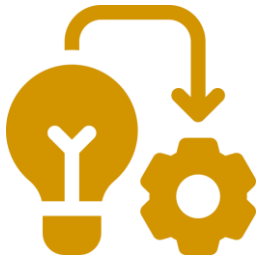
8. 18 MONTH BUSINESS FEEDBACK

In January 2022, 27 Adapting with Digital clients were interviewed. Follow up interviews were carried out between July and September with 21 of these clients. The difference in numbers is mainly due to us being unable to contact some of the clients, although three of the initial list did drop out of the programme.

Of those spoken to, all of them reported positive progress in their business activities. Many had received grants from the programme, and whilst the benefits were not fully realised yet, they all reported that they expected their business to benefit from the grant, and more broadly from the advice they received.

There was one client from the initial contact list of 27 who we know was unable to continue their business due to ill health. They had been awarded a grant but declined it having received an adverse diagnosis. We did not attempt to contact them, out of respect for their situation, but they appear to have ceased trading.

We do also have to note that the general economic climate is not favourable to many small businesses. It was noticeable that those spoken to towards the end of the interview period (early September) were more concerned about this than those we contacted in July. Whilst this could just reflect the relatively small sample size, it is plausible that our clients have become more concerned about the economy even over such a relatively short period of time, as the scale of energy price increases, and general inflation, became clearer (before the latest government intervention).



80%

**OF RESPONDENTS ON THE
PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTED
RECOMMENDATIONS
SUGGESTED TO THEM.**

In December 2022/ January 2023 a survey was sent to 364 clients from the Adapting with Digital programme. We received 30 surveys back, with only five people wishing to have a follow up call. The numbers were considerably lower than previous surveys due to people having moved on and lost interest and therefore not wishing to engage with us. We had a number of people ask to 'unsubscribe' from all communications from us as well. Some businesses did respond to our email saying that they were unable remember us, or the programme at all!

The results however were very positive and showed 80% of respondents on the programme implemented recommendations suggested to them, with 63% anticipating that their business will grow because of our advice and/or grant. Please refer to p.5 for further statistics.

60%

**OF RESPONDENTS WERE MORE
INSPIRED TO GROW THEIR BUSINESS**

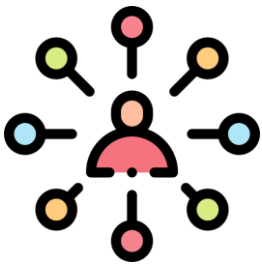


Since being on the programme 60% of respondents say they are more inspired as a business to grow. One stated “Having a external view was invaluable as we were working in the business day to day, sometimes its hard to judge if something is the correct route for the business to take. Your programme helped us establish our direction for growth”. Another said “I have regenerated enthusiasm for my business after receiving your help.”

From the five businesses interviewed, one business has a new system for providing quotes which has provided an efficient and customer friendly experience- this has in turn improved their conversion rate and increased sales. Another business reported that they have entered into new markets following the advice received from the programme, this has helped to stabilise them by adding another arm to their business. A further business has increased their revenue by employing a new staff member, meaning the company could take on additional architectural projects. Further successes from the businesses interviewed included a greater online presence, successful marketing plans and generally being able to better support their business.

When speaking with the businesses it was clear to see that the programme and Business Advisors were able to help with a wide range of business needs. Between the five businesses interviewed, new marketing strategies via social media platforms, software and technology upgrades to increase efficiency, rebranding and diversification of services were all areas that had been advised on.

The overall response from the businesses was that they felt we were able to confidently help with their business needs, it was clear to see how valuable they had found the programme.



83%

**OF RESPONDENTS SAID THAT THEIR
BUSINESS HAD BEEN PARTIALLY OR
DIRECTLY INFLUENCED BY WORKING
WITH WSX ENTERPRISE**

Here's some of the feedback we received;

“ Amazing content and advise given, we have been part of many similar programmes and can honestly say it was the best and most valuable we have accessed. You knew what you were talking about- it was refreshing. ”

“ The service through the programme was better than I expected and I really appreciate all the help I got from you. Every small business should have something similar to help them.” ”

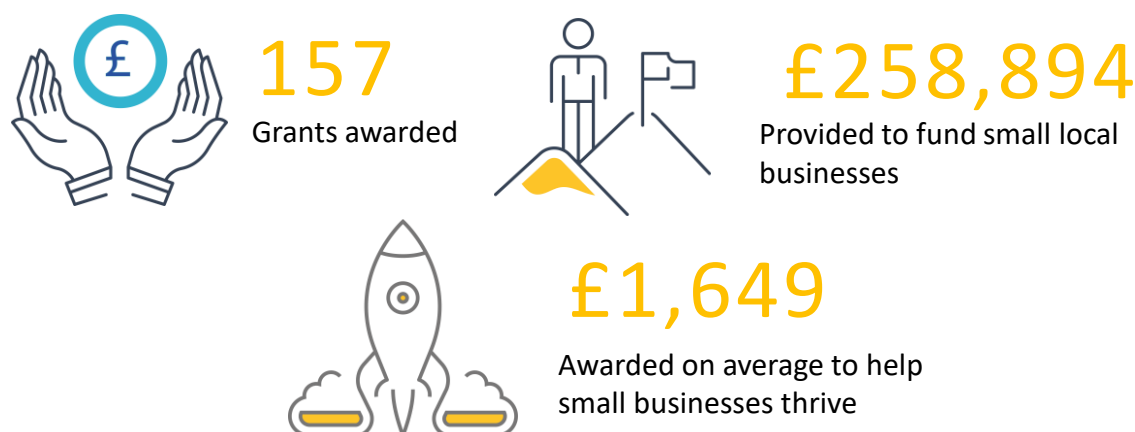
“ This was a very helpful programme to overcome part of the initial expenditure for employing staff in a period where it is hard to forecast market conditions over the next 6, 12 and 18 month period. It was a very helpful programme, the 1-2-1's and video content really helped me upskill myself and grow my business. The grant also helped me grow at a crucial stage. ”

Although this is positive feedback we need to take note that since the 12 month report, the general economic climate has declined even further with inflation still rising, energy prices increasing and the cost of living crisis further escalating, along with no end to the Ukraine issues. All of these have managed to create a perfect storm for businesses with far greater than average levels ceasing trading or reporting a decrease in turnover. Therefore, when looking at people's responses we need to bear this in mind- businesses haven't really had a fair chance to implement the advice/make the most of their grants under 'normal' trading conditions, yet we do have a lot of positive responses to show that with the influence of the support that people received they have been able to keep going, or grow- which could show the positive impact of the programme.

When speaking to the businesses, all five of them mentioned how the increase in the cost of living has impacted their profit margins and ability to stay competitive. They also expressed concerns about the constant threats of the worst recession we have seen in a long time, wondering what would happen to them, and if their business would survive it. One business reported that their sales have been safeguarded for now but they worry that if the cost of living increases further, they might not be able to carry on and have considered moving back into stable employment.

All five businesses thought that they would have benefitted further if the support from the programme was still available.

9. GRANTS



Where clients had met the minimum requirements of three hours of time on the programme, including at least one meeting with a business advisor, they were eligible to apply for a grant of between £500 and £2,000.

The grant process required an online application, after completing a set criteria and a conversation with a Business Advisor to establish a barrier to growth within the business that the grant could be used for. Applications were verified to ensure compliance with the grant rules, before being assessed by a panel independent of the project delivery team. The panel scored each application that they reviewed, any that achieved a pass mark (88) were awarded a grant, when, towards the end of the process, we had too many applicants for the number of grants available, grants were awarded to the highest scoring first.

The grants were awarded in nine rounds of applications, starting from the 1st October 2021, with each round having an equal amount of money assigned to it. This was designed to allow funds to be released in a timely basis to those with valid applications. Should one of the rounds not have enough clients who reached the pass mark, the amount not allocated was carried over to the following month. Holding grants until the end of the programme would have disadvantaged those clients who signed up early on in the programme and awarding on a first come first served basis would have disadvantaged those who hadn't yet hear about the programme. As the programme became more widely known, the volume of grant applications did increase significantly, which meant more people were disappointed not to get a grant, and others were unable to meet the qualifying requirements due to the programme deadlines. This is reflected in the feedback noted earlier in our report.

The grant process required successful applicants to buy the equipment or service themselves, and then apply for reimbursement evidenced by both an invoice from the supplier and by a bank statement showing the funds having been spent. Whilst this did cause some concern with a few applicants, it was designed to minimise the risk to the programme (and SELEP) of fraudulent payments. We committed to reimbursement of expenditure properly incurred within 10 working days, and usually much sooner than that.

In some cases, clients spent less than their award, or ended up not claiming it at all. In these cases, the funds were recycled to grant applications that had just missed out on an award in a previous round. The final allocation falls just short of the financial target due to one applicant not completing the award process for the grants.

Many of the follow up interviews that took place in July and August were with clients that had been awarded grants. Whilst clients were positive about receiving funds to support their business, the majority of business owners that we spoke to said it was too early to assess the impact.

In most cases, the activity paid for by the grant was still in progress (for example a new website was being finalised, but not launched) or equipment was ordered but had not yet arrived. It is therefore difficult to report on the outcomes of the grants.

The grants covered a wide range of activities and businesses. Some of our favourite examples are:



The grant went towards improving the website, with a new online booking system to simplify the customer journey



The client was able to invest in a new online booking system thanks to our grant, making the process easier for customers and boosting sales



Grant support provided to buy an industrial mill for a progressive organic waste recycling company



Promotional videos and membership of specialist search engines were supported by our grant funding



Grant contribution to buying a Lymphatouch machine, for specialist treatment after cancer and other surgery



Grant funding was provided to purchase new equipment to improve the ease and quality of her online music tuition

Following our 18 month survey and follow up interviews it was easy to see the impact that the grants were now having with 63% saying that they could already see a positive impact due to the programme/grant. The impact of a grant on the Adapting with Digital programme seems to be much more visible than those on the Starting and Succeeding in Business programme. This could be because the businesses were already trading so didn't have to get up and running so the grant was adding value more than could be measured for a start-up where everything is new. We also had feedback that included comments such as

'The grant was used to upgrade software on my engraving equipment which increases the scope of work that can be taken on. I have managed to secure further work using these new features which I wouldn't have been able to complete before'

'The grant allowed me to improve the photographic content of my products for social media and website and the Pinterest management has launched me in this sphere which is already gaining traction.'

'It's a slow burn but having higher grade equipment is already paying off.'

'I now have a very professional looking website and lot's of ideas for social media. This helps to bring in more clients'

10. PROGRAMME DELIVERY FEEDBACK

Whilst the programme was, in our opinion, undeniably successful and delivering on very nearly 200% of its KPIs, there were also learning points that might be useful to note for any future programmes that are undertaken both by WSX and SELEP. We have added our thoughts here to assist future work.

- We learnt very quickly that people did not want to attend a course at a specific time but rather choose when they learnt the same content. Had we not addressed this issue and got agreement for 'content on demand' we would not have succeeded in helping as many people as we did, nor meeting the KPIs in the time available.
- There was no way either WSX or SELEP could anticipate how many economic, COVID and global challenges would take place within the course of 12 months. A WSX key learning was adapting as soon as we needed to rather than sitting and waiting it out. Being agile was probably the most important skill for this programme.
- We underestimated the number of staff that would be needed in order to deliver the KPIs, this meant that a sudden recruitment drive needed to happen five months in to add an extra three Business Advisors for the SSIB programme- we also merged the Business Advisors so that they could all give support across both programmes.
- The programme would have benefited from not going live until about two months after it did- this would have enabled the programme to be fully up and running rather than setting it up alongside delivery. As it was we were trying to set up and run a programme at the same time which led to confusion all round.
- The regular meetings with SELEP were essential during the delivery period- without them WSX wouldn't have built up the relationships to be able to ask for changes to the contract and SELEP might not have had the trust in WSX that they were doing it for the benefit of the programme.
- The grant programme, which of course did receive negative feedback from businesses who weren't successful, did work in that it was fair and treated those that only found out about the programme towards the end the same way as those who were there from the beginning- everyone had an equal chance to access a grant, once they had met the eligibility criteria.
- Keeping both programmes separate but with all Business Advisors working across both programmes allowed us to provide continuity and share knowledge and resources for all participants.
- Allocating each client to a specific Business Advisor built a relationship and meant there was a rapport to enable both parties to bounce ideas off each other- we only implemented this half way through the programme but the level of engagement after having done so did increase dramatically.
- Our database to record all data- and show live data at any given point was a great investment. It made everything so much slicker from reporting, to seeing a live picture of where we were, to having immediate access to reporting data for SELEP. I would always ensure something similar was set up from the beginning going forward.



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