

Revi-VE
South East Visitor Economy Fund
Grant Programme (Element 1)
Evaluation Report

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by

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PLACE MAKING & MARKETING AGENCY

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND

The Revi-VE 100% grant fund is part of a wider package of support, funded by the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP), to help deliver long-term resilience and adaptation to a post-COVID world for the visitor economy in East Sussex, Essex, Kent, Medway, Southend and Thurrock. The aim of the grants (£1,000 – £3,000) was to inject small visitor economy businesses with the financial investment they needed to respond to changed market conditions. The funding focussed on driving innovation and helping businesses to adapt their operations or business model to new trends and consumer behaviours. It was particularly targeted at groups of businesses that missed out on previous government grants such as event organisers, tour operators, key supply chains and businesses without premises.

1.2. ABOUT THIS EVALUATION

With the target number of businesses now having received a grant, this evaluation has been carried out, in order to understand whether the grants have helped to achieve the aims of the SELEP Covid-19 recovery fund and reach target businesses as well as to evaluate the efficiency of the grant defrayal process. In summary, this evaluation aims to understand:

- The profiles of businesses that applied and received grants, in detail
- Whether geographic target allocations for grants were met
- Exactly what businesses have spent their grants on, and whether this proved transformative for the business itself, and whether it met the original aims of the SELEP COVID-19 recovery fund
- The efficiency of the programme design, communications and client journey

1.3. METHODOLOGY

The following methods were used to carry out this evaluation:

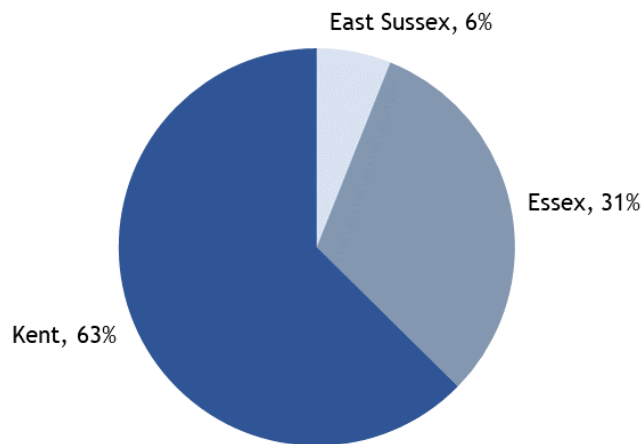
1. Desk research - a review of all data and monitoring reports related to the grant programme which includes district and sector breakdowns and information on expenditure
2. Interviews with key project partners (incl. Smarter Society) to gain qualitative feedback on the project process
3. Online survey, of approximately 15 mins duration, sent to all businesses that received funds

The online survey was carried out between 4th July-17th August 2022, with a prize draw offered as an incentive for businesses to participate. A total of 99 businesses (grant recipients) responded to the online survey.

The design of the business survey, analysis of findings and report were carried out by TOPOSOPHY Ltd, a specialist agency in place making and marketing.

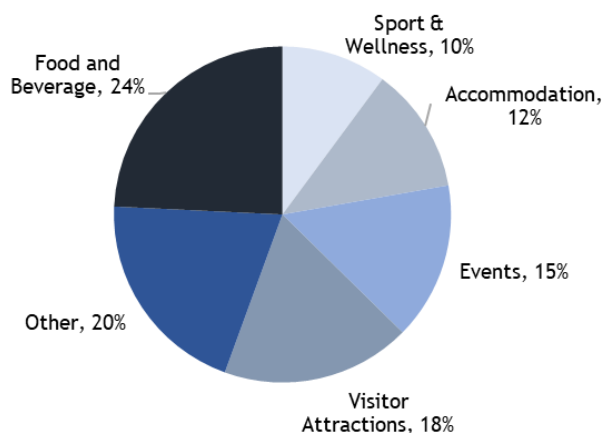
1.4 PROFILE OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Profile of survey respondents by location:



- The location of survey respondents compared to the location of eventual grant recipients (see Section 2.3, Table 2) is not exactly aligned. A greater share of survey respondents were located in Kent (63%) compared to the share of grant recipients located in Kent (53%) or the target quota for grants in Kent (42%).
- There is also a slight under-representation of respondents in East Sussex (6%) compared to grant recipients (13%)

Profile of survey respondents by main business activity:



- Respondents were split quite evenly across a range of sectors in tourism and hospitality, with food & beverage businesses representing the largest share (24%)
- Businesses listed as 'other' mostly fell into the category of art venues or arts organisations

2. APPLICATION PROCESS

2.1 CONDITIONS FOR APPLICATION

The following general conditions for applications were established, and shared through a series of dedicated communications packs that were developed and shared by the Revi-VE partner, to encourage eligible businesses to apply for funding:

- Businesses could apply for grant funding of between £1,000-£3,000 (1 grant per business)
- Following receipt of grant funding, businesses were required to submit receipts demonstrating their purchase
- Applicants were permitted to apply for a maximum of £3,000 grant funding, however these funds could be put towards a purchase of up to £6,000 (with the remaining capital contributed from the applicant's own funds)

2.2 OVERVIEW OF GRANT APPLICATIONS RECEIVED

Two application periods were opened during 2021, while defrayals were made in three waves. During the total length of the programme, a total of **399 applications** were received for grant funding, while a total of **166 grants** were successfully defrayed, amounting to a total defrayment of **£438,145.36**. The average amount defrayed per grant across all waves was **£2,639.43**.

Applications received during July and October 2021 were processed and defrayed by Southend on Sea Borough Council during these two respective waves. The third wave of defrayals was processed by Smarter Society Ltd, under commission by SELEP during May to July 2022. Table 1 shows a summary of the applications received during each period, as well as the number of grants that were defrayed from those applications.

Table 1: Summary of grants defrayed by application period

Application/ defrayal wave	Period	Applications received	Grants defrayed	Total defrayed (£)
1	15-18 July 2021	330	117	£305,672.75
2	21-22 October 2021	69	22	£55,198.39
3	May- July 2022	<i>These applications were received during W1 and W2</i>	27	£77,274.22
TOTAL		399	166	£438,145.36

Common reasons for grant applications being unsuccessful included:

- Failure to assemble all documentation required

- Failure to submit all required documentation within the application period
- Failure to demonstrate that funding required would go 'above and beyond' routine businesses purchases made by the applicant

2.3 OVERVIEW OF GRANTS DEFRAIDED

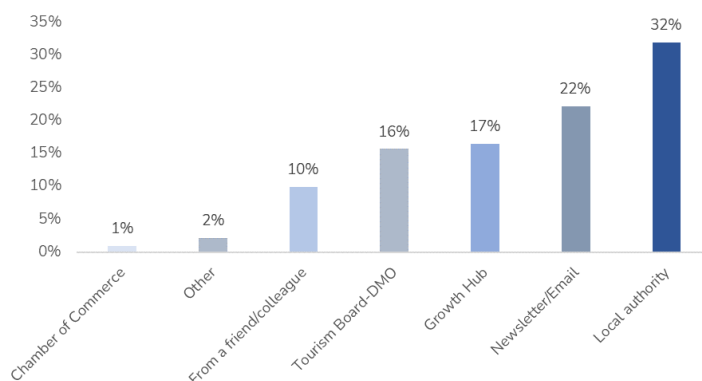
Table 2: Total grants defrayed by authority-region; target vs actual

County	Per capita split (target) (%)	Target minimum number of grants	Actual number of grants defrayed	Target quota (£)	Actual quota defrayed (£)	Per capita split (actual) (%)
Essex (incl. Southend and Thurrock)	44.14%	66	58	£198,630	£150,666.69	34.39%
Kent (incl Medway)	42.77%	64	87	£192,465	£230,402.13	52.59%
East Sussex	13.09%	20	21	£58,905	£57,076.54	13.03%
TOTALS	100%	150	166	£450,000	£438,145.36	100%

NB: Due to some missing address/location data for W3 defrayals, data for the six separate local authority areas has been aggregated to show totals for the three counties; Essex, Kent and East Sussex.

- As the table shows (column 2), targets were set to ensure a fair distribution of grants, according to population size in each county area.
- Once all grants had been defrayed, the actual per capita share achieved (final column) shows that the target was achieved for defrayals to East Sussex businesses, however defrayals to Essex businesses were approximately 10% under target, while defrayals to Kent businesses were around 10% above target
- The target number of defrayals was met (150), with the total (166) reaching 16 more businesses than originally expected
- 97% of the full fund allocation (£450,000) was defrayed, with a total defrayal amount of **£438,145.36**.

How did you hear about this funding?



All applicants were asked how they had heard about the SELEP Visitor Economy Grant Programme.

- 1 in 3 applicants (the greatest share) had heard about the programme via their local authority (it is assumed that in most cases this was their County Council, or Borough Council). This is perhaps to be expected since targets were set by local authority area
- The next most popular communications channel was via email/newsletter (22%), followed by the local growth hub (17%) and tourism board/DMO (16%).
- *NB: Data on which comms channel recipients found the grant scheme through was not available for W3 recipients.*

2.4 APPRAISAL OF THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with various elements of the application process. Results are shown in the table below, with key takeaways beneath.

'To what extent do you agree with the following statements?' [Q2]	Agree or strongly agree (%)
I was able to quickly understand whether the funding applied to my business	87
Information about what the grant could cover was easy to understand	87
I found the application process easy to understand and follow	75
It was easy to assemble the evidence required	67
I had enough time to prepare and submit my application	82
It was easy to get personalised advice about my application	78
The application criteria were fair and relevant to a business like mine	94
The grant was processed within a reasonable amount of time	91

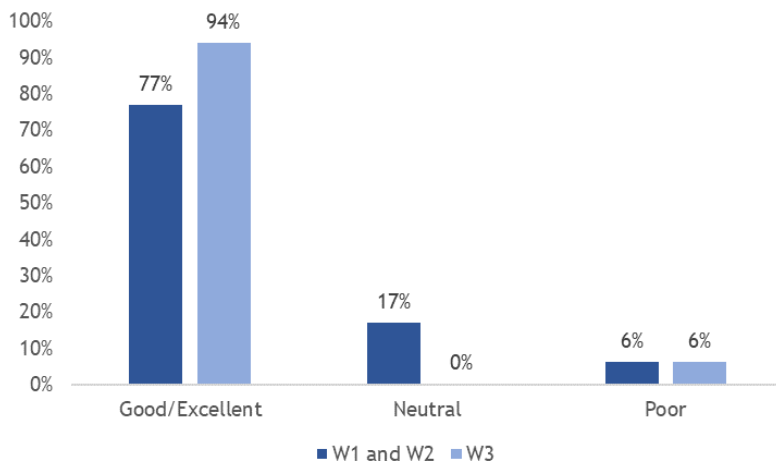
- Feedback was highly positive with at least 3 in 4 recipients rating every aspect highly, except one (ease of assembling evidence)
- Recipients felt particularly strongly that the criteria for applications were fair and relevant to small businesses, and were impressed with the speed of defrayal
- There was a consistent number (between 6-14%) of participants through all categories who gave a neutral response
- The only notable disagreements with the statements related to the 'application process being easy to understand and follow' (18% disagreed or strongly disagreed), and 'it was easy to assemble the evidence required' (18% disagreed or strongly disagreed). A smaller percentage (10%) of recipients were unhappy with the time allowed for preparing and submitting their applications

Interaction with an advisor (Q4):

77% of respondents had contact with an advisor when preparing their application. This group was asked to rate the **helpfulness** of the advisor. Satisfaction was strong, with 76% of recipients rating the advisor as 'very helpful' and 20% rating them as 'somewhat' or 'fairly' helpful. While 4% of this group gave a neutral response, no recipients rated the advisor as 'not at all helpful'.

Satisfaction with overall efficiency of the application process (Q3):

Q3 - Overall, on a scale of 1-5, how would you rate the efficiency of the application process?

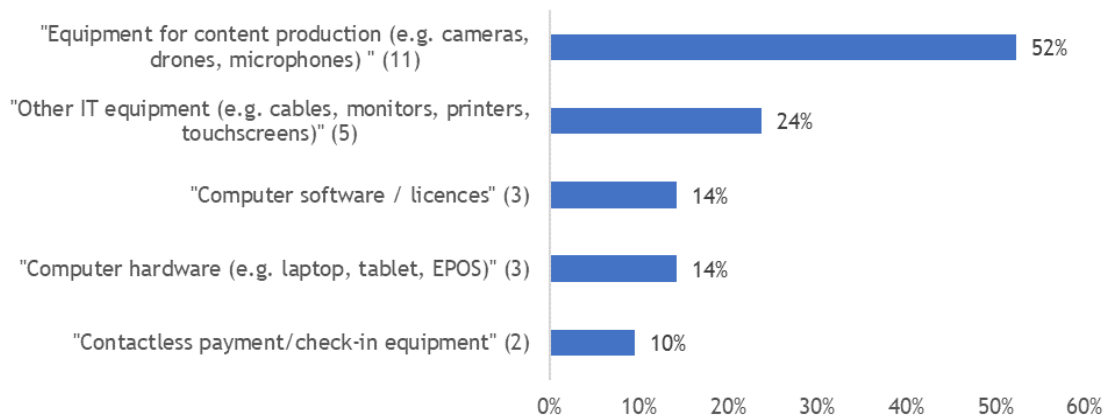


In summary, recipients were asked to rate the **overall efficiency** of the application process. Again, overall satisfaction was high, with an average of 79% of recipients rating it as 'good' or 'excellent'. Satisfaction was higher among those recipients who applied in wave 3, as opposed to waves 1 and 2 (94% vs. 77%), possibly due to this wave being administered by a dedicated service provider (Smarter Society) which used a platform designed for the purpose of processing applications. The share of recipients rating overall efficiency as 'poor' was 6%, while no recipients rated it as 'very poor.'

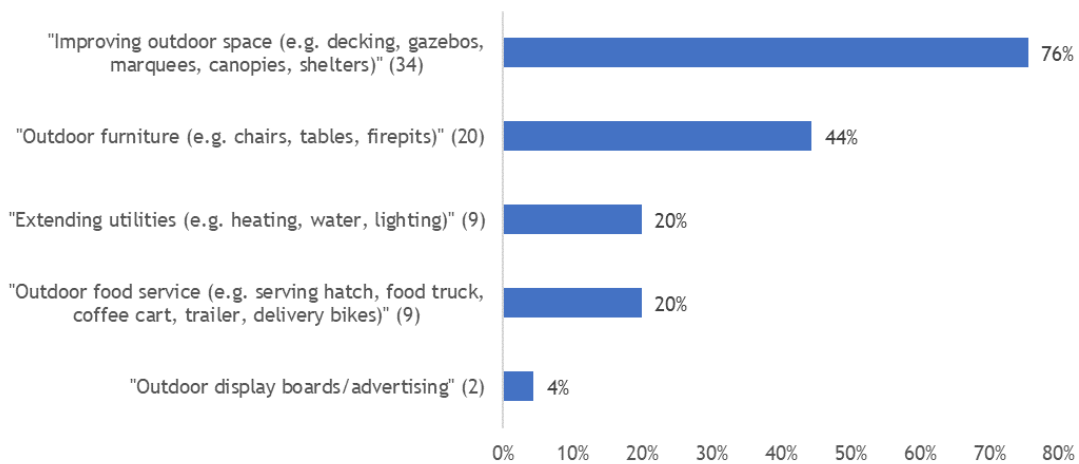
3. USE OF GRANTS DEFRAIDED

The average amount defrayed per grant across all waves was **£2,639.43**. During the application process, applicants were reminded that grants should be used for the purposes of innovation or diversification, and not for business-as-usual costs or associated with implementing legally-required social distancing or hygiene measures. Overall, the greatest proportion of grants was spent on upgrading facilities (45% of all surveyed recipients), followed by electronics (21%), professional services (19%) and 'other' categories (14%). The following three graphs show the most popular types of purchases made, under these three categories (Q5).

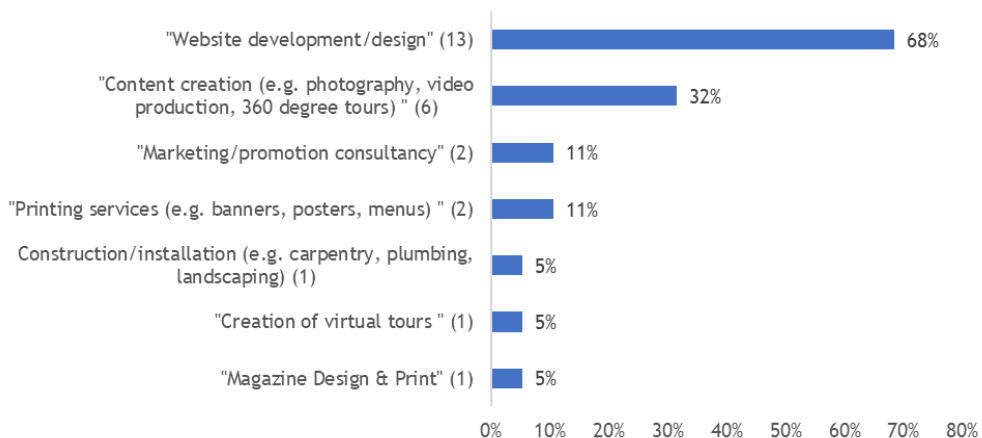
Q7 - Please select the type of electronics purchased



Q9 - Please select the type of facilities that were upgraded



Q11 - Please select the type of professional services purchased



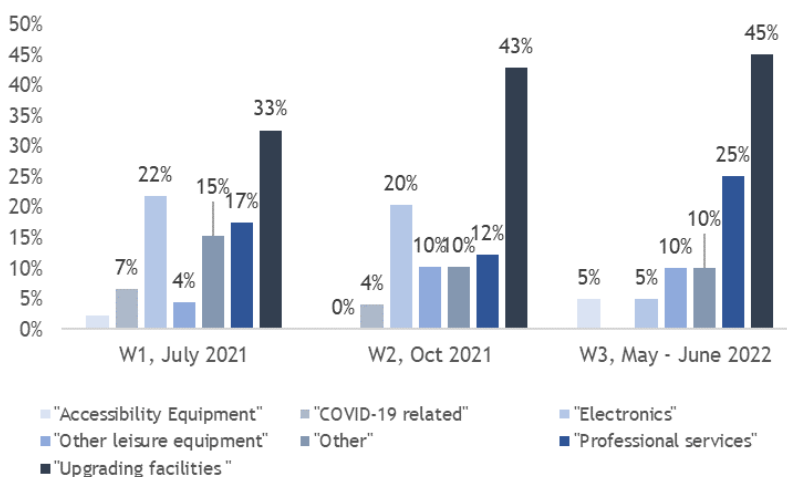
'Other' types of purchases included:

- A public art facility
- Enabling online booking
- Improving internal network IT infrastructure to cope with COVID-related demands
- New acoustic entertainment
- General equipment upgrades

- Grants were chiefly put towards helping businesses to **expand and improve their outdoor spaces**. During certain periods of the COVID-19 pandemic, hospitality businesses were only allowed to serve outside, while adding roofing and canopies, as well as outdoor furniture could help businesses to increase the overall number of customers who could be served at busy periods, even once restrictions had been lifted. This aligns with a COVID-19 consumer trend that showed that consumers were happy to spend more time outdoors, and were happy to do so even during colder weather
- 1 in 5 surveyed recipients put their grant towards buying **electronic equipment**, with more than half of these purchases going on equipment for content production such as cameras, drones and microphones. The pandemic triggered a widespread need for small businesses to improve their online presence, firstly, to give consumers greater amounts of reassurance and inspiration about their facilities, and what they could offer and secondly, to support a surge in online purchases (e.g. online bookings, food orders etc).
- This trend is also reflected in the largest share of **professional services** that were bought with grant funding; more than 60% of professional services contracted were for website development, while a smaller share (around 35%) was for professional photographers and video producers, who could help make this content. It is worth noting that many of these suppliers are likely to have been small businesses themselves, potentially struggling with a decline in business due to cancelled events - this highlights the indirect benefits triggered by SELEP's grant funding.

Use of grant funding over time (Q5):

Q5 - On what did you spend the grant that you received? Please select all that apply



As the graph above shows, there was no significant shift in the types of purchases made during the three application waves. The first wave (July 2021) saw a more even spread of purchases across all categories, with a lower overall level of facilities upgraded. This is possibly due to the expectation at the time that there would be few COVID-19 restrictions during the coming winter (which then changed by the time COVID-19 levels rose in autumn 2021). The experience of having endured two winters with restrictions might also account for the highest share of spending on facility upgrades in the third wave.

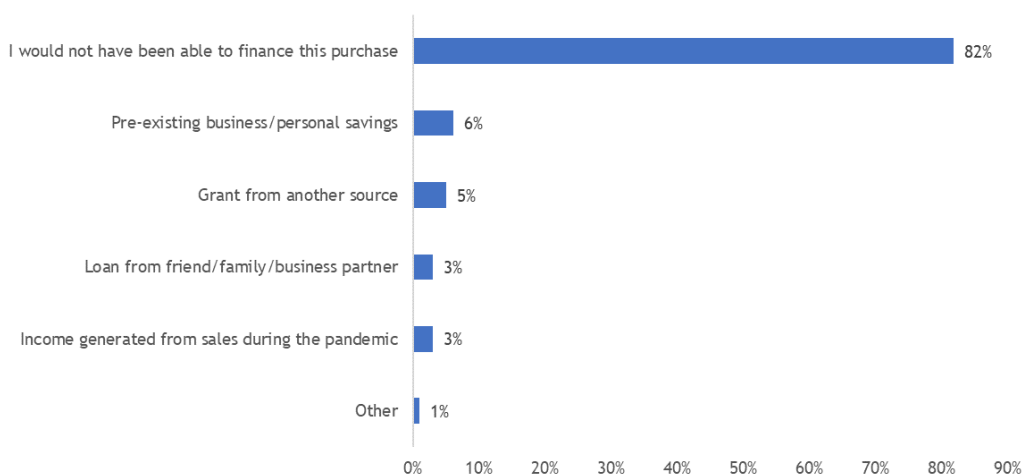
4. IMPACT OF GRANTS DEFRAIDED

One of the key aims of this evaluation has been to understand the impact of the grants that were defrayed for the recipient businesses. While the individual amounts defrayed could be considered relatively modest (between £1,000-£3,000) compared to larger sums potentially available through UK Government Business Bounce-Back loans or other funding sources, the impact achieved in terms of job retention, the opportunity to diversify and build long-term resilience appears to have been significant. This may be due to the fact that one of the stated aims of the grants was to reach 'groups of businesses who may have missed out on previous government grants such as event organisers, tour operators, key supply chains and businesses without premises.' (Source: Revi-ve Grant Programme, B2B Digital Toolkit).

4.1 TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT OF GRANT FUNDING

Given that one of the stated aims of the grant funding was to go beyond regular business investments, the transformative impact of the grant was assessed by asking survey respondents 'if no SELEP grant had been available, how would you have financed this purchase? (Q6). The answers reflect the comments listed above. More than 4 in 5 respondents would not have been able to finance the purchase, while a much smaller share (6%) would have had to draw on pre-existing personal or business savings in order to fund the purchase, or would have to have sought a grant from another source (5%).

Q6 - If no SELEP grant had been available, how would you have financed this purchase?

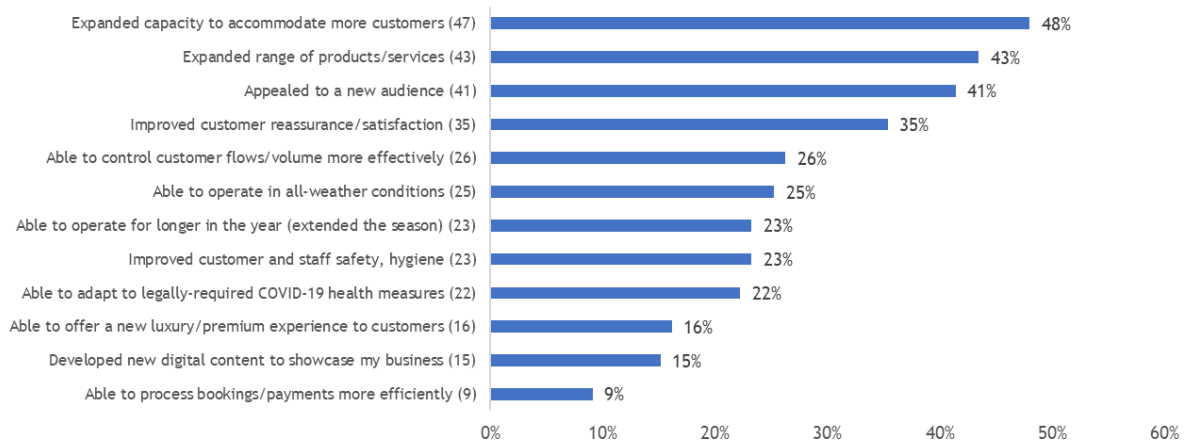


4.2 BUSINESS IMPACTS ACHIEVED

During both the application process and after grants had been spent, recipients were asked for the impacts that they *anticipated* from receiving the funding, and once they received it, the impacts that they actually *experienced* (soon after receiving the funding, and in the longer-term). Recipients were

able to indicate multiple benefits. The following graph shows the *immediate* benefits that recipients reported (i.e., within one month of purchase):

Q9 - As a result of receiving the grant, which were the *immediate* benefits (i.e. within 1 month) that your business experienced?

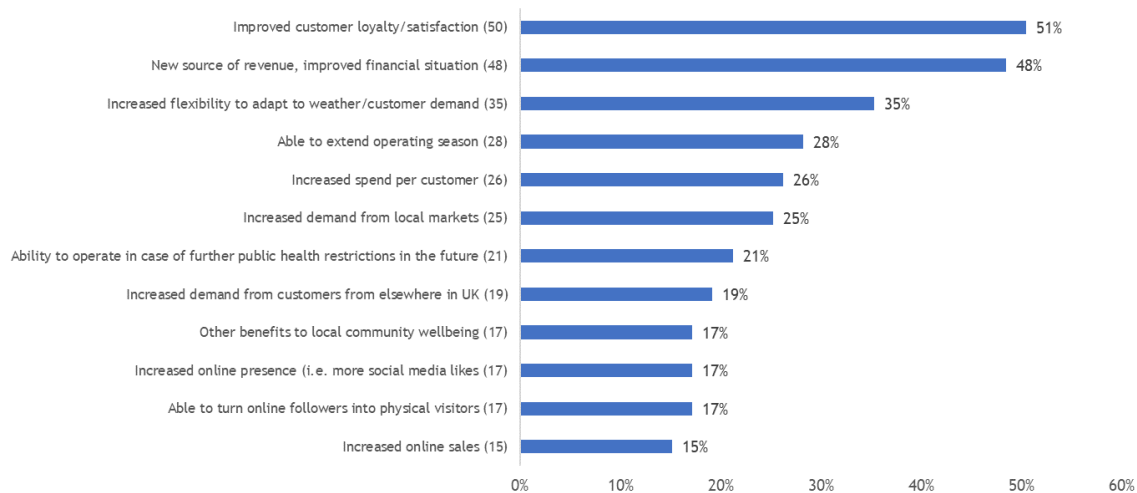


- Inevitably, the impacts experienced varied widely, reflecting the very diverse nature of applicants, and the types of purchases that they made
- The most common impacts reported related to expansion; whether expanding capacity to accommodate more customers (e.g. by creating an outdoor seating area) or through expanding the range of products or services available. Of course, these benefits could be linked (e.g. installing a barbecue could attract customers to spend longer in an outdoor seating area).
- Innovation and diversification in the product offer also allowed businesses to appeal to a new audience (41%) thus underpinning their competitiveness at a time when it was strongly needed
- A significant share of the reported benefits (between 22%-35%) related to improving the business's operations and customer satisfaction in some way - for example being able to control customer flows more effectively (26%), improve customer and staff safety (23%) or improve customer satisfaction (35%)

Longer-term impact (6-12 months) achieved:

Following this, recipients were asked about the longer-term benefits that they experienced within 6-12 months of purchase. It should be noted that a small share of respondents (those who applied in May-June 2022) will have answered this survey within approximately 1 month of receiving the grant, hence are likely to have expressed their answers as *anticipated* benefits. Results are shown in the following graph:

Q10 - Which are the longer-term benefits (i.e. within 6-12 months) that your business has gained, or expects to gain from receiving this grant? Please select all that apply.



- The most common benefits reported (51%) were those of ensuring improved customer loyalty or satisfaction, followed by an improved financial situation as a result of being able to open up a new source of revenue (48%) and increased flexibility to adapt to shifts in demand (35%). This suggests that two core aims of the grant funding had been met, i.e., to stabilise businesses' financial situation through being able to improve their offer and become more flexible in the face of COVID-19 restrictions
- It is also encouraging that grant funding appears to have triggered other benefits that are likely to sustain businesses on a longer basis, and enhance the attractiveness and resilience of their local area. For example, 28% of businesses reported being able to extend their operating season, 25% reported increased demand from local markets and 19% from markets elsewhere in the UK.
- It is possible that the low percentages given to 'increased online sales,' 'increased digital presence' or 'turning digital followers into physical customers' are due to hospitality businesses concentrating on serving physical customers first and foremost, at busy times of the year (particularly as heavy lockdown restrictions were not in place at the time of application).

4.3 IMPACT ON EMPLOYMENT

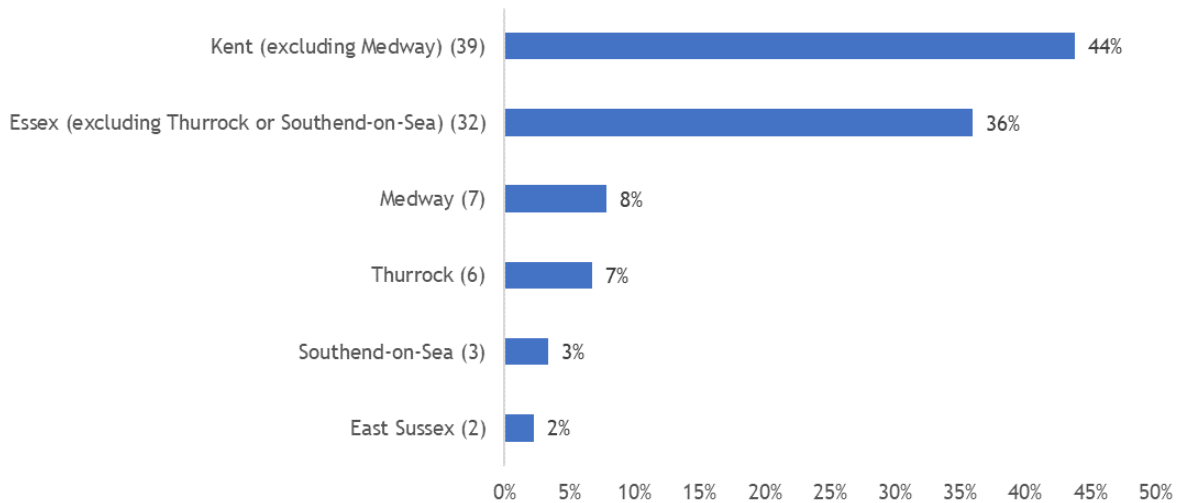
Respondents were also asked whether any full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs had been **protected**, or even **created** as a result of having received the grant. Again, despite the relatively modest sums involved, the grants received appeared to have achieved some impact in terms of preserving and creating employment in the SELEP region:

FTE jobs protected

48% of respondents (or a total of 47 businesses) reported that jobs had been **protected** in their business as a result of having received the grant funding. Businesses were asked how many FTE equivalent positions had been protected. A significant majority of businesses (62%) said that one

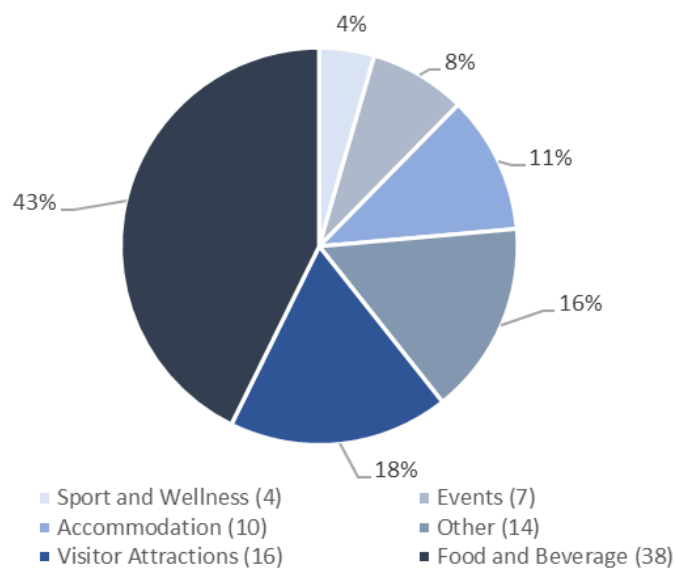
FTE job had been protected, while 23% said that 2 FTE jobs had been protected - one business reported that more than 10 FTE jobs had been protected. Cumulatively, according to these survey results, **at least 89 FTE jobs were protected** as a result of businesses having received the grant funding. As the graphs below show, the majority of these respondents were located in Kent, possibly due to the largest share of respondents being in Kent, and that the majority of jobs protected were in the food and beverage sector.

Q7 - Location of businesses where FTE jobs had been protected (incl. number of FTE positions)



Note: The FTE positions protected in “Essex (excluding Thurrock or Southend-on-Sea)” are at least 32

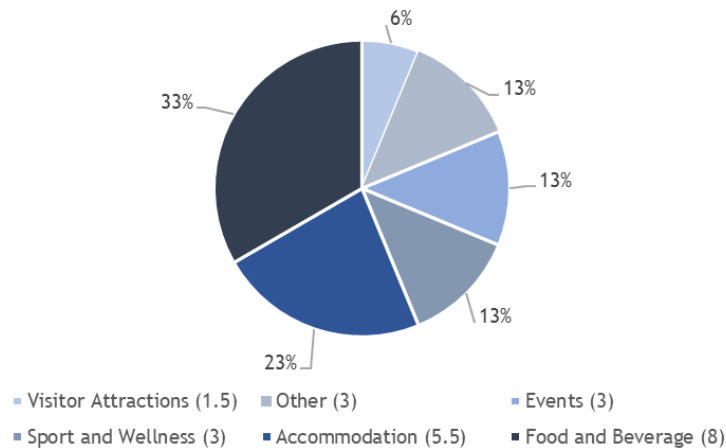
Q7 - Sectors in which FTE jobs had been protected



Note: The FTE positions protected in “Food and Beverage” are at least 38

FTE jobs created

22% of recipients reported that FTE jobs had been **created** as a result of having received grant funding. Cumulatively, according to these survey results, **at least 24 FTE jobs were created** as a result of businesses having received the grant funding. Of these, 7.5 were located in Essex, 16 in Kent and 0.5 in East Sussex. As the pie chart below shows, the greatest share of these FTE jobs was in the food and beverage sector, followed by events and other categories.



(Note: The percentages shown are based on the number of positions created in each sector (not on the number of businesses that reported that positions had been created).

4.4 IMPACT ON LOCAL COMMUNITIES

During the application process, many applicants highlighted the important role that their business plays in the local community - particularly in remote or economically disadvantaged areas. For example, many hospitality businesses serve as an important hub in their local community, providing space for different community groups to meet, or to carry out classes in areas as diverse as cookery, yoga, fitness or supporting those with additional mobility needs.

Survey respondents were asked what additional benefits for the local community were triggered as a result of having received the grant funding. As noted above, many grant recipients were able to expand their floorspace, upgrade facilities or offer classes to a more diverse range of local customers. As a result, the impact of the grants appears to have achieved a wider impact beyond the business itself. A summary of responses is given below:

'As a result of your business receiving this grant, did this trigger any additional benefits to your local community (for example by providing new facilities for local people, or increasing trade with local businesses)?' (Q12) - Highlighted responses:

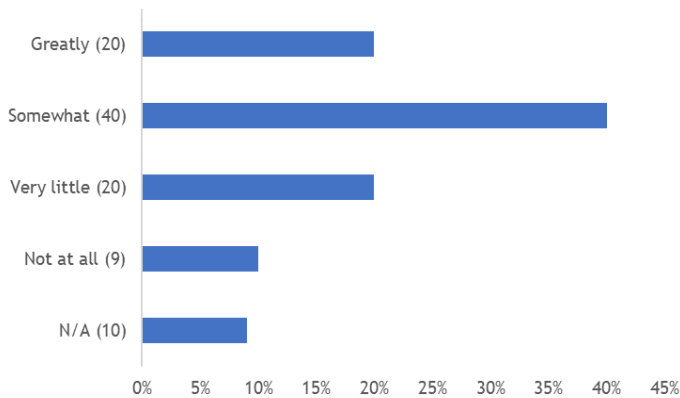
- "We managed to turn unconventional spaces into performance areas for theatrical productions"
- "Improved the appearance of the neighbourhood through public art work, reduced anti-social behaviour, increased opportunities for local artists to show their work"
- "The funding produced new facilities to our visitors and to the village. The outdoor mother and toddler group that uses our space now has an additional physical activity especially for them."
- "We will be able to showcase our vineyard to local people like never before"
- "The funding enabled local people to virtually 'visit' our wedding venue so they could continue planning their weddings during a time of COVID-19 restrictions."
- "Increase in my trade sparked by the funding resulted in me buying more from my local suppliers"
- "We can offer use of the new equipment purchased to several charities that use our space on a regular basis"
- "In creating more revenue we have been able to buy more local produce for resale"
- "The funding has enabled the business to document live events with original artists from the musical community in Maidstone and further afield, and upload promotional videos to YouTube and Facebook, which has benefitted the artists."
- "Having this new equipment provides another opportunity for locals to stay local for family gatherings, even if they don't already have camping equipment. This will bring further benefits for local food businesses etc."
- "I have been able to offer our facility to a local women's group for meetings."
- "We plan to commence a community based project which would not have been possible without this assistance."
- "We can now provide meeting facilities for local organisations including environmental and beekeeping groups"
- "We've been able to promote our own business to local residents, as well as promoting our local suppliers"

4.5 IMPACT ON ENERGY USE & ENVIRONMENT

Reducing energy use, as well as reducing environmental impact are becoming increasingly important factors in business decision making. Grant recipients were asked the extent to which these factors influenced the purchases that recipients made, with the results shown in the graph below:

Q8 - To what extent did environmental concerns (e.g. energy use, waste output)

influence the decision of which specific items you bought?



“To what extent did environmental concerns (e.g. energy use, waste output) influence the decision of which specific items you bought?”

- One in five recipients indicated that environmental concerns influenced their decision greatly, while two in five said it had ‘somewhat’ of an influence - indicating that other factors (such as price or specific requirements also played a role in decision making)
- While 10% of recipients said that these concerns were not applicable to this purchase (potentially in the case of having hired professional services), only 9% of recipients said that these factors didn’t influence their purchase decision at all.
- These results underline that the SELEP grant funding was able to achieve multiple objectives beyond those immediately intended for recipients - for example, by enabling businesses to reduce their energy consumption or waste output, and thereby reduce their environmental impact.

5. QUALITATIVE FEEDBACK FROM GRANT RECIPIENTS

The following table summarises feedback received in the **general comments** section of the survey. This is categorised firstly into positive feedback, and then comments highlighting challenges experienced or room for improvement

“Do you have any further comments or recommendations regarding the SELEP COVID-19 Recovery Fund?” (Q19)

Positive feedback
- “A quick and straightforward grant application, well managed and good comms.”
- “Our new children’s play area has been very popular. We would never have dared to do it without the Revi-VE stimulus.”
- “This grant helped us protect jobs for our restaurant staff. Thank you for this.”

- "The new photos of our wedding venue really helped us to increase our enquiry levels and sales during a challenging time for the wedding industry."
- "We are a small company that has never dealt with grants before, and so did not understand the process. [Advisor's name] guided me through and was incredibly helpful and patient - she is a credit to your team."
- "This grant has helped us purchase some fab new electronics to increase our digital output."
- "The application process was quick and easy to understand and the rapid decision allowed us to undertake our plans immediately. Thank you for this support."
- "The staff and customers of our restaurant were all so pleased and impressed. Our vulnerable wheelchair users would have been unable to attend our club if it wasn't for the covered covid safe area outdoors."
- "Thank you. It felt supportive at a very vulnerable and difficult time"
- "I think it's correct to have a fair bit of human interaction before you get funding. It means people have to really want it but also it means that those who struggle to understand it can have someone hold their hand through the process."

Challenges experienced, or room for improvement:

- "Given the small amount available, the bureaucracy associated with application process is too great, costing the organisation a substantive amount in time, at least 30%-40% of the value of the grant (£2,500)"
- "The application was quite complicated/detailed for a relatively small amount, but we appreciate that since it is state funding, it needs a level of diligence."
- "I received great customer service, however the amount of paperwork I had to create and submit seemed to outweigh the benefits as they took so long to complete (...), I am of course so pleased we applied and received the funding."
- "I felt the process could have been streamlined better with an adapted system to facilitate the approvals required."
- "When looking for quotes, the prices of the products we were looking at were constantly changing as online suppliers often frequently updated their prices. There was also the risk of not buying exactly the right product compared to the one we'd found a quote for. It would be good to know how flexible the quotes to purchase items can be (i.e. can it still be within the grant budget or up to the limit?"

6. KEY TAKEAWAYS

6.1 GENERAL TAKEAWAYS

- The original objectives of the funding were well accomplished In that relatively modest amounts of funding quickly helped businesses to adapt their premises and attract new markets (including from outside their home county).
- The target for the total number of defrayals was met (166, compared to a target of 150), however there were slight geographical imbalances in terms of grant distribution, as around 10% more Kent-based businesses received grants compared to those in Essex. The target for East Sussex businesses was met.
- Longer term objectives have also been achieved, since recipients have reported improved consumer loyalty and confidence and the opening of viable revenue streams
- The grant funding also supported secondary objectives such as securing and creating employment, and ensuring the longer term viability of otherwise vulnerable businesses
- The funding has also proven to be transformative, evidenced by the significant majority of businesses that declared that without the funding they would not have been able to make the investments that they did
- The high number of applications suggests that the communications campaign and use of the B2B communications toolkit were effective
- The vast majority of written feedback to the recipient survey was highly positive, with recipients expressing deep gratitude for funding that had helped keep their business going during very difficult times

6.2 THE APPLICATION PROCESS

- Feedback on the application process was overwhelmingly positive, particularly relating to the personalised support received from advisors. However at times some recipients felt overwhelmed, while some said that the time taken to assemble the required documentation outweighed the benefits of receiving the relatively modest grant.
- While businesses generally found the terms of defrayal fair, the initial steps of the application process (in particular assembling the necessary documentation, and ease of following the process once it had started) appeared to cause the most dissatisfaction.
- Small and micro businesses find it difficult to react quickly to this type of funding campaign, highlighting the importance of timely and consistent communication in advance. At the same time, it is perhaps unsurprising that small and micro business owners occasionally felt overwhelmed by the process, given that staff were furloughed and they were likely competing with various severe challenges at the same time
- Satisfaction appeared to be higher among applicants in wave 3 than among the earlier two waves, possibly due to these applications being processed by a service provider with a dedicated platform and customer advisors.
- Feedback from the recipients also underlines the crucial importance of advisors in supporting applicants quickly through the process. While providing advisors can be labour intensive, it

can also help to steer applicants quickly through the system, and avoid errors or wasted time later

6.3 THE IMPACT OF FUNDING

- The investments made as a result of the funding are likely to pay dividends in the future - and are not only relevant to the specific conditions created by the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, some hospitality businesses have been able to build outdoor spaces that can be used all year round, while others have bought digital equipment that will enable them to upgrade their marketing and reach a wider audience
- Various indirect benefits derived from purchases made with these grants were also evident from the survey. In particular, this relates to the impact on local communities in the SELEP region; many SME hospitality businesses play a vital role in underpinning community life, especially in rural areas and areas which have a higher share of elderly and vulnerable citizens. Helping these businesses to stay viable or improve their facilities has helped to deliver wider benefits to their respective communities, thereby increasing community resilience.
- In many cases improving hospitality facilities has also helped to increase the overall attractiveness of the region's destinations and has provided a year round offer (thereby helping to address the challenge of seasonality)
- While it may be undesirable to add further significant burdens to applicants, it would be useful to explore how grants could help incentivise environmentally friendly purchases, for example by encouraging the procurement of equipment that had a good energy rating. Applicants could also be incentivised to make investments that could also help deliver certain community benefits and increase the overall attractiveness of a particular town or village.

ANNEX 1 - General conditions for grant applications

Businesses must be required to demonstrate through their application that they met the following eligibility criteria:

WHO CAN APPLY?

- Be located in either East Sussex, Essex, Kent, Medway, Southend or Thurrock.
- Qualify as a micro (less than 10 full time equivalent staff), small (less than 50 full time equivalent staff) or medium (less than 250 full time equivalent staff) business as per the EU Definition.
- Be an existing business which began trading prior to 31st March 2020. Social Enterprises, Community Interest Companies and charities engaged in economic activity are also eligible. Public sector organisations are not eligible for this funding.
- Be operating within the visitor economy, with a primary function in one of the following sectors: tourism, culture, leisure, events or hospitality.
- Must fall within one of the eligible
- SIC code categories
- which includes crucial supply chains, tourism distributors and businesses without premises who may have missed out on previous COVID-19 grant support.
- Demonstrate that they are a viable business that has been destabilised by COVID-19.
- Clearly explain how this funding will increase their resilience in the visitor market by supporting the business to adapt or innovate in response to COVID-19.
- Demonstrate that this intervention will contribute to protecting jobs (must be roles directly employed by the applicant).
- Demonstrate that they have the resources and expertise to deliver the project, including all expenditure, within six months of the launch of the grant programme.
- Confirm that the activity isn't retrospective and hasn't commenced before the time of approval.
- Show that the requested grant covers between 50-100% of the total project cost. i.e. if the maximum of £3,000 is applied for, the total project costs should not exceed £6,000.
- Subsidy control rules apply.

Source: Revi-VE South East England Visitor Economy Fund - communications pack

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This report was prepared by TOPOSOPHY Ltd on behalf of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership

For more than a decade, **TOPOSOPHY** has been a leading place making and marketing agency, with a global reputation for rigour, professionalism and forward thinking. TOPOSOPHY transforms places and destinations through the skills and international expertise of 15 members of staff and a global network of 20+ Associates - experts with many years of experience working for DMOs, international industry organisations, and tourism businesses across the globe. TOPOSOPHY's integrated services span across four main areas: research and intelligence; strategy and consulting, marketing and branding, and creative platforms and events.