

Evaluation of West Midlands Cultural and Creative Social Enterprise Pilot Programme



Hannes Read and George Bramley
City REDI, University of Birmingham
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**Cultural
Leadership
Board**



**West Midlands
Combined Authority**



**Greater Birmingham
& Solihull
Local Enterprise Partnership**



Black Country LEP



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Foreword

The WMCA Cultural Leadership Board (CLB) was established in early 2020, just one month before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The CLB performs an advisory role to the WMCA and advocates for the cultural sector in all its diversity.

In response to this challenging climate, the CLB's Cultural and Creative Social Enterprise working group designed a rapid, experimental pilot programme to address the challenges raised by COVID-19 which would particularly affect smaller, diverse-led organisations operating at the hyper-local level. This programme was an opportunity for the newly formed CLB to quickly mobilise their experience and resources to provide direct support in the form of tailored mentoring and business development to some of the region's emerging cultural and creative social enterprises.

The CLB underpinned the programme with a strong focus on diversity across all protected characteristics, with the aim of addressing the considerable inequalities within the cultural sector which have been exacerbated by the pandemic. It has been good to see the positive results of this intervention – and we are keen to ensure that learning from this programme will be used to inform future work in this area.

I would like to thank our funders and partners including:

- Midlands Area Director Peter Knott and his team at Arts Council England;
- Chief Executive Sarah Middleton, Board Member Kevin Davis and Productivity Lead Daniel Carins at Country Local Enterprise Partnership;
- Creative & Cultural Senior Policy Lead David Fumage at Greater Birmingham & Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership;
- The research team at City-REDI

We would also like to thank WMCA for their investment and support for this programme, particularly Adam Hawksbee, Salla Virman, Lisa Hamilton, Claire Spencer, Rachel Fearn and Bethany Haskins.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow CLB working group members Julia Negus, Doreen Foster, Aftab Rahman, Parminder Dosanjh and Jerrel Jackson for their ideas and support in making this programme a reality.



**Karen Newman, Chair of the WMCA Cultural Leadership Board
Cultural & Creative Social Enterprise Programme working group**

Executive Summary

The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) established the Cultural Leadership Board (CLB) in 2019 as a cultural sector specific advisory board, providing recommendations to the WMCA in relation to the cultural sector. The Board's aim is to *place culture at the heart of sustainable growth in the region, enhancing quality of life for its diverse communities.*

In response to the pandemic the CLB developed the proposal for the Cultural and Creative Social Enterprise Pilot to address challenges faced by smaller, diverse-led organisations operating hyper-locally within their communities.

Central to the proposal was the provision of business development grants to support these enterprises in becoming more efficient, resilient, and successful, and contributing to building thriving communities in the West Midlands for people to live and work in.

WMCA secured funding for the pilot through a collaboration of interested stakeholders including Black Country LEP, GBSLEP and Arts Council England.

Pilot Design

The West Midlands Cultural and Creative Social Enterprises Pilot Programme involved commissioning two established cultural and creative sector social enterprises (SEs) as host SEs to support five cultural and creative micro-SEs in working with their local communities and providing them with a business development grant to assist them in pivoting their business model. The main features of the pilot were:

- For the purposes of the pilot, the two selected SEs are known as 'host' cultural and creative social enterprises. A total value of £60,000 was granted to the selected SEs, who were based in each of the two LEPs area contributing funds to the pilot. These host SEs were expected to use their £30,000 grants as allocated below:
 - Two-thirds (£20,000) will be used as a core business development grant to develop their organisation, business model and to innovate.
 - £1,500 towards bespoke mentoring and training support that they may require.
 - £5,000 towards supporting five 'micro' cultural & creative social enterprises within their area.
 - £3,500 towards purchasing external bespoke mentoring and training support for the 'micro' organisations (£700 each) for development areas that they are not able to provide themselves.

The WMCA and CLB provided additional £47,500 in benefits-in-kind to deliver the pilot which included programme administration, marketing, communication, CLB members expertise and time, as well as mentoring and delivery of presentations on topics identified as being relevant to the needs of micro-SEs.

The host cultural and creative social enterprises were required creatively develop and test approaches to support micro-SEs in developing their capabilities and capacity to work with their immediate communities.

The definition of cultural and creative social enterprise used to assess eligibility is shown below.

What do we mean by a 'cultural & creative social enterprise'?

Our definition for 'social enterprise' is the same used by the WMCA Social Enterprise Taskforce: "A segment of the economy that is composed of entities that aim to increase social inclusion and reduce inequalities, while simultaneously creating economic value. Such as different types of co-operatives and social enterprises, which are businesses of various legal forms using an entrepreneurial approach to respond to an increasing number of social and environmental challenges." In essence, if you reinvest your profits to increase social inclusion and reduce inequalities, you are operating a social enterprise.

A 'cultural & creative social enterprise' would include any organisation that fits the definition of the social enterprise above and uses artistic and creative activity as the tool to deliver economic & social value, and/or re-invests profits in a way that supports the arts & creative sector. This can include any art form.

Evaluation

We adopted a developmental evaluation approach with an eye to identifying impacts. The purpose of the evaluation is to capture learning and insights that will inform the design of future interventions. To achieve this, we:

- Supported self-evaluation by two host organisations through the provision of a self-evaluation form, guidance, and templates to capture relevant information from the micro-SEs they assisted.
- Held check in meetings with host SEs at different points in the pilots.
- Interviewed micro-SEs and informed stakeholders.

Findings

There were three areas that WMCA and the CLB were able to step in to provide support: established SEs who were excluded from existing government support and had insufficient reserves; new organisations that had set up during the pandemic to meet specific needs and culturally based SEs who could contribute to healthy and inclusive regional economy.

The pilot addressed a gap in the business support offer in the West Midlands. The CLB used the lobbying power and networks of the WMCA to bring potential funders of the pilot together.

Three reasonably well-established social enterprises were shortlisted with two funds, one from each of the two LEP areas providing funding for the pilot.

The demographic of people and organisations supported during the pilot were:

- Generally young people, aged under 40 (nine out of the 12 host and micro-organisations were led by younger people).
- Generally new businesses (eight out of the 12 host and micro-organisations were formed in the last three years).
- From non-white British backgrounds (nine organisations were led by non-white-British people).
- Operating within the West Midlands Combined Authority area (12 out of 12 operated within the WMCA area).
- Working as an organisation with a social mission (12 out of 12 organisations had a broad social mission).
- Working with people from neurodiverse backgrounds (the leader of one of the host organisations was neurodivergent).

The intention for the pilot was to have two host organisations at a similar stage of their business development, starting the pilot at the same time as each other, to connect and develop a mutually beneficial support network. This aspect of the pilot did not come to fruition since the organisations started at different times.

Success was defined in several ways by the two host SEs including:

- Developing a community (of creative social entrepreneurs) that feel they can achieve anything.
- Equipping individuals who are socially entrepreneurially minded turn their ideas into reality.
- Supporting five small scale interventions that can create change in their area in their area.
- Building relationships with local groups and organisations to link together different projects.

- Developing actionable value propositions and development timelines for micro-SEs through coaching.
- Micro-organisations once completing the programme being confident and optimistic about the future and deploying their creativity to achieve their goals.
- Micro-SEs who are not registered, taking the step to become constituted so they can continue to unlock funding and opportunities to progress in accordance with their big vision.

In terms of their own enterprise business development success was defined in the following ways:

- A refreshed formal business plan that is up to date with a supporting strategy behind it which is credible for funders.
- Financially sustainable business model.
- Completing an audit of where the business is at, and where we need to be, would provide a starting point for evidencing what has been done to date.
- Creating space for strategy development.
- Developing their own platform that has a community feel online which provides access to workshops and events, networks, for beneficiaries.
- Documenting progress made to ensure everyone can easily see their work. This can be advertised more widely on the website.
- Developing new job roles and standard operating procedures.

Both Host SEs were able to use their business development grant to access the support they needed.

Delivery of support for Micro-SEs

The managing directors of both host SEs took responsibility for overseeing the design and delivery of their programmes. They also created new roles to assist in the delivery of the pilot.

The high volume of applications is indicative of the demand for support for cultural and creative social enterprises. However, many of the applicants did not meet the eligibility criteria as they were not entirely clear what constituted a cultural and creative SE.

The micro-organisations found the application process for the pilot to be very straight forward.

Both Host SEs recruited and delivered support to five micro-SEs and were able to provide success stories about how the support made a difference.

Challenges and barriers

These included:

- Number of participating micro-SEs to manage.
- Limitations of funding and staffing resources.
- Organisational structures and governance.

- Confusion over definition of 'creative or cultural' by micro-SEs.
- Capacity of Host SE.
- Participation in group sessions by micro-SEs.

Opportunities

The host SEs identified several opportunities while taking part in the pilot at national and regional level.

Micro Social Enterprises supported

Discussions in the interviews followed four key themes: targeted support for cultural and creative social entrepreneurs; how support was provided from the host social enterprises; the ease of accessing support and opportunities; and the additional support gained.

Six were set up within the last three years, with another organisation still looking to incorporate.

The business support delivery model was well received by all micro-organisations and responded to their specific needs. Peer to peer support with other similar organisations added value by recipients with several years' experience in the sector mentioning they had been disappointed by, other orthodox business support providers in the past.

Over the course of the pilot, several micro-organisations noted an increase in their confidence because of being successful in the pilot. The pilot provided time and space to plan their next steps, develop contacts, build knowledge and awareness of other similar organisations to support their next steps as part of their journey.

Activities, Outputs and Outcomes Delivered

The pilot made significant progress within a relatively short time scale in terms of:

- 11 new roles were created during the pilot in host SEs.
- 1 new CIC was founded, with an additional CIC in the process of set up.
- Number of people who benefited in both host and the micro-SEs (in region of 18 based on Host SE estimates)
- 12 diverse-led creative social enterprises (gender, ethnicity, disability) were supported.
- Activity benefitting communities at risk of social exclusion.
- Delivering relevant training to social entrepreneurs within the cultural and creative sector.
- Creating employment opportunities to artists and creatives through exploring ideas for potential business ventures or safeguarding existing roles through pivoting their existing business model to new opportunities and revenue streams.
- Development of collaborations between host social enterprises and micro-SEs.

- Supported the development of a self-evaluation culture within host SEs.

Discussion

The discussion covers important key features of the pilot including:

- Peer support
- Business development of the Host SE
- established cultural and creative social enterprises that are well placed to identify emerging micro-SEs in their communities
- Cascaded support and leadership for cultural and creative social enterprises
- Extending the role of social entrepreneurs to support new enterprises as part of their organisation mission

Value for Money

Given the scale and length of the pilot, it is not possible to assess value for money using usual metrics such as cost per job, GVA created, or other metrics of social value created. Given the novel nature of intervention design, it is not easy to benchmark against other business support schemes and such benchmarks would relate to interventions delivered prior to the pandemic.

The short duration of the pilot means many of the potential quantifiable benefits have yet to fully emerge. Where the pilot has created value is in its provision of useful information for designing future interventions, and the development of interest and capacity within cultural and creative SEs in providing peer delivered business support. On this basis the pilot has overall delivered its objectives and our interim qualitative assessment shows the pilot to have provided value for money.

Recommendations

1. Undertake a follow-up of Host SEs and micro-SEs assisted to better understand economic benefits
2. Continue to invest in community of practice that supports established social entrepreneurs and creative businesses provide peer-based business support
3. Consider making the two stages (business development of Host SE, and Host providing peer support to micro-SEs) into two distinctive business support products
4. Encourage consortia of Host-SEs to share the delivery of sessions and mentoring of micro-SEs
5. Take advantage of current redesign of business support in the West Midlands. The number of applications received for the pilot suggests there is demand for a doubly distinctive offer from mainstream business support that combines specialised support for social enterprises and cultural and creative enterprise.

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Glossary

Host Social Enterprise: The social enterprise working with the host micro-SEs. Namely, GirlDreameer and Kiondo.

Micro-SE: Micro social enterprise or micro social entrepreneur who has been working with the host social enterprise.

Table of abbreviations

CCSE	Cultural and creative social enterprise
CIC	Community Interest Company
CLB	Cultural Leadership Board
GBSLEP	Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP
LEPs	Local Enterprise Partnerships
MEC	Minoritised Ethnic Communities
SE	Social enterprise
WMCA	West Midlands Combined Authority
WoC	Women of colour ¹

¹ Term used by one of the host organisations to describe their beneficiaries.

Introduction

Background

The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) established the **Cultural Leadership Board (CLB)** in 2019 as a cultural sector specific advisory board providing recommendations to the WMCA in relation to the cultural sector. The Board has 20 members from different parts of the region's cultural sector and is Chaired by Martin Sutherland, the Chief Executive of the Coventry City of Culture Trust. The Board's aim is to *place culture at the heart of sustainable growth in the region, enhancing quality of life for its diverse communities*. The CLB is tasked with identifying strategic opportunities to test the transformative role of culture across WMCA's policy areas, including transport and housing, skills, digital, the environment, wellbeing, and inclusive communities. To achieve its mission, the CLB initially established three working groups:

- **Combined Authority economic & social ambitions:** This workstream will explore how the region's world class cultural offer can maximise its contribution to the region's social and economic ambitions.
- **Funding & resilience:** This workstream will test the feasibility of new approaches to delivering additional funding models and opportunities to the cultural sector, as well as input into investment
- **Cultural leadership, entrepreneurship, and engagement:** This workstream aims to develop diverse and highly skilled leadership across the West Midlands cultural sector, explore opportunities arising from major cultural events, as well as developing recommendations to support entrepreneurial new business models for a thriving and sustainable cultural sector.

One of the outputs of the working groups was the development of a proposal for the West Midlands Cultural & Creative Social Enterprise Pilot Programme. This pilot would provide a rapid and experimental approach to address challenges created by the Covid-19 pandemic for smaller, diverse-led organisations operating hyper-locally within their communities. Central to the proposal was the provision of business development grants to support selected enterprises in becoming more efficient, resilient, and successful, and helping to build thriving communities across the region, WMCA secured funding for the pilot through the collaboration of interested stakeholders including Black Country LEP, GBS LEP and Arts Council England.

Focus of the pilot

The pilot had a strong focus on:

- Diversity across all protected characteristics, addressing inequalities within the cultural sector - particularly around diverse leadership.
- The role of cultural social enterprises in creating thriving cities, towns, and local centres; aligning with investment programmes across the region to support towns and high streets.
- Policy innovation through testing novel approaches to business support in response to the pandemic. Combining business support for established social enterprises in the cultural and

creative sector to pivot their ventures and new opportunities, in return for supporting smaller and more recently established ventures to develop their social businesses.

Design of the pilot

The West Midlands Cultural & Creative Social Enterprise Pilot Programme involved commissioning two established cultural and creative sector social enterprises (SEs) to act as host SEs who would each support five cultural and creative micro-social enterprises, or micro-social entrepreneurs (micro-SEs). The host SEs would link with the micro-SEs to make connections whilst working at a hyper-local scale. The pilot provided micro- and host-SEs with a business development grant to assist them in pivoting their business model. The main features of the pilot were:

- The programme provided a total of £60,000 business support grants which were split equally between the two host organisations, one in each of the LEP areas (the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP and Black Country LEP). As part of the programme, each host SE received £30,000 of business development grant. The host SEs were expected to use their £30,000 grants as allocated below:
 - Two-thirds (£20,000) will be used as a core business development grant to develop their organisation, business model and to innovate.
 - £1,500 towards bespoke mentoring and training support that the host SEs may require.
 - £5,000 towards supporting five micro cultural & creative social enterprises (micro-SEs) within their area.
 - £3,500 towards purchasing external bespoke mentoring and training support for the micro-SEs (£700 each) for development areas. The host SEs were required to creatively develop and test approaches to support micro-SEs. The host SEs provided and mentoring to the micro-SEs, relative to the individual needs of the micro-SE which related to one or more of the areas show in Box 1.

Box 1: Type of support available under the pilot

• Creative/Artistic Development	• Social enterprise models Diversity & inclusion
• Financial Skills	• Risk management
• Leadership	• Business processes
• Business Strategy	• Organisational behaviour
• IP, digital & innovation	• Research & data management
• Branding	• Marketing
• Governance	• Communications
• Capital investment	• Audience/customer engagement
• Bid writing	

Host and micro-SEs were able to draw on expertise of members of the Cultural Leadership Board Working Group. The board and the WMCA provided a benefit-in-kind contribution to the pilot with estimated value of £47,500. This included programme administration, marketing and communication,

CLB members expertise and time, as well as mentoring and delivery of presentations on topics identified as being relevant to the needs of micro-SEs.

Host SEs were expected to identify how they would support their cohort of micro-SEs through their networks and brokering access to other support available to social enterprises within the West Midlands. These linkages and support could include but were not limited to:

- Social enterprise specific investors.
- Assistance with new office and studio space.
- Introductions to other regional creative/cross-sectoral networks such as Culture Central (Birmingham) and FRI13 (Coventry).
- Growth Hub support
- Connections to procurement and new contract opportunities such as those being offered to Creative Businesses because of Birmingham 2022.

The pilot started in April 2021 and was originally intended to complete in November 2021 before being extended to February 2022 to allow host SEs complete their activities.

The definition of cultural and creative social enterprise used to assess eligibility is shown in Box 2

Box 2: Definition given to applicants for the pilot on what constitutes a cultural and creative social enterprise

What do we mean by a ‘cultural & creative social enterprise’?

Our definition for ‘social enterprise’ is the same used by the WMCA Social Enterprise Taskforce: “A segment of the economy that is composed of entities that aim to increase social inclusion and reduce inequalities, while simultaneously creating economic value. Such as different types of co-operatives and social enterprises, which are businesses of various legal forms using an entrepreneurial approach to respond to an increasing number of social and environmental challenges.” In essence, if you reinvest your profits to increase social inclusion and reduce inequalities, you are operating a social enterprise.

A ‘cultural & creative social enterprise’ would include any organisation that fits the definition of the social enterprise above and uses artistic and creative activity as the tool to deliver economic & social value, and/or re-invests profits in a way that supports the arts & creative sector. This can include any art form.

Taken from Grant application guidance

Programme theory

The theory of change for the pilot is set out in **Error! Reference source not found.** The theory of change clearly identifies how the pilot draws on a range of resources including:

- Programme providers.
- Individuals and businesses.
- Time and resources from the CLB.
- Funding (WMCA, LEPs, Arts Council).
- WMCA resources and support.
- Specialist high quality trainers.

These resources were deployed to deliver the following activities:

- Mentoring.
- 1:1 coaching.
- Bespoke training.
- Collaboration across hosts.
- Engagement by West Midlands Innovation Programme.
- Wrap around support.
- Marketing and communications.

Leading to the following outputs:

- Number of businesses / individuals assisted.
- Number of businesses receiving grants.
- Number of jobs created / safeguarded.
- Number of potential entrepreneurs assisted to be enterprise ready.
- Number of businesses led by / individuals from minoritised ethnic communities supported by the pilot.
- Full delivery of 12 months pilot, this was reduced to 6 months because of funding delays and extended to 9 months due to foreseen circumstances.
- Comprehensive monitoring and evaluation.

Short term outcomes for Host SEs that could be achieved within the pilot period included:

- Resilient and adaptable creative social enterprises.
- Can demonstrate the value of their work to secure further funding and investment.
- Able to identify new opportunities arising through the pandemic.
- Have pivoted their work whilst staying true to their values.
- Testing new ways of working: i.e. diversifying income, new partnerships or audiences.
- Increased confidence and ambition.
- Can demonstrate the social impact of their work on participants/communities.
- Improved financial forecast / end of year position by end of project.

Anticipated benefits for micro-SEs occurring within or shortly after completing the pilot, given the length of pilot being 6 to 9 months and receipt of support being in the second half of the pilot:

- Can identify new opportunities arising through the pandemic.
- Increase in confidence and ambition.
- Have tested new ways of working, explored new income generation or audiences.
- Can demonstrate social impact of their work on communities.
- Ability to plan and re-forecast budgets around shifting financial circumstances.
- Increased awareness and understanding of creative social enterprise models, building their own presence in the region.
- Have gained new business skills and critical thinking.
- Inspired 10 new diverse-led creative social enterprises.

Given the relatively short period of the pilots and the evaluation running concurrently, this study is only able to assess the short-term impact of the project, and unable to assess the intermediate and long-term outcomes of the pilot.

Evaluation approach

We adopted a developmental evaluation approach with an eye to identifying impacts. The purpose of the evaluation is to capture learning and insights that will inform the design of future interventions. To achieve this, we originally proposed:

- **Supported self-evaluation of two host organisations.** This involved the completion of a modified version of the self-evaluation form attached in Annex A which was originally developed for the Phoenix Development Fund (which supported place-based intervention to tackle social exclusion through enterprise) and has been successfully used on several other programmes since. The purpose of the form was to provide an opportunity to reflect on how the pilot is going and collect relevant monitoring data.
- **Provided guidance and templates for host SEs to capture relevant information** as a part of their initial discussions with micro-SEs. This was used for baseline and on-going monitoring with their work with their micro-SEs.
- **Three meetings with the two hosts SEs.** The first was in April 2021 to discuss evaluation and monitoring and how the evaluation process can support learning for the host SEs. The second planned meeting in June 2021 allowed host SEs to reflect on their progress, share emerging lessons and discuss how the two organisations might collect critical success stories from the organisations they are working with. The third and final meeting was planned towards the end of the pilot in February 2022. It provided an opportunity to discuss the findings from the case study interviews described below and co-produce recommendations.
- **Case study interviews with each host SE and up to 2 micro-SEs supported.** Up to 4 additional interviews with informed stakeholders were planned (e.g., a board member who has provided benefit-in-kind support to the pilot, a project manager, and a community leader / local official) to provide an informed overview of how the pilot has made a difference.
- **Synthesised monitoring information, self-evaluation forms and case study interviews to produce final report.**

However, it was necessary to adapt our approach to reflect circumstances affecting the pilot and the two host SEs. While we feel this has not affected the quality of information we collected, we do feel the evaluation was less developmental in nature as we were not able to bring host SEs together to share learning and experiences at different points as planned. The main changes to our approach were:

- We only organised two shared meetings with the host organisations. The first being at the beginning to discuss the evaluation, the data we wished them to provide (including how to complete the self-evaluation tool) and collecting data on the micro-SEs assisted. The second meeting with host SEs took place at the end of the pilot, in the form of a workshop. In the meeting, the emerging evaluations were presented and provided an opportunity to reflect on how the pilot went. Due to unforeseen circumstances the meetings became a one-to-one meeting between the evaluation team and the host SE.
- We increased the number of interviews to include all ten micro-SEs supported by the host SEs.

Findings

Why the pilot was needed

In the immediate aftermath of the pandemic, cultural and creative organisations were one of the most severely hit by restrictions.

There were **three areas that WMCA and the CLB were able to step in to provide support.**

- Organisations that were already established had found that **existing government support either excluded or was insufficient to support their needs.** Particularly recently incorporated organisations that had not built up enough reserves to fund extended and repeated restrictions.
- New organisations that had set up during the pandemic where **entrepreneurs had spotted a gap in the market during the lockdown** and wanted to pivot and break into the new opportunities for combining enterprise with a social mission.
- The third area was the strategic thinking behind the **role of culture for high streets, and its role in a healthy and inclusive economy.** To support high growth creative industries with a focus on well-being and inclusive economic development.

The pilot was short term, covering only nine months, so it is too early to assess the achievement of long-term strategic goals. Yet the timeframe was sufficient to test the viability an innovative approach to support diverse-led cultural organisations operating with a social mission.

The CLB were looking to support the future of the cultural and creative sector in the West Midlands. The pilot contributed to supporting the inclusivity and diversity commitments outlined in the vision and mission statements of the CLB, as shown in Box 3.

Box 3: Cultural Leadership Board Vision Statement and Mission

Vision statement

“The WMCA Cultural Leadership Board (CLB) places culture at the heart of sustainable growth in the region, enhancing quality of life for its diverse communities.”

Mission statement

The Board will look for strategic opportunities to test the transformative role of culture across WMCA’s policy areas, including transport and housing, skills, digital, the environment, wellbeing, and inclusive communities.

It is committed to building an innovative and entrepreneurial cultural sector, with leadership that reflects the diversity of our region, and supporting a world-class cultural offer that is accessible to all.”

The pilot addressed a gap in the business support offer in the West Midlands. The working hypothesis of the informed stakeholders, and outlined in the logic model, was that growing social enterprises improves the overall social value of the cultural and creative sector. The pilot specifically included

people from a variety of demographics, as well as specifically supporting social enterprises in the cultural and creative sector. From conversations between informed stakeholders, hosts and micro-organisations, there was an appreciation for the targeted style of support for the organisations that was previously missing.

Establishing the pilot

The CLB **used the lobbying power and networks** of WMCA to bring potential funders of the pilot together. The pilot was seen very much as an opportunity to test what the CLB could do and had **to align with WMCA strategy** aims for “clean and inclusive growth”. The pilot represented a new way of working within the WMCA, with a working group developing the initial idea for a viable project. This included developing an underpinning logic model to support the business case for funding. The proposal was novel in that it cut across sectors and involved cascading support from the funders to host SEs to micro-SEs, with a strong focus on peer support and learning at every level. The pilot was focused on how to bring out **inclusive leadership** within the region by providing financial and practical support to diverse-led organisations who were struggling to respond to the challenges created by the pandemic. Because of the complexities around combining the different requirements of funders, it took around 9 months to get the pilot signed off.

Who was supported?

The demographic of people and organisations supported during the pilot were:

- *Generally young people, aged under 40* (nine out of the 12 host and micro-organisations were led by younger people).
- *Generally new businesses* (eight out of the 12 host and micro-organisations were formed in the last three years).
- *From non-white British backgrounds* (nine out of 12 of the organisations were led by non-white-British people).
- *Operating within the West Midlands Combined Authority area* (12 out of 12 operated within the WMCA area).
- *Working as an organisation with a social mission* (12 out of 12 organisations had a broad social mission).
- *Working with people from neurodiverse backgrounds* (one the two host organisations was neurodivergent-led).

The two Host Social Enterprises are described in the below.



Kiran Kaur, CEO and Co-Founder of GirlDreamer.

GirlDreamer describes itself as non-profit organisation established in Birmingham in 2016 by two friends with a focus on the personal and professional development of women of colour (WoC) aged between 18 and 30. GirlDreamer started in Birmingham and grew to national scale and now has an international online presence. At the baseline interview, GirlDreamer had a team of nine staff, with two fulltime and the rest freelance, with a strong sense of identity and commitment, including a recently appointed a Head of Impact.

The offer developed by GirlDreamer draws on the personal, lived experiences of this group and is concerned with directing young women of colour to support they need. The founders were able to draw on previous experience of volunteering and mentoring in schools and the charity sector and while having no formal business qualifications, became involved in problem solving at the social level. GirlDreamer had experience in providing structured, professional and leadership development for women of colour and supporting them to gain leadership roles such as board members on charities that stepping-stone opportunities.

Programmes provided by GirlDreamer include Lead, Inspire Transform; GirlDreamer Advisory Board; Borders Without Borders; Trustees Unlimited Partnership; Women of Colour in Leadership. Enterprises supported by GirlDreamer can become a Corporate or Charity 'Dream partner'. GirlDreamer came with a track record of having previously secured grant funding when it was establishing itself, including core funding from the National Lottery and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. GirlDreamer had started a consultancy for organisations on equity and inclusion for women of colour. This was done in person until the pandemic and has started to be done online, although ideally this will be done in person in the future. Also, GirlDreamer identified a digital "opportunity" to break down barriers for organisations trying to reach women of colour when advertising for jobs.



Andre Reid, CEO and Founder of Kiondo CIC.

Kiondo have a physical space in Walsall high street where creative organisations can meet and create ideas. Its founder describes the organisation’s aims as weaving relationships between people and place. Currently organisations come to Kiondo who want to link into the community. Kiondo acts as an overarching organisation which can connect the creative organisations that it works with together.

The CCSE pilot funding is seen as an opportunity to develop the organisation’s strategy and focus its business model. At the baseline there were two business models. The first being one where programmes are co-designed with members (the funding application mentioned “work strands” such as: The Threads and Studio Table; Saturday Studio; Associates Programme; Design Lab). The second being where Kiondo acts as an umbrella organisation to support smaller social enterprises. The funding provided by the pilot was seen as an opportunity to develop and formalise this model with Kiondo being able to:

- Build rapport with funding commissioning bodies and link to micro-organisations and the individuals to facilitate change. Kiondo would assist in helping these micro-enterprises develop their business model and processes and provide a space where individuals come together under one group.
- Draw on existing relationships with the Walsall Housing Group and NHS. Kiondo have been successful in a funding bid as an organisation to connect art and social prescribing.
- Train two community facilitators with each having expertise in project management (delivery) and account managements (working with people)
- Support micro-organisations requiring training in campaign product project management. To do this, funding provided would be used to map where to go and build a strategy for their financing, organising, or accessing financing, incorporating as a CIC or any other governance structure.

Develop an approach to address the gap identified by One Walsall in creative industries support in the area in relation to community and voluntary services.

Table 1 provides an overview of the ten micro social enterprises supported.

Table 1: Overview of Micro-SEs supported

Micro-SE Name	Brief Description of Cultural and Creative Activities
Blow Water	Blow Water builds a cultural bridge to introduce people to the spirit of Hong Kong through authentic cuisine and creative events.
GIRL GRIND UK	GIRL GRIND UK CIC was founded from the music industry to amplify the unsung voices of women and girls from marginalised communities and support creative entrepreneurs.
Shakti Women in the Community	Supporting women through projects such as creative writing, canal walks, dance, and yoga among others.
The Warehouse Café	Café as well as hosting regular events, such as jazz night @warehouseessions, Matt's History Talks and OneDub Secret Garden events.
Upper Circle	Platform for up-and-coming journalists and theatre producers to share their writing and shows, to increase publicity, awareness, and experience.
We Go Outside Too	Provide opportunities for young people and inner-city communities to explore nature and green spaces by organising trips to the walk around areas of outstanding natural beauty.
Bryce HK	Documenting through photography the lives of black individuals and black-led organisations.
Art Sikh	Using painting, print making, fine art, ceramics and sculpture, to graphical and digital design/ photography to showcase creative arts for people from diverse communities.
Her Path To Purpose	To equip and empower young women to lead purposeful lives through providing skill-building opportunities and resources to equip young women with the essential tools to advance personally and professionally.
Billy Dosanjh	A visual artist and documentary-filmmaker whose work investigates race, identity, and the working class South Asian diasporas in and around Smethwick.

The Host/Micro model

The pilot was innovative in how it supported micro social enterprises. Two host SEs supported five micro-SEs. The format was developed since the CLB and WMCA were aware that their contacts did not stretch to know every cultural and creative social enterprise in the region. There is an assumption that **established cultural and creative organisations already have networks of other organisations**, which can be contacted directly or shared through their contacts, to spread the reach of the WMCA and the pilot more broadly.

The **“ripple effect” of advice from the WMCA, host, and micro-organisations meant that the host/micro model could reach more organisations** than a traditional one-to-one, business mentoring process. There was a leap of faith to use the host/micro model to support as many organisations as quickly as possible in the context of a large economic shock from the lockdowns resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic. The host/micro approach was justified and impactful as direct support to two host organisations rippled out to support 12 cultural and creative organisations overall. **There was strong demand** for the pilot, with both host SEs having to undertake an application process to identify their respective micro-SEs. However, **the approach to supporting as many organisations as possible clearly justified the host/micro model**, particularly within the context of relatively few staff resources available at WMCA.

Developing support networks between CLB, host, and micro-organisations

The intention for the pilot was to have two host organisations, at a similar stage of their business development, starting the pilot at the same time as each other, to connect and develop a mutually beneficial support network. This aspect of the pilot did not come to fruition. The **differing start dates had the greatest effect on the lack of interaction between the host organisations**. The aims of the host organisations bouncing off each other were not realised since the hosts did not have the same starting point and had delays along the way. The two hosts were not at the same stage as each other at any point of the programme, as one started work with micro-organisations earlier than the other. However, it is difficult to evaluate the impact of mutually beneficial peer-to-peer support shared by the two organisations since, for various personal and practical reasons, the organisations were unable to meet up and share their experiences.

The **two host organisations were also at differing levels of their business development**. It may have been that each host organisation was able to share knowledge and experience from each other. However, as the hosts did not interact much since their start dates were different, the ability to evaluate the impact of the pilot on peer support of host organisations is limited. Still, there are opportunities for host organisations to develop support from the CLB in the form of advice and business mentoring. The pilot was intended to provide host organisations the opportunity to connect with the experience, contacts, and knowledge of the CLB members. However, this advice was only partially taken up. Clearly communicating the intentions and purpose of the CLB to the host and micro-organisations, so that each organisation is aware of the skills and experience the CLB, could offer an opportunity to build the strong support networks because of a future pilot.

Host social enterprises

Three reasonably well-established social enterprises were shortlisted with two funded, one from each Local Enterprise Partnership areas providing funding for the pilot.

How the host SEs defined success at baseline?

Success was defined in several ways by the two host SEs including:

- **Develop a community** of social entrepreneurs that feel they can achieve anything.
- **Equipping individuals** who are socially entrepreneurial minded turning their ideas into reality.
- Supporting five **small scale interventions that can create change** in their area.
- **Building relationships** with local groups and organisation so to link together different projects.
- Developing **actionable value propositions** and development timelines for micro-SEs through coaching.
- Micro-organisations, having completed the programme, feel **confident and optimistic about the future** and **deploying their creativity to achieve their goals**.
- Micro-SEs who are not registered **take the step to become constituted** so they can continue to **unlock funding and opportunities** to progress in accordance with their big vision.

Success criteria related to specifically to the **host SE organisations** included:

- Having more women of colour being in **senior positions** in charities third, public, and commercial sectors.
- WoC having **confidence to stand for and sit on boards** and have more of them on boards.
- The programme helps **young WoC set up their own social enterprises**.
- The People's Studio to act as a **meeting space** to start the programme off. Kiondo would like to make sure the studio is set up to be suitable to meet those aims, for example to be safe in a pandemic but also to encourage creativity.
- As all the cohort of micro-SEs for GirlDreamer are women of colour, GirlDreamer are also hoping to take some learnings away as an organisation about what challenges they have faced to better **inform their own work and share learning** with stakeholders, networks and future funders

In terms of their own **enterprise business development, success was defined** in the following ways:

- A **refreshed formal business plan** that is up to date with a **supporting strategy** behind it which is credible for funders.
- **Financially sustainable** business model.
- Completing an **audit of where the business is at**, and where we need to be, would provide a starting point for evidencing what has been done to date.
- Creating **space for strategy development**. Developing their own platform that has a community feel online which provides access to workshops and events, networks, for the women of colour community.
- **Documenting progress** made to ensure everyone can easily see their work. This can be advertised more widely on the website.
- Developing **new job roles and standard** operating procedures.

Future outcomes Host SE sought from taking part in the pilot

Sustainability

The pandemic brought concerns about sustainability to the fore. The **ability to diversify income** from being reliant on grants through either more commercial work or through meeting the objectives of other potential funders was seen as an important outcome beyond the pilot.

Creative digitalisation

GirlDreamer mentioned that they would like to **become creative with the digital services** they provide. Having already built strong digital/online connections and content, GirlDreamer wished to build on those strengths. Kiondo similarly referred to developing a website with a portfolio where all the aims and projects are clearly reported and outlined. This included a **membership offer** for micro-SEs and the ability to join a programme of activities that provides a pathway from making enquiry through to developing projects. The pathway could include anything that creatively uses design, from producing a press release and advertising through to micro-SEs producing stories describing their journey about how they developed their purpose and objectives and the activities they deliver.

Improved financial management

The pilot provided the **space and resource to focus managing the financial side** of business. This was difficult to do before the pilot as founders were focused on delivering projects to clients.

Guided by a clear strategic vision

Use the pilot as an **opportunity to combine strategy with vision**. Although GirlDreamer, for example, started by working through lived experience, there is still a requirement to have a strategic vision. The start of the pandemic was useful to do planning, which is where the idea for building their digital strategy came from.

Improved business processes and systems

Developing and having in place **more formal business processes** was seen as an important outcome of the pilot for Kiondo, who had started on their development during the pilot. However, the business development was put on hold to focus on delivering the support to micro-SEs. The formal business processes are as seen something that can be continued to be developed after the completion of the pilot. The provision of the business development grant by the pilot has provided the opportunity to identify what is required and needs to be developed, including: standardised procedures; in-house training; clearer roles; distributed leadership where individuals have responsibility for different aspects of the enterprise; clearer organisation structure and understanding of business benefits and social impacts.

Business support sought and accessed by host SEs

Previously, GirlDreamer would not have had the time, space, or finances to be able to interact with business support providers. The pilot has provided improved capacity for the host SEs.

The type of **support sought or obtained** by GirlDreamer included:

- Training on **intellectual property** – to commercialise/monetise/utilise IP passing it on to other organisations.
- **Demonstrating impact**, including what has been done and to leave a legacy for other organisations to get involved with and learn from. At the time of baseline interview, they had appointed a Head of Impact and we referred them to Charity Evaluation Working Group (CHEW) as a potential source of peer support.
- **Mentoring** – this was provided by the founder of Beatfrecks, a social enterprise consultancy supporting young people, based in Birmingham, who assisted with the development of the business plan.
- **Digitalisation** including their own platform online to bring a community feel online. Support accessed included a course provided by the National Lottery digital fund that covered safeguarding, impact and capturing information around age and ethnicity. Also made use of an ethical hacker to test how safe their website is.
- Used business **development consultant to refresh business plan and model** in first half of pilot.
- Received support from the Growth Hub including **diagnostic review** focusing on sustainability and external services.
- Able to **leverage the new team member** brought on through this fund to not only capture their impact as an organisation (through a theory of change and multiple impact reports) but have since been able to keep this person on through another fund to now support with the planned income-generating activities. The skills of the team member were transferable and so were utilised, supported by the time and capacity from the pilot to further benefit GirlDreamer as an organisation going forward.

Kiondo has benefited from the widespread support of the social enterprise community. The local thought leadership present in organisations such as CIVIC SQUARE, Colab Dudley, MAIA and others whom Kiondo holds close relationships with, provides a circle of support and advice. The support networks provided safe space to share business peer-to-peer mentorship. Kiondo required support in:

- Demonstrating **metrics for impact** to support further funding.
- **Sourcing training** partners.
- Identifying **alternative funding** sources for KIONDO's development.
- **Identifying suitable talent** for the organisation.

Engagement and identification of Micro-SEs

GirlDreamer has been developing a digital online platform for individuals who are women of colour aged 18-30 which has been used to engage potential micro-SEs, promote opportunities available and relationships. GirlDreamer engaged and identified potential social entrepreneurs and micro-SEs **through newsletters, contacts with external groups, LinkedIn, Twitter, word of mouth** and the director being on the board of National Council Voluntary Organisations. GirlDreamer also reached out to organisations led by young women of colour that had previously applied for the WMCA support.

Kiondo initially worked **through partner organisations** to identify potential micro-SEs who are “unconventional” businesses that are not recognised by other funders, operate in niche markets, or new cultural enterprises with new approaches before opening the application process. Kiondo also **drew on intelligence held by the programme management team and the CLB** on potential candidates for support. In their self-evaluation form they reported with regards to engagement:

- *Micro SEs* - engaged with over 150 creative enterprises during the project.
- *Potential customers* – through digital engagement their social media has reached over 1,000 accounts across the course of the programme with over 100 interactions containing references to Take Action Pilot who may be a source of participants for a follow up programme.
- *Stakeholders* – have entered partnership discussions with a local university in terms of developing a service offer to micro-SEs.
- *Wider community* - have begun consulting community representatives whether they might benefit from a similar programme in the future and plan a detailed survey process to establish future need.

Application process for Micro-SEs

GirlDreamer aimed to have a **short application process** and advertise via connections with their newsletter and social media. The perceived benefits of an application process were accountability, micro-SEs taking responsibility and reducing the risk of them dropping out. As GirlDreamer operates nationally, checks on whether the micro-SEs operate in the West Midlands were required. Kiondo branded their programme of support as the Take Action Fund Pilot and developed a Grant Application System for receiving, reviewing, and issuing grants.

Delivery of support for micro-SEs

The **managing directors of both host SEs took responsibility for overseeing the design and delivery** of their programmes. In the case of GirlDreamer, it was possible to share responsibility for delivering support to their five micro-SEs amongst the team. GirlDreamer have developed a culture where freelance staff are treated and feel like full time employees, with distinct responsibilities such as “Head of X” which helps create a sense of trust and belonging.

GirlDreamer started delivering their programme of support to micro-SEs in early August which ran through to October 2021. They **developed a self-reflection questionnaire to better understand where each micro-SE placed themselves in their development** and to enable them to evaluate their journey to date. The information provided was helpful in tailoring support for each organisation and for them to practice self-evaluation skills. During this period, GirlDreamer provided **weekly mentoring sessions**. Each group received individual calls, so the experience was very different and tailored to their needs. The benefits are therefore based on the individual organisation getting dedicated time to talk through their challenges and get 1:1 support on overcoming them.

Kiondo have **developed a bank of training materials** for use with each micro-SE, delivering sessions that can be used as a future resource. They delivered four two hours workshops over a four-week period before Christmas 2021 online via Miro as a new technique which furthered Kiondo’s experience in delivering workshops online. The collaborative nature of the sessions incentivised the cross collaboration of each micro-organisation we engaged with to work with one another to develop their projects and their businesses. Kiondo also delivered five one-to-one sessions which helped validate the need to develop mentoring as a service offering.

Host SEs **documented and shared the process** of each organisation as they produced their micro interventions. The recording of the beginning, mid and end points of the journey has allowed the generation of new content inspiring wider audiences to engage with Kiondo. This has led to the beginning of new partnership discussions regarding the programme working with other institutions

Reported successes: What went well?

Recruitment of Micro-SEs

At the midpoint of the pilot GirlDreamer reported that the response, engagement, and management of the project had gone well. They had made clear plans and so the execution was where we wanted it to be. They attributed this to their positioning within local communities and how their reputation allowed for interest to immediately peak, including queries about running this project nationally as a large proportion of the community they had built is located outside of the West Midlands. Demand for the project was strong as GirlDreamer had received 20 eligible applications within one week.

Similarly, Kiondo, who badged their support to micro-SEs as the Take Action Fund, received a significant number of applications within a two-week application period. Kiondo attributed this to being able to pilot new marketing methods and create engaging, successful content that attracted a high number of applicants. Another factor resulting in the high number of applicants could be the strong demand for the bespoke business support provided by the pilot.

Whilst both host-SEs had good responses to their application processes, a significant proportion did not meet the eligibility criteria set out in Box 2. However, many of these did not meet the definition of cultural and creative SE. (See Challenges and barriers section on p.26 below.)

Delivery of support for micro-SEs

GirlDreamer successfully supported 5 micro-organisations over the period of the programme. Due to the way the programme was run, GirlDreamer were **able to offer individual support** to each organisation and so their experiences have been tailored and exclusive to them and their individual needs and areas of growth/support. They attributed their success to being able to draw on the founders' lived experience, making a difference as the micro-organisations were able to be completely open and transparent around their journey and would feel confident that GirlDreamer just "get it". That **instant trust and connection** made working through the programme very simple and enjoyable for the micro-SEs. The original intention had been to run a themed programme covering different topics such as business structures and marketing. However, this may not have worked to the same extent given some micro-SEs were also already incorporated or had good marketing skills and did not need that input.

While, at one point, Kiondo was significantly delayed due to the pandemic and other issues (requiring the pilot to be extended), Kiondo was able to deliver all sessions before the Christmas break (17th December 2021) drawing on the support of the WMCA programme team. To do so they needed to **innovate a new facilitation method** using Miro, condensing the programme into four weeks. This learning, adapting, and pivoting where necessary to deliver to the cohort ensured the micro-SEs were getting the most out of the experience. Participating **micro-SEs were able to make connections amongst themselves** and **feel more confident** about their organisations, knowing that their ideas had been recognised.

Development of host SE

Both hosts **valued the focus on their own development in the first half of the pilot** and saw the second half of the pilot supporting micro-SEs as consolidating their learning from their own organisational development.

Both host SEs described **valuable developmental journeys** in terms of how they develop their businesses. The distance travelled depended on their starting point in terms of formalised systems and roles and clarity of their organisation's objectives. Kiondo underwent the greatest level of restructuring during the pilot, including using their grant to support the development of new team member roles, the introduction of new procedures and the implementation of new project management systems. Kiondo developed a business plan that clearly outlines their business development which will help pitch to investors in the future. Whereas GirlDreamer had many of these structures in place and was able to focus more on measuring impact including the appointment of a Head of Impact around the time the pilot started.

Kiondo saw its core development improve. This included **increased public awareness** of Kiondo as a brand and its offerings to its communities. Kiondo improved the education and skills opportunities, health and wellbeing, environments and climate consciousness of the project participants and audiences.

Success stories

The host SEs identified several success stories in their self-evaluation forms including:

Kiondo were able to produce and share training materials for each organization. All participants stated the materials, techniques and resources were useful in helping analyse their business and furthering their social business offer in more clarity. The micro-SE cohort were engaged during the pilot and have been able to find value through cross collaborations in their regular group meetings and one-to-one sessions to push their organisations forward.

Art Sikh were able to make the necessary changes to their work and finally make the leap to incorporate as a CIC and under a new name – Creative Cohesion and setting up a business bank account.

Blow Water have successfully made the move to decide that a future as a social enterprise is for them. Previously, they were unsure whether to take the step but are now just in the process of receiving business and financial support from the Growth Hub including advice on officially incorporating.

Her Path to Purpose were able to get questions answered on financials and accounting and were provided with a template to create their first set of management accounts. They also received general support with growing their team, including an opportunity to utilise GirlDreamer networks to do so and hire. They also started the process of doing a re-brand and this should take place in early 2022.

Girl Grind UK came to the programme seeking general support from an organisation who understood their approach as a lived experience organisation and to foster a stronger connection to aid their future endeavours through shared learning. GirlDreamer the host SE describes the support they provided as a more holistic journey which has been impactful, nonetheless. On a more practical note, GirlDreamer were able to support them with understanding how to leverage their current brand positioning for further funding opportunities and general growth in their social positioning through introducing them to creating pitch decks and a brand book.

Challenges and barriers

Number of organisations to manage

Five micro-organisations are a lot for host SEs to manage which adds levels of complexity to the programme. In addition, the CLB had little contact with micros, their only contact was a workshop on funding opportunities organised by WMCA. The CLB and WMCA would have liked to be more involved with supporting the host and micro-SEs, but changing timelines made it difficult to be able to provide the in-depth level of support that some organisations involved in the pilot would require. Yet, there were opportunities to link in with and supplement the offerings existing business support. Whilst there can be lots of churn in the provision of business support, a mapping exercise of what support is

already available and how to link in with the needs of cultural and creative social enterprises could offer an extension of the existing support that is available.

Limitations of funding and staffing resources

The pilot was intended to be **quick and flexible** to be able to provide 12 months of support at the height of the pandemic to the organisations. The idea for the pilot itself, and the development of a logic model occurred relatively quickly. However, the internal processes to establish funding meant that the pilot took time to put in place, in part due to having to get multiple partners - WMCA, Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP), Black Country LEP, and the Arts Council - to pool together to create the funding pot for the pilot. WMCA did not have resources to cover the whole cost of the entire project so needed to bring different funders together. As a result of delays in obtaining funding and signing off the business case, the pilot was shortened initially to six months before being extended to nine months, shorter than the year-long programme initially envisaged. However, the CLB and WMCA used the time introduced by delays well in refining the design of the pilot and the business case for investment.

The novel and experimental nature of the pilot and the unexpected challenges faced by the host SEs **required significant input from the programme team at WMCA at different stages in the pilot** to sufficiently support the two host SEs and ten micro-SEs. The pilot did open doors to support for 12 cultural and creative SEs; and this was achieved with the internal staff at WMCA being highly responsive and willing to invest additional time to ensure the pilot's success.

Both Hosts reported several barriers they encountered in their self-evaluation.

Organisational structures

At the baseline Kiondo reported there had been challenges in deciding where to allocate resource due to their setup as two linked separate organisations, Kiondo and Saturday Studio.

Confusion over definition of 'creative or cultural' by micro-SEs.

There was **strong interest and uptake** in the offer to micro-SEs by the host SEs. However, many micro-SEs that applied were **confused around the definition of 'creative or cultural'** with many considering themselves to be and meeting the funders criteria who did not. This resulted a delay in confirming results of the application process and the need to re-open applications to find applicants the host could best support who the met funders criteria in full too.

Capacity of host SE

Since the pilot involved delivering new activities and undertaking business development, it was not always possible for their directors to estimate the demand placed on their teams. Being at different stages in their development, the **two hosts differed in their capacity and organisational maturity**. It was not always possible where the Director is closely involved because they had to establish posts and delegate specific aspects of the enterprise to keep on top of everything at all stages of the pilot, whilst further juggling commissioned projects. To deliver the pilot it was necessary to put other **commissioned work on hold** at key junctures in the project. Kiondo were aiming to set up a social enterprise incubator space in Walsall and act as a host social enterprise in the town as a part of their business plan. The pilot neatly aligned with the strategic business development aims of Kiondo and enabled greater focus and capacity on working towards this.

To help with the delivery of sessions, the **WMCA programme team helped organise and deliver sessions** with micro-SEs as well as advising on external speakers. Kiondo had wanted to get further support from the Black Country Growth Hub but were not able to access this due to the tight timescales. The aim to pass on learnings from the Growth Hub support to the micro-organisations was scaled back as a result.

Staff turnover was an issue for one of host SEs during the pilot and it was not always possible to properly onboard new replacement team members. Loss of team members throughout the process held back the organisation in places. Further offers of support and advice from the CLB was not taken up beyond a few meetings with a few members, however Kiondo did draw on the support of the CLB members.

Unforeseen circumstances affecting the delivery model of group sessions and **greater level of coordination** around the availability of micro-SEs/stakeholders meant it was not possible to optimally organise the programme of activities - making it difficult to stay within budget.

Where the host SE already had people in specific roles, they were better able to complete their actions according to pilot timetable.

Participation in group sessions by micro-SEs

GirlDreamer had intended to facilitate group sessions to engender peer support and make the programme easier to deliver. However, after a few failed attempts at coordinating calendars, it was necessary to switch to one-to-one sessions with each micro-SE. This meant their **cohort were unable to meet each other to connect** and carry that connection over beyond our programme. This made the programme quite **time consuming to deliver and involving rescheduling sessions to fit individual participants availability**. Therefore, the programme was extended to deliver the final two sessions. One organisation started much later than the other and so has not benefitted in full, nor received the same amount of support. However, they utilised the time they had to give the micro-SE dedicated attention and found some additional time to support them despite the end of the contract.

Kiondo had more success but participant attendance and availability at workshops (average attendance was three out of five micro-SEs being present) was still an issue. **The reasonable level of participation was due to the other commitments and priorities** of micro-SE founders. Some micro-SEs were unable to commit the time and therefore dropped out of the programme. In one case this meant **replacing a participant micro-SE despite them accepting the award** by signing the award contract with the host to ensure Kiondo met the target of five micro-SEs being supported. **More experienced micro-SEs may have had less urgency to take part** in group sessions.

Changes to plans, staffing or partners during the pilot

GirlDreamer brought in a Head of Impact which helped place resource and time into measuring the impact that the organisation has. WMCA funding met the Head of Impact to develop a Theory of Change and an independent annual report to show to their funders, staff, and community the difference that GirlDreamer makes.

Kiondo **condensed the Take Action Fund Pilot from eight weeks to four** to ensure the programme finished within the evaluation period. Kiondo have also begun establishing training provider networks to provide similar support in the future.

Kiondo had to pause their own business development for a while, to deliver on commercial projects, but were able to draw on specialist consultancy support before the end of the extended pilot.

Eleven job roles were created in the Host SEs over the period of the pilot. These tended to be associate roles rather than fulltime positions with very specific duties.

Opportunities

The host SEs identified several opportunities during taking part in the pilot.

Nationally

Strong interest outside of the West Midlands for this project indicates there is a national opportunity for GirlDreamer to deliver the programme developed during the pilot to women of colour should they be able to secure funding to do so.

‘After completing the programme and realising what a key role our lived experience plays with micro-organisations feeling like they are getting business support that is more tailored, we will leverage this and seek to run a similar type of programme to a wider range of organisations across the country. In our evaluation and reporting of this project, we will highlight the importance of lived experience-based organisations and what specific type of impact and benefits they can have to other start-up or micro-orgs in their key development phases.’

Regionally

Kiondo intends to **capitalise on their learning** from their ‘Take Action’ Pilot and are already in **discussion with a local university and other partners to develop a funding bid** to provide a similar package of support. As well as consolidating what they have learnt from supporting micro-SEs and input from WMCA, specialist consultants and CLB in terms of they are considering:

- Potentially restructuring of the programme to increase consistency.
- Developing more original content based on learnings from the programme.
- Introducing a mentoring programme.
- Exploring an Associate Programme with partners such as Creative Black Country for live project opportunities for creatives aiming to develop their practice.
- Supporting students looking to transition into social and creative businesses post study.
- Opportunities for further collaborations with their cohort of micro-SEs including developing Studio Table and the Threads as platform to support this.
- Adapting to a wider range of organisations.
- Produce an Abundance Map that acts as a Social and cultural arts directory.

GirlDreamer were able to use the pilot to align with their strategic aims of working with women of colour in the West Midlands’ cultural and creative sectors. The organisations were representative of the communities that GirlDreamer also wanted to support which aligned the funding with supporting the missions of the host organisations.

In the **immediate future both Host SEs plan to continue to check in with their cohorts** of micro-SEs after the pilot was completed to:

- Deliver any support promised and still outstanding.
- Keep that rapport and get regular updates on their journey and maintain an open connection.
- Assess their impact and benefits of the pilots to micro-SEs they supported.
- Provide material for publicising their work on their respective platforms.

Micro social enterprises supported

Interviews were conducted with nine micro-organisations that were working with the two hosts to provide insights into the impacts of the pilot. Discussions in the interviews followed four key themes: how the pilot provided specifically **targeted support for cultural and creative social entrepreneurs**; how support was provided from the **host social enterprises**; the **ease of accessing support and opportunities**; and the **additional support** gained.

Targeted Support for Cultural and Creative Social Entrepreneurs

All the micro-organisations involved in the pilot had been set up relatively recently. The pilot worked with ten organisations who had a range of different organisational structures, as outlined in Table 2 below. Most micro-SEs (six) were set up within the last three years, with another organisation still looking to incorporate. There are multiple ways in which organisations with a social focus can be constituted, and some micro-organisations are still on that journey to incorporation to decide which status would be most appropriate for their aims.

Table 2: Characteristics of Micro-SEs supported

Incorporation Date	Number	Incorporation Status	Number
2016	1	Sole Trader	4
2017	1	Community Interest Company	3
2018	0	Unincorporated	1
2019	2	Limited Company	1
2020	4	Worker co-operative	1
2021	0		
Forthcoming	2		

Inspiration for the entrepreneurs in setting up their cultural and creative organisation stemmed from their **previous professional experience**. Despite the relatively new incorporation status of the micro-organisations, the personnel had many years of experience in the cultural and creative sector. Other inspirations for setting up the micro-organisations came from their personal life, such as people who had lived in other countries looking to share their heritage through food and music. The entrepreneurs spotted a gap in the market, like providing a new culinary, language, or theatre experience that was not yet available in the West Midlands. The pilot funding from WMCA laid the foundation for those ideas to grow and provide support for those ideas to flourish.

Support from host social enterprises

The model of micro-SEs having a support network from host social enterprises was well received. The model worked particularly well for supporting the specific needs of micro-SEs.

The approach of having peer-to-peer support with other similar organisations added value to the project. Some of the older organisations, with staff who have had several years' experience in the sector, mentioned how they had approached, but were ultimately disappointed by, other orthodox business support providers in the past. The importance of the personality of the hosts came through as highly important in supporting the impact of the pilot. The **ability of the host to relate to the experiences of the micro-SEs** was noted as being important in building the rapport. Particularly when starting up a cultural and creative social enterprise with young and ethnically diverse leaders.

However, working with a host organisation that had been on a similar journey meant that the hosts were more relatable and empathetic towards the position of the micro-SEs.

The **empathetic approach to business support** was particularly important for several micro-SEs that had needed to pivot their business model in response to Covid and the lockdowns. The cultural and creative sector had been severely hit because of the pandemic and the impact had been passed onto all organisations. The smaller organisations that had already been trading prior to the pandemic had their financial, personnel, and motivational capacity reduced over the course of the lockdowns. The organisations that were already trading mentioned their gratitude to the host SEs for being a mentor and for supporting the strategic reorganisation of their business plans, and to the pilot for providing the opportunity to think through financial issues, in response to the pandemic.

Still, innovation and enterprise did not take a pause during the pandemic. Five of the organisations started trading during, or just before, the pandemic hit. As a result, support for these micro-SEs was slightly different. New organisations had found a gap in the market during the pandemic. However, the advice for how to incorporate an organisation, and which method is best, was appreciated by newly formed enterprises.

The two host SEs took different approaches to working with the micro-SEs. One host SE ensured that four sessions with the micro-organisations were set up so that connections could be built. The in-person group meetings were appreciated by the micro-SEs who were able to bounce ideas off each other and develop their contact networks. The host and micro model was particularly useful in expanding the networks of the like-minded micro-SEs like a virtuous feedback loop. However, the approach for meeting in person was not suitable for the other host SE as timelines and diary clashes made it difficult for all micro-SEs to meet. The host SE instead held a weekly conversation with the micro-SEs which, whilst this was time consuming for the host SE, did ensure that the personal and relatable aspect of the project was in place.

Ease of accessing support and opportunities

The micro-SEs found the **application process for the pilot to be very straightforward**. The micro-organisations appreciated the easy to access application form. The process for application was developed by the host SE who received plenty of interest from micro-SEs in applying for the pilot. The high volume of applications is indicative of the demand for support for cultural and creative social enterprises and, in some part, down to the ability of the contacts to reach a wide number of social enterprises in the West Midlands. Many micro-SEs found out about the programme through their existing networks, which **further emphasises the importance of building a network of contacts** between cultural and creative social enterprises in the West Midlands.

Over the course of the pilot, several **micro-SEs noted an increase in their confidence** because of being successful in the pilot. There is merit in enabling numerous micro social enterprises to be successful in accessing funding as the level of confidence of the organisations grew. Newer SEs, who had recently started up, or entrepreneurs who had been new in their venture noted the improvements in their confidence throughout the programme.

Further, there was appreciation **from most micro-SEs that the funding available to specifically support the cultural and creative social enterprise sector**. The micro-SEs had previously been applying for many different bids from funding pots that may not have been particularly well suited to them, to apply for as many bids as quickly as possible. The scattergun approach to bid writing took time away from the operations of the rest of the organisation. However, with the pilot being specifically targeted

for cultural and creative social enterprises in the West Midlands, the micro social enterprises felt supported with the opportunity for directly relevant business support.

Additional support

As well as the above, the micro-SEs had plenty of additional benefits from taking part in the pilot. The micro-SEs had **time and space to plan their next steps, develop contacts, build knowledge** and awareness of other similar organisations to support their next steps as part of their journey. All micro-SEs had ambitions of survival over the coming months and years following the pandemic. Almost all were optimistic about the future for their organisation in terms of growing, networking, and generating a stable income. The pilot provided capacity for micro-SEs to continue what they were already doing, but provided time, allocated human resource, and targeted business development support that worked towards those aims. Due to the short-term nature of the funding pilot, the impact of the pilot on the resilience of the micro-SEs is difficult to test at present. Future evaluations could return to the same host and micro-SEs to investigate the impact of the pilot on longer-term resilience. Still, there is clear **evidence that each of the micro-organisations are coming out of the pilot with suitable skills and tangible outputs** such as business plans, websites, marketing strategies, a plan of future events, contacts from the hosts, other micros, WMCA, and the Cultural Leadership Board, and a refreshed approach to their organisations that can support their journey in the future. Looking to the future, and beyond the uncertainty of the pandemic, the skills and tangible outputs developed because of the capacity that the pilot provided, would support the development of diverse-led cultural and creative social enterprises in the West Midlands.

Discussion

Important key features of the pilot design

Peer support was an important aspect of the pilot design and was seen as mechanism to achieving many of the pilots' intended outcomes. While it was not possible to undertake a genuine realist evaluation approach, we have found contextual barriers to peer support that occurred during the pilot which affected implementation and delayed some of the expected outcomes. In many ways, with additional support of the programme team and CLB, the Host SEs have found ways of working around not being able to bring people together in meetings and events. Contextual barriers included the pandemic, unexpected events, and other commitments in social entrepreneurs' lives and Host SEs organisational structures and resources (though these can also be considered as inputs). The compressed timescale made it difficult to design and deliver a programme of events for micro-SEs that fitted with their availability. Work around this included Host SEs delivering more one-to-one sessions with micro-SEs, using social media and other communication platforms to create a sense of community amongst micro-SEs. While the two Host SEs operated to different timetables due to unforeseeable events (which prevented working together on issues), as the pilot progressed learning was shared between the two.

Business development of the Host SE was a critical first step in the delivery of the pilot. The provision of grant funding to support to develop their organisation, business model and to innovate was timely for the Host SEs. Both invested in developing their business plans and strategies around new opportunities. The funding, as well providing access to specific business support including branding and digitalisation, supported the creation of new roles such as Head of Impact. Both Host SEs valued the initial focus on developing their businesses which not only enabled to innovate in terms of their business model and pivot towards new opportunities, but also prepared them for working with their micro-SEs.

Established cultural and creative social enterprises are well placed to identify emerging micro-SEs in their communities. Both hosts were well networked in their communities but not necessarily within their geographies. The diverse communities they had previously worked with were not geographically bound or necessarily covered all diverse communities within a LEP area. This had implications for the recruitment of micro-SEs and required additional input from the WMCA programme team in identifying potential candidates for assistance.

Cascaded support and leadership for cultural and creative social enterprises. The pilot design is based on the premise that support can be cascaded from the CLB/WMCA programme team to established CCSE who are ready to pivot their business model, innovate and support newly emerging CCSEs. In many respects the pilot has supported distributive leadership associated with effective organisations including:

- Creation of new leadership roles with the host SEs specific responsibility
- Developing a sense of mission amongst directors of host SEs to support new emerging SEs develop and provide a leadership role in pulling peer support networks together
- CLB members providing mentoring to help host SE directors develop their leadership teams as well practical support including an introduction to networks, opportunities, and expertise.

Extending the role of social entrepreneurs to support new enterprises as part of their organisation mission.

This aspect of the pilot is not explicitly stated in the programme theory but is clearly linked to **creating new capacity in supporting micro-SEs**. Given the remarkably short timescale of the pilot, both Host

SEs provided support that was considered relevant and accessible by micro-SEs in the cultural and creative sector. The directors of both hosts have indicated they intend to continue to provide support beyond the pilot.

Delivery of intended outcomes

The pilot made significant progress within a relatively short time scale in terms of:

- number of people who benefited in both host and the micro-SEs. This was estimated to be 18 people supported by host SEs.
- reaching diverse-led creative social enterprises (gender, ethnicity, disability) with potential to work with communities of at risk of social exclusion.
- delivering relevant training to social entrepreneurs within the cultural and creative sector
- creating employment opportunities to artists and creatives through exploring ideas for potential business ventures or safeguarding existing roles through pivoting their existing business model to new opportunities and revenue streams. 11 new roles were created during the pilot in host SEs.

As shown in Table 3, despite significant contextual challenges, the pilot has broadly achieved its objectives. Table 3 draws from the original logic model as set out in **Error! Reference source not found.** Our assessment overall indicates that the pilot has achieved or made significant progress against the stated outcomes in the logic model.

Value for money

Given the scale and length of the pilot, it is not possible to assess value for money using usual metrics such as cost per job, or GVA created, or other metrics of social value created. Given the novel nature of the intervention design, it is not easy to benchmark against other business support schemes and such benchmarks would relate to interventions delivered prior to pandemic.

The short duration of the pilot and the end to complete the evaluation at the end of pilot means many of the potential quantifiable benefits have yet to fully emerge. Where the pilot has created value is in useful information for designing future interventions and the development of interest and capacity within cultural and creative SEs in providing peer delivered business support. On the basis the pilot has overall delivered its objectives our interim qualitative assessment would be the pilot has provided value for money.

Table 3: Progress against anticipated outcomes

Host Organisations	Achieved /progress made (yes, partially, no, unclear ²)
[Host SEs have become more] resilient and adaptable creative social enterprises	Yes , both refer to the business development grant as providing the opportunity to take stock and refresh their business plan and underpinning strategy. They have access business support through their development grant that has allowed them to focus on improving specific aspects of their business model and were able to draw on support of WMCA programme team and CLB which has contributed to their sense of confidence about their prospects.
Can demonstrate the value of their work to secure funding / investment	Yes, progress has been made. Both have capitalised on the learning and support they received during the pilot. It is too early to assess the effectiveness of the pilot in terms of helping the Hosts secure further funding, but they are actively exploring opportunities with potential partners to secure funding and investment.
{Host SEs} are able to identify new opportunities arising through the pandemic.	Yes , both host SEs were able to identify new opportunities because of taking part in the pilot. Some of these opportunities involved working with other organisations in their responses to the pandemic including the micro-SEs they assisted. The main opportunity identified by the host SEs were developing further their provision to micro-SEs including scaling up their programme nationally in the case of GirlDreamer and working with local partners to seek funding to provide similar provision in supporting social entrepreneurs in the case of Kiondo
Have 'pivoted' their work whilst staying true to their values	Yes. Interviews with Host SEs and their self-evaluation forms indicate this is the case.
Have tested new ways of working such as diversifying income, new partnerships, or audiences	Yes. Both Host SEs provided evidence of introducing new ways of working and exploring how they might diversify income, partnerships an audience. The length of the pilot was insufficient to assess the extent to which diversification had an impact on the host SEs business models.
Increase in confidence and ambition	Yes. Interviews with Host SEs and their self-evaluation forms indicate this is the case.
{Host SEs} can demonstrate the social impact of their work on participants / communities	Partially. Both have started collecting relevant data and information to do so. GirlDreamer is further along the process having recruited a Head of Impact. Both are intending to follow-up with their cohort the impact of the micro-interventions they worked on to do so and started to document the social impact of their work.
Improved financial forecast / projected end of year position by end of the project.	Unclear. We were unable to assess this outcome at the time of the evaluation, though both Host SEs reported capabilities from receiving their business development grant
Micro-SEs	Achieved /progress made (yes, partially, no, unclear)
Can identity new opportunities arising through the pandemic	Yes. Micro-organisations could combine their own enterprise skills with advice and support from the host organisations to be able to find new opportunities to either pivot their existing business model towards online ways of working, identify new opportunities such as catering to emerging trends such as developing a digital presence through website development, or, commonly, combination of the two.
Increase in confidence and ambition	Yes. Micro-organisations gained confidence after being successful in receiving funding through the pilot. Their successful applications gave confidence that their ideas were worth pursuing and had the backing of not only their hosts but by extension

² By unclear we mean we were unable to assess this outcome. This could because there was insufficient information to do so at this stage.

Micro-SEs	Achieved /progress made (yes, partially, no, unclear)
	WMCA and the CLB. Over the course of the pilot micro-organisations demonstrated clear improvements in the scale of their ambitions, with some stating their wish to share knowledge and become a host organisation in the future
Have tested new ways of working, explored new income generation or audiences	Yes. As a result of the pandemic all micro-organisations had to adapt their approaches to online and remote ways of working. The pandemic offered opportunities to explore new methods of income generation by pivoting their business model to provide more social interactions, whether that be in person gatherings or to improve their digital presence.
Can demonstrate the social impact of their work on communities	Partially. Part of the process was understanding their value proposition including their social impact on communities. Too early to assess fully. Host SEs intend to follow up with their cohorts to understand better the impacts of the support they provided.
Ability to plan and re-forecast budgets around shifting financial circumstances	Partially. Micro-SEs were able to focus on range of enterprise development needs and not necessarily financial planning. Too early to assess fully. Host SEs intend to follow up with their cohorts to understand better the impacts of the support they provided.
Increased awareness and understanding of creative social enterprise models, building own presence in sector in region	Yes. Micro-SEs developed a better understanding of different legal and governance structures which led to some becoming more formalised as a precursor to developing their presence in their immediate communities and the region.
Have gained new business skills, and critical thinking	Yes, both interviews with Host SEs and micro-SEs provide examples of improved business skills and critical thinking. It should be noted that insufficient time had elapsed at the time of the evaluation for these skills to have fully emerge or be tested.
Programme inspires 10 new diverse-led creative social enterprises	Yes. All 10 creative social-enterprises involved in the pilot were diverse-led whether that be someone from a non-white-British background, someone from a younger generation, or someone who is neurodivergent. The creative organisations were not all social enterprises but were all organisations with a social mission. All 10 organisations felt confident about the future, to varying degrees, and were looking to use the skills gained over the course of the pilot.

Sector / WMCA policy areas	Achieved /progress made (yes, partially, no, unclear)
An innovative and entrepreneurial creative social enterprise sector	Unclear. Too early to assess impact on the sector which would come through the application of learning from the pilot in future interventions and policies.
Evidence led approach to business support models suitable for social enterprises in the creative sector	Yes, the piloted has contributed to future business support models by testing a novel approach.
Smarter and more targeted interventions for the creative social enterprise sector	Unclear. Too early to assess,
Improved WMCA data and understanding of creative social enterprises	Partially. Has provided insights into creative social enterprises and peer support might assist in their development. It was not realistic to expect the pilot to contribute to improved data on the sector. There are separate ongoing initiatives that aim to improve the data on commercial and social enterprises in the region.
Improved collective identity of creative social enterprises in the region	Partially. Pilot not of sufficient scale and duration to realistically expect improved collective identity of creative social enterprises in the region. Created sense of identity within project participants.
Increased growth in the creative social enterprise sector	Partially. Provided insights that can be used in policy and intervention design to achieve this stated objective.

Sector / WMCA policy areas	Achieved /progress made (yes, partially, no, unclear)
More productive and inclusive regional economy	Partially. The pilot has provided valuable insights for design of future programmes that can feed into both the redesign of business support services ongoing in the region and inform the regions Social Economy Strategy. In particular, the pilot provides information on the use of peer support which is increasingly being seen as a viable approach non-financial business support to increase productivity.
Increased diversity in the sector	Unclear. The delivery of the pilot was configured so it was accessible to diverse range of social entrepreneurs. The close involvement in the delivery of the pilot by the programme team means they is considerable tacit knowledge generated in working with diversity that can feed into future business support projects for the sector. To be able to assess this outcome, appropriate monitoring strategy needs to be in place, but the West Midlands has a strong baseline in terms of having diverse range of social entrepreneurs and enterprises.
New pipeline of investible creative social enterprises in the region led by diverse emerging leaders	Yes, the pilot has proven it is possible to identify and support a potential pipeline of diversly lead creative social enterprises. However, it will be necessary to follow up the 10 micro-SEs in 12 to 18 months to understand how and whether they have become investable.

Recommendations

1. Consider follow-up of Host SEs and micro-SEs assisted to better understand economic benefits

This evaluation only provides a snapshot of the impacts of the pilot at the end of its completion and does not fully capture business and economic benefits created. We would recommend following up Host SEs and their cohort of micro-SEs in six to 18 months after the pilot to better understand the benefits created.

2. Continue to invest in community of practice that supports established social entrepreneurs and creative businesses to provide peer-based business support.

The pilot has shown that a peer-based approach is a realistic approach to providing support to cultural and creative social entrepreneurs, but it has also shown that this requires convening and supporting a community of practice for interested social entrepreneurs who wish to provide this support.

3. Consider making the two stages (business development of Host SE, and Host providing peer support to micro-SEs) into two distinctive business support products

While there is no reason why the provision of business development grants to existing CCSE might require a commitment to provide peer support to newly formed enterprises, there are likely to be experienced social entrepreneurs who only require financial support to provide mentoring and training to new social entrepreneurs and enterprises.

Similarly, there may be existing CCSEs who may have sound propositions for new innovative business models that can create significant social value and not able to provide to peer-based business support to micro-SEs.

4. Consider consortium of Host-SEs who share the delivery of sessions and mentoring of micro-SEs.

This would have the advantage of pooling resources and having a larger shared cohort of micro-SEs that would make delivery of programme of peer-group sessions around specific topics more viable.

5. Take advantage of current redesign of business support in the West Midlands.

Provision of specialised support for specific sectors and social enterprises have been identified as potential premium products. The number of applications received for the pilot suggests there is demand for a doubly distinctive offer from mainstream business support that combines specialised support for social enterprises and cultural and creative enterprise.

Appendices

Appendix A: Self-evaluation tool

To be completed every quarter

Project Name	<input type="text"/>
Organisation Name	<input type="text"/>
Covers period	<input type="text"/>
Completed by	<input type="text" value="Name: Position:"/>
Date completed	<input type="text"/>

Instructions

The purpose of the review form is very much to give you as a project an opportunity to reflect on how the project is going, to consider what actions you take to take forward, and to share with the evaluators what you think were the key lessons and successes in the period you are reporting on. This form is in Word to make it easy to complete and the boxes will expand automatically unlike online forms making it easier for you to review what you have written. The form is designed to be completed by the project leader, but they can choose to complete with colleagues if they think help sharing learning within their team.

Part A: Status summary

Please provide an overview of how well you think your project is going overall.

- Green** – the project is on track
- Amber** – there are some challenges or delays in meeting one or more objectives, delivery of planned activities or milestones
- Red** - there has been significant delays in delivery key milestones in the reporting period and/or challenges that are requiring significant attention to resolve

Part B: information required by the evaluation team

SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis

The purpose of this quarterly review is to provide an opportunity to reflect on how well the project is going. We would like you to think about:

- What is going really well (*strengths*)
- What is not working (*weaknesses*).
- Any *opportunities* that you have identified
- Potential *threats* to delivering the project and barriers you have encountered

B1: What has gone well and why? What do you currently consider the key *strengths* of the project?

B2: What is not working well currently and why? (This may not necessarily be a *weakness* of the project design or your delivery.) Key lessons learnt.

B3: What *opportunities* have emerged for the project over the reporting period? Have you, or when do you plan to take advantage of the opportunity?

B4: What barriers have you encountered this reporting period and to what extent do you consider them to be a significant *threat* to the delivery of the project? How have you responded to them, or plan to respond to them?

B5 Success stories to be captured

Please describe any successes that you like to be captured by the evaluation. Successes can be of any size or nature. They could be anything from a successful event to a 'light bulb' moment (e.g. where a stakeholder realises they 'get it'), good press coverage, and/or things went to plan. **To save you from**

writing realms we will call you back at a convenient time. Please provide a brief description below and indicate if you wish to speak with us about these successes.

B6 Plans for the next quarter

B7 Is there any specific support and input you require from the evaluation team?

Part C Progress Update

Progress Report

Please comment on the progress this period from the start of the project to 31st July 2021,

Summary of progress

C1: Outputs achieved against agreed plans

C2: Engagement Summary (What have you done to engage with micro social enterprises, potential customers, stakeholders, and the wider local community)

C3: What type of support have you received and from whom in developing your social enterprise (e.g. leadership training, mentoring, support in developing your business plans and model)

C4: Please describe activities undertaken with micro social enterprises and the benefits to date

Milestones and Planned Activities

C5: Milestones falling this period

Please list any milestones falling in this reporting period and indicate whether they have been achieved

C6: Changes to plans, staffing or partners

Yes, have made changes in this period or will be making changes

Considering making changes

No planned changes

Reason for change

Thank you for completing the self-evaluation tool. Please could you send to:

[name and contact details removed]

Appendix B: WMCA Cultural and Creative Social Enterprise Development Pilot Evaluation Information Note

Introduction

The study has been commissioned by West Midlands Combined Authority to support learning and provide evidence on the effectiveness on the Cultural and Creative Social Enterprise Pilot and is being undertaken by [WM-REDI](#) a regional [consortium](#) based at the University of Birmingham.

WM-REDI will be adopting a developmental evaluation approach with an eye to identifying impacts.

The purpose of the evaluation is to capture learning and insights that will inform design of similar schemes. To achieve this, WM-REDI will be:

- **Supporting self-evaluation and learning by two host social enterprises.** This will involve regularly completing self-evaluation that has been designed to provide an opportunity to reflect on how the pilot is going and collect relevant monitoring data.
- **Providing guidance and templates for host social enterprises (SEs) to capture relevant information** as part of their initial discussions with micro-SEs that can be used as a baseline and on-going monitoring with their work with their micro-SEs.
- **Hold three meetings with the host SEs.** The first meeting will discuss evaluation and monitoring and how it can support learning. The second to reflect on how the pilot is going and share emerging lessons towards end of June and the third meeting will be towards the end of the pilot will explore how successful the pilot has been.
- **Undertake case study interviews with host SEs and the micro-SEs supported in the final three months of the pilot.**
- Interviewing a small number of informed stakeholders (e.g. Cultural Leadership Board member, project manager, community leader / local official) who can provide an informed overview of how the pilot has been made a difference.
- **Synthesis of monitoring information, self-evaluation forms and case study interviews to produce final report.**

Typically, the interview should last no longer than 45 minutes. In some cases, the interviews may be recorded and transcribed so that the researchers can fully analyse the context. Information you provide will be held securely by WM-REDI and will only be shared with the members of the research team. All information will remain confidential to the research team. We may approach you after the interview for permission to use your company or organisation as case study. The data will be stored on University of Birmingham password protected servers. Although your comments and suggestions may be included in a report, your name and any other identifying information will not be used unless you have given permission. Participants will be offered a summary of their interview if requested to allow them to check that the conclusions are accurate and to allow them to make any amendments if they wish.

If you have any questions about the research at any time, please contact George Bramley (WM-REDI) G.Bramley@bham.ac.uk.

Appendix C: Micro Social Enterprise – Interview Topic Guide

Name (Interviewee):

Organisation:

Role Title:

A. Please tell us about how (name of micro-SE) came about and why?

Probe:

- what are your aims – what do you wish to achieve?
- (How) are you incorporated? Why did you choose that form?
- who are you working with? E.g. individuals, groups of people/other organisations

B. How did you find out about (name of host) and how they might/have helped you?

Probe:

- Did the host help identify new opportunities for your organisation?

C. What type of help were you looking for and in what ways did (name of host) help you?

Probe for intended outcomes:

- planning and forecasting budgets in changing times
- increased awareness and understanding of alternative models for being a creative social enterprise
- building presence in sector / region

D. Did you agree to work on a specific set of actions together? This could be a project or more practical issues around setting up and running a social enterprise. Please tell what these were.

Probe:

- Increasing awareness of social enterprise models
- Building presence of the organisation in the region

E. What have been the main benefits so far for the people and communities you are working with?

Probe for the following expected outcomes:

- identification of new opportunities (arising through the pandemic)
- tested new ways of working, explored new income sources or audiences
- able to demonstrate social impacts/ benefits of your work with communities
- increased confidence and ambition

F. What has worked well for you over the course of the project?

Probe:

- Demonstrating impact of the work
- Tested or explored new ideas/opportunities
- Confidence and ambition

G. What challenges have there been and how have you overcome them?

Probe:

- Impact of the pandemic
- Shifting circumstances and adapting around that

H. What are the continuing challenges or risks for your organisation?

Probe:

- Do you a strategy or approach to manage them?
- Do you require further support?

- Have you accessed other business support, advice, training, and mentoring services throughout the project? Do you have plans to do so in the future?

- What additional/further business support could help your organisation in future?

Appendix D: Host Social Enterprise – Interview Question Bank

Please provide an overview of (name of organisation).

What are your aims and the groups of people/other organisations you work with?

Probe:

- what are your aims – what do you wish to achieve?
- who are you working with? E.g. individuals, groups of people/other organisations

What were the key things you wished to achieve and did these aims change over the course of the project?

Probe:

- New opportunities
- New income generation
- New business skills
- Critical thinking
- Confidence and ambition
- Adapting to change
- Demonstrating impact
- Resilience and adaptability

Describe the support you received during the project and who provided it?

Probe:

- Team members
- WMCA
- Board of directors
- Micro social enterprise
- Business support providers

What has worked well for you over the course of the project? What work less well and why?

Probe:

- Demonstrating impact of the work
- Tested or explored new ideas/opportunities
- Confidence and ambition
- Impact of the pandemic
- Shifting circumstances and adapting around that

What changes has (name of host organisation) made over the course of the project?

Probe:

- Impact of the pandemic
- Unexpected changes
- How did you adapt?

- How have you worked with WMCA, the advisory board, LEP Growth Hub during the project?

What has been the main impacts / benefits of the work that you have done with micro social enterprises?

Probe:

- identification of new opportunities (arising through the pandemic)
- tested new ways of working, explored new income sources or audiences
- able to demonstrate social impacts/ benefits of your work with communities
- increased confidence and ambition

What challenges have there been and how have you overcome them?

Probe:

- Impact of the pandemic
- Shifting circumstances and adapting around that
- Pivoting whilst staying true to values

What are the continuing challenges or risks for your organisation?

Probe

- Do you a strategy or approach to manage them?
- Do you require further support?

- What business support, training, and mentoring services have you used throughout the project?

- What further business support could help your organisation in future?

Appendix E: Informed Stakeholders – Interview Topic Guide

Please provide an overview of your role in the pilot

What were your main expectations about the pilot and to what extent have these been achieved?

What in your opinion:

- were main strengths of the design of the pilot
- the extent to which the pilot worked out as planned
- main barriers and issues faced in implementing the pilot and how were these addressed?
- how the pilot might have been delivered differently. Lesson learnt?
- complemented other support potentially available to micro-SEs/ filled a gap in provision of support
- benefits to date for host social enterprise
- benefits to date for micro-SEs

What can be learned from the pilot for future support for cultural and creative social enterprises in the West Midlands?

The West Midlands Regional Economic Development Institute
and the
City-Region Economic Development Institute
Funded by UKRI



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