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# Evaluation of the Enterprise Network and the Wiltshire Business Support Service

A report for Wiltshire Council
May 2015

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# Acknowledgements

We would also like to thank the many individuals who gave their time to assist in the evaluation, all of whom were important in the writing of this report. This evaluation would not have been possible without all of these contributions.

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# Executive Summary

**Introduction**

In June 2014, Wavehill were appointed by Wiltshire Council to undertake an evaluation of The Enterprise Network and Wiltshire Business Support Service.

**The Enterprise Network**

The Enterprise Network (TEN)[1] is a network of enterprise spaces and support that covers the county of Wiltshire and Swindon Borough. Four enterprise centres were initially created through the conversion of existing buildings to create: Castledown Enterprise Centre (Ludgershall), White Horse Enterprise Centre, Ascot Court (North Bradley, near Trowbridge), Old Fire Station, Salt Lane (Salisbury), and Manor House Enterprise Centre (Royal Wootton Basset) using a combination of Wiltshire Council (Action For Wiltshire (A4W)), Rural Growth Network funding (DEFRA) and European Regional Development Funding. A further six satellite enterprise centres are also being developed, funded through £1 million of satellite centre grant funding through the Rural Growth Network.

Alongside the enterprise centres that offer physical space to new or growing small businesses, a package of support, training, and networking is provided through the Wiltshire Business Support Service (WBSS) and includes a targeting of support to women in business (who have also benefitted from a specific programme of women in business events) and the military community as priority groups. An additional Business Support Manager was recruited by WBSS through TEN resources to provide additional capacity for this work. Grant funding was made available to small businesses through the Rural Economy Grant (REG) scheme (funded through the Rural Development Programme for England via DEFRA) and a Specialist Business Advice Grant (SBAG) which is Rural Growth Network funded.

**The Wiltshire Business Support Service**

Wiltshire Business Support Service (WBSS) is a partnership arrangement run by the Wessex Association of Chambers of Commerce (WACC), as the council's delegated delivery partner through a deed of entrustment agreement.

The Wiltshire Business Support Service agreement with Wiltshire Council commenced in January 2012 through investment from A4W and ran to March 2015, the contract was then extended for a further 12months to March 2016. Service delivery began in April 2012, offering advice and workshop sessions to pre-start and start-up individuals as well as a range of workshop, peer-to-peer networking and support to established businesses. The SBAG and REG schemes have been promoted to participant businesses engaged through WBSS.

**The Evaluation**

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[1] It should be noted that the project was described as the Wiltshire Incubation Environments project however this term is now rarely used as a project description with it more commonly referred to as The Enterprise Network.

The evaluation has been conducted over two phases (July-November 2014 and February-June 2015) and involved:

- Taking a holistic approach to the delivery of WBSS and TEN incorporating a review of the capital aspect of TEN in the creation enterprise and satellite centres.
- Reporting on the initiative's net economic impact, both in terms of GVA generated, sustainable job creation and less tangible benefits.
- To provide an understanding of the effects of the project, including how the project ultimately leads to an economic impact on the Swindon & Wiltshire region.
- To provide practical recommendations as to how service delivery could be improved.
- To identify good practice and lessons learnt to inform future delivery

The following methodological approaches have been applied to Phase 2 of the evaluation:

- **Desk Based Research -** involving a review and refresh of key documentation associated with TEN and WBSS to ensure that changes over the intervening period between the two phases of research are accounted for within the report.
- **Stakeholder Consultations -** to capture perspectives on progress of activity and to pick up on any changes of significance between the two phases of the study.
- **Grant Process Review -** of the Small Business Advice Grant (SBAG) and the Rural Economy Grants (REG) available through TEN.
- **Business Survey -** with 130 participant business of TEN and WBSS to capture perspectives on the support received. A survey of tenant businesses of The Enterprise Network has also been undertaken to gather perspectives on the Enterprise Centres and a survey of 200 random small businesses across Swindon and Wiltshire to understand awareness and usage of business support.
- **Analysis of Findings -** from both phases of research, including an impact assessment to identify the GVA arising from those businesses in receipt of support.

**Summary of Findings and Recommendations**

The TEN project has funded the development of four enterprise centres and the award of grants for a further six satellite centres thereby providing incubation provision across Wiltshire and rural Swindon. The aspiration for an effective network for all the centres looks achievable with private sector incubation centres also now reportedly interested in engaging in the network

Grant provision through SBAG and the RGN alongside a series of events and conferences have enhanced the support available to businesses within the centres and across the wider marketplace. The resource has helped to strengthen both WBSS' and TEN's presence amongst the business community with around a third of small business aware of both brands.

WBSS have used the platform of the Chamber network and TEN effectively and have delivered support to in excess of 3,500 businesses since 2012. The resourcing of an online portal through a separate programme has helped further strengthen the business support infrastructure, filling the gap left through the loss of the Business Link offer.

## The Enterprise Centres

With regards to the success of the Enterprise Centres as incubator facilities, the rate of increase in tenancies at three of the four Enterprise Centres has been slow (although for Manor House the rate remains ahead of profile, as competition that emerged elsewhere in Wotton Bassett was anticipated to have an impact on the rate of take up). In Castledown the level of interest has been particularly poor with very few inquiries, whilst at the White Horse in Trowbridge there has been a relatively healthy number of enquiries, however conversion rates have been lower than expected. In this regard there is concern amongst some members of the team that securing a tenancy at the enterprise centres requires far more from a business than the private sector would require, which may influence the conversion rate.

### Recommendation
Revisit the administrative requirements for a business to become a tenant within an Enterprise Centre, with a view to streamline the amount of information required.

The Centres have secured funding until 2018 at which point it is hoped that they will be generating sufficient income to be financially sustainable. Whilst Manor House and the White Horse are garnering levels of interest which should ultimately lead to the centres operating at optimum occupancy rates, that scenario looks less likely for Castledown in particular. It possibly offers the best facilities within the centre itself, but its isolation would appear to be a significant issue for those starting up in business. However, the remainder of the site which offers larger office and light industrial provision remains extremely popular, thereby suggesting that some of the barriers to engagement for newly started businesses are less of a factor once they are more established.

### Recommendation
To consider a reconfiguration of the Castledown centre as an offer to prospective tenants so that it is less focused on start-up businesses, and instead has greater focus on more established businesses (perhaps as move on, phase 2 space for microbusinesses).

Conversely, the Old Fire Station in Salisbury continues to be very popular with the centre operating at around 80% occupancy (the typical target for an incubation centre). The popularity of the centre however increases the demands on the Centre Coordinator who finds it increasingly difficult to meet the demands of their Development Officer role, alongside meeting the expectations of tenants in their Centre Coordinator role.

The team across all the Enterprise Centres are all well regarded by colleagues and tenants, and it is understood that the long term desire is for Centre Coordinators to continue to balance the Coordinator and Development Officer role. However pursuing this desire would likely lead to other staff facing the same difficulties were occupancy levels to reach those achieved at the Old Fire Station.

*Recommendation*
To consider, as occupation rates increase, a restructure of the staffing of Enterprise Centres, which could include, for example, the appointment of dedicated Centre staff who are overseen by a smaller number of Development Officers.

The Old Fire Station includes within it available infrastructure to potentially expand the offer and, were resources to become available, would appear to be a good opportunity to expand and, in doing so, increase the viability of the facility.

### Events, Seminars and Conferences

The events, seminars and conferences being delivered through the TEN project are a very good example of collaboration between the TEN team and WBSS. The events are highly thought of, very popular and a useful promotional activity for both teams.

The larger, flagship events have also proved to be extremely popular with the Women's Conference and more generally the women in business events and seminars were a particular success. Clearly there is a demand for this targeted support, which may in part be a reflection on the significant increase in the rate of self-employment amongst women in Wiltshire.

### Satellite Centres

The Satellite Centres collectively (in addition to the four main Enterprise Centres) provide a good spread of provision throughout Wiltshire and rural Swindon. It is too early to provide judgement on the success of these or the extent to which they will network with the other centres, however the introduction of the quarterly working lunches would appear to have been a success, and the appointment of the centre operators to the Advisory Board should also help to integrate the offer further.

### WBSS

WBSS has continued to strengthen its presence with increased numbers of pre-start, start- up and existing businesses receiving support, more than three times the target number. The number of jobs created has fallen in the last year, however it still is ahead of profile and perhaps may reflect the pursuit of the number of businesses to increase market penetration and awareness of the offer, at the expense of intensive support that may lead to job growth. The number of businesses created has also fallen sharply, it is unclear what is behind this significant drop in volume.

Considering volumes of delivery by WBSS as whole, much success has been gained with what would appear to be a strengthening presence amongst the business community (as evidenced by the increased use of word of mouth as a route to engagement), yet whilst 37% of respondents to the random business survey were aware of WBSS, 38% of small businesses were aware of TEN. Furthermore, securing multiple contracts have stretched the delivery team at WBSS, even more so following the loss of several Business Managers. This has led to certain contracts being perceived as not gaining the focus expected, likely due to the apparent lack of available capacity.

The demands of contracts and the continued desire for increased market penetration has increased the momentum associated with a shift in the support model offered by WBSS. Whilst the information, diagnostic, brokerage process will remain core to the offer, the nature by which some of these elements are delivered is increasingly to be dependent on the growth orientation of the business supported. Clearly this shift is not going to be welcomed by all businesses however there remains commitment to supporting in some way all that seek to engage with the service (enhanced by the establishment of the Wiltshire Business Hub online portal).

## Monitoring and Data Capture

The award of multiple contracts to WBSS from a variety of funding sources brought with them challenges of various degrees. One area of shortfall in the delivery of these contracts has been the capture of the various monitoring information required for the capture of outputs and results/outcomes, particularly those associated with ERDF monies via the TEN project.

The failure to obtain the necessary information has unfortunately led to significant reductions in the output and result indicators associated with the support element of the TEN project. This has ultimately led to under-reporting of the true scale of service delivery achieved and a significant shortfall in delivery against a number of the targets associated with TEN.

The failure to capture this information appropriately has been a source of frustration for Wiltshire Council particularly as support and guidance had been provided. The oversight has led to a restructure of roles at WBSS to improve data capture compliance which, based on findings from more recent contracts, would appear to have addressed these issues.

**Overview of Performance against Targets**

The TEN project has recorded (following the reductions in numbers due to the lack of evidence):
- 140 businesses assisted to improve their performance (at least 12hours of support) against a target of 300 (47% of target)
- 23 new businesses assisted against a target of 38 (61% of target)
- 124 new jobs created (gross) against a target of 124 (109% of target)
- 12-month GVA of approximately £1.5m (37% of target)

The RGN project has led to:
- 198 existing businesses assisted (99% of target)
- 115.5 jobs created (77% of target)

The WBSS has:
- Supported 1,799 pre-start/start up individuals (88% of profiled target)
- Supported the creation of 325 businesses (87% of target)
- Created 509 jobs (107% of target)
- Supported 1,864 businesses (259% of target)

## Impact of Support

Participant businesses remain largely positive about the support they have received through WBSS or indeed through the Enterprise Centres. The only concerns evident typically related to the clarity of offer available through WBSS and the perceived need for additional capacity.

Net additional employment amongst respondent businesses to the survey is lower than expected and may in part reflect a focus on self-employed or newly established businesses but is also likely to reflect the lower than anticipated number of businesses assisted on the TEN project. Estimates of Gross additional GVA also fall short of the project target of £4m, but again they need to be considered against an achievement of 140 "intensive assists" which are also less than half the original target due to the evidencing issues outline above. Therefore, on a gross additional GVA per business, the rate of growth achieved is likely to be at or above the project target.

## Grant Award Processes

The review of grant award processes provided evidence to suggest that elements of the Specialist Business Advice Grant (SBAG) process would have been better managed through Wiltshire Council with WBSS playing the role of supporting the applicant in their application.

## Marketing and Promotion

The Enterprise Network has benefitted from a significant overhaul of its website which has strengthened the promotion of the offer considerably. A high proportion of surveyed businesses are aware of the offer that exists at the centres, thereby illustrating that the centres are benefiting from promotion through WBSS led activities. Some stakeholders still however remain of the view that the branding for TEN could be updated.

Concerns also remain about the confusing array of brands associated with publicly funded business support in Wiltshire and Swindon. Surveyed businesses were sometimes unclear of the different roles played by TEN and WBSS, with neither gaining a very high profile amongst small businesses that were randomly surveyed. There is a fear that the recent incorporate of WBSS (along with WACC) into Inspire, will only serve to heighten any confusion that exists.

**Future Provision**

The WBSS have begun introducing charging for certain services (including a monthly fee to participate in events and seminars that are on offer) with a view to self-sustaining certain elements of business support. The extension contract also includes a focus on relationship retention (with the introduction of targets of in excess of 12 hours of support) with certain businesses. Relationship building will be targeted at those businesses that are growth orientated and is reflective of the shift towards focusing on those businesses with the strongest growth potential, which itself is a clear desire within the ESIF strategy. In this regard both TEN and the contacts for WBSS have enabled the creation of a business support infrastructure that is well placed for building on through ESIF funding, which can further strengthen the effectiveness and impact of publicly funded business support in Wiltshire and Swindon.

# 1 Introduction and Background

## 1.1 Introduction

In June 2014, Wavehill were appointed by Wiltshire Council to undertake an evaluation of The Enterprise Network and Wiltshire Business Support Service.

### 1.1.1 The Enterprise Network

The Enterprise Network (TEN)[2] is a network of enterprise spaces and support that covers the county of Wiltshire and Swindon Borough. Four enterprise centres were initially created through the conversion of existing buildings to create; Castledown Enterprise Centre (Ludgershall), White Horse Enterprise Centre, Ascot Court (North Bradley, near Trowbridge), Old Fire Station, Salt Lane (Salisbury), and Manor House Enterprise Centre (Royal Wootton Basset) using a combination of Wiltshire Council (Action For Wiltshire (A4W)), Rural Growth Network funding (DEFRA) and European Regional Development Funding. Further satellite enterprise centres are also being developed and funded through £1 million of satellite centre grant funding through the Rural Growth Network.

Alongside the enterprise centres that offer physical space to new or growing small businesses, a package of support, training, and networking is provided through the Wiltshire Business Support Service (WBSS), and includes a targeting of support to women in business (who have also benefitted from a specific programme of women in business events) and the military community as priority groups. An additional Business Support Manager was recruited by WBSS through TEN resources to provide additional capacity for this work. Grant funding is available to small businesses through the Rural Economy Grant (REG) scheme (funded through the Rural Development Programme for England via DEFRA), and a Specialist Business Advice Grant (SBAG) which is Rural Growth Network funded.

### 1.1.2 The Wiltshire Business Support Service

Wiltshire Business Support Service (WBSS) is a partnership arrangement run by the Wessex Association of Chambers of Commerce (WACC), as the council's delegated delivery partner through a deed of entrustment agreement.

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[2] It should be noted that the project was described as the Wiltshire Incubation Environments project however this term is now rarely used as a project description with it more commonly referred to as The Enterprise Network.

The Wiltshire Business Support Service agreement with Wiltshire Council commenced in January 2012 through investment from A4W and ran until March 2015 when the contract was then extended for a further 12 months to March 2016.  Service delivery began in April 2012, offering advice and workshop sessions to pre-start and start-up individuals, as well as a range of workshop, peer-to-peer networking and support to established businesses.  The SBAG and REG schemes have been promoted to participant businesses engaged through WBSS.

In January 2014, WACC became the lead delivery partner for the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership's (SWLEP's) Gateway for Growth pilot, which extends the level of support available for established businesses employing over 10 people with growth aspirations.  In response to the Gateway for Growth pilot (which is outside the scope of this evaluation), the WBSS start-up and pre-start delivery model was revised to accommodate this additional workstream.

### 1.1.3   The Evaluation

The evaluation is tasked with delivering the following:

- Taking a holistic approach to the delivery of WBSS and TEN incorporating a review of the capital aspect of TEN in the creation of four enterprise centres and subsequent satellite centres.
- To investigate and report on the initiative's net economic impact, both in terms of GVA generated, sustainable job creation and less tangible benefits.
- To use a logic chain approach to provide an understanding of the aims and effects of the project, explaining how the funding put into the project ultimately leads to an economic impact on the Swindon and Wiltshire region.
- To provide practical recommendations as to how service delivery could be improved.
- To provide case study material to be used as part of the project's communication and marketing activities.
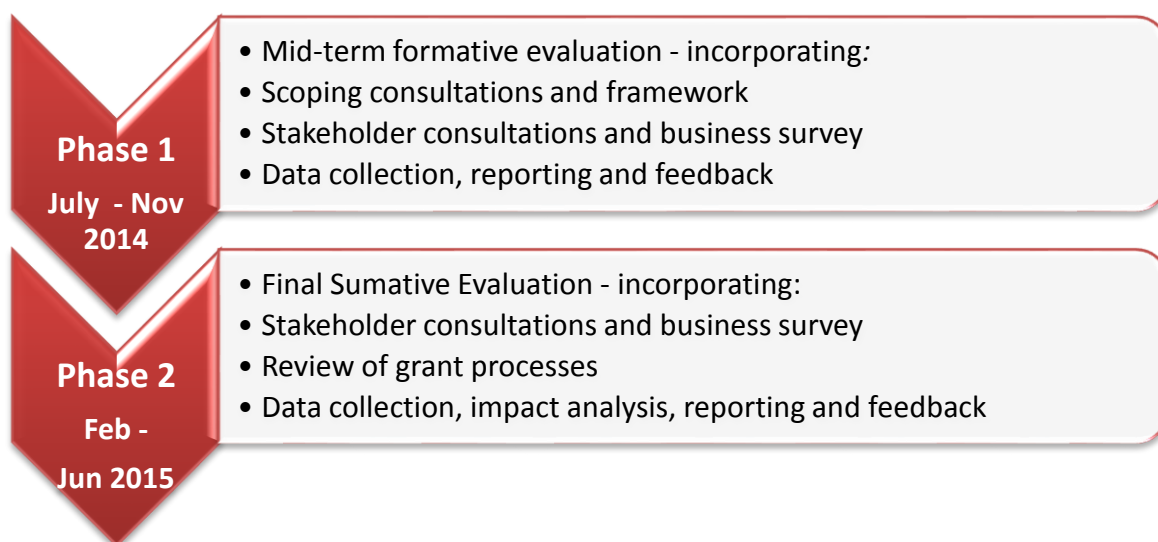- To identify good practice and lessons learnt to inform future delivery.

A series of project specific evaluation questions were set out within the project brief, these have been fed into the evaluation framework (which itself is informed by the logic chain) and these are detailed in Appendix 1.

## 1.2   Methodological Approach

The evaluation has been undertaken over two phases, the timing and key tasks associated with each phase are set out within Figure 1.1 below.

The following methodological approaches have been applied to Phase 2 of the evaluation.

Figure 1.1: Outline Methodological Approach

**Phase 1**
**July - Nov 2014**
- Mid-term formative evaluation - incorporating:
- Scoping consultations and framework
- Stakeholder consultations and business survey
- Data collection, reporting and feedback

**Phase 2**
**Feb - Jun 2015**
- Final Sumative Evaluation - incorporating:
- Stakeholder consultations and business survey
- Review of grant processes
- Data collection, impact analysis, reporting and feedback

**Desk Based Research – Refresh**

A review and refresh of key documentation associated with TEN and WBSS was undertaken by the study team, and included the revisiting policy to ensure that changes over the intervening period between the two phases of research are accounted for within the report.

**Stakeholder Consultations**

A number of stakeholders were re-engaged in the final phase of the evaluation to capture their perspective on the progress of activity and to pick up on any changes of significance between the two phases of the study.

**Grant Process Review**

An in-depth review of the process associated with the provision of the Small Business Advice Grant (SBAG) and the Rural Economy Grants (REG) available through TEN, has been undertaken to identify lessons learnt in the grant process to inform the administering of future funding schemes of this nature.

**Business Survey**

A business survey has again been conducted with 130 participant business of TEN and WBSS to capture perspectives on the support received. A survey of tenant businesses of The Enterprise Network has also been undertaken to capture perspectives on the package of support (included the facilities) at each of the Enterprise Centres.

In addition, a survey part-funded by TEN and part-funded by Gateway for Growth has been undertaken with 200 random businesses across Swindon and Wiltshire to understand awareness and usage of business support and to identify what support businesses require in the future (whilst key findings associated with the survey have been integrated into this report, the full findings of the survey are available as a separate annex to this report).

**Analysis of Findings**

The findings from both phases of research have been analysed to inform the report's findings. The approach includes an impact assessment to identify the GVA arising from those businesses in receipt of support.

# 2 Context

This section summarises the two projects and provides an overview of the socio-economic context associated with these initiatives (which have been explored in some depth in the Phase 1 report), with a particular focus on updating the socio-economic context.

**Section Summary:**
- The WBSS was developed to respond to the loss of business support available following the demise of the Business Link.
- The Enterprise Network was developed to respond to an opportunity to convert council premises in rural areas made vacant as a result of the transition from a two tier to a one tier authority.
- Evidence suggests that the Wiltshire and Swindon entrepreneurial economy is in a strong position with significant increases in start-up rates, however one-year survival rates have fallen slightly.

### 2.1.1 The Enterprise Network Project (TEN)

The aim of the project, as set out within the application is to bring forward a network of incubation centres and enterprise support services around Wiltshire to provide an environment that will meet the demand within settlements where regeneration and economic development are priorities (e.g. Trowbridge, Salisbury, Chippenham and Lynham), and in other rural locations where there are specific sector concentrations of businesses, knowledge and skills, with a requirement for an infrastructure to support entrepreneurship and enterprise.

To bring forward the network of incubation centres, the project identified an opportunity arising from the restructure of the council from a two tier to a single tier, unitary authority (prior to this, since the separation of Swindon the county had been divided into four local government districts). The restructure to a unitary authority took effect from 1st April 2009 and led to the collocation of council services and the consolidation of activity in fewer buildings across Wiltshire, and in doing so, left the council with a series of vacant or soon to be vacant buildings within its ownership.

The emergence of vacant facilities with a lack of an identified meanwhile use[3] provided the opportunity to bring forth greater community benefit which wouldn't typically be achieved through a sale of the facility. In addition, the project application recognised the opportunity to align with A4W funding and the plans for a Wiltshire Business Support Service by providing a supportive environment for incubation and enterprise that recognises the local characteristics of the Wiltshire economy.[4]

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[3] Temporary usage of space
[4] Wiltshire Incubation Environment Proposal and Business Plan (9th March 2012 Update)

The project aimed to provide:

- A range of sustainable, managed units to support both incubation, start-up and growth micro/SMEs
- Business incubation and intensive business support
- Business Support Centres providing; advice, training, office facilities, high speed ICT access, and meeting/conference/networking facilities

With objectives in relation to this aim to:

- Enhance the small business base of Wiltshire diversifying the local economy, reducing the dependence on the military and MOD employment
- Provide start-up, incubation and business development support for the local business community
- Build capacity in readiness for greater skilled workforce in the area
- Create and grow new businesses in order to deliver sustainable economic growth
- Provide affordable, flexible accommodation to pre-start, incubated and start-up businesses and access to high quality facilities and support services for start-up businesses with growth potential
- Assist their growth and onward development over the first three years of their existence

The aspiration at the time of the application was that the centres would generate sufficient income, over and above property costs, at the end of three years to support both the management of the sites, staffing of the centres' core, and providing for a comprehensive business development programme. Any surplus generated would then be reinvested in TEN to respond to any new demand or requirement and/or to fund any complementary new initiatives.[5]

### 2.1.2   Wiltshire Business Support Service (WBSS)

The Wiltshire Assembly established the A4W Programme to deal with the impact on businesses and communities moving into recession, and subsequently retained the programme to help communities and businesses recover from the recession.  Wiltshire Council sought funding from A4W to support the development of business support infrastructure to fill the vacuum created through the loss of business service provision thereby aiding the economic recovery. The service was initially funded in 2012 with the aim to "Develop an appropriate business model for professional business advice delivery to become self-sustaining and serving the whole of Wiltshire."

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[5] Wiltshire Incubation Environments Proposal and Business Plan (9th March 2012 Update)

The emphasis of provision supported by the service was identified at the time as being pre-start and start-up businesses, peer-to-peer support for existing businesses, exporting, innovation and mentoring.  The service was delivered by Wessex Association of Chambers of Commerce (WACC) and initially focused on the pre-start and start-up service provision. The scope of services offered through WBSS has grown as a result of securing additional resources, including ERDF funding via TEN, Rural Growth Network funding (through the provision of Rural Economy Grants to eligible rural businesses within Swindon and Wiltshire and the Specialist Business Advice Grant and to support the appointment of an additional business manager to focus on the priorities of female entrepreneurs and the military community[6]), and Growth Hub funding through the Gateway for Growth programme. These resources have enabled WBSS to serve the existing SME community, particularly those looking for growth in addition to service pre-start and start-up businesses in Wiltshire.

## 2.2   Socio-economic Context

The socio-economic situation in both Wiltshire and Swindon has been updated where possible from the baseline report to ensure that the socio-context remains contemporary. Whilst WBSS activity is almost entirely delivered within Wiltshire, elements of the TEN project have benefited the rural areas of Swindon Borough, and both authority areas have therefore been included as geographies of interest in the socio-economic analysis.

### 2.2.1   Self-employment Rates

Self-employment rates since 2009 have been somewhat flat in Wiltshire but have remained consistently higher than the rates typically found throughout England as well as the rates in Swindon (both areas fluctuate on a quarter by quarter basis but this is typically sample error). That said, both the national average and the Swindon rate have steadily improved over that period leading to the performance gap closing significantly.

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[6] Further detail on the Specialist Business Advice Grant can be found in Section 3

Figure 2.1: Self-employment Rates for those aged 16-64 – Four-quarter Averages on a Quarter-by-Quarter Basis
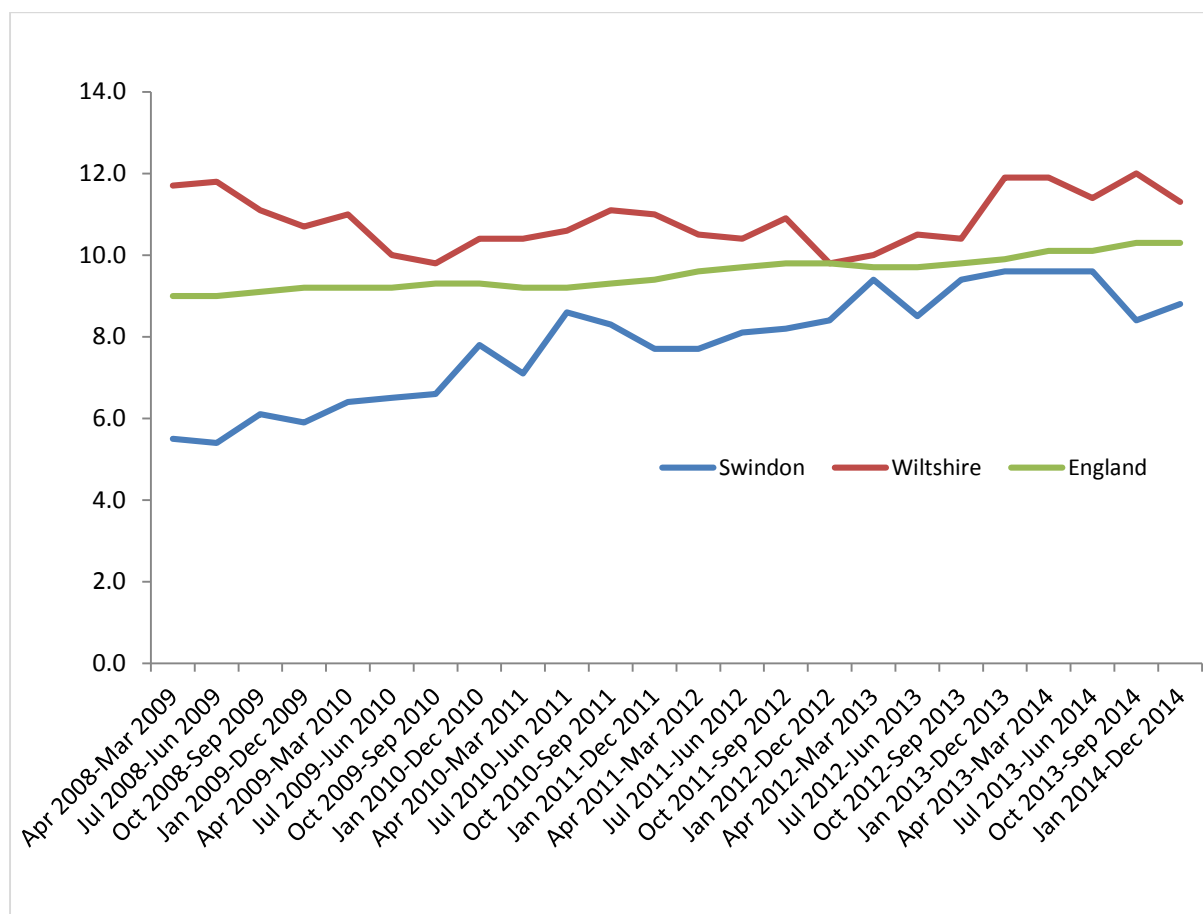


Source: Annual Population Survey

## 2.2.2    Percentage of Women in Rural Areas that are Self-employed

A key target for the TEN and RGN projects is to increase the proportion of women in rural areas that are self-employed. Data on self-employment rates is only available at the local authority level, however the entire county of Wiltshire is designated as rural, thereby making this analysis possible. Figure 2.2 below presents the self-employment rates for all who are aged 16-64, and then also includes the rate for females within that age cohort. The data for females at the local level is based on relatively small sample sizes and is therefore subjected to greater volatility. However, the chart illustrates a substantial increase in the rate for females to the extent that it is now similar to the self-employment rate for males and females for England.

Figure 2.2: Self-employment Rates for those aged 16-64 (a comparison of all in that aged cohort alongside specific analysis of the female rate of self-employment)



Source: Annual Population Survey

### 2.2.3    Start-Up Rates

Business birth or start up rates have jumped by around 30% between 2012 and 2013 (the most recent data that is available)[7] and are likely to reflect the significant strengthening in the economy over that period. The rate of growth was lowest in Wiltshire (although Wiltshire still secured growth of around 27% between 2012 and 2013), and there has therefore been a slight widening of the gap with the average start up rate for England. However, this should not detract from the significant rate of growth that is evident with a 43% increase in start-up rates in Wiltshire since 2009.

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[7] ONS business Demography data. Importantly these are captured when a business registers for VAT which is required for a business when turnover reaches around £85,000, or if a business registers for PAYE. It therefore overlooks self-employed businesses that are typically "lifestyle" in nature).

Figure 2.3: Start-Up Rates per 10,000 of the Working Age Population



Source: ONS Business Demography and Annual Population Survey

### 2.2.4    Business Survival Rates

One year survival rates for those businesses established in 2012 represent a slight fall on the peaks achieved by those businesses that started in 2011. When considered in conjunction with the increasing birth rates it perhaps reflects an increasingly entrepreneurial culture and an increased willingness to take risks. The fall may also simply reflect a reversion to the mean average one year survival rates.

Figure 2.4: One-Year Business Survival Rates
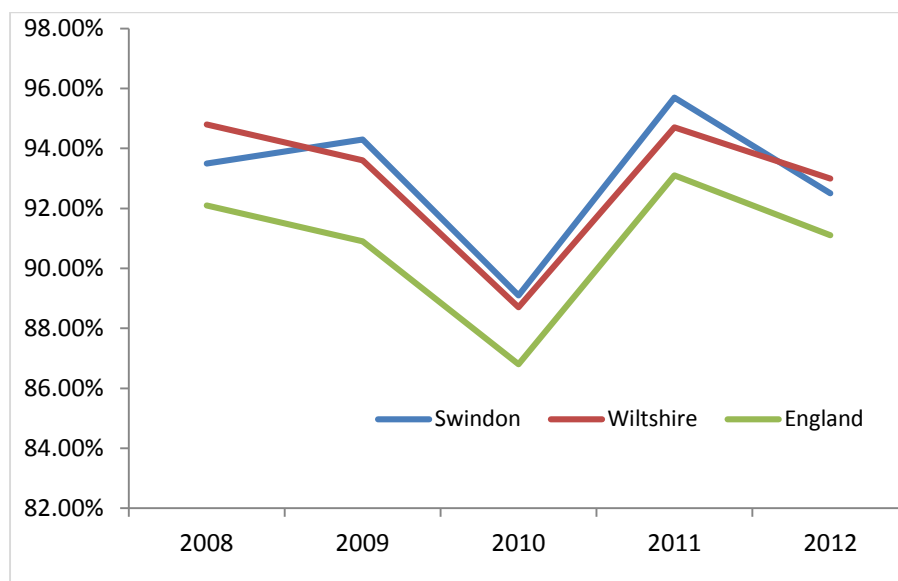


Source: ONS Business Demography

## 2.2.5   Business Stock

Unfortunately no further data has become available on the stock of businesses in Wiltshire and Swindon since the production of the baseline report (with the next update planned for October 2015). The data as summarised in the Phase 1 report shows that the number of businesses operating in Swindon and Wiltshire has grown in recent years. In Swindon the stock of businesses has expanded by an estimated 15% (equivalent to growth in stock of around 800 businesses) since 2011 (the earliest date for when data has been made available), whilst Wiltshire has experienced expansion of around 6% (equivalent to a growth in stock of around 1,200 businesses, these rates of growth compare to a 9.5% expansion across England).[8]

In terms of the sectors that are driving this change, Figure 2.5 below illustrates that growth in Swindon has been driven by the Professional and Scientific sector, the Information and Communication sector, and Construction sector, whilst growth in Wiltshire has largely been driven by the professional and scientific sector, the information and communication sector and agricultural sector.

<u>Figure 2.5: Change in Business Counts (figures provided where change is >50) 2011-2014</u>
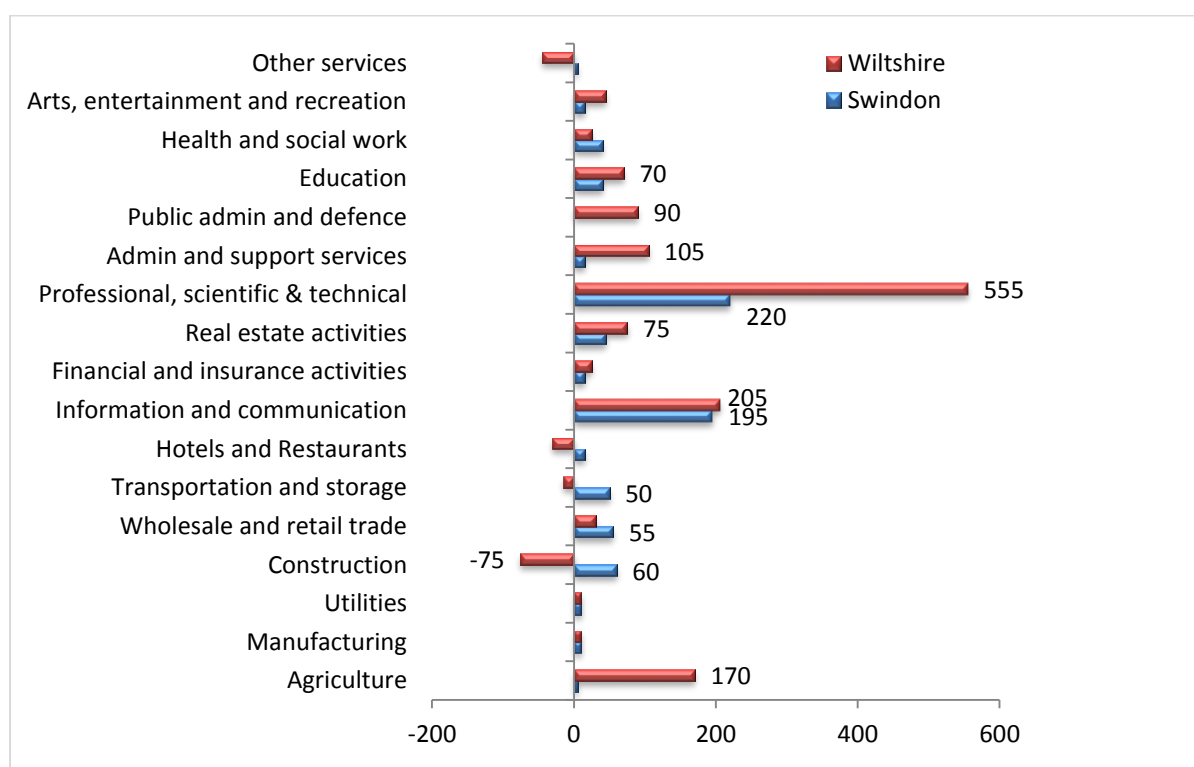


Source: Interdepartmental Business Register (IDBR)

The data therefore continues to illustrate a strengthening economy for Wiltshire and Swindon with a useful spread of growth across industrial sectors and an entrepreneurial culture evident across both authority areas.

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[8] Business Counts data from the Interdepartmental Business Register (IDBR)

# 3 Progress

This section provides an update on progress in the delivery of TEN and WBSS.

**Summary**:
- Whilst the Salisbury Enterprise Centre continues to perform strongly the rate of increase in occupation within the other centres is relatively slow (albeit remaining ahead of profile at Wootton Bassett). However rate of occupation is particularly slow at Castledown.
- Some of the issues behind the slower than anticipated rate of take up are centre specific, although there is a perception that the approval process is rather bureaucratic which some felt may act as a disincentive.
- The team are struggling to balance the centre coordinator role with the Development Officer role, particularly given the expectations/assumptions of some tenants that they act as a full time receptionist.
- Collaboration with WBSS is particularly effective for events and seminars at the centres, with high levels of interest and providing the opportunity to pitching and promote the centres as business support hubs.
- Insufficient evidence captured by WBSS in relation to some elements of business support has led to a significant reduction in eligible outputs and results for the project. This has left the project some way short of profile across several indicators
- The satellite centres have all now commenced with some open and informal networking already taking place.  Collectively they provide a useful spread of centres across Wiltshire and rural Swindon.
- Women in business events have been very successful, particularly the conference which attracted around 200 attendees.
- WBSS has shifted its focus towards more one to many events, whilst one to one is retained for those businesses showing most growth potential.
- The service is gaining an increased profile across Wiltshire which in turn has led to increased demands for services, but with limited staff capacity it has furthered the shift towards events and seminars as the core service offer.
- A recognition of the need to shift the focus from market penetration to relationship building has led to a shift in contractual targets for the service over the current financial year.

## 3.1    Management and Governance

### 3.1.1    TEN Advisory Board

A review of the management and governance of both TEN and WBSS was undertaken as part of the baseline evaluation and should be referred to for greater detail however, in summary, an Advisory Board oversees TEN provision (and WBSS provision that is relevant to ERDF outputs or RGN funding) and meets on a quarterly basis. The Advisory Board includes representatives from SWLEP, both Swindon and Wiltshire Council, from the Chamber and the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB). A number of private sector representatives with knowledge of running business centres were also invited on to the Advisory Board and have been increasingly involved at this level which, reportedly has been of great benefit to the strategic operation of TEN. Furthermore, Swindon Borough Council has taken on an increased role in their governance with (for example) representation on the board from a councillor of rural Swindon. More widely, Swindon Borough Council's involvement in business support provision has been further aided by the introduction of additional business support schemes (separate to TEN and therefore the Advisory Board, such as the Growth Hub for example) which also operates across both Swindon and Wiltshire thereby providing further momentum for activity across the area.

ERDF funding ceases in June 2015 which provides a useful juncture for considering the future role of the Advisory Board which is a central element for consideration at the next meeting of the Board.

### 3.1.2    WBSS Management Group

A separate WBSS steering group has overseen business support activities since WBSS was first established. The attendance of this group changed in Spring/Summer of 2013 to become more operationally focused. The Management Group (which covers the business support offer for TEN as well as WBSS) is comprised of the TEN Project Manager, the Economic Growth Manager (the manager of the WBSS contract for Wiltshire Council) and the Chief Executive of WACC.

### 3.1.3    TEN Centre Coordinators

The TEN Team, which is made up of each of the Centre Coordinators (most of whom are Development Officers), have a monthly management team which is attended by each of the Centre Coordinators and the TEN project manager.  In addition, the TEN team hold a co-working day at one of the Enterprise Centres, with the aim of strengthening links and enhancing the sharing of practice and lessons learnt.

## 3.2   Project Delivery – The Enterprise Network

### 3.2.1   Enterprise Centres and their Progress

The Enterprise Network comprises of four enterprise centres that are located in rural Wiltshire.

<u>Figure 3.1: The Enterprise Network – Enterprise Centres</u>[9]



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[9] http://www.theenterprisenetwork.co.uk/

**Castledown Enterprise Centre, Ludgershall**

Castledown Business Centre is located in the south east of Wiltshire, in a rural location with the surrounding settlements having a significant military presence in addition to a number of military barracks. The centre is the only purpose built business facility of the four enterprise centres, and is located on an industrial estate which offers move-on space of varying scales thereby enabling tenant businesses to expand on site. Prior to the facility's conversion, it operated as two light industrial units that were proving difficult to let. The centre opened in July 2013 with the first tenant moving into the facility in the summer of that year.
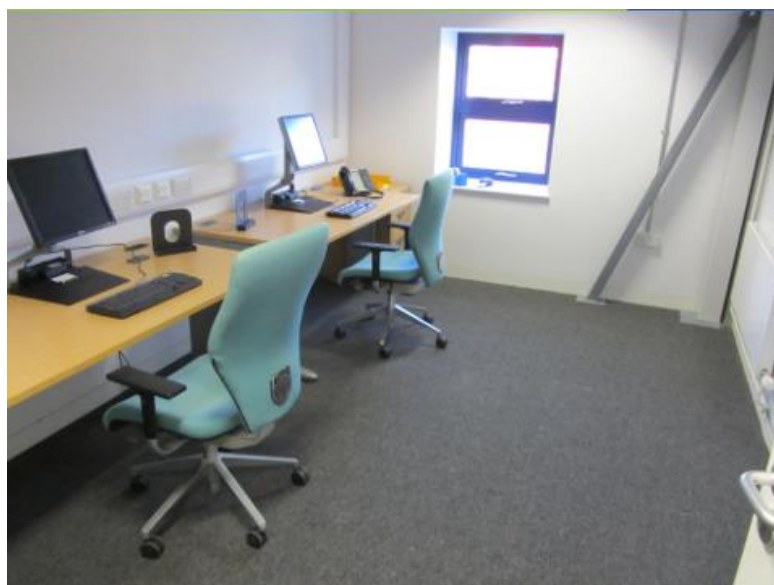
The centre has suffered from a relatively slow rate of take up in units with occupation rates at 11% of capacity and little sign of any pick up in enquiries. Whilst its location ensures that the centre is well placed to serve the ex-military community and military spouses, its relative isolation from any conurbations is understood to be a negative factor for many enquirers. It is felt that often, those businesses that are looking to move out into office space, may typically be working flexible hours to combine family needs with their work and so they therefore require office space that is accessible to enable them to continue operating with this flexibility. Furthermore, the isolation of the facility also means a lack of footfall for ad hoc enquiries.

**Manor House Enterprise Centre, Royal Wootton Bassett**

Manor House Enterprise Centre is located in Royal Wotton Basset in the north of Wiltshire on the edge of the town centre, and was formerly a magistrate court before being used for NHS and Social Services staff. The refurbished property opened in February 2014 although no "hard launch" took place as there was a degree of snagging associated with the refurbishment, and the first tenant took up a unit in May 2014. Whilst the building as a whole is impressive, its historical structure leads to compromises in its character with several rooms leading off each other creating a rather confused lay out. The facility is also said to suffer from local competition which typically benefits from full-time receptionist services that are also believed to offer more flexible pricing structures.

After a slow start, the erection of a promotional sign on the main road outside Manor House reportedly had a positive effect in raising awareness with additional tenants and enquiries towards the end of 2014. The larger rooms in Manor House have tended to be most popular as rates have increased and there are no two desk spaces available. However since the autumn levels of enquiries have slowed amidst reportedly increased competition from other providers in the town, the centre currently has an occupation rate of 43%.

**Old Fire Station, Salisbury**



The Fire Station is based in Salisbury city centre and opened in February 2014. Despite a lack of dedicated parking the centre has seen the most rapid take up of tenancies. The facility remains around 80% full with evidence of tenants progressing from the smaller office space to the larger rooms within the centre. The co-working provision within the centre is also increasingly popular with tenants who aren't ready for an office space or, in some instances used on a temporary basis whilst a tenant awaits the availability of suitable one desk office space within the facility. The popularity of the centre exists despite the lack of dedicated parking for the centre, however there are two spaces that could for example be used for staff at the centre, although it is understood that this outside space is currently used for informal networking. There also remains a desire to explore the expansion of the centre into the adjacent building; however it is currently unclear as to how this expansion could be resourced.

**The White Horse Enterprise Centre, Trowbridge**



The White Horse Centre is located on an industrial estate to the south of Trowbridge and opened in September 2013. The facility is also occupied by the WBSS service deliverer WACC (who took occupation of the facility around 12 months ago). Whilst the centre benefits from a relatively high number of enquiries, the conversion rate is poor and occupation rates are around 39%. One of the factors considered to influence the conversion rate is the small size of the one desk offices within the facility.

Table 3.1 overleaf summarises the progress amongst each enterprise centre to date. Collectively it illustrates that, whilst Salisbury continues to perform strongly, the other centres are suffering from relatively low rates of occupancy (although it should be noted that Manor House remains ahead of profile).

Table 3.1: Occupancy Rates in Enterprise Centres – June 2015

| Location | No. of Units Total | No. of Units Let | % Units Let | * Capacity No. of Desks Total | Capacity No. of Desks Let | % Desks Let | No of Tenants | No of Tenants Hot Desk, Networked and Virtual Office |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Old Fire Station Salisbury | 18 | 15 | 83 | 31 | 27 | 87 | 17 | 11 |
| Manor House Wootton B | 21 | 9 | 43 | 46 | 21 | 46 | 8 | 1 |
| Castledown Ludgershall | 19 | 2 | 11 | 45 | 6 | 13 | 2 | 4 |
| White Horse Trowbridge | 18 | 7 | 39 | 34 | 11 | 32 | 7 | 2 |
| | 76 | 33 | | 156 | 65 | | 34 | 14 |

### 3.2.2   Challenges in Delivery

One of the issues encountered within the Baseline Report was a perceived level of inflexibility in the workspace offer to prospective tenants, it is understood that greater flexibility to negotiate a more competitive offer has been implemented with some success.

A factor that however is considered by some as a barrier to taking up an office, is the perceived level of information a prospective tenant needs to supply. Some respondents felt that TEN requires a business plan, latest accounts and a guarantor, whereas other private sector enterprise centres typically rely on a credit check. Were this to be the case, the demands prior to taking up a tenancy may be too much of a disincentive for some businesses, particularly where a competitive offer can be sourced close by. It is understood however, that if a business plan or accounts are unavailable for a TEN Enterprise Centre tenancy, then an application can still proceed with it instead being guided by the introductory chat with the Centre Coordinator. A lack of consensus or clarity was apparent amongst the TEN team on these requirements, and there is a need to revisit these to ensure that all Coordinators are clear on what the application requirements are.

A further factor that may be influencing take up is the lack of a full time receptionist. Several stakeholders referred to this as an issue both phases of the research. Some tenants misinterpret the Coordinator role as a receptionist whilst others anecdotally are surprised that this offer is not available. The misinterpretation of role can create challenges in relation to a juggling of tasks associated with the Coordinator/Development Officer role whilst undertaking a facilities management/receptionist role that some tenants expect. The challenge of balancing workload becomes particularly acute where tenancy levels are highest with tenants looking to engage the Development Officers regularly on an informal, ad hoc basis.

With regards to facilities management, the approach to responding to certain issues remains somewhat inefficient, particularly when it comes to the purchase of items (the Centre Managers are unable to carry petty cash for example) or works which typically need to go through council procedures (three quotes) which can limit the responsiveness to tenant needs. Whilst there has been greater allowance for Centre Managers to respond as they see fit their remains a perception that they have insufficient autonomy to overcome these issues themselves.

A further challenge for the team is the growing demand for the use of the facilities out of hours. This necessitates preparation and clear up but can be difficult for Development Officers if they are out of the office (which is a relatively regular scenario). However, out of hours agreements are now regularly being used to enable greater usage outside of core opening hours. The security applied to each centre, whilst a good intention and a modern addition has added complexity to this requirement whilst not entirely deliver on the wishes of the team (with a lack of, for example enabling access to a centre remotely for a manager of another centre).

The space on offer within the Enterprise Centres is designed as an incubation offer and theoretically should lead to tenants being encouraged to move on after 18-24 months. To date the length of tenancy has not been a factor due to the length of time that each facility has been and because the rate of take up of space has not warranted this across most centres. However Salisbury has been open now for almost 18 months and with occupancy rates of around 80% it would appear an appropriate time to begin adopting this if the programme remains keen to follow the incubation model.

### 3.2.3    Progress to Date

In relation to the business support on offer and funded through The Enterprise Network and the Rural Growth Network, tables 3.2 and 3.3 overleaf summarise project progress to date against key outputs and results.

**The Enterprise Network**

The performance data presented in table 3.2 has been revised down from the previous phase of the evaluation after it emerged that insufficient evidence was being captured for some outputs to enable them to be claimed. This has led to significant under-reporting of activities actually delivered and a significant shortfall in some areas against the original target.

The extent to which there was a shortfall in the level of data captured has only become apparent during the last quarter when Wiltshire Council undertook spot checks of the evidence base held by WBSS. The lack of robust evidence captured has led to a restructure within the team at WBSS, with Business Managers no longer tasked with capturing the necessary data which has instead been assigned to a finance and compliance officer. Since those changes have been made, data capture has been much tighter; however some significant opportunities have been missed (including for example, failure to capture the necessary evidence (i.e. Signed registers) of the c.200 attendees at the Women in Business Conference).

Prior to this WBSS had been reporting higher outputs in relation to the businesses supported than were actually eligible for counting. Without the shortfall in evidence in the outputs the project remained behind profile, indeed a change request form had been submitted to DCLG with a view to reducing the businesses assisted target from 300 to 222. At that point (31st December 2014) Wiltshire Council were reporting delivery of 194 businesses assisted (prior to being fully aware of the data capture issues at WBSS). The request to reduce the target at that point reflected the fact that there was a delayed start to the project and the capital works for each of the four enterprise centres took longer than anticipated.

Following the revisions to the outputs in light of the shortfall in evidence, the number of businesses assisted to improve their performance is currently less than half the original project target number, again this reflects on the lack of suitable methods for data capture. The number delivered (140) could be derived from 12 hours of support (73 participant businesses have surpassed this level of support - where the lack of suitable methods for data capture emanate from) or from the receipt of a SBAG (a total of 104 businesses were in receipt of a SBAG and therefore some businesses were in receipt of over 12 hours of support and a grant). The fact that the total businesses supported has fallen from 194 to 140, despite the fact that a further three months of activity have been recorded, provides insight into the scale of gaps in available evidence.

The achievement of GVA and net additional employment is largely derived from the businesses assisted to improve their performance, and the estimated achievements against targets for these indicators are broadly proportionately comparable with the number of business assisted.

Other indicators have fallen short of target, including the number of environmental technology and renewable energy businesses assisted with the shortfall linked to the fact that no specific networks for these sectors exist in the target area, and that the enterprise centres are not necessarily suited to accommodate businesses of this use. Furthermore, the number of firms involved in collaborative research and development projects has been particularly difficult to achieve due to the lack of Higher Education Institutions in the local area.

It is important to note however, that the gross new jobs created has surpassed target and despite the low numbers of businesses eligible for recording as being supported, this figure suggests therefore that there are higher rates of employment growth per business than were anticipated.

**Rural Growth Network**

The outputs associated with the Rural Growth Network show a strong performance relative to target with the number of businesses assisted having been (largely) met and the additional output in relation to increases in the percentage of women in self-employment having been surpassed.

Table 3.2: Wiltshire Incubation Environment (The Enterprise Network) Outputs

| Core Outputs | Actual: year 1 | Profile: year 1 | Actual: year 2 | Profile: year 2 | Actual: year 3 | Profile: year 3 | Actual: year 4 | Profile: year 4 | Project total | Profile | % of Target |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of businesses assisted to improve their performance | | 60 | 26 | 120 | 97 | 120 | 17 | 0 | 140 | 300 | 47% |
| Number of new businesses assisted (subset of businesses assisted) | | 8 | 3 | 15 | 14 | 15 | 6 | | 23 | 38 | 61% |
| Number of env. tech & renewable energy bus assisted (subset of businesses assisted) | | 2 | 2 | 12 | 2 | 12 | 0 | | 4 | 26 | 25% |
| No. of firms involved in collaborative research and development projects (subset of bus. assisted) | | 6 | 0 | 12 | 0 | 12 | 1 | | 1 | 30 | 3% |
| **Results** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Gross new jobs created | | 10 | 32 | 35 | 75.5 | 35 | 16 | 35 | 124 | 114 | 109% |
| Gross research jobs created | | 2 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 16 | 0% |
| Number of additional firms involved in business clusters and networks | | 10 | | 25 | 36[10] | 25 | 0 | | 36 | 60 | 60% |
| Number of patents, other IP and other IPR devices used | | 2 | 0 | 5 | 1 | 5 | 1 | | 4 | 12 | 33% |
| Number of SMEs launching new or improved products | | 5 | 1.5 | 15 | 9 | 20 | 0 | | 11 | 40 | 28% |
| Gross increase in GVA (12 month) | | | | | | £2.8m | | £1.2m | £1.5m | £4m | 37% |
| Gross jobs created in environmental sectors | | | 0 | 6 | 2 | 8 | | 8 | 2 | 22 | 9% |
| **Impacts** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Net additional employment | | | | 10 | | 18 | | 40 | 15[11] | 68 | 35% |

Table 3.3: RGN Output Performance

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[10] Based on occupancy log of tenants

[11] Ibid

| Core Outputs | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Common Outputs** | Actual: year 1 | Profile: year 1 | Actual: year 2 | Profile: year 2 | Actual: year 3 | Profile: year 3 | Actual: year 4 | Profile: year 4 | Project total | Profile | % of target |
| Existing businesses assisted* | | 10 | 48 | 90 | 126 | 90 | 24 | 10 | 198 | 200 | 99% |
| Individuals assisted to start a business | | | 11 | | 23 | | 7 | | 41 | | |
| No. of women-led businesses assisted | | | 13 | | 60 | | 11 | | 84 | | |
| Jobs created | | | 32 | 70 | 67.5 | 70 | 16 | 10 | 115.5 | 150 | 77% |
| Networks created and/or individuals engaged in a network | | 2 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 7 | 43% |
| Floor space developed (sq m) OR | | | 1308 | 1,978 | 670 | | | | 1,978 | 1,978 | 100% |
| Floor space developed (sq ft) | | | 0 | | 0 | | | | | | |
| **Additional Outputs** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Increase in % of rural women self-employed[12] | | | 0%[13] | | 2%[14] | 34% | 54%[15] | 38% | 45%[16] | 38% | 118% |
| Operational incubation/enterprise centre | | 2 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 7 | 57% |

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[12] Baseline has been set at 6.5% (January-December 2010 four quarter average) derived from the Annual Population Survey
[13] Percentage change in rate of 2011 compared to baseline
[14] Percentage change in rate of 2012 compared to baseline
[15] Percentage change in rate of 2013 compared to baseline
[16] Percentage change in rate of 2014 compared to baseline

### 3.2.4  Business Support and Events at the Centres

With regards to the provision of support at the Enterprise Centres, each centre has maintained a close partnership with the WBSS who continue to deliver drop-in provision in the Enterprise Centres (in some centres more than others, which partly reflects the number of tenants but also the suitability of the centre's location). A shift in the WBSS' approach to business support (further details of which can be found later within this section) has reportedly lessened the extent to which tenants are gaining one-to-one support, however collaboration on the delivery of seminars and events has remained a very effective model for promoting the centres and enabling the centres to play out their role as a business hub.

A series of seminar programmes were widely regarded as being very successful with many of these being held in one centre and then streamed, live to the other centres. The seminars have been structured under four themes: start, grow, accelerate and innovate with the events being extended to another two sessions due to an underspend of RGN monies, and are also being streamed live to the other Enterprise Centres. It is understood that the level of interest in the streamed events varies from one centre to the next, with streamed events reportedly garnering a higher degree of interest in the Salisbury and Trowbridge Enterprise Centres, than in Castledown or Wotton Bassett.

There has also been a series of events and conferences targeted at the priority groups of women and the military community (including partners and spouses), further details on progress with priority groups is presented later within this section.

### 3.2.5  Tenant Collaboration

One of the aspirations for the enterprise centres is the encouragement of tenant interaction; however this demands a critical mass of tenants for interaction to work effectively. The Baseline Report reflected on some initial events that had been trialled at the Salisbury Enterprise Centre.  Since the Phase 1 report, Centre Managers are reporting increasing instances of facilitating interactions between tenants to encourage networking and collaboration, particularly within centres but also in some instances across centres.

### 3.2.6  Marketing and Promotion

Since the baseline phase of the evaluation the TEN website has benefitted from a significant revamp and appears far more professional. It is also well optimised as one of the first weblinks you come to when looking for incubation or business support in Wiltshire. LinkedIn and Twitter groups associated with TEN are also gaining increased usage with a doubling in terms of participant numbers, whilst press releases are typically tied in with the seminars events and distributed approximately every three months.

Flyers, leaflets and press releases are regularly being used to promote the various activities being undertaken, some however remain of the view that the marketing and in particular the branding is somewhat dated.

### 3.2.7   Satellite Centres

A total of six applications for satellite centres were approved by the TEN Advisory Board.

- Wiltshire College 3D Enterprise Centre, Lackham secured a grant of £173,214. The centre is a technology focused hub at Wiltshire College Lackham campus that provides 3D design and prototyping facilities for small businesses. The facility is now open having launched in November 2014 with a programme of training events for 2015.
- Elcot Park, Malborough secured a grant of £160,000 and is funding the creation of micro-enterprise workspace within the development of a business park. The facility is also open and securing tenancies. It is understood that prospective tenants are able to request refurbishments to each potential unit to ensure it best meets their perceived needs.
- Butts Business Centre, Chisledon secured a grant of £106,780. The funding has enabled an expansion of current business centre to include an additional two light industrial units and office for hot-desking (in rural Swindon). Work has commenced on the scheme but at the time of this report is yet to be completed.
- Glove Factory, Holt secured a grant of £159,925 to create incubation offices for an additional 20 businesses, doubling the number of potential tenants at the current Glove Factory site. The works commenced in October 2014 and were due for completion in mid-May.
- Wiltshire Council – Shambles Market Hall Devizes secured an initial grant of £72,000 for a retail-specific enterprise centre. The proposal is to create a centre within the rear end of the existing indoor market building comprising an office, three single units and eight double units. The centre will be managed by Wiltshire Council markets team. A specification for the works has been developed and procurement undertaken, a preferred supplier has been identified for the build. Cost increases have led to a request to receive an increased RGN grant offer. It is hoped that the build will be completed by the end of June 2015
- Wiltshire Council – Tisbury Campus Enterprise Centre secured a grant of £250,000 for the Old School in Tisbury to be converted into campus site for Wiltshire Council with plans to convert part of the building into incubation space. The works commenced in January 2015 with the build likely to be completed by January 2016.

For those satellite centres that are now operational it is reported that some informal networking has already started which has reportedly been aided by the commencement (led by one of the TEN Centre managers)  of  quarterly working lunch sessions (with satellite centres and enterprise centre coordinators in attendance) which it is understood have been very successful. There is also interest in the streaming of some of the latest events into the satellite centres (which would be as an addition to the streaming of events that takes place in the "core" enterprise centres).

The addition of the satellite centres has also helped to lever on to the TEN Advisory Board private sector representatives from these centres. These individuals are keen to be involved and welcome the support they have received to deliver on their satellites centres. There is however a wish that they may have been engaged earlier when the core Enterprise Centres were in the design and build process and when establishing their delivery model. The experience of those private sector representatives already running incubators and enterprise centres would likely have been valuable at this juncture. However, the forthcoming (at the time of the design of the core enterprise centres) release of satellite centre funding which, they were obviously keen to go for, may have precluded this involvement due to conflicts of interest.

The location of the enterprise centres and the satellite centres are mapped out on Figure 3.2 below.

Figure 3.2: Enterprise Centre and Satellite Locations



Copyright: Batchgeo 2014

### 3.2.8   Future Plans

Further funding from A4W was secured to support the TEN project as occupancy rates are lower than anticipated and are therefore not providing sufficient income to be financially sustainable. Rural Growth Network funding is being used to the end of 2015 to support the women in business events and the series events alongside other business support events at the centre, and associated staff time.

As RGN funding comes to an end it will lead to an associated loss of resource demands, thereby leaving existing posts as part-time and freeing up staff to focus on other economic development initiatives. The loss of resource for the centres would have an associated effect on running costs for those centres, which may in turn increase the likelihood of the TEN model breaking even financially. However, the Enterprise Centres, particularly those the Old Fire Station at Salisbury and the Manor House, are both likely to need significant investment in their maintenance if they are to retain their roles as Enterprise Centres, if and how this is likely to be secured is currently unclear.

For the TEN centres there remains a strong desire for the retention of the collaborative work with WBSS, the delivery of events in the centres helps to pitch the centres as business support hubs and is likely to be the case given the deed of entrustment states that the business support provider should do this for the current financial year.  Beyond that, TEN would seek the opportunity to collaborate with the support provision that is made available through the ESIF programme.

## 3.3   Supporting Priority Groups

### 3.3.1   Military Leavers, Spouses and their Dependents

Research was undertaken through RGN funding to explore routes into enterprise for Military Leavers, Military Spouses and their Dependents. Key findings from the research identified that (amongst other findings) spouses were considered to be the group with the greatest potential for increased levels of enterprise, they often faced significant barriers including: access and affordability of childcare; poor access to transport (particularly public transport); frequent moves meaning they are often far away from their wider family and support network; and low levels of confidence.[17] The focus for intervention and engagement has reportedly shifted a little in response to these findings towards the engagement and support of these particular groups.

Activity for the priority group is broadly defined as being promoted by the TEN team and delivered by WBSS. By way of example, the Communications Consultant for TEN has been delivering mail outs as part of the partner and spouses activity funded under the TEN project regarding the support available to every services family accommodation.

In terms of delivery and to facilitate further engagement with this group, a programme of events for the military were commissioned by TEN for delivery by WBSS. However, this has not gained the momentum hoped and there is a feeling that there has been insufficient capacity within WBSS to manage the delivery of these (a "light-touch" evaluation of this programme of activity will take place in September 2015 which will aid the judgement of its success). However, there has been some progress in promoting this agenda nationally with X-forces a national social enterprise that delivers business support having made a pitch to the SWLEP for the Wiltshire and Swindon area to be a pathfinder for delivering supports services with the aforementioned research being used as evidence to underpin this approach.

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[17]  Routes into Enterprise for Military Leavers, Military Spouses and their Dependants, Red Box Research (2014)

**Women in Business**

Activities targeted at promoting women into business have continued to be very successful in particular the women in business conference, held at Bowood House was widely perceived to be a hugely successful event, which was tied in with International Women's Day with around 200 attendees.

There were several key note speakers and two workshops on sales coaching and media training both of which were fully booked. The popularity of the two workshops has meant that they will be delivered again at two Enterprise Centres between now and the end of year. In addition, pop-up stands were supplied for attendees to showcase their services/products for attendees during breakout sessions and lunch.

The success of the event and more widely of the women in business activity is significant and has gained significant momentum however sustaining this level of provision demands further resources with opportunities for further funding from alternate sources currently being explored.

## 3.4   TEN and RGN Grants

Two grants were offered through the TEN project; the Specialist Business Advice Grant and the RDPE funded Rural Economy Grant. These grants have been a central element in the success of the schemes and a review of the processes applied in the delivery of these grants has been undertaken by the study team with the details of these found in Appendix 2.

### 3.4.1   Specialist Business Advice Grant

The Specialist Business Advice Grant (SBAG) was launched in September 2013 with a budget of £150,000 which offered grant support (from £500 to £1,500) to rural business in Swindon and Wiltshire, with growth potential to assist with up to 50% of the costs for advice that is not generalist advice (as is typically available through WBSS or the Swindon equivalent). The grant could not duplicate or replicate other funded support schemes but could resource specialist support across a host of areas including marketing, financial, technical or IP advice. The WBSS administered the programme on behalf of Wiltshire Council and was delivered over an 18 month period from September 2013 to March 2015.

The grant was promoted through WBSS (typically through the workshops and events that they deliver as well as through the one-to-one diagnostics) and by the TEN team through the use of an external PR consultant who developed press releases to promote the grant. The grant was also advertised on the TEN website however, in reality the level of demand meant that a huge amount of promotion of the grant was unnecessary with a steady increase in demand following its initial launch.

Ultimately, there were 158 applications and 106 grant awards to the value of £123, 550 (which equates to an average grant award of £1,165, whilst £26,450 of current aid remained un-deployed.

Once works/support were completed the evidence of completion was sent to WBSS for appraisal.

Once satisfied with the evidence, WBSS would reimburse the business with the approved grant aid. WBSS would then forward the evidence base for approved grant requests to Wiltshire Council at the end of every quarter to enable WBSS to draw down spend incurred though SBAG for that quarter.

This approach did however lead to one instance where the evidence approved by WBSS was then rejected by Wiltshire Council due to a change in the nature of support the applicant gained (the change emerged when the specialist provider recognised that the support the applicant suggested was inappropriate for the needs of their business).

Reflecting on the SBAG process it was felt to be a very useful and effective grant offer and extremely helpful as a tool for engagement with businesses, despite it being fairly limited in the scale of grant available.

However, stakeholders did reflect on a lack of clarity regarding what could and what could not be funded, and suggestions were made with regards to a tightening of information in the grant offer letter, however as this element was undertaken by WBSS, Wiltshire Council remain unclear as to whether the suggestions were acted upon.

Some stakeholders also reflected on a disappointment about the relative lack of diversity in terms of the nature of grant applications being put forward. This may, in part, reflect the limited scale of funding available and also how the offer was "sold" (as the primary means of distribution was through the Business Managers), but also simply may reflect the specific needs of businesses of that size in the current climate.

It would also appear that in hindsight, a reassignment of certain tasks and responsibilities may have benefitted both WBSS and Wiltshire Council. Wiltshire Council suggested that all associated paperwork for grants should be forwarded to them for verification for the first three months of the scheme but this never took place. Wiltshire council also lacked access to evidence associated with a final claim which has meant that WBSS has reimbursed clients at risk. This in turn proved challenging for Wiltshire Council as there is a lack of evidence on progress in relation to the level of spend incurred, and in hindsight reimbursement and receipt of evidence for the final claim should, from the research team's perspective, have been handled by Wiltshire Council. Furthermore, it has led to a backlog in the provision of final evidence as there are a number of instances where the final submission has had insufficient evidence. To help overcome these issues when they began to arise, Wiltshire Council offered training on the claim process to WBSS to ensure all paperwork was in place, however this wasn't taken up and additional administrative support was provided during the last two quarters to help tackle the administrative demands of the scheme.

Therefore an approach where WBSS acts as a broker and application support officer, whilst Wiltshire Council holds the resources and approves/appraises the evidence base and releases spend, would appear a more suitable model to adopt as Wiltshire Council are better equipped to handle the administrative requirements of the scheme.

### 3.4.2   Rural Economy Grants

The Rural Economy Grants were successfully committed to predominantly microbusinesses operating across a range of industrial sectors. It is understood that most applicants were referred from the WBSS or via the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), in addition, the scheme was promoted in a variety of ways including via press releases.

Ultimately, 17 businesses gained support through the rural economy grants, the minimum grant available was £10,000 with a 40% intervention rate

Reflecting on the Rural Economy Grants, the process applied (the detail of which is contained within Appendix 2) in their delivery is highly dependent on a close relationship between the Consultant (who support the applicant in the development of their application), the Grant Manager (who oversaw the process) and the Appraiser (who appraised the application) and on the ability of those appointed to deliver their tasks effectively.

The role of the appraiser in this process is a challenging one which requires the balance of independent appraisal but also a judgement on whether further development may ultimately secure a worthwhile application for the grant aid that an applicant requires. Blurring the lines between appraiser and project development. That said, this system does appear an effective model to adopt for grant applications of this scale.

Following approval, the use of a Compliance Officer working with the applicant provided welcome flexibility to the grant process, particularly if changes were made to the planned works. Throughout they would be able to make a judgement call on the significance of the change and whether it was appropriate to be retained within the original application or if it demanded any material changes and therefore, a formal variation to the project.

## 3.5   Wiltshire Business Support Services

### 3.5.1   Progress Update

Wiltshire Council secured A4W funding to pump-prime the establishment of the WBSS service. WACC had (and indeed has) a well-established network of Chambers of Commerce throughout Wiltshire, and were considered well-placed to deliver on the support with the capital, and capacity to deliver the geographic spread of provision demanded. Chambers of Commerce was also identified as the vehicle around which support should be delivered within the Heseltine review[18].

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[18] No Stone Unturned, Rt. Hon Lord Heseltine (October 2012) – this proposal was accepted in part in the Government Response to the Heseltine Review, albeit with a desire for other bodies, private sector providers and other local partners,  BIS (March 2013).

There has been a layering of services provided via WBSS since securing the A4W funding as new funding opportunities have come forward with the addition of the business support offer through TEN (and subsequently the specialist business advice grant, the introduction of the Growth Hub and Gateway for Growth and the Rural Economy Grants). The additional resources have largely been invested in service delivery with limited expansion in staff with up to six business managers geographically spread across Wiltshire. However, as some contracts have come to an end (whilst others have been revised) there has been a reduction in the number of Business Managers which has increased the demands on the remaining Business Managers.

### 3.5.2   Process for Receiving WBSS Support

Initial engagement by a business with WBSS is typically undertaken online (via email) or by phone. The route to engagement with WBSS has now been enhanced by the introduction of the Wiltshire Business Hub, a portal for all business support. WBSS has, over the last six months shifted their approach to be increasingly reflective of the needs and growth potential of a business – the greater the growth potential, the greater intensity of support provided. Resultantly the initial diagnosis plays an ever more critical role in the model for identifying the most useful and cost effective support for the enquiring business - be that a one-to-one consultation if there would appear strong growth potential, or a one-to-many engagement through the various events that are on offer if the business has more moderate growth aspirations.

Where businesses benefit from a full diagnostic, they are referred if a need is identified to specialist service providers (if appropriate), to deliver support which is largely consistent with the core WBSS model, with the retention of a relationship from the business manager with that client. Whilst grant funding was available, the specialist support could be part funded by SBAG, however this grant schemes is now closed so specialist advice would need to be self-financed by a participant business.

### 3.5.3   Progress in Delivery

Table 3.4 below summarises the performance of the WBSS against contractual targets. It highlights that pre-start and start-up support surpassed the profile for 2014/15, leading to the programme wide performance moving closer to profile. It also illustrates a continued trend in terms of a year on year increase in the number of pre-start/start-up individuals supported.

The table also illustrates continuation of courses and event delivery far in excess of that profiled which reflects the move to a one to many approach for support, and the introduction of a subscription for some events (further detail can be found later within this section). Conversely there has been a significant fall in the number of businesses created, it is currently unclear as to the reasoning behind this fall. Whilst jobs created remains broadly to profile the total number of existing businesses supported is once again up sharply and more than three times the target for the 2014/15 year. This is likely a reflection on the shift to a one-to-many approach but also a reflection on the increased profile of the WBSS support which is leading to greater demand for their services and resultantly, an increased rate of market penetration.

Table 3.4: WBSS Outputs against Profile

| Core Delivery | Profile 2012/13 | Actual 2012/13 | Profile 2013/14 | Actual 2013/14 | Profile 2014/15 | Actual 2014/15 | Profile Programme (2012-2015) | Actual Programme (2012-2015) | % of target |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total pre-start/start-up/ enterprise clubs individuals supported | 812 | 447 | 612 | 670 | 612 | 682 | 2036 | 1799 | 88% |
| Total courses/events held | 30 | 30 | 18 | 56 | 18 | 48 | 66 | 134 | 203% |
| Total businesses created | 133 | 128 | 120 | 142 | 120 | 55 | 373 | 325 | 87% |
| Total jobs created | 146 | 172 | 165 | 196 | 165 | 141 | 476 | 509 | 107% |
| Total existing businesses supported | 240 | 410 | 240 | 668 | 240 | 786 | 720 | 1864 | 259% |

The table therefore illustrates that WBSS has continued to deliver a high volumes of support, which has encompassed one-to-one advice and workshop sessions to pre-start and start-up individuals, alongside workshops and peer-to-peer networking to established businesses. This model of delivery has helped in offering a breadth of provision to a range of businesses that is reflective of their needs and their potential (particularly for pre-start, start up and microbusinesses). The service has continued to fill a gap in the marketplace created following the loss of the Business Link service with approximately 3,650 pre-start, start-up and established businesses having been supported between April 2012-2015.

The traditional model offered by WBSS of one-to-one engagement, whilst highly valued, is resource intensive particularly when delivered alongside an associated drive for increased market penetration. The drive for market penetration facilitated an increased demand for the service on offer and limited the ability of WBSS to sustain relationships with the businesses that they had engaged. It has also increased the challenge of applying a suite of offer that is in depth to some yet light touch to others. These challenges have been recognised by Wiltshire council and has led to a contractual change in relation to that which is funded through A4W for the next financial year. This has shifted the balance of service away from purely additional participant numbers to a 50/50 split with half of those engaged, businesses that WBSS would look to build a relationship with (due to their growth potential), whilst half would be new to the business support on offer.

Furthermore, WBSS secured Growth Hub funding to deliver Gateway for Growth grants and to develop the Wiltshire Business Hub web portal as a one-stop-shop for the identification of business support. The former has been helpful in enabling WBSS to engage with larger businesses (typically those with 10-50 employees). The Growth Hub has now received an extension on its funding with a specific focus on intensive support to growth orientated businesses and additional resource to enable further strengthening of the business support infrastructure.

**Revenue Generation**

WBSS has been tasked throughout their contracts with A4W to explore opportunities for generating revenue through the provision of business support to increase the sustainability of some the services that they offer. Progress in the development of revenue generation has been slow, with a perception amongst some of a general reluctance to explore opportunities to generate revenue, or where they have been pursued they have offered limited success (through the offer of mentoring for example).

WBSS have now however, introduced a subscription service this year which involves a payment of £25 per month to gain access to a series of events and seminars for free. As a model it works well for WBSS as those delivering the seminars typically do so for free as they recognise the promotional opportunities for them and their business.

Referrals to other business support provision have been of varying success and highly dependent upon the relationships with key individuals associated with the business support, by way of example, Innovate UK should have been integral to the business support offer but it has been difficult for WBSS to form an effective relationship with them, although good progress has been made in this regard in recent months.

### 3.5.4   Marketing and Promotion

Of significance in the marketing and promotion of WBSS has been the further development of the Wiltshire business Hub as the web portal for business support (as yet it is difficult to know the success of portal) but also the change of brand from Wiltshire Business Support Service to Inspire (with Inspire encompassing both WACC and WBSS). The brand only changed as recently as April 2015 so it is difficult to judge the impact arising from this change, however some stakeholders are fearful that this may only serve to further the confusion associated with the range of business support available.

The random survey of small businesses in Swindon and Wiltshire identified that 44% of respondents would use an internet search to find information on what support is available thereby suggesting a lack of existing knowledge of where to go to for this information. Furthermore, from that survey, the proportion of small businesses aware of business support provision were very similar with 37% (73/200) of respondents aware of Wiltshire Business Support Service, and 38% (75/200) aware of The Enterprise Network. This compared to 70% (139/200) of survey respondents being aware of the Federation of Small Businesses and 53% (106/200) being aware of the Local Enterprise Partnership and interestingly, 67% (133) aware of their local Chamber of Commerce. The awareness figure for the Chamber of Commerce suggests there may be benefit to WBSS by drawing it under the same brand as WACC, enabling the service to benefit from the higher profile of WACC but potentially increasing confusion for customers between the offer to Chamber members and the offer to general businesses.

### 3.5.5   Monitoring

The layering of contracts secured by WBSS also brought with it challenges in terms of adhering to the differing levels of administrative demands that European funding in particular requires. Within the early stages of the ERDF scheme the expectation was that Business Managers could also be tasked with capturing the appropriate evidence base in relation to eligibility. Eligibility requirements were not perceived to be entirely clear from the commencement of the project and to address this, it is understood that a number of meetings were held in January 2013 to ensure key individuals were aware of the necessary reporting requirements. However, there was a slow response in the implementation of the necessary process to capture this information by WBSS. This is thought by some to simply be a reflection of the fact that Business Managers were appointed to provide business support and not be compliance officers able to understand the complex and rather bureaucratic evidence requirements of ERDF, whilst others felt that the importance of these elements was perhaps not fully understood. The initial reliance upon the Business Managers to capture this information has led to gaps in the evidence base and the loss of eligible outputs for certain provision. The task of collating this evidence has now shifted to one central staff member within WACC, and it is understood to have improved as a result.

However, whilst there remain challenges within the WBSS offer, several stakeholders reflected on the distance travelled by the service with it now offering a business support infrastructure to large numbers of businesses across Wiltshire, and increasingly within Swindon.

### 3.5.6   Future Plans

Funding for WBSS is increasingly being driven through the SWLEP which in turn is exploring the potential for a consistent offer across the LEP area which, given the current difference in the business support landscape, will likely be a challenge to deliver. However, the aim is for the development of a single recognisable brand for business support going forward with local and national providers to support and benefit from this single brand through a strong referral mechanism. As part of the Growth Hub funding, a mapping exercise is underway to better understand the range of business support provision and business support providers across Swindon and Wiltshire, this scoping exercise should provide a clearer understanding of where there are gaps and where there is duplication in the business support provision.

The WBSS (now under the brand of Inspire) offer itself is likely to continue at least in the short term through the extension contract as a mix of light touch and intensive support. The intensive support will likely focus on growth orientated businesses that have the ability to generate sustainable job opportunities, with, as outlined earlier within the report, an increased focus on relationship building as part of that extension (through the addition of a target for the number of businesses in receipt of in excess of 12 hours of support).

There is also a desire to enhance data sharing through, for example a shared CRM system that would enable a widening of the partnership approach to delivery that ensured there was no wrong door when seeking to access business support.

# 4 Participant Impact

## 4.1 Introduction

A telephone survey was undertaken with businesses in receipt of support through WBSS or through The Enterprise Network. In the first phase of the evaluation the team managed to engage with 100 pre-start and start-up businesses, whilst in this phase the team have managed to engage with 130 pre-start and start-up businesses of which 13 were re-interviews of businesses engaged in Phase 1. Collectively therefore the team have managed to engage with a total of 217 unique respondents.

**Summary:**
- There has been a significant increase in the proportion of businesses becoming aware of WBSS via word of mouth, it is presumed that this is a reflection of the service becoming more established amongst the business community.
- One-to-one support was most often described as the most useful element of the support received whilst the provision of workshops and networking also proved to be popular.
- The vast majority of respondents were satisfied with the specialist advice they received with 85% describing it as "very useful" or "quite useful."
- When asked about any improvements that could be made to the service there was a high degree of consistency with those cited within the Phase 1 survey, with increased promotional activities, enhance clarity of support, more staff capacity and additional follow-on support the most popular responses.
- On average, turnover had increased amongst intensively assisted businesses that had completed a financial year since they initially engaged with the support by 52%, from a mean average of £122,600 to £186,310. If this performance was reflected across all 140 businesses supported it would equate to turnover growth of almost £9m.
- Using various methods for calculating 12 month GVA it is estimated that supported businesses have benefitted from a gross increase in GVA to date of between £1.46-2.87m.
- Amongst surveyed businesses that were intensively assisted, the businesses referred to an aggregated growth in employment of 24 employees since receiving the support.
- Almost half of the respondents to the tenant's survey had moved into one of the Enterprise Centres as they had outgrown the facilities they had within their own home.

## 4.2 Participants of the WBSS

In the survey, 92% of the respondents could recall having received support from the WBSS. Of these, 61% of the respondents had started trading prior to receiving their support (this compared to 72% of the Phase 1 survey).

### 4.2.1 Engaging with the Support

Surveyed businesses were asked how they became aware of the support on offer. Figure 4.1 below provides analysis of the open answer responses and illustrates a high degree of consistency in response between the Phase 1 and Phase 2 surveys. The only notable change is the proportion of respondent businesses who became aware of the support on offer via word of mouth, which is likely a reflection of the service becoming increasingly established.

Figure 4.1: How Did You Find Out about the Support Available?
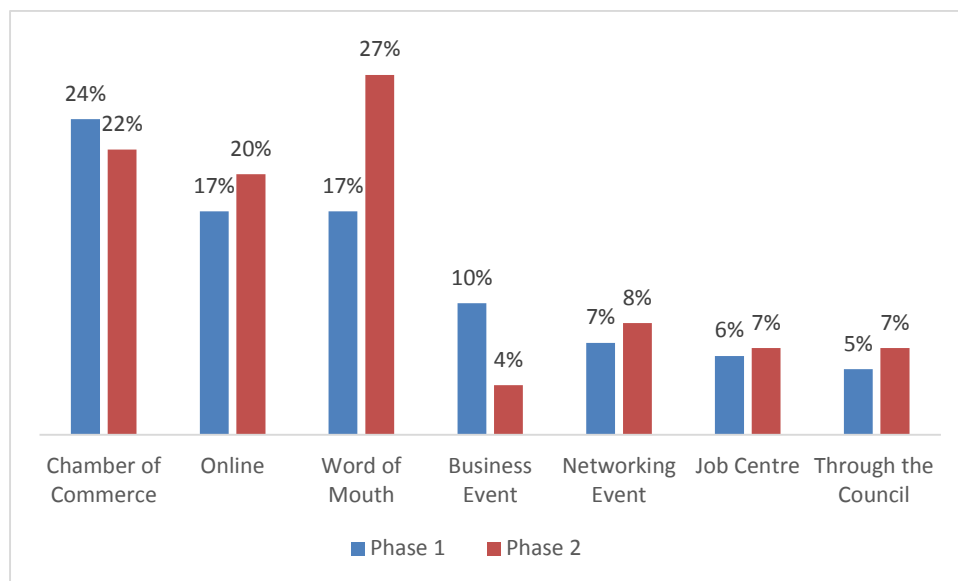


Despite the prevalence of word of mouth, respondents were broadly positive regarding the promotion of the service.

Figure 4.2: In Your Opinion How Effectively is the Support Promoted?
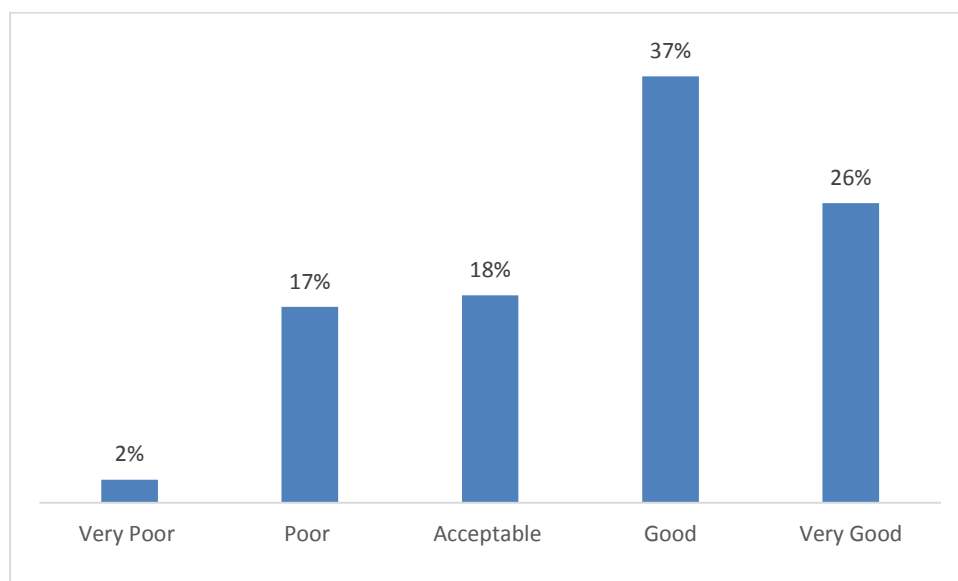


N = 163

Besides advice and support, 35% (44/216) of respondent businesses were hoping to obtain finance as a result of their engagement with the service.

### 4.2.2   Support Received

Figure 4.3 below provides an overview of the nature of support that participants' businesses benefitted from. The analysis enables a comparison of those "intensively assisted" (in receipt of 12 hours or more of support or in receipt of an SBAG), and those benefitting from less than 12 hours of recorded support. The figure highlights that (as expected), one-to-one advice is more prevalent amongst those intensively assisted, whilst peer-to-peer networking is significantly more likely amongst those in reception of over 12 hours of support. The chart also highlights a greater range of support received amongst those intensively assisted.

Figure 4.3: Which of the Following Support Have You Received Via Wiltshire Business Support Service? (Phase 1 and 2 combined)
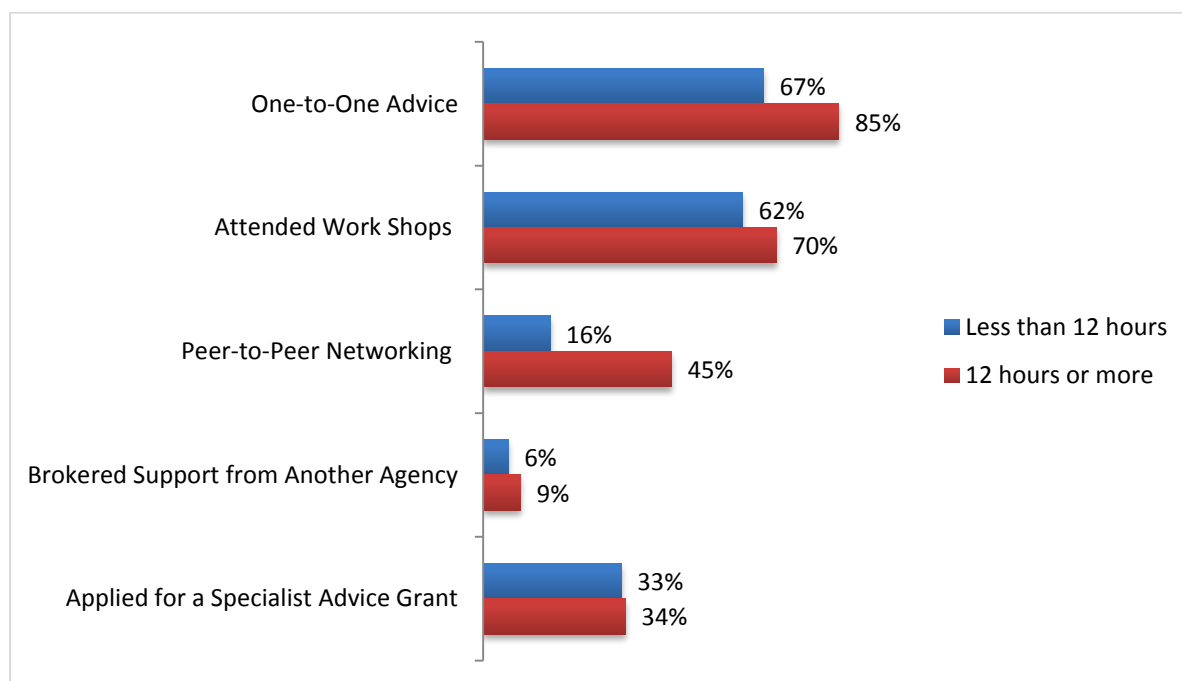


N = 216

**Specialist Business Advice Grant (SBAG)**

Amongst the respondents to the most recent survey, 41 (32%) had applied for a Specialist Business Advice Grant (SBAG). The process for applying was found to be straightforward or very straightforward for the vast majority of applicants (88%) and 85% of those respondents were successful in their application. Figure 4.4 below illustrates the nature of support received based on open answer responses to the question. The analysis shows that the nature of support was dominated by that in relation to a marketing strategy or rebranding of a company or website design/development and associated social media support. This reaffirms the perception raised by some stakeholders of a relative lack of diversity in the nature of specialist advice obtained.

Figure 4.4: What Type of Specialist Advice Did You Obtain?
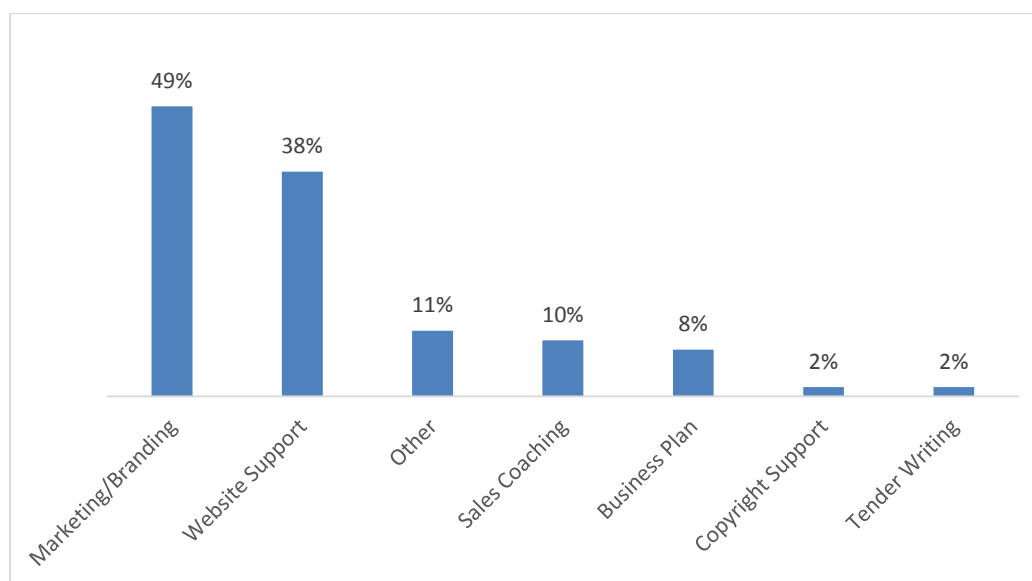


There was a high degree of satisfaction with the advice received with 85% describing it as either very (71%) or quite useful (14%), although five respondents (15%) described the support as not very or not all useful.

When asked to specify which elements of the support they had received that had been most useful, many simply suggested that all of the support had been helpful. Where it was possible to discern the specific nature of support that a respondent was referring to it was evident that the one-to-one support was considered to be of most use (42 respondents – it should be recognised however that in some instances respondents may have referred to the one-to-one support they gained through the specialist advice grant rather than purely that offered by a Business Manager). The various workshops, seminars and events were also popular with 27 respondents referring to these elements as the most useful support that they had received, and similarly networking (14 respondents) also proved a popular element amongst respondents.

Respondents were also asked to rate various elements of the support out of 10. Figure 4.5 below presents the spread of ratings and compares the response from the two evaluation phases. Whilst there has been a slight drop in relevance and usefulness the level of change is statistically insignificant.

Figure 4.5: On a Scale of 1 to 10 (1 Being Poor and 10 Being Excellent) How Would You Rate the Support You Have Received from WBSS In Terms Of…
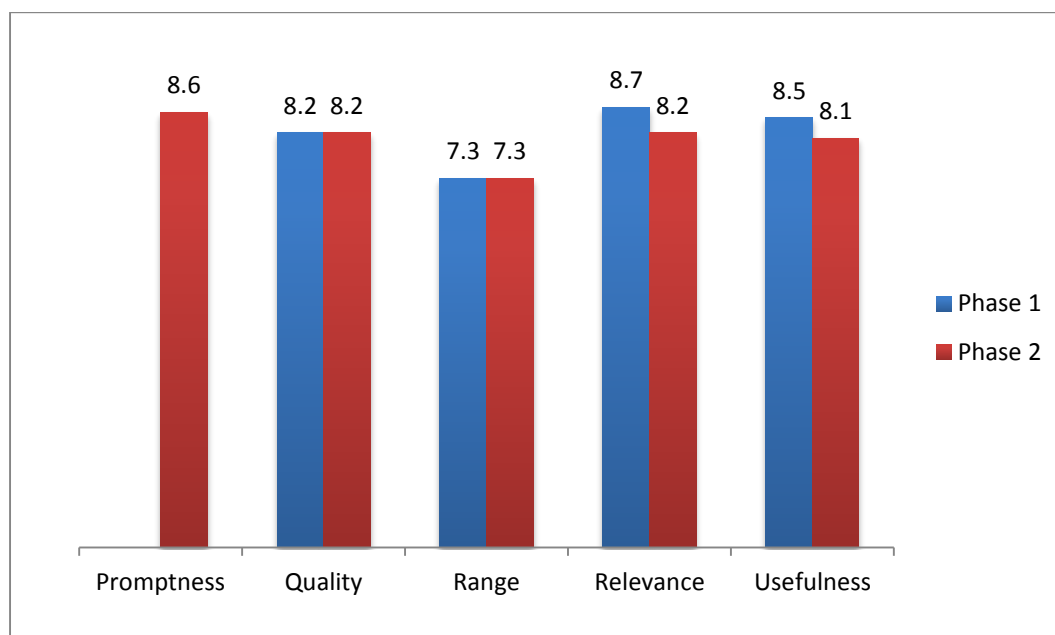


**Improvements**

Respondents to the Phase 2 survey were asked if they felt there were any improvements that could be made to the service. Most were unable to identify improvements or referred to suggestions that were specific to their own experience, however some were more easily categorised with the most popular being:

- Increased promotional activities to raise awareness of the service (12 respondents);
- Increased clarity of the nature of support that may be available (10 respondents);
- Additional staff to support businesses (8 respondents);
- Additional follow-up support (7 respondents).

Three of the four (clarity of support, promotional activities and follow-up support) are consistent with the areas of improvement referred to in the Phase 1 survey.

### 4.2.3   Impact of the Support

Respondent businesses were asked what impact the support had on various elements of their business and Figure 4.6 below provides a comparison of those impacts between Phase 1 and Phase 2. There is a high degree of consistency in the nature of impact cited (albeit that the prevalence of impact is typically slightly less amongst Phase 2 respondents than it is amongst the Phase 1 respondents).

Figure 4.6: What Impact has the Support You've Received Had on Your…? (Percentage Who Described the Support as Having Either "Some Impact" or "A Lot of Impact")
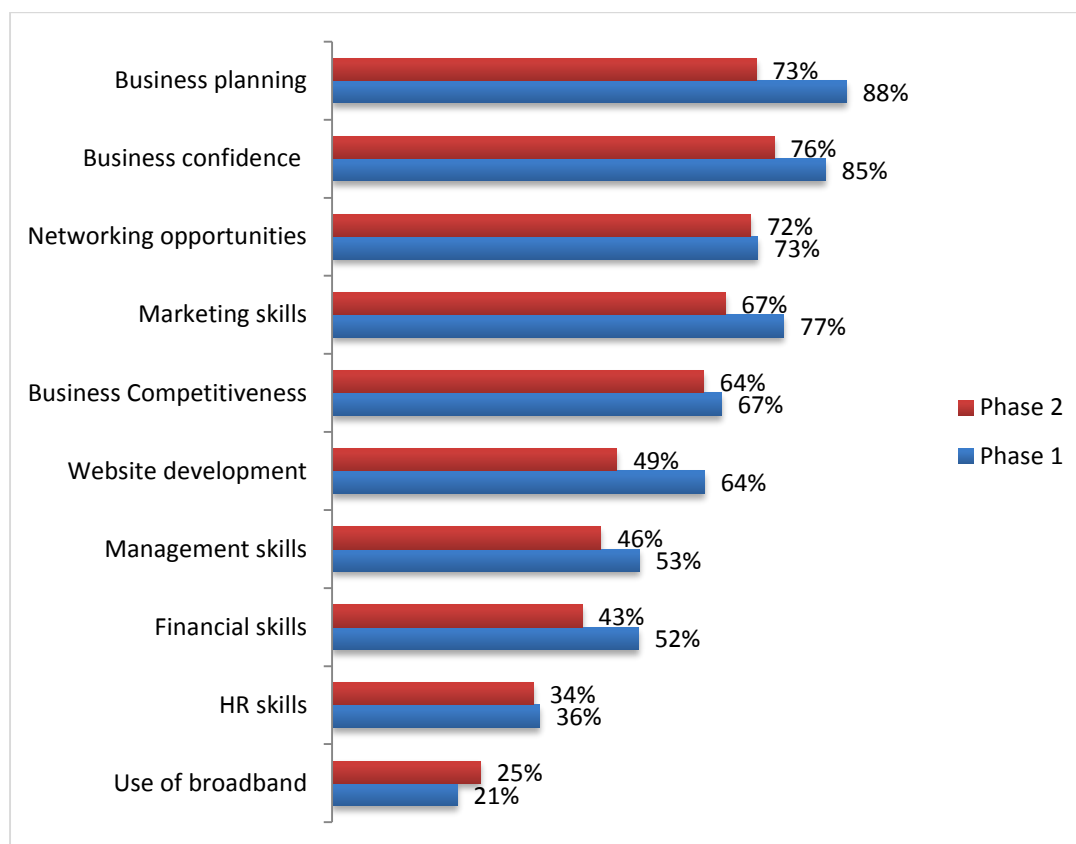
Figure 4.7 below then analyses the proportion of respondents citing at least some impact by the length of support they have received. As expected, a greater proportion of respondents who had more intensive support cited an impact on elements of their business, although the rate of increase varies significantly with the largest increase in the proportion of respondents citing an impact on their financial skills (an increase of 30 percentage points), whilst the smallest increase was found to be in relation to business competitiveness (a five percentage point increase).

Figure 4.7: What Impact Has the Support You've Received Had On Your…? (Percentage Who Described the Support as Having Either "Some Impact" or "A Lot of Impact" By Intensity of Support Received)
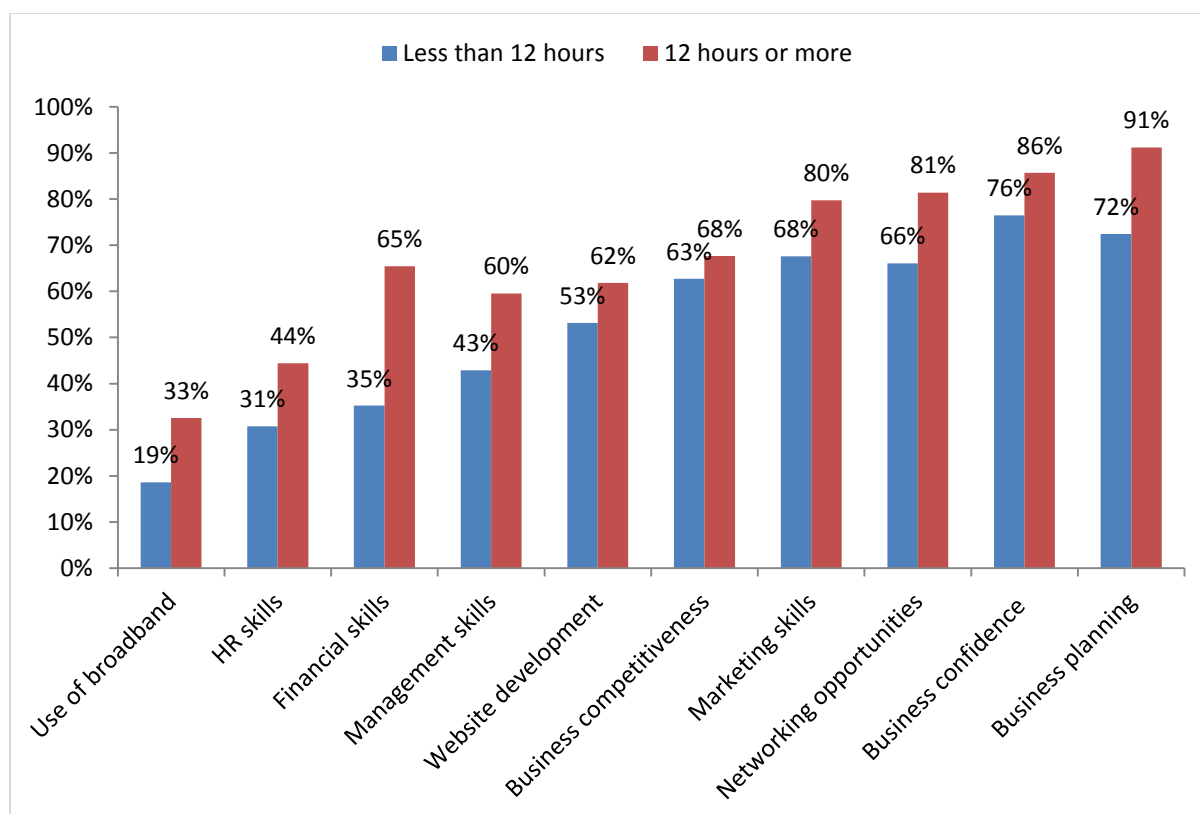


Finally, when asked whether they would refer others to WBSS, 94% of respondents (110/117) confirmed that they would, and 92% (108/117) were aware that the support was part funded by Wiltshire Council.

### 4.2.4   Enterprise Centre Usage

Fourteen respondents to the survey could recall having used one of the centres, three of these were tenants in the office space, whilst 11 have used the centres for events. Whilst only 14 had used them, more than two-thirds were aware of the centres (67%; 69/103) a very similar proportion to those that were aware within the Phase 1 survey (65%). All of the respondents who had used the centres stated that they were made aware of the facilities by Wessex Chambers of Commerce, although in reality the nature of promotion is very intertwined with TEN advertising all of their events via partner newsletters including those of the Chamber.

### 4.2.5   Impact of Support on those Intensively Assisted

Those in receipt of in excess of 12 hours of support or beneficiaries of an SBAG were asked a suite of additional questions to enable the quantification of additional impact derived from the support they have received through the project to be estimated.

**Impact on Pre-Start Businesses**

Twelve respondent businesses had not started their business when they first engaged with the support, however when asked if it had on impact on their business starting, two thirds (eight) confirmed that it did, with six of these confirming that the support had accelerated the start-up of their business, whilst two respondents felt that the support influenced the business they ultimately sought to start.

**Established Businesses**

**Turnover**

For the remainder of this impact section, the responses to the Phase 1 and 2 surveys have been combined to strengthen the robustness of the evidence base.

Of the 88 businesses surveyed who had been intensively assisted, 55 (63%) had completed a financial year prior to engagement with the support (and therefore had a baseline turnover figure on which to judge and attribute any change in turnover experienced). Of those that had completed a financial year, Figure 4.8 below presents the spread of turnover amongst recipient businesses and illustrates that many of the businesses were very small, with over two thirds (67%; 31/46) with turnover of less than £100,000, whilst the average (mean was £126,324).

Figure 4.8: Can You Recall the Approximate Turnover of Your Business When You First Received Support From WBSS?
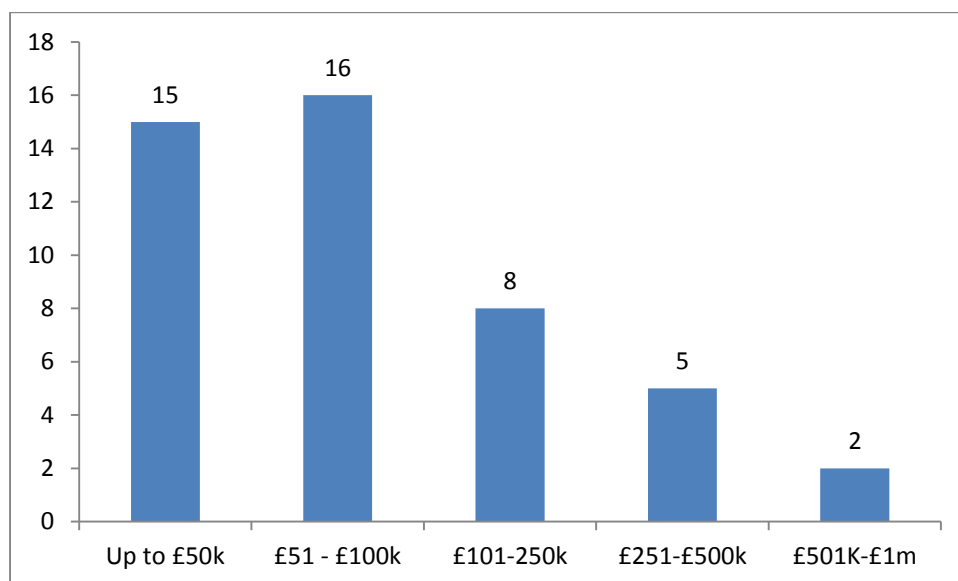


Respondent businesses were also asked whether they had completed a financial year since their first engagement with the support. Of those that had completed a financial year and had provided figures for both that and the previous financial year the mean average turnover had risen from £122,600 in the baseline year, to £186,310 in their most recent financial year, an increase in turnover of c.£64,000 or 52%. Were this increase to be reflected across all 140 businesses that were intensively assisted it would equate to a gross increase in turnover of almost £9m.

In terms of profit margins, in their baseline year respondent businesses on average generated profits of £10,800 however in their most recent complete financial year since receiving support the (mean) average profit margin had more than doubled to £23,300.

**Gross Value Added**

The gross value added (GVA) of a business can be calculated by through a combination of profit margins, employment costs and depreciation[19]. The average baseline GVA amongst those businesses that had completed a financial year and felt able to provide these details (and had then completed a financial year since receiving support to enable a tracking of change) was £53,643. Amongst those same businesses following receipt of support average GVA had risen to £64,085, an increase of £10,400. Once again, were this grossed up to be reflective of all businesses that were intensively assisted, it would equate to a 12month gross additional increase in GVA of £1.46m.

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[19] This is the method prescribed within the ERDF Technical Note of Combined Indicators for RDA Single Budget and ERDF Programme 2007-2013 – Version 2

An alternative method of getting to GVA is through the application of turnover: GVA ratios using the Annual Business Survey data available through the IDBR.[20] Applying the ratio to the gross turnover calculated above £9m leads to an estimated gross additional GVA of £2.87m, significantly higher than the figure above. Whilst the method is less sophisticated it is reflective of a greater number of respondent businesses who provided turnover figures than felt able to provide all the key elements of the more traditional route to GVA, which strengthens its relative robustness.

**Forecasting 24 Month GVA**

Respondent businesses were also requested to estimate their turnover for the current financial year, the mean average turnover amongst respondent businesses based on estimations for their current financial year rose a further 21% or £39,000 to £225,000. Once again the data can be grossed up to be reflective of all those intensively supported and combined with the 12 month turnover figures to provide 24 month turnover growth. The application of this analysis equates to £14.5m turnover and using the application of turnover:GVA ratios enables a forecast of estimated 24 month gross additional GVA, equating to £4.6m.

**Attributing Impact**

Where turnover figures were provided for both the baseline and most recent financial years, respondent businesses were asked to estimate the proportion of any change evident that they would attribute to the support they received. This equated to a total increase of in excess of £0.5m in turnover that was attributed to the support that the businesses had received. If this were grossed to reflect the entire proportion of businesses intensively assisted (the 140 businesses recorded to date in the latest statistical release) this would equate to a net additional increase in turnover attributed to the support of £1.38m,[21] however this is an underestimate for the project as a whole as it excludes those businesses that hadn't completed a financial year on engagement.

Without baseline turnover data for those newly started businesses it is difficult to provide a judgement of turnover but, arguably a similar rate of increase and attribution could be placed on these businesses as was experienced by those that had completed a financial year, therefore were the turnover increase to be grossed up to reflect the entire 140 businesses intensively assisted it would equate to an estimated £2.2m net additional increase in turnover for the project to date.

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[20] See for instance: Measuring the economic impact of an intervention or investment, Office for National Statistics, (2010) and http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/abs/annual-business-survey/2012-regional-results/index.html.

[21] Grossing up of turnover figures can only be undertaken for those businesses that recorded a baseline turnover (63%) of all respondents. For this to reflect all intensively assisted businesses it equates to 88 businesses.

### 4.2.6   Employment Growth

Of those that were intensively assisted and surveyed through the evaluation, just 28 (32%) employed any staff.  Collectively these organisations employed 89 full-time staff and 96 part-time staff. The businesses have subsequently added nine additional full time staff and five additional part time staff since receiving support through the project, once again if these figures were 'grossed up' to reflect the entire programme of intensively assisted organisations, it would equate to a (gross) additional 26 staff being employed amongst those businesses in receipt of support. When asked to what extent they attributed those jobs to the support received, this equated to an estimated net additional employment for all businesses intensively assisted of 15 staff.

## 4.3   Tenant Survey

A survey was distributed to tenants of the four enterprise centres which was designed and initially delivered as part of the baseline phase of the evaluation. The survey has been re-distributed to tenants as part of the next phase of the research. A total of 25 tenants responded to the survey, equating to a healthy response rate of 76% with the following rates of response by Enterprise Centre:

- 86% (6/7) Manor House Enterprise Centre, Royal Wootton Bassett (6)
- 71% (5/7) White Horse Enterprise Centre, Trowbridge (5)
- 71% (10/14) Old Fire Station, Salisbury
- 80% (4/5) Castledown Enterprise Centre, Ludgershall (4)

Of those who provided information, 11 (of the 24 able to answer) of the business respondents (46%) had been established for less than two years whilst seven of the business respondents (29%) had been established for in excess of five years.  When asked as to how they had found out about the centres, of those who could recall, six (of 17) found the centres through an internet search, six (of 17) were told of the centres by their local Chamber of Commerce, whilst five (of 17) drove or walked past the centre and saw that space was advertised.

The tenant survey included a question regarding where they had moved their business from home (if they were already an existing business), having almost half relocated from their home (9/19), with the majority of these referring to the fact that they had outgrown their home premises. In this respect the centres are very much meeting the need identified.

When asked for reasons as to why they had chosen the enterprise centre, the cost and location remained the most popular reasons (consistent with the findings from the previous survey).

Figure 4.9: Why Did Your Company Decide to Obtain Premises at the Enterprise Centre?
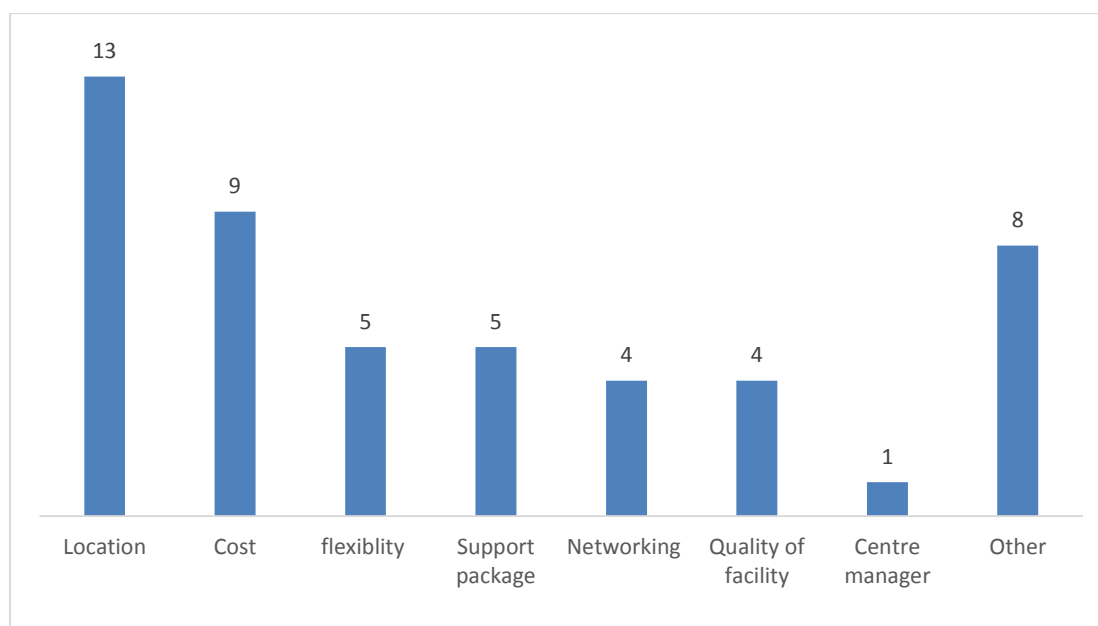


The tenants were also very positive about any of the services that they had used at the facility, with all describing them as very useful or useful, bar one response in relation to the hot-desking which one tenant found to be not very useful.

In terms of the nature of businesses that these tenants operate, six of the respondent businesses operate from multiple locations and of those six, just two have other premises within Swindon or Wiltshire, whilst one has a head office in Toronto, Canada. Across all tenant companies who responded to the survey, they estimated an aggregate of 32 staff are employed at the centres through these businesses.

Over half of respondent businesses (14/26) primarily operate at a very local level, with three quarters of their sales generated in Swindon/Wiltshire. At the end of the scale, five respondents generate no sales within the Swindon and Wiltshire geography.

Half of the respondents who were willing to provide details (8/16) have a turnover of less than £100,000, whilst all bar two of the remaining respondents have a turnover below £0.25m.

Figure 4.10: How Would You Rate the Centre Out of Five (One Being a Low Rating and Five Being a High Rating), In Terms Of… (Mean Average of the Responses):
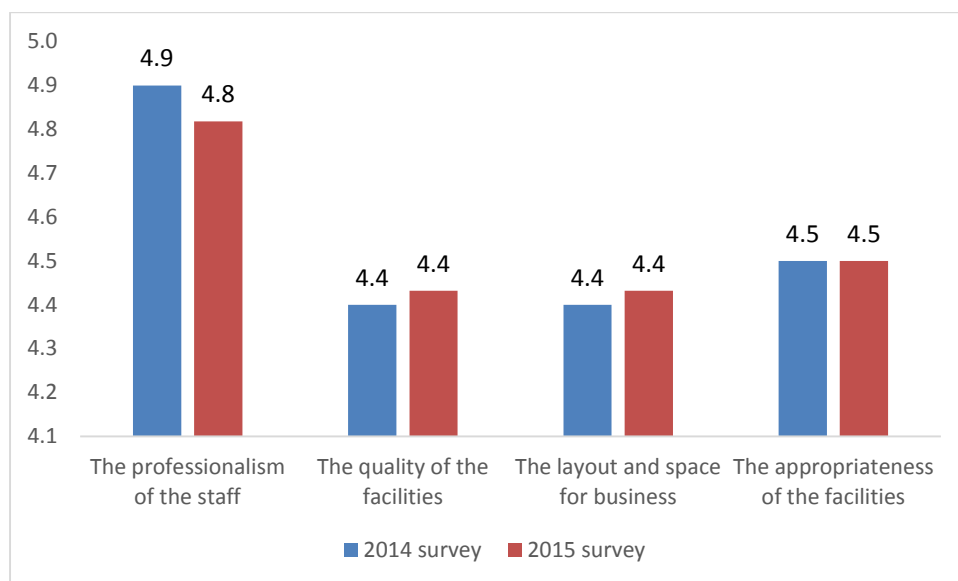


| The professionalism of the staff | The quality of the facilities | The layout and space for businesses | The appropriateness of the facilities |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4.82 | 4.43 | 4.43 | 4.50 |

Respondent businesses were asked how (if at all) the Enterprise Centre had contributed to their company's success some of the verbatim responses are presented below:

*"It has allowed me to separate work from home by having an office away from my house. Helps show professionalism. Has great meeting rooms."*

*"Allowed me to grow my business by offering flexible accommodation on easy in / easy out terms."*

*"It has provided excellent accommodation and is an impressive place to bring along clients/contacts. The IT infrastructure has been very good with minimal disruption."*

*"It's allowed me to be able to set up my business locally and I used the meeting room facility to successfully host a strategy day and pitch business to a new client."*

*"Definitely helped me grow, given me a good start up space for reasonable cost and there is room to move to bigger offices as I grow."*

The tenants were also asked to describe what they believed the key strengths are of the Enterprise Centres. Once again the cost, the flexibility and the location were referred to, however several also referred to the sense of community and the scope to informally network as a real strength, whilst others would specifically mention the Centre Coordinator at their respective centres.

When asked if any improvements could be made to the centre where they were a tenant, the most common issues (2/17) related to car park provision, whilst several tenants at the Old Fire Station were keen for more offices and events or business support provision, and a further two tenants Enterprise Centres were keen for the addition of a shower.

Finally, when asked for any suggestions for event topics or speakers at future events the most common response (three respondents) was for some form of website/online marketing, whilst the use of social media (three respondents) was also a popular request

Finally, respondent businesses were asked if any new jobs had been created by the business over the last six months, over a quarter (26%; 6/23) had created posts. Collectively, those businesses which have expanded have created a total of 21 jobs.

# 5 Summary of Findings and Recommendations

## 5.1 Overview

The TEN project has funded the development of four enterprise centres and the award of grants for a further six satellite centres, thereby providing incubation provision across the main towns of Wiltshire and rural Swindon. The aspiration for an effective network for all the centres looks achievable, with private sector incubation centres also now reportedly interested in engaging in the network

Grant provision through SBAG and the REG alongside a series of events and conferences have enhanced the support available to businesses within the centres and across the wider marketplace. The resource has helped to strengthen both WBSS' and TEN's presence amongst the business community, with around a third of small business aware of both brands.

WBSS have used the platform of the Chamber network and TEN effectively and have delivered support to in excess of 3,500 businesses since 2012. The resourcing of an online portal through a separate programme has helped further strengthen the business support infrastructure, filling the gap left through the loss of the Business Link offer.

### 5.1.1 The Enterprise Centres

With regards to the success of the Enterprise Centres as incubator facilities, the rate of increase in tenancies at three of the four Enterprise Centres has been slow (although for Manor House the rate remains ahead of profile as competition that emerged elsewhere in Wotton Bassett was anticipated to have an impact on the rate of take up). In Castledown the level of interest has been particularly poor with very few inquiries, whilst at the White Horse in Trowbridge there has been a relatively healthy number of enquiries, however conversion rates have been lower than expected. In this regard there is concern amongst some members of the team that securing a tenancy at the Enterprise Centres requires far more from a business than the private sector would require, which may influence the conversion rate.

***Recommendation***
Revisit the administrative requirements for a business to become a tenant within an Enterprise Centre with a view to streamline the amount of information required.

The Centres have secured funding until 2018 at which point it is hoped that they will be generating sufficient income to be financially sustainable. Whilst Manor House and the White Horse are garnering levels of interest which should ultimately lead to the centres operating at optimum occupancy rates, that scenario looks less likely for Castledown in particular. It possibly offers the best facilities within the centre itself but its isolation would appear to be a significant issue for those starting up in business. However, the remainder of the site, which offers larger office and light industrial provision, remains extremely popular thereby suggesting that some of the barriers to engagement for newly started businesses are less of a factor once more established.

*Recommendation*

To consider a reconfiguration of the Castledown Centre as an offer to prospective tenants such that it is less focused on start-up businesses and instead has greater focus on more established businesses (perhaps as move on, Phase 2 space for microbusinesses).

Conversely, the Old Fire Station in Salisbury continues to be very popular with the centre operating at around 80% occupancy (the typical target for an incubation centre).  The popularity of the centre however, increases the demands on the Centre Coordinator who finds it increasingly difficult to meet the demands of their Development Officer role alongside meeting the expectations of tenants in their Centre Coordinator role.

The team across all the Enterprise Centres are all well regarded by colleagues and tenants, and it is understood that the long term desire is for Centre Coordinators to continue to balance the Coordinator and Development Officer role.  However pursuing this desire would likely lead to other staff facing the same difficulties were occupancy levels to reach those achieved at the Old Fire Station.

*Recommendation*

To consider, as occupation rates increase, a restructure of the staffing of Enterprise Centres which could include for example the appointment of dedicated Centre staff who are overseen by a smaller number of Development Officers.

The Old Fire Station includes within it available infrastructure to potentially expand the offer and, were resources to become available, would appear to be a good opportunity to expand and, in doing so, increase the viability of the facility.

### 5.1.2   Events, Seminars and Conferences

The events, seminars and conferences being delivered through the TEN project are a very good example of collaboration between the TEN team and WBSS. The events are highly thought of, very popular and a useful promotional activity for both teams.

The larger, flagship events have also proved to be extremely popular with the Women's Conference and more generally the women in business events and seminars, a particular success. Clearly there is a demand for this targeted support which may in part be a reflection on the significant increase in the rate of self-employment amongst women in Wiltshire.

### 5.1.3   Satellite Centres

The Satellite Centres collectively (in addition to the four main Enterprise Centres) provide a good spread of provision throughout Wiltshire and rural Swindon. It is too early to provide judgement on the success of these or the extent to which they will network with the other centres however the introduction of the quarterly working lunches would appear to have been a success and the appointment of the centre operators to the Advisory Board should also help to integrate the offer further.

### 5.1.4   WBSS

WBSS has continued to strengthen its presence with increased numbers of pre-start, start- up and existing businesses receiving support, more than three times the target number. The number of jobs created has fallen in the latest year; however it still is ahead of profile and perhaps may reflect the pursuit of number of businesses to increase market penetration and awareness of the offer at the expense of intensive support that may lead to job growth.  The number of businesses created has also fallen sharply; it is unclear what is behind this significant drop in volume.

Considering volumes of delivery by WBSS as whole, much success has been gained with what would appear to be a strengthening presence amongst the business community (as evidenced by the increased use of word of mouth as a route to engagement), yet whilst 37% of respondents to the random business survey were aware of WBSS, 38% of small businesses were aware of TEN. Furthermore, securing multiple contracts have stretched the delivery team at WBSS, even more so following the loss of several Business Managers. This has led to certain contracts being perceived as not gaining the focus expected, likely due to the apparent lack of available capacity.

The demands of contracts and the continued desire for increased market penetration has increased the momentum associated with a shift in the support model offered by WBSS. Whilst the information, diagnostic, brokerage process will remain core to the offer, the nature by which some of these elements are delivered is increasingly to be dependent on the growth orientation of the business supported. Clearly this shift is not going to be welcomed by all businesses however there remains commitment to supporting in some way all that seek to engage with the service (enhanced by the establishment of the Wiltshire Business Hub online portal).

### 5.1.5   Monitoring and Data Capture

The award of multiple contracts to WBSS from a variety of funding sources brought with them challenges of various degrees. One area of shortfall in the delivery of these contracts has been the capture of the various monitoring information required for the capture of outputs and results/outcomes, particularly those associated with ERDF monies via the TEN project.

The failure to obtain the necessary information has unfortunately led to significant reductions in the output and result indicators associated with the support element of the TEN project. This has ultimately led to under-reporting of the true scale of service delivery achieved and a significant shortfall in delivery against a number of the targets associated with TEN.

The failure to capture this information appropriately has been a source of frustration for Wiltshire Council particularly as support and guidance had been provided. The oversight has led to a restructure of roles at WBSS to improve data capture compliance which, based on findings from more recent contracts, would appear to have addressed these issues.

### 5.1.6    Impact of Support

Participant businesses remain largely positive about the support they have received through WBSS or indeed through the Enterprise Centres. The only concerns evident typically related to the clarity of offer available through WBSS, and the perceived need for additional capacity.

Net additional employment amongst respondent businesses to the survey is lower than expected, and may in part reflect a focus on self-employed or newly established businesses but is also likely to reflect the lower than anticipated number of businesses assisted.. Estimates of gross additional GVA also fall short of the project target of £4m (at between £1.46m and £2.87m), but again they need to be considered against an achievement of 140 "intensive assists" which are also less than half the original target due to the evidencing issues outline above. Therefore, on a gross additional GVA per business the rate of growth achieved is likely to be at or above the project target.

### 5.1.7    Grant Award Processes

The review of grant award processes provided evidence to suggest that elements of the Specialist Business Advice Grant (SBAG) process would have been better managed through Wiltshire Council with WBSS playing the role of supporting the applicant in their application.

### 5.1.8    Marketing and Promotion

The Enterprise Network has benefitted from a significant overhaul of its website which has strengthened the promotion of the offer considerably. A high proportion of surveyed businesses are aware of the offer that exists at the centres thereby illustrating that the centres are benefiting from promotion through WBSS led activities. Some stakeholders still however remain of the view that the branding for TEN could be updated.

Concerns also remain about the confusing array of brands associated with publicly funded business support in Wiltshire and Swindon. Surveyed businesses were sometimes unclear of the different roles played by TEN and WBSS, with neither gaining a very high profile amongst small businesses that were randomly surveyed. There is a fear that the recent incorporate of WBSS (along with WACC) into Inspire will only serve to heighten any confusion that exists.

### 5.1.9   Future Provision

The WBSS have begun introducing charging for certain services (including a monthly fee to participate in events and seminars that are on offer) with a view to self-sustaining certain elements of business support. The extension contract also includes a focus on relationship retention (with the introduction of targets of in excess of 12 hours of support) with certain businesses. Relationship building will be targeted at those businesses that are growth orientated and is reflective of the shift towards focussing on those businesses with the strongest growth potential which itself is a clear desire within the ESIF strategy.  In this regard both TEN and the contacts for WBSS have enabled the creation of a business support infrastructure that is well placed for building on through ESIF funding which can further strengthen the effectiveness and impact of publicly funded business support in Wiltshire and Swindon.

# Appendix 1: Evaluation Framework

## Rationale and Logic Model

The scoping research has informed the development of a logic model for the interventions (see Figure A1 below). The logic model maps the various inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts associated with a policy intervention with the aim of capturing the majority of anticipated and unanticipated outcomes and/or impacts arising from an intervention.

Figure A1: Logic Model
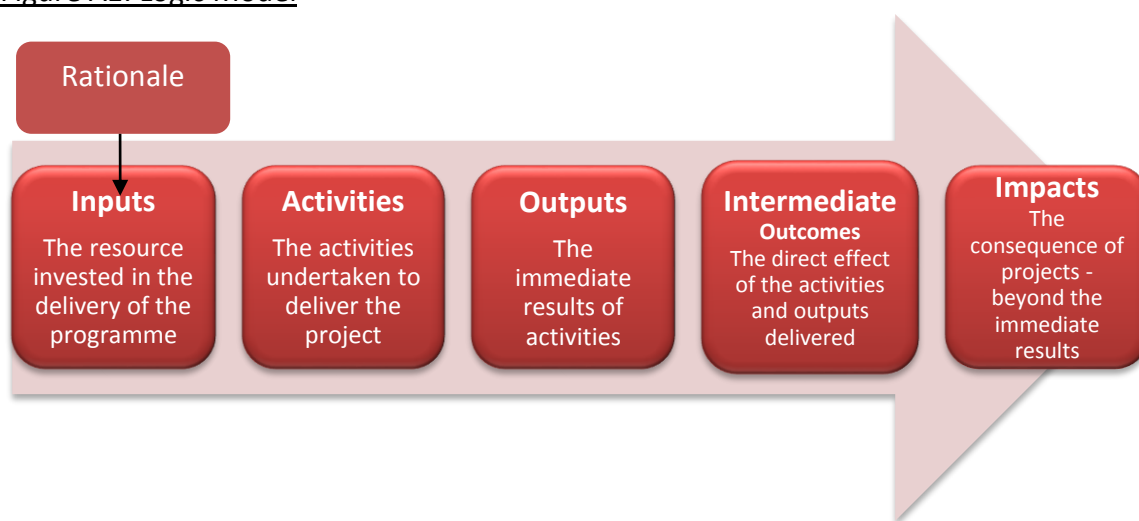


The evaluation framework aims to identify the most suitable research topic areas and (based on resource availability) methodological approaches to measure the various outcomes and/or impacts mapped through the logic chain, and the extent to which these can be attributed to the intervention.

The evaluation framework has two broad elements to its structure:

- A **Process Based** Evaluation (how the intervention was delivered); and an
- **Outcome/ Impact Based** Evaluation (what difference did the intervention make)

The logic chain and evaluation framework are presented on the following pages.

*Rationale: Research highlights that businesses supported by incubation environments grow more quickly, have higher rates of survival and are more attractive to investors. Wiltshire experiences has higher "business churn" than typically encountered nationally, and as a rural area is considered as disadvantaged by a lack of quality/type of accommodation, lack of business support services and local business incubation facilities. Wiltshire Business Support Service emerged in response to the transformation in public business support and most notably, the closure of Business Link with WBSS being established to fill the vacuum created and provide better-coordinated and better-matched support to the needs of businesses in Wiltshire and Swindon.*

| Input | Activities | Outputs | Outcomes/Results | Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| • ERDF Competitiveness funding<br>• A4W<br>• Linked investment via RGN and RDPE<br>***SAV elements***<br>• Wiltshire Council as enablers of economic change and sustainability<br>• The Enterprise Network concept and brand as a delivery mechanism for economic growth<br>• The project acting as a front runner in its operation across the SWLEP area | • Business incubation workspace created<br>• Refurbishment of workspace<br>• Fast broadband connectivity to centres<br>• Networked business support and advice<br>• WBSS business support elements (to be added)<br>• The provision of grants (incl. appraisal)<br>***SAV elements***<br>• Wiltshire Council as enablers of economic change and sustainability<br>• The Enterprise Network concept and brand as a delivery mechanism for economic growth<br>• The coordination of various funding streams | • 944 pre-starts supported<br>• 434 attendees to start-up course<br>• 78 start-up courses held<br>• 104 specialist advice grants to businesses<br>• 200 businesses assisted for 6 hrs (RGN)<br>• 300 businesses assisted to improve their performance (12hrs) ERDF<br>• Number of satellite grants awarded<br>• 26 environmental technologies and renewable energy enterprises assisted<br>• 30 firms involved in collaborative research and development projects<br>• 38 new businesses assisted<br>• M$^2$ of office space refurbished<br>• No. of activities (training sessions/courses, support sessions, enterprise clubs etc.) delivered at TEN facilities<br>• No. of participants on the above at TEN facilities<br>• No. of business incubation facilities created<br>• % of businesses supported with military links (either leavers or dependents)<br>• % of women owned businesses supported | • No. of business tenants in incubation workspace<br>• 114 (TEN)/368 (WBSS) gross new jobs created and no. of jobs safeguarded<br>• 22 gross jobs created in environmental sectors<br>• 67 high value/skilled jobs<br>• 16 gross research jobs created<br>• 60 firms involved in business/cluster networks<br>• £4m gross increase in GVA<br>• 40 SMEs launching new / improved products<br>• 12 patents, other IP and IPR devices used (trademarks etc.)<br>• Increased proportion of Wiltshire/Swindon SMEs accessing business advice<br>• Incubation facilities achieving financial stability (within 5 years)<br>• Attitudinal change amongst supported businesses<br>• The establishment of xx business networks<br>• 142 new businesses created<br>• No. of participant businesses surviving 12 and 24 months<br>***SAV elements***<br>• Improved organisational/ service profile leading to increased confidence/investment in activities<br>• Reduced duplication of service provision<br>• More joined-up approach to service delivery and coordination of funding streams | • 68 net additional jobs<br>• Stronger (more skilled and knowledgeable) business leaders<br>• Higher skilled workforce<br>• More diverse business base (less reliance on public sector)<br>• Sustainable workspace facilities – financially viable<br>• Increased business survival rates<br>• Reduction in business closures<br>• Reduction in the level of out-commuting from rural areas<br>• Increase in the percentage of women self-employed<br>• Increased % of military leavers becoming business owners |

## Process Evaluation Framework

| Issues | Topic Areas/Questions | Method /Phase |
|---|---|---|
| Strategic fit[22] and Added-Value[23] (of Activity) | 1. In what ways does the various aspects of the Enterprise Network and WBSS align with recent and emerging policy?<br>2. What is the impact of the changing business support environment, in the context of the forthcoming European Structural Investment Fund?<br>3. To what extent has the Enterprise Network concept and/or the WBSS addressed any duplication and confusion within the marketplace? | 1. Stakeholder consultations - strategic, mgmt & delivery, document review (Ph1)<br>2. Stakeholder consultations - strategic, mgmt & delivery (ph1 &2)<br>3. Stakeholder consultations - strategic, mgmt & delivery, desk based research/document review (Ph 1&2) |
| Management & Delivery of the Project | **Management and Governance**<br>1. What management and governance arrangements are in place for The Enterprise Network and its constituent projects?<br>2. How effective has the management and governance been to date?<br>3. Do you think anything could be done to improve the overall management and governance of the project and for future potential projects of a similar nature?<br><br>**Partnerships and Collaboration**<br>1. How does the project work with other projects or organisations, if at all, in the area?<br>2. How would you describe the benefits of the partnership approach adopted at both a strategic added value level and also from an operational perspective (e.g. managing referrals)?<br>3. What challenges, if any, have emerged from working in partnership? How have any such challenges been overcome to date?<br>4. Is there anything you feel could be done to improve partnership working still further for the remainder of the delivery period?<br>5. To what extent do you think The Enterprise Network and its constituent projects is integrated with other support provision that is available? E.g. have any lessons been shared or clients referred?<br>6. How, if at all, would it have been possible to develop relationships with projects or organisations further? | **Management**<br>1. Stakeholder consultations - mgmt & delivery, document review (Ph1)<br>2. Stakeholder consultations- mgmt & delivery (Ph1 &2)<br>3. Stakeholder consultations - mgmt & delivery (Ph1&2)<br><br>**Partnerships and Collaboration**<br>1. Stakeholder consultations - Mgmt & Delivery and document review (Ph1)<br>2-5 Stakeholder consultations strategic, mgmt & delivery (Ph1&2)<br><br><br>6. Stakeholder consultations: mgmt & delivery (Ph1&2) |

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[22] Definition: avoid duplication and support / complement other activities.

[23] Definition: addressing a need that is clear and which is not or only partly being addressed by other activities.

| Issues | Topic Areas/Questions | Method /Phase |
|---|---|---|
| Management & Delivery of the Project | **Delivery (General)**<br>1. What have been the key strengths or success factors from a delivery perspective to date?<br>2. What are the weaknesses or potential gaps in provision?<br>3. Any external factors that have affected delivery?<br>4. What more could have been done, or with hindsight what would you have done differently? | **Delivery (general)**<br>1-4 Stakeholder consultations - mgmt & delivery) (ph1&2) |
| | **Process**<br>1. Outline the processes involved in the delivery of the service.<br>2. What systems are used to capture client information and when is this data captured?<br>3. How are tasks allocated/duties delegated? | **Process**<br>1-3 Stakeholder consultations - mgmt & delivery) (ph1) |
| | **Business Support**<br>1. Is the business support considered relevant, useful and accessible?<br>2. What additional benefits does the provision of business support directly from networked centres bring to businesses as opposed to delivery of business support delivered generally across Swindon & Wiltshire?<br>3. Is the customer journey clear for beneficiaries and what has the customer experience been? | **Business Support**<br>1-3. Stakeholder consultations - mgmt & delivery), participant surveys (ph1&2) |
| | **Brokerage/Specialist Support**<br>1. What has been the customer experience for business advice and support brokered to other specialist providers?<br>2. What additional benefits have arisen from the women in business focused (and military leavers activity as priority sectors. Is there justification for activity for this specific sector? Has the support provided met the needs of this sector? | **Brokerage/Specialist Support**<br>1. Participant survey (ph1 &2)<br>2. Stakeholder consultations - mgmt & delivery) and participant survey (ph1&2) |
| | **Specialist Advice Grant**<br>1. Does the delivery approach adopted for the specialist advice grant add value? | **Specialist Advice Grant**<br>1. Stakeholder consultations - mgmt & delivery) and participant survey (ph1&2) |
| | **Enterprise Centres**<br>1. Do the centres provide the right type of business environment? Logistically – in terms of layout and space for businesses?<br>2. Are there appropriate facilities – (especially ICT, e-conferencing, etc), and is the setting right for the types of beneficiary business users?<br>3. Do the facilities represent good value for money given the budget that was available for them?<br>4. Is the price appropriate? | **Enterprise Centre**<br>1-3. Stakeholder consultations - mgmt & delivery, site visits, participant monitoring and participant survey (ph1&2) |

| Issues | Topic Areas/Questions | Method /Phase |
|---|---|---|
| | **Monitoring**<br>1. In terms of progress against profiled targets and spend, how well do you think the project is currently performing? Are there any areas of concern and if so what is being done to address them?<br>2. What systems are currently being used to capture and monitor client data /receipt of services, where is the customer data held?<br>3. How effective do you find the current monitoring approaches?<br>4. Do you think that the Enterprise Network / WBSS are generating any additional benefits (including soft outcomes) that are not being captured through traditional monitoring mechanisms?<br><br>**Future Elements**<br>1. Looking beyond the project, what do you see as the key issues that will need to be addressed around business development in Wiltshire and Swindon?<br>2. What nature of support do you perceive as key to business development in Swindon and Wiltshire following the completion of The Enterprise Network /WBSS project?<br>3. What is the forward strategy for these schemes? | 4. Stakeholder consultations, participant monitoring (ph1&2)<br>**Monitoring**<br>1-2. Document/desk based review and Stakeholder consultations – mgmt & delivery (Ph1 &2)<br>3. Stakeholder consultations – mgmt & delivery (Ph1)<br>4. Stakeholder consultations – mgmt & delivery (Ph1&2)<br><br><br><br>**Future Elements**<br>1-3. Stakeholder consultations strategic, mgmt & delivery (Ph1&2) |
| Assessment of the capital aspect of TEN (i.e. four centres and satellite grants) | 1. How were the four centres identified? What was the rationale for these locations?<br>2. What procurement approach was used for the refurbishment of these facilities?<br>3. Did the process of refurbishment progress as planned/expected?<br>4. What factors (internal and external), if any affected the completion of the refurbishments?<br><br>**Marketing and Promotion**<br>1. What marketing/promotional activities have been undertaken prior to and following the completion of the refurbishments – how effective has this been?<br>2. What level/pattern of enquiries have been received for each facility?<br>3. How did you become aware of the availability of this space?<br>4. Are there appropriate facilities – (especially ICT, e-conferencing, etc), and is the setting right for the types of beneficiary business users?<br>5. Is the price appropriate? | 1-4. Stakeholder consultations strategic, mgmt & delivery (Ph1&2)<br><br><br><br>**Marketing and Promotion**<br>1. Stakeholder consultations mgmt & delivery (Ph1&2)<br>2. Stakeholder consultations mgmt & delivery (Ph1&2)<br>3. Participant survey (occupiers) (Ph1&2)<br>4. Participant monitoring approach (continuous)<br>5. Participant survey (Ph1&2) |

## Outcomes/Impact Evaluation Framework

| Issue/Objectives | Questions | Method(s) |
|---|---|---|
| The evaluation needs to investigate and report on the initiative's net economic impact, both in terms of GVA generated sustainable job creation | **General impact questions**<br>1. What is the gross economic impact of the TEN/WBSS project?<br>    ○ Assessing impact of refurbishment spend<br>    ○ Assess catalytic impact of presence of workspace<br>    ○ Impact of the services provided in the centre for those in receipt and particularly tenants of the centres<br>2. What proportion of the gross impact is attributable to each additionality component (deadweight, leakage, displacement and substitution)?<br>    ○ Utilising self-assessment of attribution and benchmark figures in addition to the application of IEF questions<br>3. What is the counterfactual scenario?<br>    ○ Derived from self-assessment of additionality<br>4. What is the net economic impact of the project (having considered multipliers)?<br>5. Has the project delivered value for money? (Application of cost effectiveness analysis – not applicable to apply Return on Investment approach)<br><br>**Disentangling interventions**<br>6. Which elements of the support have been most useful/impactful on your business, why? | **General impact questions**<br>1. Analysis of primary research and desk based review of monitoring data (Ph1&2)<br>1-3. Participant Survey, Analysis of primary research and desk based review of monitoring data (Ph1&2)<br><br><br>4. Impact analysis (ph1&2)<br>5. Impact analysis, cost effectiveness analysis and desk based research for comparative assessment where appropriate (Ph1&2)<br><br>6. Participant surveys (ph1&2) |

| Issue/Objectives | Questions | Method(s) |
|---|---|---|
| The evaluation needs to investigate and report on the initiative's less tangible benefits | **General - WBSS** <br> 1. In your opinion, do you think any particular elements of WBSS intervention have a greater impact on the beneficiary? <br> 2. What impact do you feel the approach to business support through WBSS has had on the continuity of support provision for pre-start, start-up and existing businesses? <br> 3. Based on identified needs on the ground, do you think there are any gaps in the current WBSS delivery model or activities that you think could be delivered differently? <br><br> **General - Enterprise Centres** <br> 1. Do beneficiary perceptions of their own business performance change when using the centres? What is the effect on business confidence and productivity? <br> 2. Are there different benefits between resident businesses based at centres and non-resident businesses using centre facilities on a regular or irregular basis? <br> 3. How has superfast-broadband at the centre improved business productivity and performance? – What value is given by beneficiary businesses to the overall business performance to fast-broadband? How has the availability of fast-broadband affected the workspace choices made by beneficiaries? <br> 4. How does the intervention support the development of networks, and therefore the connectivity of local businesses? i.e. by the businesses collaborating, trading and innovating socialising with each other. <br> 5. What are the customer experiences of being part of a network as opposed to working in isolation i.e. in their own homes? | **General** <br> 1. Stakeholder consultations mgmt & delivery (Ph1&2) <br> 2. Stakeholder consultations Strategic, mgmt & delivery (Ph1&2) <br> 3. Stakeholder consultations strategic, mgmt & delivery (Ph1& <br><br> **Enterprise Centres** <br> 1. Participant survey (Ph1&2) <br><br> 2. Participant survey and data analysis (Ph1&2) <br> 3. Participant survey (Ph1&2) <br><br><br> 4. Participant survey and stakeholder consultations - mgmt & delivery (Ph1&2) <br> 5. Participant survey (ph1&2) |
| What is the projects strategic added value? | 1. What impact did the pump-priming investment via A4W in WBSS have on the success of the Enterprise Network? <br> 2. To what extent has the Enterprise Network improved partnership working and collaboration amongst business support providers – has this led to the development of a continuum of support for pre-start, start-up and established businesses? <br> 3. To what extent does provision offered through the Enterprise Network duplicate existing services? <br> 4. To what extent is the Enterprise Network now the recognised brand for the provision of business support – how does this link with Wiltshire Business Hub? <br> 5. What strategic added value has been gained/is likely to be gained from having some of the first projects delivering in the LEP area | 1-5. Stakeholder consultations - strategic and mgmt & delivery (Ph1&2) |

# Appendix 2: Grant Application Processes

## Specialist Business Advice Grant

The Specialist Business Advice Grant (SBAG) was launched in September 2013 with a budget of £150,000 which offered grant support (from £500 to £1,500) to rural businesses in Swindon and Wiltshire with growth potential to assist with up to 50% of the costs for advice that is not generalist advice (as is typically available through WBSS or the Swindon equivalent). The grant could not duplicate or replicate other funded support schemes but could resource specialist support across a host of areas including marketing, financial, technical or IP advice. The WBSS administered the programme on behalf of Wiltshire Council and was delivered over an 18 month period from September 2013 to March 2015.

The grant was promoted through WBSS (typically through the workshops and events that they deliver as well as through the one-to-one diagnostics) and by the TEN team through the use of an external PR consultant who developed press releases to promote the grant. The grant was also advertised on the TEN website, however, in reality the level of demand meant that a huge amount of promotion of the grant was unnecessary, with a steady increase in demand following it initial launch.

### Process - First Stage Application

The application process was two-staged with the first stage involving a short series of questions associated with getting an approval in principle for the funding.

WBSS worked with their clients to guide them on completing a first stage application, which, on completion, was forwarded to a Wiltshire Council Development Officer (one of the TEN team as SBAG forms part of the TEN project) to appraise against the grant guidelines. Where the approval/rejection of the application was clear cut the Development Officer has the autonomy to make the decision, if the judgement was more marginal it was forwarded to the TEN Project Manager to provide her judgement. Whilst there were no specific timeframes set in stone, the Development Officer would aim to provide a reply within seven days and on the vast majority of applications it is understood that this timescale was met. If there were omissions or errors in the application it was returned to WBSS for further information or as a rejection. It is estimated that approximately one in three grant applications were rejected.

After the initial application a client was required to secure three quotes for the specialist business advice and then choose a preferred supplier. A WBSS Business Manager would act as a broker for the identification of three suppliers although ideally it was down to the applicant to choose which supplier they wished to provide the advice. Many applicants were unsure of where to source suppliers or of which supplier to go to so were provided with a list of preferred suppliers[24] that WBSS holds. In the instances where an applicant had their own supplier in mind they would be encouraged to obtain a comparator. If the suppliers were not within Wiltshire and/or not on WBSS' preferred supplier list then this will be raised with WBSS who will undertake an appraisal of that supplier (which would involve either a face-to-face meeting and consultation with that supplier or a telephone consultation) to provide a judgement on their quality. In this respect the judgement of quality seems fairly arbitrary and more formal methods or accreditation would appear to be more appropriate.

## Second Stage Application

The second stage application form was required alongside a detailed quote from the specialist who, as set out within the guidelines is unable to charge a rate in excess of £500 per day. The quote itself would need to go into detail about what was on offer.

In terms of eligibility of support, there has remained a lack of consistent and clear understanding regarding eligibility for training provision for an applicant business. A judgement had to be made on whether the training would be bespoke and tailored towards the specific needs of a business with training typically delivered on a one to many basis as a standard (off-the-shelf) module of provision deemed ineligible.

Also if the quote was not reflective of what was initially outlined within the stage 1 application or if it ultimately fell short of a floor target of £500, then it would again be returned to WBSS for review.

Once again the TEN officer would be required to approve the second stage application. On approval of the application, the WBSS would issue the offer letter to the applicant within which it would be made clear what was required to enable the release of the grant.

WBSS would then at various points go back to applicants to check progress in them accessing the support and ultimately drawing down the grant, where little progress had been made the deadline was reiterated to these clients. However despite these reminders there remained some who did not draw down the grant before the deadline.

Ultimately, there were 158 applications and 106 grant awards to the value of £123, 550 (which equates to an average grant award of £1,165, whilst £26,450 of current aid remained un-deployed.

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[24] It is understood that there are around 90 suppliers on this list.

Once works/support were completed the evidence of completion was sent to WBSS for appraisal. This led to something of an iterative process as the completion evidence was typically short of all the evidence required. Sometimes the nature of support provided is somewhat intangible (support of a mentoring nature for example rather than support in the development of website), which provides a challenge in terms of gathering a suitable evidence base to support the reimbursement.

Evidence typically included:

- Information on each supplier (there may be more than one that has delivered support)
- A copy of the invoice(s) from the supplier(s)
- A copy of the offer letter that WBSS has given to the applicant
- Evidence of the work undertaken, for example a marketing strategy, evidence of website improvements
- Progress report outlining what support the applicant had received, what benefit had been derived from the support and what was the evidence of that benefit.

Once satisfied with the evidence WBSS would reimburse the business with the approved grant aid.  WBSS would then forward the evidence base for approved grant requests to Wiltshire Council at the end of every quarter to enable WBSS to draw down spend incurred though SBAG for that quarter.

This approach did however lead to one instance where the evidence approved by WBSS was then rejected by Wiltshire Council due to a change in the nature of support the applicant gained (the change emerged when the specialist provider recognised that the support the applicant suggested was inappropriate for the needs of their business).

There was also, unfortunately, promotion of the grant after the deadline for closing the grant offer. This oversight was understood to partly be a reflection of the grant being promoted on multiple websites, it was felt that this would have been addressed if a designated individual had been tasked with removing promotion on completion of the SBAG.

With regards to the governance of SBAG, the Development Officer would feedback to the TEN manager on a regular basis as part of their update meetings who in turn would provide an update to the WBSS Management Group.

The SBAG process is summarised in the diagram presented overleaf.

```
┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Business Expressed       │
│ Interest in SBAG         │
└─────────────────────────┘
            │
            ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│ WBSS Business Manager    │
│ Provides Stage 1         │
│ Application Form for      │
│ completion               │
└─────────────────────────┘
            │
            ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│ WBSS appraise stage 1    │
│ application and sent to   │
│ TEN Development Officer  │
└─────────────────────────┘
            │
            ▼
```

**Insufficient Evidence**

| The Applicant is required to provide further information and resubmit | ◄─ | TEN Dev't Officer Appraises Form – (support from TEN Proj. Man. Where required) | ─► | **Inappropriate Application** The Application is rejected |

```
            │
            ▼
```

| Applicant required to secure 3 quotes – works with WBSS to identify | ─► | WBSS appraises supplier if non-Wilts or not on preferred Supplier List |

```
            │
            ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│ WBSS works with applicant │
│ on Stage 2 Application –  │
│ including preferred quote │
└─────────────────────────┘
            │
            ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Referred to TEN          │
│ Development Officer for    │
│ Approval                 │
└─────────────────────────┘
            │
            ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│ WBSS Issue offer letter   │
│ detailing requirements of │
│ grant                    │
└─────────────────────────┘
            │
            ▼
```

| On completion applicant submits evidence base and progress report to WBSS | ◄─► | Further evidence requested from applicant |

```
            │
            ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│ WBSS reimburse applicant  │
│ for approved grant       │
└─────────────────────────┘
            │
            ▼
```

| WBSS submits evidence and draws down expenditure from Wiltshire Council each quarter | ─► | Further evidence requested from applicant and WBSS |

Reflecting on the SBAG process, it was felt to be a very useful and effective grant offer and extremely helpful as a tool for engagement with businesses, despite it being fairly limited in the scale of grants available.

However, stakeholders did reflect on a lack of clarity regarding what could and what could not be funded and suggestions were made with regards to a tightening of information in the grant offer letter, however as this element was undertaken by WBSS, Wiltshire Council remain unclear as to whether the suggestions were acted upon.

Some stakeholders also reflected on a disappointment about the relative lack of diversity in terms of the nature of grant applications being put forward. This may, in part, reflect the limited scale of funding available and also how the offer was "sold" (as the primary means of distribution was through the Business Managers), but also simply may reflect the specific needs of businesses of that size in the current climate.

It would also appear that in hindsight, a reassignment of certain tasks and responsibilities may have benefitted both WBSS and Wiltshire Council. Wiltshire Council suggested that all associated paperwork for grants should be forwarded to them for verification for the first three months of the scheme but this never took place.  Wiltshire council also lacked  access to evidence associated with a final claim which has meant that WBSS has reimbursed clients at risk. This in turn proved challenging for Wiltshire Council as there is a lack of evidence on progress in relation to the level of spend incurred, and in hindsight reimbursement and receipt of evidence for the final claim should, from the research team's perspective have been handled by Wiltshire Council.  Furthermore, it has led to a backlog in the provision of final evidence as there are a number of instances where the final submission has had insufficient evidence to enable Wiltshire Council to release funding.  To help overcome these issues when they began to arise, Wiltshire Council offered training on the claim process to WBSS to ensure all paperwork was in place, however this was not taken up and additional administrative support was provided during the last two quarters to help tackle the administrative demands of the schemes.

Therefore an approach where WBSS acts as a broker and application support officer, whilst Wiltshire Council holds the resources and approves/appraises the evidence base and releases spend, would appear a more suitable model to adopt as Wiltshire Council are better equipped to handle the administrative requirements of the scheme.

## 5.2   Rural Economy Grants

The Rural Economy Grants have been successfully committed to predominantly microbusinesses operating across a range of industrial sectors. It is understood that most applicants were referred from the WBSS or via the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), in addition, the scheme was promoted in a variety of ways including via press releases.

Existing websites were also used to promote the grant including the WACC, WBSS, Enterprise Wiltshire, LEADER and FSB. There was a focus on encouraging those who were already involved with WBSS with investment needs, but in reality referrals came from all sources with

around half via WBSS whilst the remainder came through other routes. The focus on the referral process and in terms of careful wording the promotion was applied in the hope to avoid a scatter gun approach, and in order that the number of interested parties could be managed.

On receipt of initial interest the Wiltshire council representative would engage with the applicant directly by phone. This approach was effectively applied as an expression of interest stage with the hope of avoiding a two stage process of application. The telephone conversations typically lasted around 15-20 minutes but helped to generate efficiencies later within the application process.

On completion of the initial telephone appraisal, those applicants who were still deemed eligible for the support were referred to a consultant who had been appointed to support applicants through their application.

The consultant would then work with a client on their application until it was ready for submission and would then contact the appraiser at Wiltshire Council to inform them of the application being complete and imminent, this process of application preparation took anything from 3-4 weeks to 4-5 months.  At this point the consultant would also provide an informal judgement on the suitability of the application in a form that acted as a precursor to the appraisal.

Ultimately, 17 businesses gained support through the rural economy grants, the minimum grant available was £10,000 with a 40% intervention rate.

With regards to the appraisal form, the Grant Team at Wiltshire Council initially tried to streamline the appraisal forms from Defra however this led to concerns being raised and necessitated a reversion back to the Defra supplied appraisal forms. The enhanced forms demanded greater levels of more senior resource at Wiltshire Council, and in that respect led to increased costs for the council.

On completion of the appraisal it was provided to the TEN Advisory Board who acted as the grant panel who typically met once a month over the September 2013-March 2014 period to make a decision based on that appraisal. By the end of 2014 all grant aid on the project had been spent.

On approval of the grant application the documentation was then sent to Defra for their sign off. On a couple of occasions Defra, who often re-appraised the applications, requested additional evidence

Where an applicant has gained grant approval, the process is then passed on to a Compliance Officer who would work up the contract and undertake a project engagement visit. The visit would involve the provision of guidance to an applicant on how to make a claim.
There would then be at least one inspection during the delivery of the grant, particularly for the smaller businesses who may not have sufficient dedicated resource to deal with the financial and administrative requirements of the grant. This approach reportedly led to claims coming in on time. Further support was offered particularly to the applicants that were

smaller businesses by (for example) offering them the opportunity to put in more than one claim to reduce the scale of expenses incurred prior to reimbursement.

Wiltshire Council would then pay the grant and Defra would then pay based on defrayment of expenditure and the evidence to support that spend. In terms of supporting evidence, this would typically include:

- Paid invoices
- Photographic evidence of works
- Delivery dates
- Building regulations

The applicant would also need to include a copy of the business' bank account to show spend incurred.

The process associated with the Rural Economy Grants is summarised overleaf.

```
┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Business expresses      │
│ interest in REG         │
└─────────────────────────┘
            │
            ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│ REG Grants Manager      │
│ undertakes telephone    │
│ interview with applicant│
└─────────────────────────┘
            │
            ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Applicant is introduced │
│ to consultant for       │
│ support in application  │
│ process                 │
└─────────────────────────┘
       │           │
       ▼           ▼
┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐
│ Consult      │  │ Applicant    │
│ submits their│  │ submits      │
│ perspective  │  │ application  │
│ on application│  │              │
└──────────────┘  └──────────────┘
       │           │
       ▼           ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Wiltshire Council       │
│ Appraiser appraises     │
│ application             │
└─────────────────────────┘
            │
            ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Appraisal provided to   │
│ monthly panel session   │
│ for consideration       │
└─────────────────────────┘
            │
            ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Approved applications   │
│ sent to Defra for       │
│ confirmation            │
└─────────────────────────┘
            │
            ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Offer letter and        │
│ contract issues by      │
│ compliance officer      │
└─────────────────────────┘
            │
            ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Project Engagement      │
│ Visit by Compliance     │
│ Officer                 │
└─────────────────────────┘
            │
            ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Project inspection      │
│ visit (at least one)    │
└─────────────────────────┘
            │
            ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Evidence submitted to   │
│ Wiltshire Council for   │
│ payment                 │
└─────────────────────────┘
```

Reflecting on the Rural Economy Grants, the process applied in their delivery is highly dependent on a close relationship between the Consultant, the Grant Manager and the Appraiser and on the ability of those appointed to deliver their tasks effectively.

The role of the Appraiser in this process is a challenging one, which requires the balance of independent appraisal but also a judgement on whether further development may ultimately secure a worthwhile applicant the grant aid that they require. The blurring of lines appear between appraiser and project development. That said, this system does appear an effective model to adopt for grant applications of this scale.

The disagreement with Defra of the appraisal criteria was something of a challenge and illustrates the importance of adhering to all guidance and templates issued by funding providers.

The Compliance Officer working with the applicant provided welcome flexibility to the grant process, particularly if changes were made to the planned works. Throughout they would be able to make a judgement call on the significance of the change and whether it was appropriate to be retained within the original application or if it demanded any material changes and therefore, a formal variation to the project.

# Appendix 2: Discussion Guides



## Evaluation of the Enterprise Network (TEN) / Wiltshire Incubation Environments and Wiltshire Business Support Service Project

*Discussion Guide – Process Review of Grant Activity (Specialist Business Advice Grant and Rural Economy Grant) Grant Process - Awareness and Application*

To enable a thorough review of the process associated with SBAG and the rural economy grant it would be helpful to go through the entire process, specifically:

1. How were the grants promoted – who was responsible for this promotion?

2. How did interested organisations register an interest in the grant, how was this information recorded?

3. What were the subsequent steps of interested organisations - please describe the typical journey in detail up to the completion of the application?

4. How and by whom was the organisation's journey managed through the process – were roles interchangeable?

5. Once completed, how and by whom were grant applications appraised?

6. How and over what timeframe were applicants informed of the result of that appraisal?

**Monitoring of Grant Activity and Spend**

7. Following the award of a grant how is the spending/activity of the grant recipient then monitored?

8. At what point is grant funding then awarded?

9. What evidence is required to enable the final award of the grant?

**Management and Governance**

10. Please describe the management and governance of the grant activity?

11. Are there any steps in the process that have been overlooked through our discussion?

12. Do you have any documentation which summarises/details the processes associated with each grant?

**Conclusions**

13. Thinking through this process which elements could be improved / amended in the process to increase its efficiency and effectiveness?

# Evaluation of the Enterprise Network (TEN)/Wiltshire Incubation Environments and Wiltshire Business Support Service Project

*Discussion Guide – interviews with strategic stakeholders*

First of all, thank you for agreeing to be interviewed.

As you will be aware, Wavehill have been appointed by Wiltshire Council to bring together the evaluation of the Enterprise Network and the Wiltshire Business Support Service. The evaluation aims:

- To understand and report on the initiatives' net economic impact, both in terms of GVA generated, sustainable job creation and less tangible benefits.
- To report on the effectiveness of delivery mechanisms and the strategic added value associated with the projects.
- To provide practical feedback and recommendations on how things could be improved moving forward.
- To identify good practice & lessons learnt to influence future delivery and celebrate success.

**This interview is being undertaken as part of the final evaluation, during which the evaluation team will have discussions with a range of people involved with the project in different ways. Its purpose is to inform the final report being submitted in June 2015.**

This discussion guide is however exactly that - a *guide* to the issues that we would like to discuss during the interview. We would, of course, be happy to discuss any other issues which you feel are relevant.

As you can appreciate, we will be interviewing a wide range of people as part of the evaluation. Accordingly, some of the questions listed may not be applicable to you; we will of course focus on those questions which are relevant to you.

**Any comments that you make will be confidential and the information you provide will only be used for the purposes of this evaluation. Comments that you make will not be attributed to you unless we have your explicit permission to do that.**

We look forward to speaking with you.

**Questions for discussion**

1. To get started, please can you introduce yourself and your role, and explain how you are associated with The Enterprise Network project and/or the Wiltshire Business Support Service?

**The Enterprise Network (TEN)**

2. In relation to The Enterprise Network project:
   - What elements of TEN do you think work particularly well?
   - What elements of TEN could be improved on/delivered differently?
   - Based on identified needs on the ground, do you think there are any gaps in the current delivery model?

3. To what extent, if at all, do the facilities address any duplication/ confusion within the marketplace?

**Wiltshire Business Support Service (WBSS)**

4. In relation to the WBSS support offer:
   - What elements of the WBSS do you think work particularly well?
   - What elements of the WBSS could be improved on/delivered differently?
   - Based on identified needs on the ground, do you think there are any gaps in the current delivery model?

5. Do you consider the business support on offer to be relevant, useful and accessible? Why do you say this?

6. To what extent, if at all, does the provision offered through the WBSS address any duplication / confusion within the marketplace?

**Support to Priority Groups**

7. What additional benefits have arisen from the focus on the following as priority groups?
   a. Women in business
   b. The military community – both military leavers and military partners and spouses

**Management and Governance**

8. How effective do you believe the management and governance of TEN/WBSS has been to date?

9. For future schemes of a similar nature, do you think anything could be done to improve the overall management and governance of
   - The Enterprise Network
   - WBSS

10. What advantages have there been in having a delivery area that largely matches the Wiltshire and Swindon LEP area?

**Partnership and Collaboration**

11. How would you describe the benefits of the partnership approach between TEN and WBSS adopted at both a strategic level and also from an operational perspective (e.g. managing referrals)?

12. To what extent has TEN and WBSS improved partnership working and collaboration amongst business support providers?

13. To what extent have these projects led to the development of a continuum of support for pre-start, start-up and established businesses?

14. How, if at all, would it have been possible to develop relationships with projects or organisations further?

**Future Elements**

15. How do you see The Enterprise Network facilities being taken forward – should they continue the model of centre management and operation that they currently have?
    o   Would you suggest any changes to this model at all?

16. What impact do you perceive the forthcoming ESIF [European Structural Investment Fund] will have on the business support environment in Wiltshire and Swindon?

17. Looking beyond the project, what do you see as the key issues that will need to be addressed around business development in Wiltshire and Swindon?

18. Do you have anything to add on an issue we've discussed or would you like to raise an issue we have not discussed?

# The Enterprise Network (TEN)/Wiltshire Incubation Environments and Wiltshire Business Support Service Project

*Discussion Guide – interviews with management and delivery staff*

First of all, thank you for agreeing to be interviewed.

As you will be aware, Wavehill have been appointed by Wiltshire Council to bring together the evaluation of the Enterprise Network and the Wiltshire Business Support Service. The evaluation aims:

- To understand and report on the initiatives' net economic impact, both in terms of GVA generated, sustainable job creation and less tangible benefits.
- To report on the effectiveness of delivery mechanisms and the strategic added value associated with the projects.
- To provide practical feedback and recommendations on how things could be improved moving forward.
- To identify good practice and lessons learnt to influence future delivery and celebrate success.

**This interview is being undertaken as part of the final evaluation, during which the evaluation team will have discussions with a range of people involved with the project in different ways. Its purpose is to inform the final report being submitted in June 2015.**

This discussion guide is however exactly that - a *guide* to the issues that we would like to discuss during the interview. We would, of course, be happy to discuss any other issues which you feel are relevant.

As you can appreciate, we will be interviewing a wide range of people as part of the evaluation. Accordingly, some of the questions listed may not be applicable to you; we will of course focus on those questions which are relevant to you.

**Any comments that you make will be confidential and the information you provide will only be used for the purposes of this evaluation. Comments that you make will not be attributed to you unless we have your explicit permission to do that.**

We look forward to speaking with you.

## Questions for discussion

1. To get started, please can you introduce yourself and your role, and explain how you are associated with The Enterprise Network project / Wiltshire Business Support Service?

**The Enterprise Network**

2. How have levels of occupation in each centre changed over the last six months?

3. Now that the centres have become more established, do they provide the right type of business environment? Logistically – in terms of layout and space for businesses?

4. Are there appropriate facilities – (especially ICT, e-conferencing, etc.), and is the setting right for the types of beneficiary business users?

5. How does the intervention support the development of networks, and therefore the connectivity of local businesses? i.e. by the businesses collaborating, trading and innovating socialising with each other.

6. What marketing/promotional activities have been undertaken in the last six months– how effective have these been?

7. What level/pattern of enquiries have been received for each facility?

8. How are the satellite centres currently progressing? In what ways do you believe these centres will network with the existing TEN centres?

**Wiltshire Business Support Service**

9. In your opinion, are there any particular elements of the business support service which have had a greater impact on the beneficiary?

10. Based on identified needs on the ground, do you think there are any gaps in the current delivery model or activities that you think could be delivered differently?

**Delivery (General)**

11. From your perspective what have been the key strengths or success factors to date in relation to the delivery of services to the business community? From;
    a. The Enterprise Network project
    b. Wiltshire Business Support Service

12. What are the weaknesses or potential gaps in the services/provision offered to the business community through;
    a. The Enterprise Network project
    b. Wiltshire Business Support Service

13. What, if any, external factors have affected delivery of;
    a. The Enterprise Network project
    b. Wiltshire Business Support Service

14. Has the funding enabled any innovative approaches to be applied to service delivery? If so, what are they and how successful have they been?

15. What more could have been done, or with hindsight what would you have done differently in?
    a. The Enterprise Network project
    b. Wiltshire Business Support Service

**Support to Priority Groups**

16. What additional benefits have arisen from the focus on the following as priority groups?
    a. Women in business
    b. Military leavers

**Management and Governance**

17. What (if any) changes have been made to management and governance arrangements for TEN/WBSS over the last 6 months?

18. How effective has the management and governance of TEN/WBSS been to date?

19. To what extent have the projects addressed any duplication / confusion within the market place?

20. For future schemes of a similar nature, do you think anything could be done to improve the overall management and governance of the project?

**Partnership and Collaboration**

21. How would you describe the benefits of the partnership approach between TEN and WBSS adopted at both a strategic level and also from an operational perspective (e.g. managing referrals)?

22. What challenges, if any, have emerged from working in partnership between TEN and WBSS? How have any such challenges been overcome to date?

23. Is there anything you feel could be done to improve partnership working between TEN and WBSS still further for the remainder of the delivery period?

24. How does the project work with other projects or organisations, if at all, in the area? In what ways could this be improved (if at all)?

**Monitoring**

25. How well do you think the project is currently performing in terms of progress against profiled targets and spend? Are there any areas of concern and if so what is being done to address them?

26. How effective do you find the current monitoring approaches?

27. Do you think that the project(s) is generating any additional benefits (including soft outcomes) that are not being captured through traditional monitoring mechanisms?

**Future elements**

28. How do you see The Enterprise Network facilities being taken forward – should they continue the model of centre management and operation that they currently have?
    a. Would you suggest any changes to this model at all?

29. For the future, what nature of business support do you perceive as key to the generation and sustainable growth of businesses in Swindon and Wiltshire?

30. What impact do you perceive the forthcoming ESIF [European Structural Investment Fund] will have on the business support environment in Wiltshire and Swindon?

31. More specifically are there any key lessons/comments that should be taken into consideration when developing the call for business support projects through ESIF?

32. Do you have anything to add on an issue we've discussed or would you like to raise an issue we have not discussed?

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