

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

A report for Wiltshire Council  
January 2015

**Wavehill Ltd.**

- Wales office: 21 Alban Square, Aberaeron, Ceredigion, SA46 0DB (registered office)
- West England office: Unit 5.2, Paintworks, Arnos Vale, Bristol, BS4 3EH
- London office: Research House, 51 Portland Road, Kingston upon Thames, KT1 2SH

Contact details:

Tel: 01545 571711

Email: [info@wavehill.com](mailto:info@wavehill.com)

Twitter: @wavehilltweets

More information:

[www.wavehill.com](http://www.wavehill.com)

<https://twitter.com/wavehilltweets>

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Report author:

Oliver Allies

Any questions in relation to this report should be directed in the first instance to Oliver Allies ([oliver.allies@wavehill.com](mailto:oliver.allies@wavehill.com) )

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Client contact:

Kate Forrest

The Enterprise Network Manager

01249 706549

[kate.forrest@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:kate.forrest@wiltshire.gov.uk)

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# Executive Summary

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

## Overview

**The Enterprise Network (TEN)**<sup>1</sup> 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 in Ludgershall, Trowbridge, Salisbury and Royal Wootton Bassett using a combination of Wiltshire Council, Rural Growth Network Funding and European Regional Development Fund Funding. Further enterprise centres are subsequently 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). Grant funding is also 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.

**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 Action for Wiltshire ((A4W)and runs to March 2015). 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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

## 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 & 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.

## Methodological Approach

The evaluation is being undertaken over two phases with the first (this) phase being more process orientated, whilst the second phase has more of an outcome and impact orientation (with a greater focus on primary research). The research for Phase 1 has included:

- Desk based research – including programme and policy related documentation.
- Stakeholder (scoping) consultations – as part of the scoping exercise to inform the approach to the remainder of the study.
- The compilation of an evaluation framework to inform the detailed approach to the evaluation.
- Stakeholder consultations with those engaged at a strategic, management or delivery level with either TEN or WBSS.
- A survey of 100 businesses, half of which had been intensively assisted (in receipt of over 12 hours of support).
- Analysis and reporting on findings.

## Context

An opportunity arose for the development of a network of enterprise centres from the restructure of Wiltshire Council from a two tier to a single tier, unitary authority. The restructure 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<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>

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."

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 and exporting, innovation and mentoring.

## Summary of Findings and Recommendations

### TEN

After a slow start gaining the funding approval for TEN the refurbishments of facilities have progressed well and the recent allocation of satellite centre funding will provide a useful geographical spread of facilities across Wiltshire and Swindon.

The opening of enterprise centres have typically been low key and has necessitated a building of momentum in terms of awareness raising of the facilities on offer. This may in part reflect on the relatively slow rate of take up of offices in three of the four centres, whilst in Salisbury the centre is now close to optimum capacity (typically described as around 85% full)<sup>4</sup>. Equally, whilst there is a feeling (particularly amongst some stakeholders) that take up of office space has been largely of a slow pace, evidence<sup>5</sup> suggests that business incubation needs 7-12 years to become self-sustaining and some may never reach this position. Whilst these timescales would suggest that the rate of uptake is perfectly normal, the centres have opened in the midst of rapid growth in the rate of self-employment which would suggest increased demand for facilities of this nature.

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<sup>2</sup> Temporary usage of space

<sup>3</sup> Wiltshire Incubation Environment Proposal and Business Plan (9<sup>th</sup> March 2012 Update)

<sup>4</sup> Peter Harman Chief Executive of UKBI, Better Business (2013)

<sup>5</sup> UKBI Business Incubation Managers Handbook (2009)

Until recently, the centre coordinators have been working somewhat remotely from each other, which led to nuances in the approaches and processes applied. Monthly meetings that are rotational around each centre combined with the development of shared management systems should help to increase the level of collaborative working and sharing of practice/approach in each centre.

## WBSS

WBSS commenced with pump-prime investment from A4W at a time where public austerity was beginning to take hold. The decision to invest at this time was a bold one and reflects the priority attributed to this offer within the council. The success of the service has led to the attraction and subsequent investment of other funding sources to enhance the WBSS offer and the scale of market that it serves.

Whilst the additional contracts secured have clearly brought opportunities to further the market reach of the WBSS offer, they have also brought in some instances an additional administrative burden which the WBSS team were typically unprepared for. These contracts have also been delivery focused, so typically have offered limited scope for the appointment of additional staff. Securing the additional contracts has helped to increase market presence which in turn has influenced the level of demand for services. However the increased demand has brought with it a challenge of continuing to serve businesses with their model of support (which encourages the use of one-to-one engagement and advice) and has led to the increased use of a one to many approach.

In this context, the shift in approach is inevitable and perhaps will be driven further towards a more selective offer depending on what resources become available in future months.

## Management and Governance

Structures for the management and governance of the initiatives have evolved to reflect changes in the initiatives as they have progressed and also changes in the administrative structures for economic development (in particular as LEPs have gained a more central role in local economic development).

The move to a Swindon and Wiltshire model for management and governance of TEN has not been without its challenges, particularly due to the differing needs of the two areas with, aside from the issues of rurality, Wiltshire having a greater propensity for start-up businesses within its economy, whilst Swindon has more emphasis on medium-large scale enterprises). These challenges therefore are unlikely to dissipate as the nature of provision to be funded through the Structural Funds begins to take shape.

### **Recommendation**

That a smooth transition of provision funded through the ESIF in Wiltshire and Swindon is sought with, clear signposting (if required) to emerging schemes should service provision and/or providers change.



## Marketing and Branding

The introduction of additional funding projects and programmes has brought inevitable issues with branding. However prior to the introduction of these there has been some element of confusion between the roles played by TEN, by WBSS and by WACC.

Whether businesses suffer from any complexities arising from these brands is difficult to judge. However, the addition of the Growth Hub and initiatives arising through the structural funds and those that continue to emerge from central government are likely to increase the chances of confusing the marketplace.

### **Recommendation**

That the roles of TEN and WBSS are consistently applied across the initiatives with little or no fluctuation (so as to avoid any internal confusion on roles and responsibilities).

That a consistent and recognised brand for business support is used across all business support initiatives to provide some coherence to the marketplace and, where possible, that dual WACC-WBSS branding of services is avoided.

## Forward Planning

Financial sustainability for the enterprise centres was planned for three years after their refurbishment, this is ambitious in these timescales and there are now plans being considered for Wiltshire Council to continue to subsidise the centre offer for a further three years. Whilst this would appear a sensible approach there remains an underlying need for more significant investment in the refurbished facilities, which have maintenance requirements that may undermine the offer within each facility.

There is also consideration for the limited flexibility and responsiveness that centre management provides, where ownership sits within the local authority and for these centres to operate commercially and to compete with the existing offer, they may need to be outsourced to a commercial operator.

### **Recommendation**

For the forward strategy for TEN to be explored in greater depth as part of the final phase of the evaluation.

There is also a desire for the satellite centres to network closely with the existing enterprise centres on their completion. This would appear ambitious particularly where the satellite centres are extensions of an existing and (to an extent) competitive offer.

### **Recommendation**

There is a need to manage expectations of the scale of collaboration that may arise and to work with each satellite centre to determine what type of collaboration would be feasible and mutually beneficial for the centres and particularly the tenants residing within those centres.

For WBSS the turbulence in terms of policy and provision makes any forward strategy difficult to compile, however once initiatives begin to emerge through ESIF it will be important that the offer dovetails with that provided through the existing contracts.

### **Methodological Recommendations for the Final Phase**

The phase one evaluation has provided some useful findings for the evaluation and the next and final phase will shift towards more of an emphasis on the impact arising from the initiatives. With this in mind it is useful to consider any changes to the methodological approach for the next phase.

Surveying 50 businesses intensively assisted, provided an insufficient body of evidence to provide a judgement on net additional GVA at 12 and 24 months. Also, some of the evidence would suggest that the two datasets used in the survey were not as clearly delineated as hoped between intensive and non-intensive services. In addition, information on the centre where each tenant is based will aid the analysis of any centre based trends that may exist.

### **Recommendations**

That the number of businesses surveyed to incorporate a GVA assessment to be doubled (at least) to provide the necessary body evidence to make a judgement of net additional GVA arising from the support received (this would be aided by a more comprehensive capture of baseline data on GVA).

That the enterprise centre where a tenant is based is captured on the tenant survey to enable any trends to be explored.

# 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)<sup>6</sup> 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 Bassett) using a combination of Wiltshire Council (Action For Wiltshire (A4W)), Rural Growth Network funding (DEFRA) and European Regional Development Funding. Further enterprise centres are subsequently 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 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.

The Wiltshire Business Support Service agreement with Wiltshire Council commenced in January 2012 through investment from A4W (and runs to March 2015). 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.

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<sup>6</sup> 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

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:

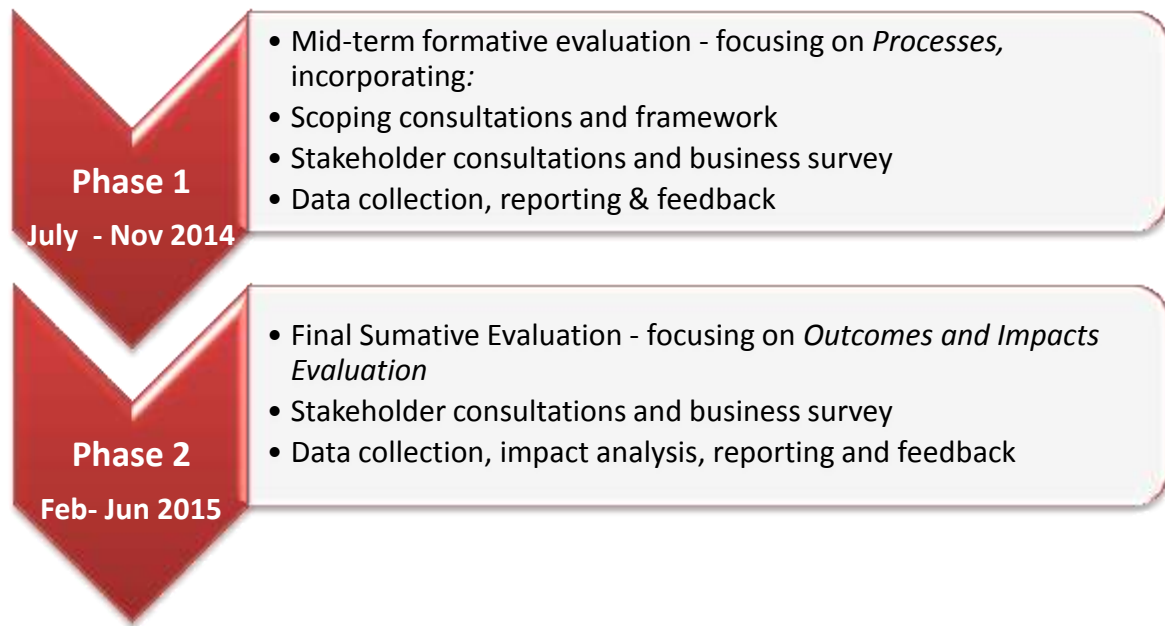
- Taking an holistic approach to the delivery of WBSS and TEN incorporating a review of the capital aspect of TEN in the creation of four enterprise centres and subsequent satellite centres.
- To investigate and report on the initiative's net economic impact, both in terms of GVA generated, sustainable 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 & 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 is being undertaken over two phases with the first (this) phase being more process orientated whilst the second phase has more of an outcome and impact orientation (with a greater focus on primary research).

Figure 1.1: Outline Methodological Approach



The following methodological approaches have been applied to Phase 1 of the evaluation:

### **Desk Based Research**

The team have reviewed a variety of secondary evidence including programme and policy related documentation and quarterly monitoring data as well as the analysis of various evaluative evidence.

### **Stakeholder Consultations – Scoping Consultations**

A number of key stakeholders have been engaged and consulted as part of the scoping element of the evaluation, with the aim of identifying and finalising the approach to the remainder of the study.

## **Evaluation Framework**

Following scoping consultations enhancements to the project logic chain were made which in turn, informed the development of an evaluation framework for the two projects, which provided more detailed plans on target audiences for primary research, the methods through which we would engage with these audiences and the key topics employed as part of this engagement (the evaluation framework can be found in Appendix 1).

## **Stakeholder Consultations**

Following the completion of the framework in-depth consultations have been undertaken with key stakeholders who have been engaged at the strategic level in the two projects and also with those involved in the management and delivery of TEN/WBSS services. The consultation exercise has also involved site visits to each of the TEN centres with the interviews aiming to gain perspectives on progress to date and to capture opinions on the process and mechanisms applied in the delivery of service provisions.

## **Business Survey**

One hundred businesses have been surveyed as part of the phase 1 evaluation with half of those engaged through the survey, having been in receipt of at least 12 hours of support (and therefore considered to be intensively assisted and eligible as a beneficiary for the TEN project, whilst half have had less than 12 hours of support and typically have been a beneficiary of WBSS provision only.

In addition a survey has been developed that has been distributed by TEN enterprise centre coordinators to their tenants; the analysis of their feedback has also been incorporated into this report.

## **Analysis of Findings**

Analysis of the primary research gathered to identify what elements of the support are most valued and what initial impacts have arisen as a result of the support received.

## 2 Context

This section explores the policy and socio economic context surrounding the development and implementation of these initiatives and any trends that have emerged since their commencement.

### Section Summary

- TEN and WBSS have emerged in the context of rapidly evolving policy in relation to economic development and in particular, business support provision.
- WBSS was essentially pump-primed by Wiltshire Council to address an anticipated vacuum in business support provision at a time when local businesses needed it most.
- Since the 2008 recession there has been a sustained growth in rates of self-employment across both Swindon and Wiltshire. Rates of VAT registrations have also strengthened over recent years and one year survival rates in both areas surpass the national average.
- Since 2011 both areas have experienced growth in their business stock, particularly so in Swindon. Industrial sectors that appear to be driving this growth include the professional and scientific sector and the information and communication sector which collectively account for an additional c.1200 businesses in these sectors.

#### 2.1.1 Evolution of Business Support

Government funded business support provision throughout England, was dominated by the Business Link service for almost twenty years. The service commenced in the 1990's and consisted of business advisors supporting existing businesses along with enterprise agencies to support pre-start and start-up organisations across the country.

The website for Business Link was launched in 2004, initially to support the network of business advisors however, its launch heralded a move away from face-to-face government funded business advice with the website ultimately becoming the primary government support and information channel to businesses.

The Business Link service was regionalised (prior to the regionalisation it was typically managed at a local or sub-regional level) and managed by Regional Development Agencies in 2008. However, a change of government in 2010 led to the abolition of the Regional Development Agencies and with it, the regional business advisory service which closed in 2011, which meant that no face-to-face service (for SMEs) was being provided nationally.

In October 2012 Lord Heseltine produced an independent recommendation on how to increase UK growth<sup>7</sup>. At the heart of the document were measures to unleash the potential of local economies. One of the key recommendations taken on board by the coalition government was the need to empower Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs) with their role including leading on the provision of business support alongside local authorities and Chambers of Commerce.

### 2.1.2 The Enterprise Network Project (TEN)

The ERDF application for TEN funding took place in the midst of these sweeping changes targeting ERDF funding from the 2007-2013 Competitiveness Programme. Given the timescales of the Structural Funds, the business support initiatives funded through the programme were somewhat immune from the policy changes associated with business support taking place across England (although changing demands for match funding for Structural Funds created significant challenges on the implementation of Structural Funds).

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 1<sup>st</sup> 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<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> No Stone Unturned, The Rt Hon Lord Heseltine of Thenford CH, October 2012

<sup>8</sup> Temporary usage of space

<sup>9</sup> Wiltshire Incubation Environment Proposal and Business Plan (9<sup>th</sup> March 2012 Update)



The project aims 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 set out as 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 work-force 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 will 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 funding any complementary new initiatives.<sup>10</sup>

### **Rationale for Intervention**

The rationale for this nature of intervention related to a series of factors. Previous research was drawn upon in the project business plan for identifying a series of disadvantages typically encountered in rural areas associated with the lack of (quality) business accommodation, business support and on-site services.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Wiltshire Incubation Environments Proposal and Business Plan (9<sup>th</sup> March 2012 Update)

<sup>11</sup> Developing Entrepreneurship and Innovation in rural areas in West Yorkshire, SQW (2006)

Other issues identified in the application through a SWOT analysis for Wiltshire include:

- Shortage of quality employment premises for small and medium enterprises including incubation facilities and managed workspace.
- Lack of small/medium premises to facilitate expansion of existing local business, particularly providing office accommodation.
- High level of out-commuting from county removing valuable local consumer expenditure.
- Continued over-reliance upon public sector employment may limit opportunities for economic diversification driven by the private sector.
- Potential for improved growth in professional business services, biotechnology, ICT, engineering and environmental sciences, where changing work practices have led to a greater flexibility in business space and location requirements.

In addition, market research undertaken at the time of the application identified that existing incubation provision within the county was close to, or at capacity. Furthermore, anecdotal evidence and discussions with Bath Spa University were used to identify latent demand both from college graduates and young professionals for incubation space.<sup>12</sup>

### 2.1.3 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.”

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 is 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<sup>13</sup>) and Gateway for Growth funding. 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.

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<sup>12</sup> Wiltshire Incubation Environments Proposal and Business Plan (9<sup>th</sup> March 2012 Update)

<sup>13</sup> Further detail on the Specialist Business Advice Grant can be found in Section 3

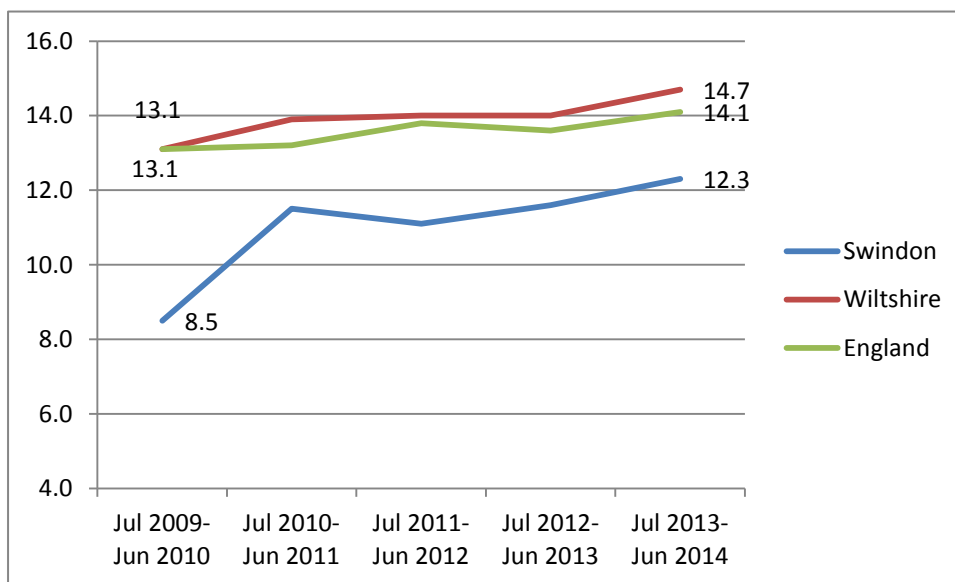
## 2.2 Socio-economic Context

When considering the policy context associated with these initiatives it is useful to compare this with the socio-economic situation at that time and the trends since then to identify whether any drivers for change have emerged. 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 have been steadily rising since the onset of the recession and self-employment now stands at a higher rate than at any other point in the last 40 years. The rise in total employment since the 2008 recession seen nationally has largely been driven by a growth in self-employment (around 70% of growth between 2008-2014 which equates to an additional 732,000 employees). Swindon and Wiltshire have witnessed self-employment growth that has exceeded the trends presented nationally, with close to a 50% increase in rates in Swindon between 2009 and 2014 (this equates to growth of around 4,500) and a 12% increase in rates of growth in Wiltshire. For Swindon this has helped to close the gap with self-employment across England, whilst Wiltshire now surpasses the national average with more than one in seven people of a working age in self-employment (in excess of 30,000 in self-employment).

**Figure 2.1: Rate of Self-Employment amongst the Working Age Population**

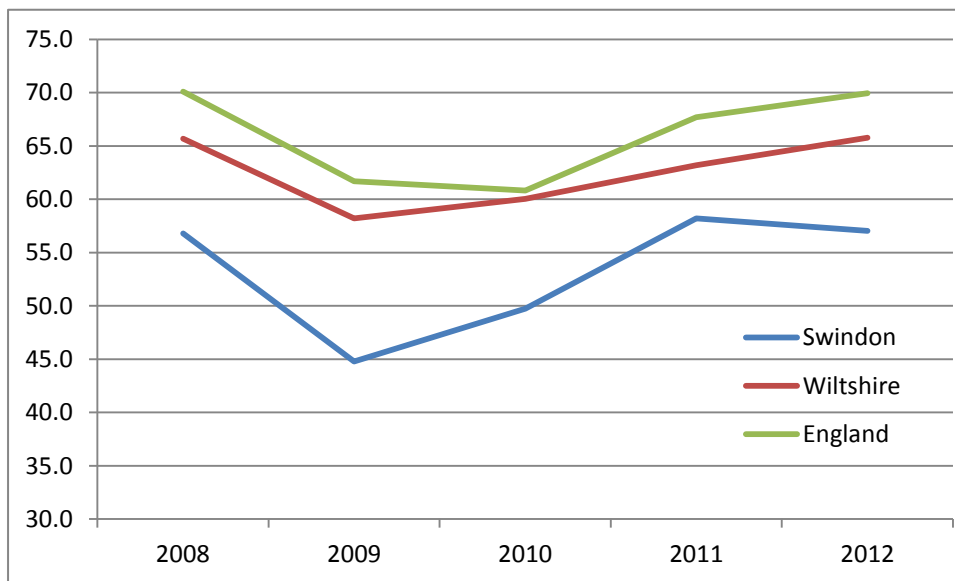


Source: Annual Population Survey/ Labour Force Survey

### 2.2.2 Start-Up Rates

The rates of business start-ups have also been analysed (importantly these are captured when a business registers for VAT which is required for a business when turnover reaches around £85,000, it therefore overlooks self-employed businesses that are typically “lifestyle” in nature). The figure below illustrates that, following significant falls associated with the recession from 2008 to 2009 rates have steadily increased in both Wiltshire and Swindon, however the rates for Wiltshire fall below the national average suggesting that there is a greater propensity for lifestyle starts in Wiltshire (which may not lead to the need to register for VAT typically found nationally).

Figure 2.2: Start-up rates per 10,000 of working age population

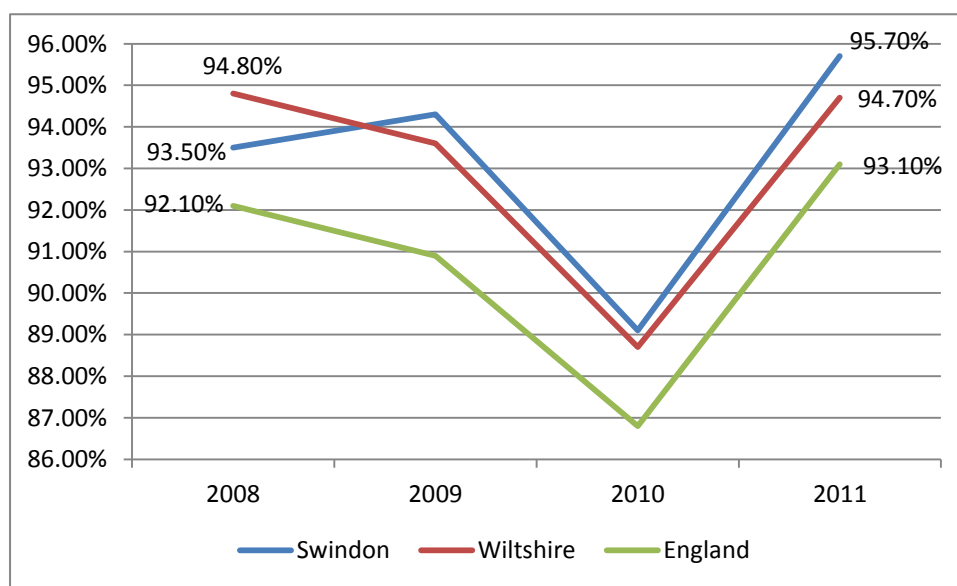


Source: ONS Business Demography and Annual Population Survey

### 2.2.3 Business Survival Rates

Trends in one-year business survival rates have also been analysed by the study team. They show a significant dip in rates in 2010, this may reflect an increase in “necessity start-ups” in 2009 following increased uncertainty and redundancies arising from the recession. The data suggests that survival rates have now recovered to (or beyond) pre-recession levels with both Swindon and Wiltshire enjoying one-year survival rates that are higher than typically found throughout England.

**Figure 2.3: One-Year Business Survival Rates**



Source: ONS Business Demography

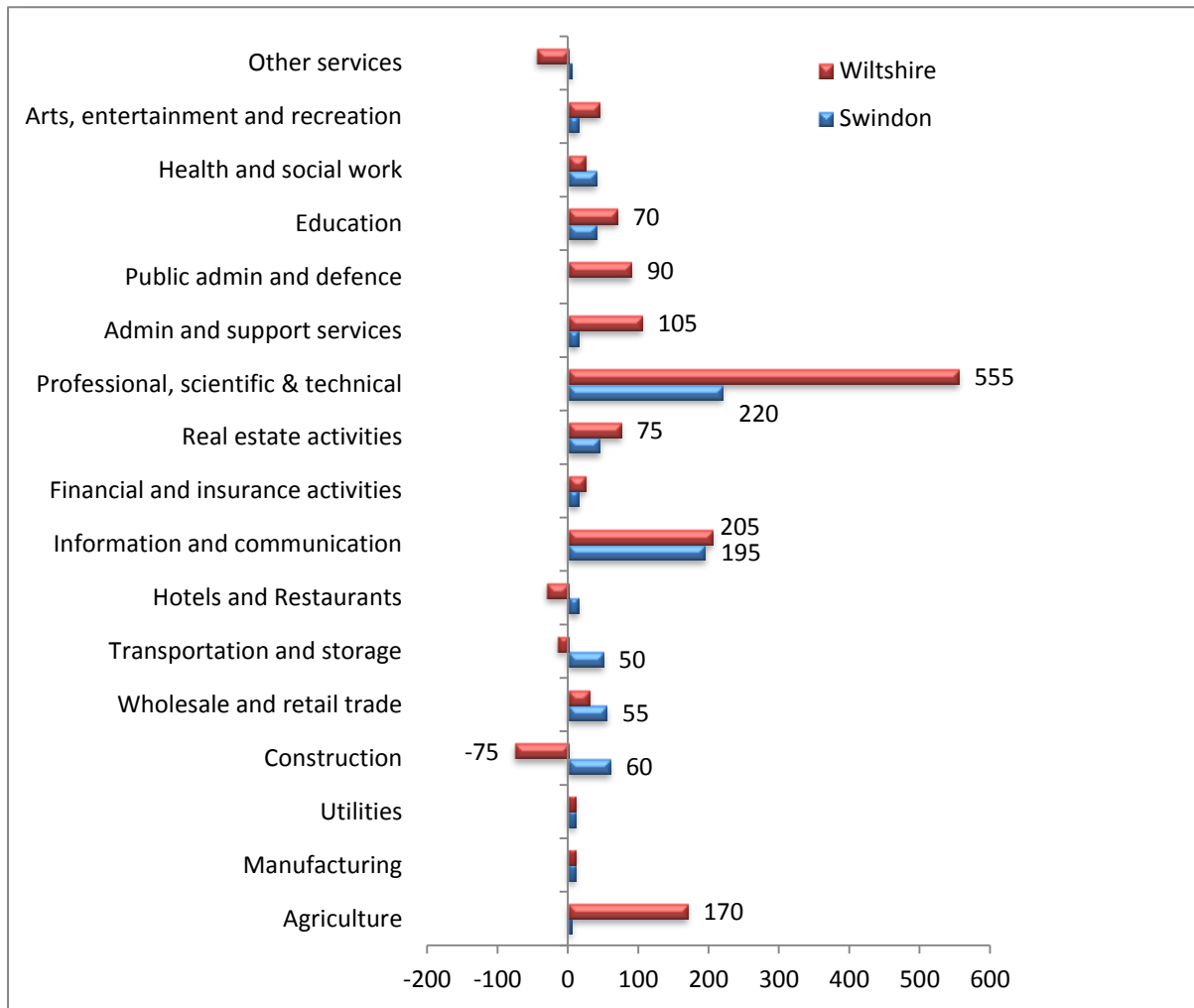
### 2.2.4 Business Stock

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).<sup>14</sup>

In terms of the sectors that are driving this change, figure 2.4 overleaf 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.

<sup>14</sup> Business Counts data from the Interdepartmental Business Register (IDBR)

Figure 2.4: Change in Business Counts (figures provided where change is >50) 2011-2014



Source: Interdepartmental Business Register (IDBR)

Collectively therefore the data for both Wiltshire and Swindon illustrates a strengthening economy with a useful spread of growth across industrial sectors and a strong entrepreneurial culture evident.

### 3 Progress to Date

This section summarises the processes applied in the delivery of services through the initiatives and summarises perspectives of stakeholders on the progress of activity to date, considering the key issues and factors of success encountered.

#### Section summary

- The refurbishment of the four enterprise centres is estimated to have generated a net additional £450,000 GVA for Swindon and Wiltshire.
- The facilities are widely seen as perfectly adequate for start-up businesses.
- The Fire Station in Salisbury has enjoyed the most rapid take up tenancies whilst the other centres have experienced a relatively slow if steady rise in interest.
- Management and governance for both TEN and WBSS has evolved alongside the change in scale and focus of both initiatives.
- The variety of funding involved reflects the range of interested parties at a strategic level. Meeting all their respective wants and needs is considered to be increasingly challenging.
- Nuances in approach have emerged due to remote working across the centre coordinators, however systems and processes have recently been put in place to increase the level of consistency and to encourage the sharing of best practice.
- The location of satellite centre approvals combined with the enterprise centre locations provides a useful geographical spread of facilities across Wiltshire and Swindon.
- WBSS has benefitted from additional contracts which have enabled the enhancement of service offer and market reach. Different funding sources have had varying administrative demands and some have proved challenging to implement.
- There is a perception that marketing for TEN has missed opportunities for coordinated launches. It is also felt that in some instances the roles of TEN and WBSS became a little confused. The addition of other brands associated with support initiatives may serve to further confuse the marketplace.

## 3.1 The Enterprise Network

### 3.1.1 Build Programme

Following the initial submission of an ERDF application in June 2011, the confirmation of funding for the TEN project took longer than expected, which in turn delayed the refurbishment of the facilities at the four sites.

The project team during the refurbishment phase was driven by a property surveyor who oversaw the successful refurbishment of the four centres. Just prior to the completion of the works the surveyor left the council and whilst there was a transfer of knowledge on what had been delivered to date, there reportedly emerged a number of instances where unforeseen issues arose that could have been more easily tackled were a more comprehensive knowledge transfer process applied. This is perhaps inevitable when one individual is centrally involved in all elements of the process but has reportedly led to some lessons learnt in the sharing of information amongst key staff.

The four facilities are located throughout rural Wiltshire and whilst rural areas of Swindon Borough were also eligible for the scheme (indeed this is the one of the first initiatives to be operating across Swindon and Wiltshire following the creation of the Local Enterprise Partnership), a lack of available match funding from Swindon Borough Council and the lack of available facilities meant that no suitable site was identified in the borough for one of the initial four centres (it should be noted that there are plans to invest funding in rural areas through the Satellite Centre grants, discussed later within this section).

### Impact of Works

The refurbishment of the facilities (to April 2014) led to an estimated expenditure of £1.86m on suppliers within the Swindon and Wiltshire area, (the remainder of spend was incurred on suppliers based outside the area). Estimates can be made on the likely contribution of this spend to the local economy based on benchmark figures derived from large bodies of research exploring net additionality<sup>15</sup>. Calculating net additional impact takes into account:

- Displacement – where spend may take market share from other local competitor organisations.
- Leakage – expenditure that leaks out of the geographical area that the investment seeks to benefit.
- Multiplier effect – further economic activity arising from additional expenditure within the target area.

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<sup>15</sup> Research to improve the assessment of additionality, BIS Occasional Paper No. 1, BIS (2009) – benchmarks associated with physical regeneration activities at the sub-regional level were applied in this instance



Collectively these elements led to an estimated net additional £1.4m being invested in the Swindon and Wiltshire economy through the refurbishment activity, the equivalent of an estimated £450,000 net additional GVA.

### 3.1.2 The Enterprise Centres

The initial four enterprise centres are now all open, providing the following services to small businesses:

- Start-up business space with on-site support
- Specialist and generalist advice and guidance
- Hot desks, co-working facilities, flexible offices, and administration services
- Virtual office solution (business mail box)
- Network spaces, meeting and training rooms
- Wi-Fi access and fast broadband connectivity

### 3.1.3 Facilities

In terms of the facilities on offer they are widely perceived amongst stakeholders as fairly basic but perfectly adequate and in being so, perhaps reflect the emphasis on attracting newly started businesses that might not have the financial resources for anything more upmarket.

The sites of the facilities have been called into question by some stakeholders who feel that in most instances they are not ideally located. By way of example, there is a lack of free parking at the Salisbury centre and the centre at Royal Wootton Bassett is considered by some to be at the wrong end of town and may suffer from competition nearby. In addition, some of the furnishings in the centres were considered a little dated. The nature of furnishings and facilities provided in each centre is likely to have helped to keep the costs of refurbishment down, however the facilities need to be offered at a commercial rate to avoid undercutting competitors which may undermine the attractiveness and influence the rate of take up.

### 3.1.4 Enterprise Centres and their Progress

#### Castledown Enterprise Centre, Ludgershall

Castledown Business Centre is located in the south east of Wiltshire, and is surrounded by towns with a significant military presence in addition to a number of military barracks. The centre is the only purpose built business facility of the four, 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, although in recent months there has been an increase in enquiries and also a degree of churn.

Its location ensures that the centre is well placed to serve the ex-military community and three of the four tenants (at the time of consultation) are indeed ex-military personnel.

Some concerns were raised regarding the ability of the service areas within the workspace coping when occupancy rates rise, however all elements meet usual specifications. The potential scale of sound transfer between units was also highlighted as a risk that may heighten as occupancy levels increase.

### Manor House Enterprise Centre, Royal Wootton Bassett



Manor House Enterprise Centre is located in Royal Wootton Bassett 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. After a slow start, the

erection of a promotional sign on the main road outside Manor House has reportedly had a positive effect in raising awareness with additional tenants moving in over the last few months.

There are meeting rooms available at Manor House but enquiries for meeting rooms tend to be seeking larger spaces. There are also reportedly enquiries from community groups for spaces of the size available but these groups aren’t typically the desired core market for these facilities. Furthermore, many enquiries for the facility are for out of hours usage and whilst this is allowable it does demand the signing of quite a lengthy legal document which can be a disincentive to some.

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 and that are also believed to offer more flexible pricing structures.



Whilst support services through WBSS are offered at all facilities, it is understood that the Manor House is least used (of the four) for service delivery.



## 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 is now over 80% full with only some of the larger rooms still remaining. Reportedly there is particular demand for single desk offices at the facility (an issue which is reflected at other centres) and there is a desire to explore the expansion of the centre into the adjacent building.



### **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). The facility has also suffered from a fairly slow take up although once again it has tended to be the one

desk offices that have been the first to be occupied. By having the Chamber and the WBSS offer at the centre it ensures that there is full-time reception and business support on hand.

Interest in the centre has predominantly been generated from footfall passing by, however there is also a desire for more prominent signage and sponsorship on the roundabout of the main road adjacent to the building to help boost levels of interest in the facility. A managed workspace provider nearby has recently been in touch with the team at the centre and has agreed to refer prospective tenants to them if (as is currently understood to be the case) there is insufficient or inappropriate space at their own facility, this should help to boost demand for the facility further.

## 3.2 Management and Governance

The management and governance of both TEN and WBSS has evolved in form and function as the projects have progressed. Initially, a steering group for the TEN project was established, which included a Chair and a Service Director. Once the project had completed its set up phase, the group's role was largely transferred to an Operational Management Team for the construction phase whilst representatives on the steering group were transferred to an Advisory Board which oversees TEN provision (and WBSS provision that is relevant to ERDF outputs or RGN funding) as well as the rural economy grant 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 have also recently been invited on to the Advisory Board.

More widely, as the initiatives have progressed, 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. Swindon Borough Council's involvement has been further aided by the introduction of additional schemes (the Growth Hub for example) which also operates across both Swindon and Wiltshire thereby providing further momentum for activity across the area.

The Operational Management team held meetings that placed an initial emphasis on finalising the completion of the centres. Once the capital works were complete the operational team stopped meeting with day to day issues subsequently managed via the TEN team meeting structure (see section 3.2.1).

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, into the WBSS management group. The management group is comprised of the TEN Project Manager, the Economic Growth Manager (the manager of the WBSS contract for Wiltshire Council), the Director of Business Support at WBSS and the Chief Executive of WACC.

### 3.2.1 TEN Centre Managers

The TEN Team have a monthly management team which is attended by each of the centre coordinators and the TEN project manager. The meetings are typically described as being very lengthy and reflect the challenge of working remotely from each other the majority of time. The remote working has led to nuances in the systems and processes applied in each centre, however there is focus now within the team for seeking increased commonality in approach and sharing of good practice, facilitated in part by the rotation of monthly meetings at each of the centres.

A quarterly progress report is compiled for the Advisory Board, including a budget update and output achievements. This detail is then used to populate the various reporting mechanisms for each funder. Whilst each of the four funders (DCLG ERDF, DEFRA, A4W and SWLEP) requires information in different formats, a common database for output information has been developed, helping to minimise the impact of the administrative demands associated with reporting to these funders.

The variety of funding streams also, however reflects the number of interested parties in this provision and serving the needs of these is a challenge for both TEN and WBSS particularly given the rapid evolution in roles and responsibilities of some of these (which in part are associated with the policy context within which they sit).

### 3.2.2 Facilities and Management of the Centres

Each of the centres is managed by a coordinator who typically works part-time in this role with other elements of their time associated with other aspects of the TEN project. The coordinator is typically seen by tenants as the centre's receptionist and there is reportedly a desire for this role to operate full-time within each facility.

As the enterprise centres are Wiltshire Council owned facilities, any procurement of items needs to go through council procedures which are more lengthy and bureaucratic than a private sector approach. More recently the team have been given greater autonomy for small-scale purchases, however there is in most instances a need to gain three quotes, more generally these requirements challenge the ability of the centres to be flexible and (rapidly) responsive to tenant needs. However, on the positive side, the team benefit from the legal expertise available in the council should any issues arise in relation to late payment or debtors.

There have also been concerns raised regarding an initial lack of flexibility in the pricing structure for the centres (with prices calculated on a cost per desk basis and currently charged out at £50 per week, per desk). It is understood that whilst other commercial centres typically charge a similar rate to the enterprise centres, they also offer significant cuts (usually these are temporary) to entice a potential tenant to sign up, which significantly undercuts the TEN offer. However, in more recent months greater flexibility has been put in place with some potential tenants particularly of TEN enterprise centre offices with multiple desks offered initial reductions in the rents. Without this offer it is felt that the multiple desks provide poorer value for money as the cost per desk formula in isolation of any discount, offers no clear economies of scale.

The space on offer is designed as an incubation offer and theoretically should lead to tenants being encouraged to move on after 18 months, however at the moment contracts are one month rolling. To date the length of tenancy has not been implemented as the rate of take up of space has not warranted this, however Salisbury is now getting to a point where this approach needs adopting to ensure the ethos and the optimum rate of tenancy is retained.

### 3.2.3 Tenant Application Process

Following (typically) a visit to one of the centres, a potential tenant completes an expression of interest for a unit in one of the centres. They are then interviewed by the centre coordinator with the interview including the completion of an application form which is appraised by the TEN project manager and results in the provision of a draft lease/licence agreement which typically operates on a one month rolling basis.

Prospective tenants are requested for a copy of their business plan and accounts (if they do not have a business plan then financial details and plans are discussed). Tenants are required to have £5m public liability (although there is some flexibility for a reduction in this to £2m).

Management information for tenants has, until recently been captured using slightly different processes for each centre; however there has been a thorough process of consolidation undertaken with a shared system being established.

A further development for the system is the provision of room booking capability on the TEN website within the member's area to enable tenants to identify whether a meeting room is available and if so, to book that room. Currently you can enquire about a room but need to wait for a coordinator to get back to you which is less responsive than tenants are likely to desire (particularly as the centre coordinator role forms only part of each staff member's role).

### 3.2.4 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. Some events have been trialled to encourage interaction including the hosting of a beer and pizza Friday which was attended by all tenants at the Salisbury Centre. Tenants have reportedly requested another event of this nature and it is understood that this event has triggered some business collaboration with, for example a brand design company undertaking the branding for two of the tenants whilst another tenant has assisted others with their company insurance.

### 3.2.5 Satellite Centres

Satellite centre funding was not promoted on the open market in order to manage the scale and nature of demand that may be forthcoming and instead focused on promotion through strategic partners of the council. Ultimately this has led to nine expressions of interest of which six were invited to submit an application.



### 3.2.6 Satellite Centre Process

Following receipt of an application they are subjected to an appraisal and technical review. The findings for the appraisal and technical review of applications were then presented to the TEN advisory board for decision. Where the applications were approved further requests were made in relation to a series of pre-contractual conditions.

Once the works commence on the creation of a satellite centre, claims for funding are made following expenditure with, prior to the final claim, a site visit to assess project progress/completion.

All six of the applications have been approved, four of which have commenced, they are:

- Elcot Park, Marlborough - grant of £160,000. Creation of micro-enterprise workspace within the development of a business park.
- Butts Business Centre, Chisledon – grant of £106,780. 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 with completion planned for January 2015.
- Wiltshire College 3D Enterprise Centre, Lackham – grant of 173,214. A technology focused hub at Wiltshire College Lackham campus that will provide 3D design and prototyping facilities for small businesses. It is understood that works have commenced on this scheme with completion planned for October 2014.
- Glove Factory, Holt – grant of £159,925 to create incubation offices for 20 businesses, extending the current Glove Factory site. Works on site are imminent with planned completion by March 2015.

Figure 3.2 on the following page plots the location of the enterprise centres and the approved satellite centres. It illustrates a useful geographical spread of centres with the most significant gap in Devizes, although there is also an unconfirmed agreement for the development of a satellite centre here (further detail below).

Figure 3.2: Enterprise Centre and Satellite Locations



Copyright: Batchgeo 2014

The following projects have also been agreed by the TEN advisory board but the offer of grants has not yet been confirmed as the projects are not quite ready to deliver:

- Wiltshire Council – Shambles Market Hall Devizes - £72,000. Retail specific enterprise centre. Proposal to create centre within rear end of existing indoor market building, four large and 10 small units plus office/hot desk/training room Existing market at front of building to remain. Managed by Wiltshire Council markets team. Likely to be completed March 2015.
- Wiltshire Council – Tisbury Campus Enterprise Centre - £250,000, Old School in Tisbury to be converted into campus site for Wiltshire Council. Plans to convert part of the building into incubation space. Likely to be completed by December 2015.

### 3.3 WBSS

As identified in the previous section, the development of the WBSS emerged in response to a recognition that the loss of Business Link services would lead to something of a vacuum in business support at a time (in the midst of a sluggish recovery from the deepest recession in living memory) when arguably, business would need this support most.

Wiltshire Council secured A4W funding to pump-prime the establishment of this service. WACC had (and indeed has) a well-established network of chambers 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.

The nature of services provided through WBSS have snowballed somewhat 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 and currently there are five business managers geographically spread across Wiltshire that each have an area of specialism/expertise that others can call upon as necessary.

### 3.3.1 Process for Receiving WBSS Support

Initial engagement by a business with WBSS is typically undertaken online (via email) or by phone. If a business manager didn't receive the initial call they will call back at the earliest opportunity or equally will respond by email to clarify their situation and undertake an initial diagnosis of the nature of support they may require. In the majority of instances the business manager will seek to either secure a one-to-one meeting with the enquirer or encourage them to attend an event. In recent months, the latter approach has been the preference due to the limitations of capacity amongst the team and the fact that event attendance provides a more cost efficient method of engagement.

Once a full diagnostic has been delivered the businesses are referred to specialist service providers (if appropriate) to deliver support (including, for example, specialist support with the assistance of the specialist business advice grant) with the retention of a relationship from the business manager with that client. In this way the model offered by WBSS is similar to the information, diagnostic and brokerage model developed through Business Link. In this respect the WBSS typically describe themselves as a GP's surgery and the team look to offer a 'no wrong door' approach and will refer to other support provision where appropriate.

### 3.3.2 Progress in Delivery

WBSS initially offered 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 additional contracts that have been secured have led to specialist provision, largely targeted at existing businesses and priority groups. The increased presence and awareness of WBSS has led to a steady increase in demand for the service. The challenge of capacity brought on by the additional demand is enhanced by the fact that additional contracts have been secured with an emphasis on service delivery (rather than additional staff resources) and that there is one vacancy in the team. However with regards to the vacancy the current Wiltshire Council contract is due to finish at the end of March 2015 and whilst there are plans to extend the contract for a further 12 months, the nature of services delivered through that contract are still to be finalised and could lead to significant changes in the approach adopted.

The additional contracts secured by WBSS have brought with them challenges, particularly in terms of adhering to the differing levels of administrative demands that European funding in particular brings with it. This in turn has demanded something of a reallocation of resources to meet the administrative needs of other funding, compared to the comparatively flexible Wiltshire Council reporting requirements that the WBSS initially commenced with.

In terms of the breadth of support on offer, it is felt that, if a continuum of support is demanded for all businesses then there is something of a shortfall in provision for small and medium sized enterprises (those organisations with over 10 employees). Although the challenge of engaging growth businesses (or businesses with growth aspirations) has been partly addressed through the provision of grant aid (both through SBAG and the Gateway for Growth programme).

### **Specialist Business Advice Grant**

The Specialist Business Advice Grant (SBAG) offers grant support (up to £1,500) to businesses seeking specialist advice to aid the growth of their business. The WBSS administer the programme on behalf of Wiltshire Council, they assess the needs and recommend the required specialist support and then businesses submit their applications which are then appraised by the TEN team.

There has been high demand for the scheme with applicants required to initially apply for funding and then to submit a second stage application, which includes the quote for works and evidence that they have considered three different suppliers. In a small minority of instances there have been rejections for applications where the approach doesn't fit with the criteria, for example the grant is not able to support staff training as this investment may be lost to the area (if a staff member leaves following the training) and also if there is insufficient content in the application.

Where funding is approved the business then pays for the advice and then claims the grant from WBSS, submitting evidence of cost and expenditure, and evidence of advice given (e.g. marketing strategy), outputs and outcomes.

Mixed messages and challenges with monitoring the progress and scale of grants offered heightened the risk of promotion of the grant when no funding remained. It is reported that some promotion may have continued when no funds remained, however once confirmation of funding had been received all web-based references to the scheme were amended. The risks associated with the model of delivery have raised some learning points for Wiltshire Council where they are the accountable body, about delegation of the administration of a small grant scheme to another party. The nature of this relationship is something that will be explored in further depth as part of the final evaluation.

## Rural Economy Grants

The rural economy grants offered through the Rural Growth Network are subject to a separate evaluation, however it is understood that the fund has 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 and the website.

### 3.4 Progress against Targets

Table 3.1 overleaf summarise the performance of the TEN project against profile. It should be noted that the year three performance is based on six months of activity only and therefore whilst historically the project has performed below target, the rate of performance has accelerated significantly in the latest year and is likely to surpass the annual profile for this year. However even with performance forecast to over achieve against profile this year, it would still appear a significant challenge for the project to meet the full project output targets against each indicator.

Project results and impacts are likely to emerge towards the end of the scheme so will be explored in greater depth as part of the next phase of the evaluation.

The performance against the Rural Growth Network targets within table 3.2. on the subsequent page presents a positive picture with outputs at or above profile. This performance reflects on the successful delivery of the Rural Economy Grants and the Specialist Business Advice Grants in particular and is also likely to reflect slight nuances in what is defined as a business assist (with a six hour threshold required for the RGN and a 12 hour threshold required for ERDF).

The final table illustrates performance against the WBSS contract. The table summarises the headline targets on the contract and illustrates that whilst the team are a little short on the number of clients supported, they are ahead of profile on the other contract targets.

Table 3.1: Wiltshire Incubation Environment (The Enterprise Network) Outputs

Core Outputs								
	Actual: year 1	Profile: year 1	Actual: year 2	Profile: year 2	Actual: year 3 <sup>16</sup>	Profile: year 3	Actual: year 4	Profile: year 4
Number of businesses assisted to improve their performance		60	57	120	85	120		
Number of new businesses assisted (subset of businesses assisted)		8	15	15	6	15		
Number of env. tech & renewable energy bus assisted (subset of businesses assisted)		2	1	12	0	12		
Number of firms involved in collaborative research & development projects (subset of businesses assisted)		6	0	12	0	12		
<b>Results</b>								
Gross new jobs created		10	65	35	0	35		35
Gross research jobs created		2	0	4	0	6		4
Number of additional firms involved in business clusters & networks		10		25		25		
Number of patents, other IP and other IPR devices used		2	0	5	0	5		
Number of SMEs launching new or improved products		5	0	15	0	20		
Gross increase in GVA						£2.8m		£1.2m
Gross jobs created in environmental sectors			2	6	0	8		8
<b>Impacts</b>								
Net additional employment				10		18		40

<sup>16</sup> Based on only 6 months of delivery in Year 3

Table 3.2: RGN Output Performance

<b>Core Outputs</b>								
<b>Common Outputs</b>	<b>Actual: year 1</b>	<b>Profile: year 1</b>	<b>Actual: year 2</b>	<b>Profile: year 2</b>	<b>Actual: year 3</b>	<b>Profile: year 3</b>	<b>Actual: year 4</b>	<b>Profile: year 4</b>
Existing businesses assisted*		10	77	90	86	90		10
Individuals assisted to start a business			35		14			
No. of women-led businesses assisted			34		36			
Jobs created			65	70	0	70		10
Networks created and/or individuals engaged in a network		2	2	4	1	1		
Floor space developed (sq m) OR			1308	1,978	670			
Floor space developed (sq ft)			0		0			
<b>Additional Outputs</b>								
Increase in % of rural women self-employed						34%		38%
Operational incubation/enterprise centre		2	2	4	1	1		

Table 3.3: WBSS Performance against selected output indicators to March 2014

<b>Core Delivery</b>	<b>Profile 2012/13</b>	<b>Actual 2012/13</b>	<b>Profile 2013/14</b>	<b>Actual 2013/14</b>	<b>Profile Programme (2012-2014)</b>	<b>Actual Programme (2012-2014)</b>	<b>% Actual profile</b>
Total pre-start/start-up/ enterprise clubs individuals supported	812	447	612	670	1424	1117	78
Total courses/events held	30	30	18	56	48	86	179
Total businesses created	133	128	120	142	253	270	107
Total jobs created	146	172	165	196	311	368	118
Total existing businesses supported	240	410	240	668	480	1078	225

### 3.5 Marketing

Perceptions with regards to the marketing of the TEN project in particular were varied. Some stakeholders perceived marketing activity to be working well, aided by the commissioning of an external communications consultant to lead on promotional activity across the TEN project. A communications strategy has been developed with a diverse range of marketing and promotional activity planned, including press releases and case studies of participant businesses. There are also plans to include an events calendar on the website for the remainder of the project and the streaming of events to other centres has also been trialled with plans to repeat this process. However other respondents typically described missed opportunities for promotional activity including the lack of a specific launch for the project. Some also referred to an aversion to the branding and a lack of effective integration in relation to the provision of events at each centre. Some also queried the extent to which the offer is promoted through WBSS Business Managers although it is reported that referrals for prospective tenants have come through these routes.

The holding of events at the centres has typically been considered a useful marketing opportunity for both TEN and WBSS, however there have been concerns that sometimes when these are evening events in particular, the centres aren't fully prepared for the event or do not look particularly inviting and in being so are unlikely to attract prospective tenants. There has also been some confusion as to who should lead on the promotion and running of events, either WBSS (through the business manager dedicated to this role) or TEN centre coordinators.

Several stakeholders referred to a website for TEN being insufficiently visible with a lack of an automated system for booking meeting rooms and hot desks as well as the lack of a reception offer. Equally concerns were raised about the online promotion of WBSS and whether it was sufficiently distinctive from WACC which some stakeholders felt may, through association with the chamber, be a disincentive to engage with the service.

#### **Branding**

The variety of projects and funding streams that have emerged as WBSS and TEN have progressed has led to growth in the number of brands associated with business support in Wiltshire, an issue that the WBSS in particular initially sought to address. There is further danger of proliferation of publicly funded business support via central government schemes (the Growth Hub for example) and, for example through the Rural Development Programme, which may only serve to increase the danger of confusion in the marketplace.



The perceived extent to which a variety of confused branding and terminology has an impact on prospective clients was varied however it would appear from an external perspective entirely probable that the range of offer, brands and terms applied to publicly funded business support in Wiltshire and Swindon would ultimately confuse some businesses. Some stakeholders also felt that dual-branding of provision (WBSS and WACC) would also serve to confuse potential customers of the WBSS service, with a desire expressed that is avoided where possible.

### 3.5.1 Priority Groups

Two priority groups have been identified for the targeting of services via the TEN project; military leavers and women who are considering starting or indeed have started in business.

#### **Military Leavers**

Thousands of troops are moving from bases in Germany to expanded and newly built bases in Wiltshire with an expectation that military numbers will be expanded by around 3,000. It is reported that around 1,400 wives/spouses of the military will also be moving back from Germany with over half expected to be looking for some form of employment or self-employment. These figures collectively suggest a significant increase in demand for employment amongst both military leavers and their spouses, thereby justifying a targeting of these groups.

TEN has actively sought to target military leavers; however the support infrastructure is reported to be rather complex with a number of different organisations involved. The TEN project has sought to build and strengthen links with this support infrastructure (including the Defence Infrastructure Organisation, the Military Civilian Integration Partnership, the Army Families Federation and the Careers Transition Partnership) to provide the route to engagement with these groups and good progress has been made. TEN has also been promoted in national magazines targeted at military leavers to help promote the centres and support available.

In terms of facilities Castledown is perhaps best placed for military leavers given its proximity to army personnel and leavers and has secured tenants that are ex-military. The opportunities arising from military spouses provided a useful alignment to the other priority group for the project, women.

## Women

Women were identified as a priority group for the project reflecting the fact that they are under-represented as business owners, (in 2013 they were the majority owners of an estimated 32% of start-up businesses and 19% of all SMEs).<sup>17</sup>

A series of networking events have been held for women, with the programme of events undertaken in collaboration with WBSS having been well attended suggesting significant demand for this offer and the continuation of women led events is planned for the project. In addition the AFF has been cooperating with TEN and together have organised a women in business event specifically targeted at military spouses.

## 3.6 Forward Strategy/Sustainability

### 3.6.1 TEN

Looking forward, the Enterprise Network planned for financial sustainability after three years of operation, which on current forecasts would appear an ambitious objective (albeit one that typifies externally (public) funded incubation schemes).<sup>18</sup> Challenges in achieving financial sustainability have been enhanced by delays encountered in the works for the centres in addition to a slower than planned rate of take up of tenancies in some centres. This profile of tenancies is not consistent however with one centre, the Old Fire Station, Salisbury having benefited from a rapid take-up of tenancies and plans are currently being considered for the extension of that facility.

The original business plan profiles a part-time coordinator role for each centre. The economic development officers appointed with the centre coordinator function within their role are full time and higher skilled (and therefore it is assumed on a higher pay scale) than profiled in the business plan, but have been required to support the broader delivery of the TEN project. The TEN project manager is currently in the process of compiling a business plan with an initial view to secure additional funding for another three years from Wiltshire Council which as part of that planning, will take into account the role of centre coordinator.

One aspect of concern for the future of the facilities is that much of the refurbishment of the centres was undertaken for meanwhile use, with the acknowledgement that several of the centres would require significant investment to maintain them long term. The scale of this investment is likely to have an influence on whether these centres are retained within the council. Alternative options could include their transfer to a trust/arms-length delivery organisation or their commercial sale.

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<sup>17</sup> Small Business Survey 2012, Department for Business Innovation and Skills

<sup>18</sup> The UKBI Business Incubator Managers Handbook (2009) refers to evidence which suggests that business incubation needs 7-12 years to become self-sustaining – a lot longer than the 2 to 3 years that most funding is available for from the public sector

An additional focus for the project moving forward is to establish how the enterprise centres and satellite centres network effectively together, including consideration for the application of a consistent corporate offer within each centre.

### 3.6.2 WBSS

In terms of business support, a critical element that may influence the nature of support offered to Wiltshire businesses is the nature of schemes funded through the emerging ESIF programme. This programme, driven by SWLEP is informed by the SWLEP's Strategic Economic Plan and it is evident currently that both the ESIF and the Strategic Economic Plan place greater emphasis on growth orientated investment, with a reduction in focus on business support to the mainstream. Equally there is likely to be a tension in terms of supporting the very differing needs of Swindon as a major urban conurbation and the rural areas of Wiltshire.

## 4 Participant Perspectives

This section reviews feedback from participants of the TEN project and the WBSS. A telephone survey of 100 participants were undertaken, 50 of these had received intensive support (either at least 12 hours of support or grant aid and therefore benefitting from both WBSS and TEN) and 50 that had received less than 12 hours of support (and therefore benefitting only from WBSS support).

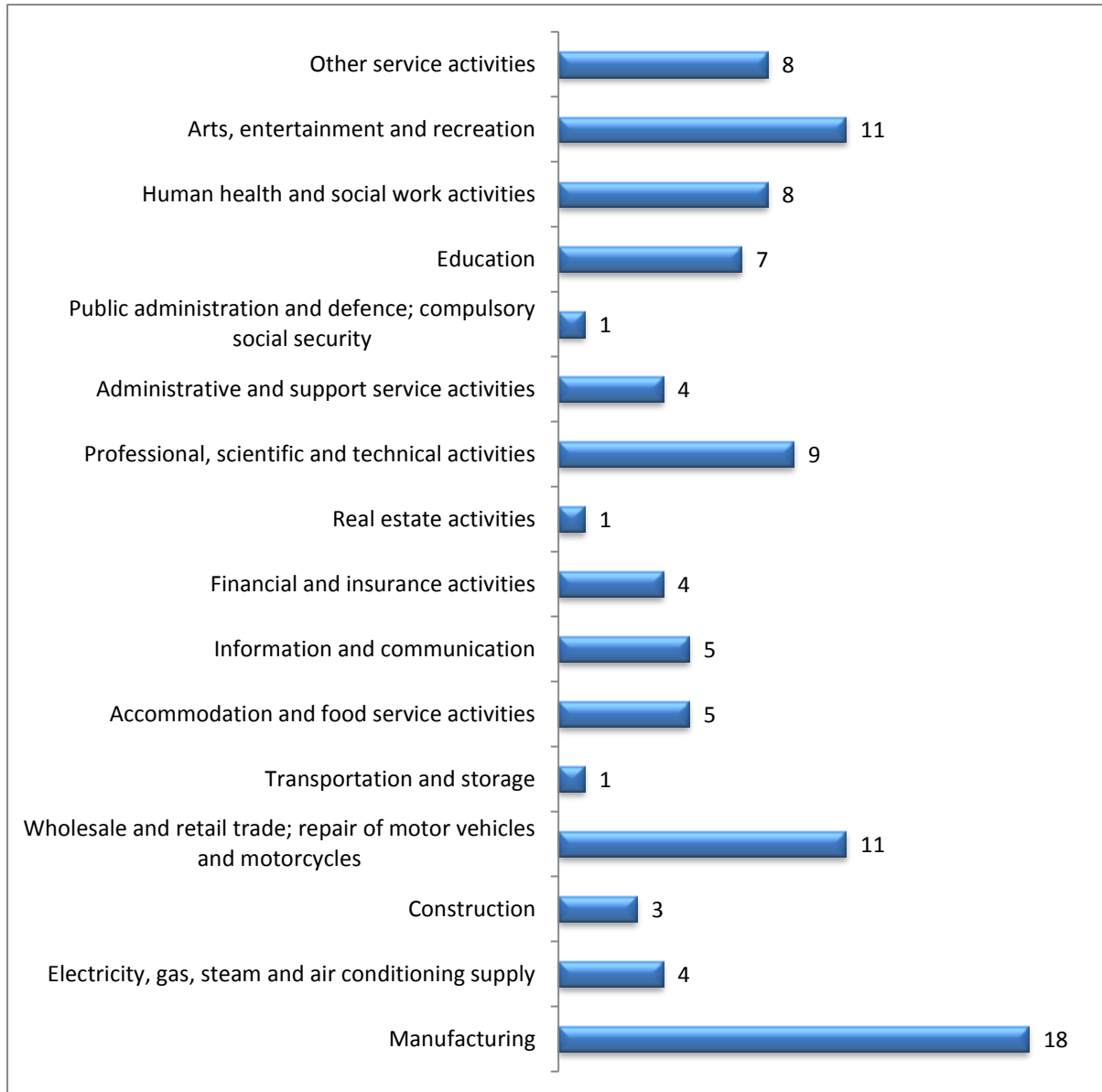
### Section Summary

- The Chamber of Commerce was the most common route to engagement amongst participants of the WBSS service.
- Besides business advice, support to obtain finance was most commonly referred to as the reason for engaging with WBSS.
- The support received from WBSS was rated highly (typically eight out of ten).
- Suggested improvements typically related to enhanced promotion of the offer, the provision of more detailed information about support, increased follow-up by business managers post support and enhanced to the networking activities.
- Respondent businesses most typically referred to the support impacting upon their business planning, business confidence and marketing skills as a result of the support they have received.
- In terms of tangible, economic impacts, thirteen of the fourteen businesses that responded to the survey who have experienced employment growth since engaging with the support attribute the growth in employment, at least to some extent, to the support that they have received.
- Tenants of the centres most commonly chose those sites due to their location and cost
- The majority of tenant businesses are micro-businesses with less than five employees, with half of the respondents staffed in entirety by employees living in Swindon or Wiltshire.
- Feedback on the centres from tenants was very positive and particularly so in relation to the professionalism of enterprise centre staff.

## 4.1 Business Background

Ninety-three per cent (93/100 of the respondents were senior representatives or owners of the business (Managing Director/Partner/Director/Owner).

**Figure 4.1: Sector of Respondent Businesses**

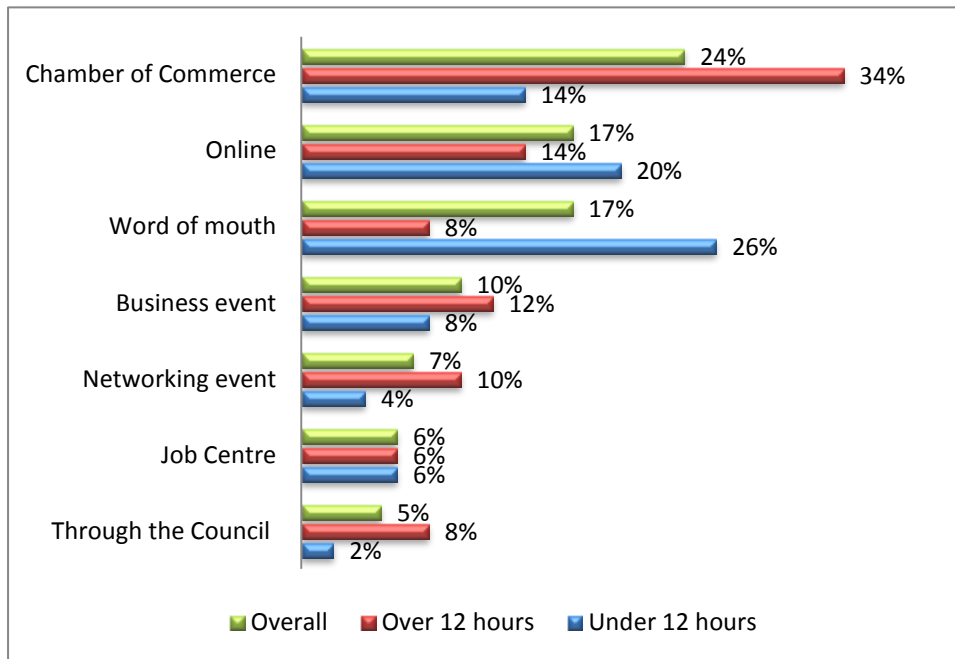


## 4.2 WBSS

Ninety-nine of the one hundred respondents confirmed that they had received support from WBSS.

Of those who responded to the survey, 28 had not started their business when they first engaged with WBSS.

Figure 4.2: How did you find out about the support available?



When asked how effectively the support is promoted the majority 55% (44/80) said very good or good, a minority 16% (13/80) have described promotion as poor with several referring to the difficulties in finding the service on the internet, whilst others felt that they wouldn't have found out about the service at all without the referral that they had received.

Besides business advice and support obtaining finance was most commonly referred to as the reason for engaging with WBSS

When asked what support they had received, the majority (73% had received one-to-one advice, rising to 84% when specifically analysing those that had received in excess of 12 hours of support) whilst 60% had attended a workshop. Peer-to-peer networking (35% of respondents) and support to apply for finance (31% of respondents) were also common elements of support received by respondents.

#### 4.2.1 Specialist Business Advice Grant

Twenty-nine respondents had applied for a Specialist Business Advice Grant, 81% of these described the process of application as straightforward and 90% of respondents had been successful with their application. When asked what the grant had been used for the majority 57% (16/31) sought branding/marketing advice, whilst 39% used the grant to either build or improve their company website.

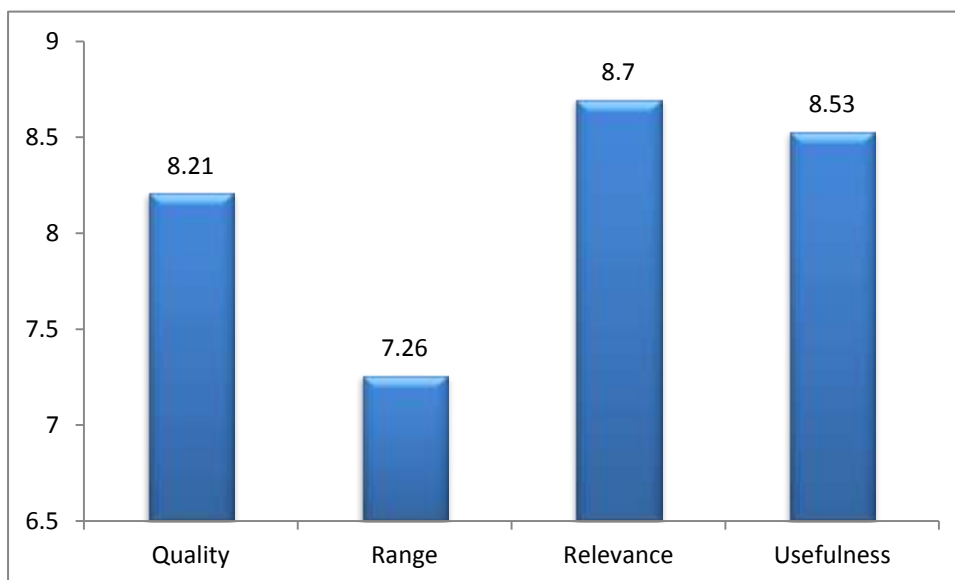
Three-quarters of those who secured the grant described it as very useful (all bar one of the remaining respondents described the grant as quite useful).

#### 4.2.2 Best elements of support

When asked which elements of the WBSS service were most useful the one-to-one support was most commonly referred to (33% of all respondents), although this is likely to be a conservative estimate as others referred to the task undertaken rather than the process through which the support was delivered (by way of example – help with business plan and marketing advice were cited by a further 14% of respondents). Networking and events were also popular, with 19 % of respondents citing these elements of support as the most useful, whilst 12% of respondents referred to the financial support that they had received.

Finally, respondents were asked to rate the support that they had received from WBSS out of 10. Ratings were typically high, with a mean average of 8.1 out of 10 across all elements of support. Respondent businesses were most positive about the relevance of the support (8.7 out of 10).

**Figure 4.3: How would you rate the support you have received from WBSS in terms of...?**





Some of the comments in relation to why they scored support so highly included the following:

**Quality**

*"It was very useful and once we start trading we'll be presenting our business model, it's giving us a lot of confidence that we can do this and that our idea is viable."*

**Range**

*"There is nothing I can think of that isn't there that I'd want."*

**Relevance**

*"Everything they said, even though they don't have first-hand knowledge of what I do, all of it was relevant and adaptable, about paperwork, networking etc."*

*"It was all very relevant especially the advice on social media."*

**Usefulness**

*"The business growth training was exceptionally useful and they have offered lots of follow up and back up support, they are well established within the business and networking communities and they have welcomed us in and been extremely supportive. It's really helped me to compartmentalise on things like cash flow and plan out my next year because they covered all the key areas and did this very well."*

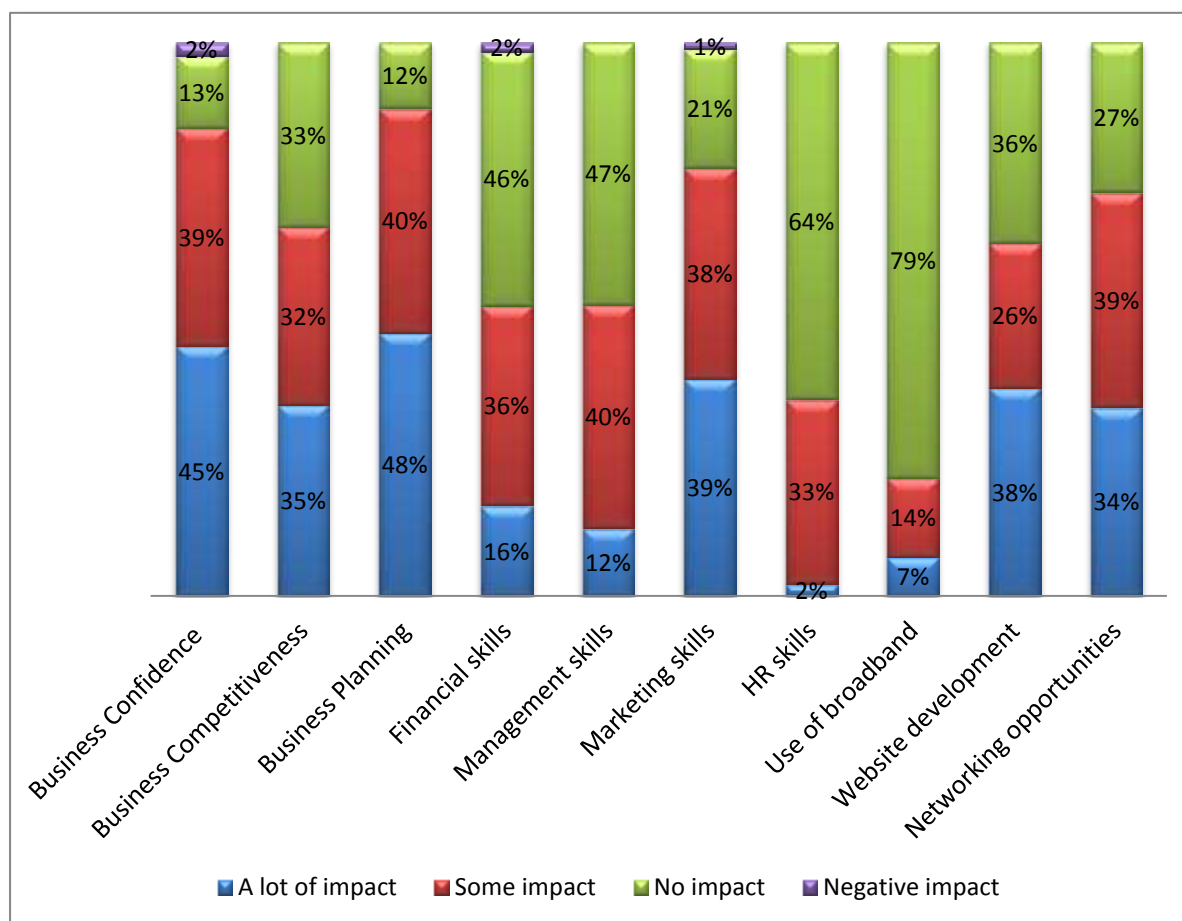
When asked if there were any elements of WBSS support that could be improved, just over half (56%) provided a response, (full details on the comments received is contained in Appendix 2), the most common elements that respondents referred to were:

- **Information provision** 18% (10/56) – particularly more information on the various services on offer and also in terms of the provision of update information to businesses on new initiatives once they are engaged.
- **Promotion** 13% (7/56) – A desire for increased promotion of the offer with several being unaware of the service prior to a referral to the support.
- **Follow-Up Support** 13% (7/56) – Respondents typically were impressed with the support they received but felt that follow-ups from their mentor/advisor would be welcome to help check on their progress.
- **Networking** 13% (7/56) – a desire for an increased number and/or greater spread (in terms of geography and time of day) of networking opportunities, two respondents also felt that the events themselves could be more professionally run.

### 4.2.3 Impact of the Support

Respondent businesses were asked what impact the support had on various elements of their business and figure 4.4 below illustrates that business planning (88% of respondents citing at least some impact) business confidence (84% of respondents citing at least some impact), marketing skills (77% of respondents citing at least some impact) and networking opportunities (73% citing at least some impact).

Figure 4.4: What impact has the support you've received had on your...?



When asked if they would refer others to the support, 96% of respondents (95/99) confirmed that they would and when asked if they knew that the service was a Wiltshire Council initiative, 90% confirmed that they did.

When asked about feedback on the enterprise centres, only two of the respondents were tenants in the centres, whilst a further respondent referred to visiting the centres for events. Consequently no specific analysis has been undertaken on this feedback given the numbers. Feedback from tenants of the centres has also been captured via the centre coordinators and this is explored later within this section.

### 4.2.4 Economic Impact – Pre-Start Businesses

Twelve respondents businesses that had received intensive support were pre-starts when they initially engaged with WBSS (representing 24% of all businesses in receipt of intensive support). Ten of the twelve respondents felt that the support impacted on them starting their business and eight of these felt that the support had accelerated the start-up of their business. When asked for what reasons the service accelerated business start-up comments included the following:

*"It made me more confident and motivated to go and do it, it made me put in place the things I needed to do and got me focused."*

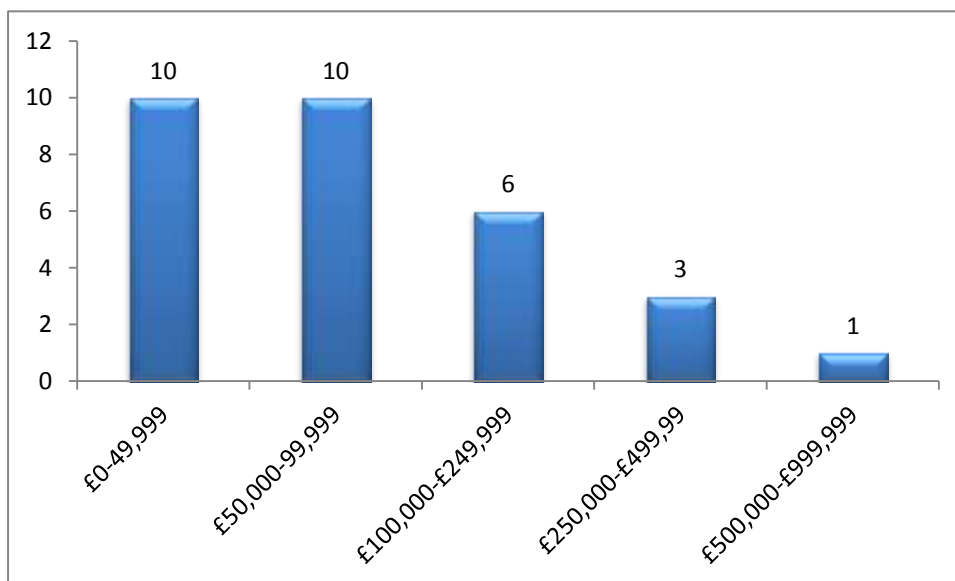
*"It gave the brand identity and therefore I was able to start. They provided this in a quick and effective manner."*

*"The training helped you focus your mind more, by having the course you concentrate on the tasks you need to undertake rather than procrastinating."*

*"I wouldn't have gone ahead without their help."*

Of those intensively assisted through the project, 68% (34/50) have completed a financial year in their business. Using a combination of actual turnover figures and estimated figures it is evident that the majority of businesses were of a very small scale when they first engaged with WBSS, with two-thirds of those who responded (20/30) with turnover less than £100,000.

**Figure 4.5: Can you recall the approximate turnover of your business when you first received support from WBSS?**



Respondents were then asked what their turnover is for the latest financial year and when comparing turnover change for respondents where turnover was provided for both years (for 21 respondents) there has been a 41% growth in turnover from a mean average of £111,000 to a mean average of £157,000.

Fifteen of the 24 respondent businesses (63%) who had started receiving support in excess of 12 months previously and had completed a financial year felt that their turnover would be lower were it not for the support that they had received through the project.<sup>19</sup>

Twenty-two of the 50 respondents (44%) employ someone in their organisation, with eleven being the highest number of employees reported. Two-thirds of these businesses have grown in employment terms since receiving the support (14/22,) with thirteen of the 14 attributing the growth in employment to the support they have received to some extent.

### 4.3 Tenant Survey

A survey was distributed to tenants of the four enterprise centres, twenty tenants responded with the following rates of response:

- 100% Manor House Enterprise Centre, Royal Wootton Bassett
- 72% White Horse Enterprise Centre, Trowbridge
- 27% Old Fire Station, Salisbury
- 100% Castledown Enterprise Centre, Ludgershall

Tenants were asked for how long they had been trading, the responses were polarised with half the respondents having been trading for 12 months or less, supporting the desire for the facilities to be taken up by start-up businesses, whilst 45% of respondents had been trading for in excess of five years.

When asked why they had chosen the centres, the most popular responses were the cost (9/20) and the location (9/20), whilst a further three respondents referred to the flexibility on offer in terms of the scope to grow within the centre.

Eight of the 20 respondent tenants have multiple sites for their business; three of the businesses have sites outside Wiltshire, whilst one has an international presence with a site in Toronto.

In terms of business size, the majority of tenants are micro-businesses and have less than five employees, however four businesses have in excess of 20 staff, whilst one has 260 employees (clearly not all the employees are based within the centres). With regards to employment directly within the centres the respondent businesses collectively account for the on-site employment of 26 staff, with tenant businesses having created an additional 14 jobs over the last six months.

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<sup>19</sup> The proportion of businesses who have provided sufficient evidence for a GVA assessment are very small (11 respondents) so this element has been overlooked for this phase of the research

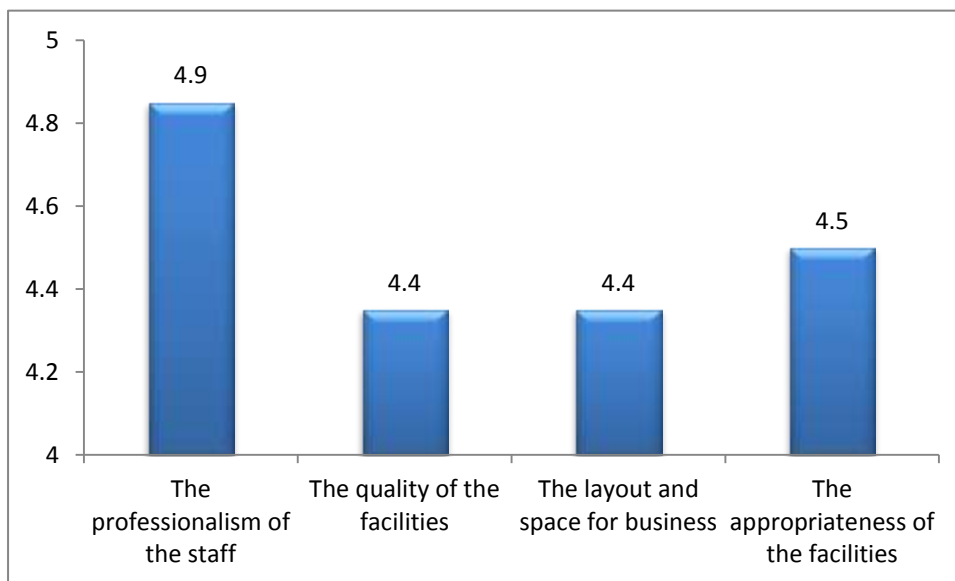
Ten of the respondent organisations are staffed in their entirety by employees based in Swindon or Wiltshire, with only four of the tenant businesses with less than half their employees living there.

Tenants were asked about the geographical markets that they operate in, over half 53% (10/19) of the respondents generate at least 75% of their sales within Swindon or Wiltshire, whilst four respondents generated less than 10% of their sales within the area.

Tenants were asked what services they had used at the enterprise centres; three quarters of the tenants had used the meeting rooms, whilst 60% of respondents had used the networking area. Half of the tenants had attended events, but only six tenants (30% of respondents) had used WBSS support.

Tenants were asked to rate the centre out of five (one being low and five being high) against a series of elements. Figure 4.6 below illustrates a high rating across all elements and particularly so in relation to the professionalism of the staff at the centres.

Figure 4.6: How would you rate the centre out of five (1 being low and 5 being high), in terms of...



N = 21

The respondent tenants when then asked a series of open answer questions including “over the last quarter how, if at all, has the enterprise centre contributed to your company’s success?” Comments included the following:

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

*“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.”*

When asked what they perceived the key strengths of the Enterprise Centre are, comments included:

*“Location, cost, centre manager is great ambassador for enterprise centre & TEN.”*

*“There is a good sense of community and like-minded fellow professionals which doesn't make you feel as if you are working alone. The co-ordinator and WBSS work hard to make it an enjoyable atmosphere to work in.”*

*“Facilities are excellent, co-location with Chamber of Commerce / WBSS very helpful.”*

Tenants were asked what ways the enterprise centre could improve its overall service, the most common issues referred to were car parking and the need for a barrier, whilst several referred to the need for a more rapid response to repairs and maintenance issues that arise.

## 5 Summary of Findings and Recommendations

### 5.1 Overview

#### 5.1.1 TEN

After a slow start gaining the funding approval for TEN the refurbishments of facilities have progressed well and the recent allocation of satellite centre funding will provide a useful geographical spread of facilities across Wiltshire and Swindon.

The opening of enterprise centres have typically been low key and has necessitated a building of momentum in terms of awareness raising of the facilities on offer. This may in part reflect on the slow rate of take-up of offices in three of the four centres, whilst in Salisbury the centre is now close to optimum capacity (typically described as around 85% full).<sup>20</sup> Equally, whilst there is a feeling that take-up of office space has been largely of a slow pace evidence<sup>21</sup> suggests that business incubation needs 7-12 years to become self-sustaining and some may never reach this position. Whilst these timescales would suggest that the rate of uptake in the centres is perfectly normal, the centres have opened in the midst of rapid growth in the rate of self-employment which would suggest increased demand for facilities of this nature.

Until recently, the centre coordinators have been working somewhat remotely from each other, which has led to nuances in approaches and processes applied. Monthly meetings that are rotational around each centre, compared with the development of shared management systems should help to increase the level of collaborative working and sharing of practice/approach in each centre.

#### 5.1.2 WBSS

The WBSS commenced with pump-prime investment from A4W at a time where public austerity was beginning to take hold. The decision to invest at this time reflects the priority attributed to this offer and the success of the service has led to the attraction and subsequent investment of other funding sources to enhance the WBSS offer and the scale of market that it serves.

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<sup>20</sup> Peter Harman Chief Executive of UKBI, Better Business (2013)

<sup>21</sup> UKBI Business Incubation Managers Handbook (2009)

Whilst the additional contracts secured have clearly brought opportunities to further the market reach of the WBSS offer, they have also brought in some instances, an additional administrative burden which the WBSS team were typically unprepared for. The additional contracts have also been delivery focused, so typically have offered limited scope for the appointment of additional staff. Securing the additional contracts has helped to increase market presence, which in turn has influenced the level of demand for services. However, the increased demand has brought with it a challenge of continuing to serve businesses with their model of support (which encourages the use of one-to-one engagement and advice) and has led to the increased use of a one-to-many approach.

In this context, the shift in approach is inevitable and perhaps will be driven further towards a more selective offer depending on what resources become available in future months.

## 5.2 Management and Governance

Structures for the management and governance of the initiatives have evolved to reflect changes in the initiatives as they have progressed and also changes in the administrative structures for economic development (in particular as LEPs have gained a more central role in local economic development).

The move to a Swindon and Wiltshire model for management and governance has not been without its challenges, particularly due to the differing needs of the two areas with, aside from the issues of rurality, Wiltshire having a greater propensity for start-up businesses within its economy, whilst Swindon has more of emphasis on medium-large scale enterprises). These challenges therefore are unlikely to dissipate as the nature of provision to be funded through the Structural Funds begins to take shape.

### **Recommendation**

That a smooth transition of provision funded through the ESIF in Wiltshire and Swindon is sought with, clear signposting (if required) to emerging schemes should service provision and/or providers change.

#### 5.2.1 Marketing and Branding

The introduction of additional funding projects and programmes has brought inevitable issues with branding. However, prior to the introduction of these there has been some element of confusion between the role played by TEN, by WBSS and by WACC.

Whether businesses suffer from any complexities arising from these brands is difficult to judge. However, the addition of the Growth Hub and initiatives arising through the Structural Funds and those that continue to emerge from central government are likely to increase the chances of confusing the marketplace.



### **Recommendation**

That the roles of TEN and WBSS are consistently applied across the initiatives with little or no fluctuation (so as to avoid any internal confusion on roles and responsibilities).

That a consistent and recognised brand for business support is used across all business support initiatives to provide some coherence to the marketplace and, where possible, that dual WACC-WBSS branding of services is avoided.

### 5.2.2 Forward Planning

Financial sustainability for the enterprise centres was planned for three years after their refurbishment, this is ambitious in these timescales and there are now plans being considered for Wiltshire Council to continue to subsidise the centre offer up to 2018. Whilst this would appear a sensible approach, there remains an underlying need for more significant investment in the refurbished facilities which have maintenance requirements that may undermine the offer within each facility.

There is also consideration for the limited flexibility and responsiveness that centre management provides where ownership sits within the local authority and for these centres to operate commercially and to compete with the existing offer, they may need to be outsourced to a commercial operator.

### **Recommendation**

For the forward strategy for TEN to be explored in greater depth as part of the final phase of the evaluation.

There is also a desire for the satellite centres to network closely with the existing enterprise centres on their completion. This would appear ambitious particularly where the satellite centres are extensions of an existing and (to an extent) competitive offer.

### **Recommendation**

There is a need to manage expectations of the scale of collaboration that may arise and to work with each satellite centre to work out both, what type of collaboration would be feasible and mutually beneficial for the centres and particularly the tenants residing within those centres.

For WBSS the turbulence in terms of policy and provision makes any forward strategy difficult to compile, however once initiatives begin to emerge through ESIF it will be important that the offer dovetails with that provided through the existing contracts.

### 5.2.3 Methodological Recommendations for the Final Phase

The phase one evaluation has provided some useful findings for the evaluation and the next and final phase will shift towards more of an emphasis on the impact arising from the initiatives. With this in mind it is useful to consider any changes to the methodological approach for the next phase.

Surveying 50 businesses intensively assisted provided an insufficient body of evidence to provide a judgement on net additional GVA at 12 and 24 months. Also, some of the evidence would suggest that the two datasets used in the survey were not as clearly delineated as hoped between intensive and non-intensive services. In addition, information on the centre where each tenant is based will aid the analysis of any centre based trends that may exist.

***Recommendations***

That the number of businesses surveyed to incorporate a GVA assessment to be doubled (at least) to provide the necessary body evidence to make a judgement of net additional GVA arising from the support received (this would be aided by a more comprehensive capture of baseline data on GVA).

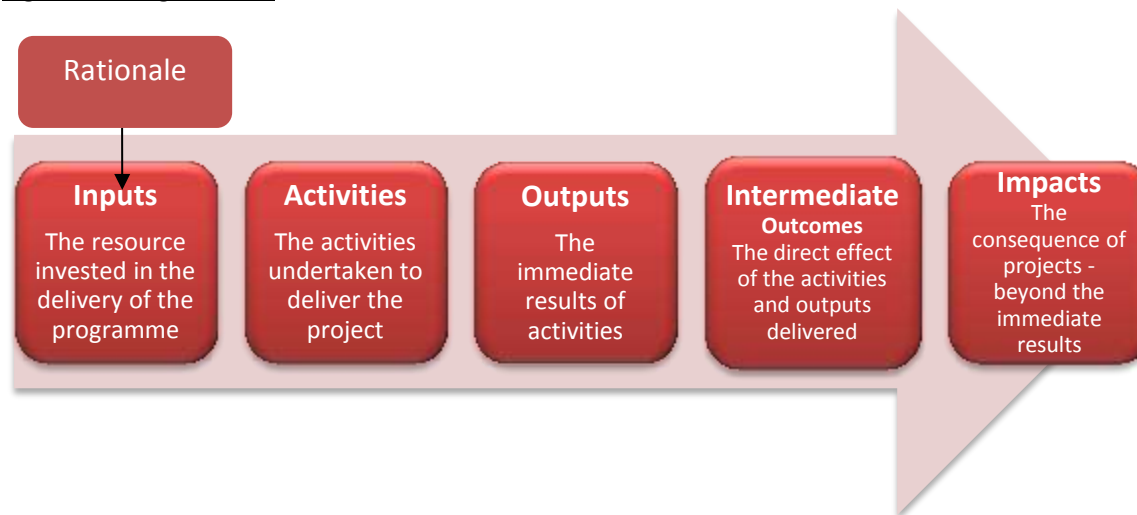
That the enterprise centre where a tenant is based is captured on the tenant survey to enable any trends to be explored.

## Appendix 1 – Logic Model and 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



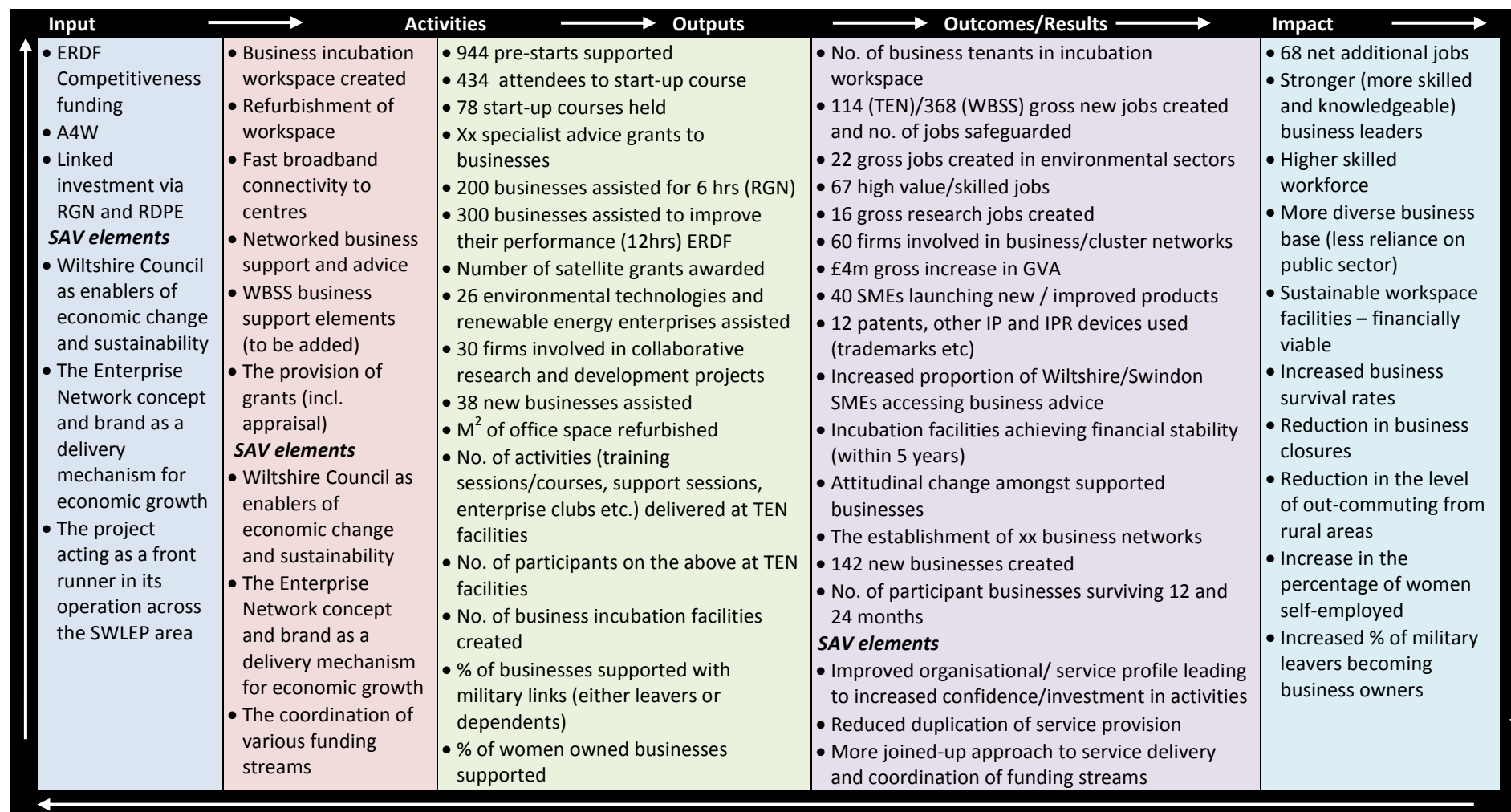
The evaluation framework aims to identify the most suitable research topic areas and (based on resource availability) methodological approaches to measure the various outcomes and/or impacts mapped through the logic chain and the extent to which these can be attributed to the intervention.

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 as 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.



## Process Evaluation Framework

Issues	Topic areas/Questions	Method /phase
Strategic fit <sup>22</sup> and added-value <sup>23</sup> (of activity)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In what ways does the various aspects of the Enterprise Network and WBSS align with recent and emerging policy?</li> <li>2. What is the impact of the changing business support environment, in the context of the forthcoming European Structural Investment Fund?</li> <li>3. To what extent has the Enterprise Network concept and/or the WBSS addressed any duplication and confusion within the marketplace?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Stakeholder consultations - strategic, mgmt &amp; delivery, document review (Ph1)</li> <li>2. Stakeholder consultations - strategic, mgmt &amp; delivery (ph1 &amp;2)</li> <li>3. Stakeholder consultations - strategic, mgmt &amp; delivery, desk based research/document review (Ph 1&amp;2)</li> </ol>
Management & delivery of the project	<p><b>Management and Governance</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What management and governance arrangements are in place for The Enterprise Network and its constituent projects?</li> <li>2. How effective has the management and governance been to date?</li> <li>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?</li> </ol> <p><b>Partnerships and Collaboration</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How does the project work with other projects or organisations, if at all, in the area?</li> <li>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)?</li> <li>3. What challenges, if any, have emerged from working in partnership? How have any such challenges been overcome to date?</li> <li>4. Is there anything you feel could be done to improve partnership working still further for the remainder of the delivery period?</li> <li>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?</li> <li>6. How, if at all, would it have been possible to develop relationships with projects or organisations further?</li> </ol> <p><b>Delivery (general)</b></p>	<p><b>Management</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Stakeholder consultations - mgmt &amp; delivery, document review (Ph1)</li> <li>2. Stakeholder consultations- mgmt &amp; delivery (Ph1 &amp;2)</li> <li>3. Stakeholder consultations - mgmt &amp; delivery (Ph1&amp;2)</li> </ol> <p><b>Partnerships and Collaboration</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Stakeholder consultations - Mgmt &amp; Delivery and document review (Ph1)</li> <li>2-5 Stakeholder consultations strategic, mgmt &amp; delivery (Ph1&amp;2)</li> </ol> <p>6. Stakeholder consultations: mgmt &amp; delivery (Ph1&amp;2)</p> <p><b>Delivery (general)</b></p>

<sup>22</sup> Definition: avoid duplication and support / complement other activities

<sup>23</sup> 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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What have been the key strengths or success factors from a delivery perspective to date?</li> <li>2. What are the weaknesses or potential gaps in provision?</li> <li>3. Any external factors that have affected delivery?</li> <li>4. What more could have been done, or with hindsight what would you have done differently?</li> </ol> <p><b>Process</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Outline the processes involved in the delivery of the service.</li> <li>2. What systems are used to capture client information and when is this data captured?</li> <li>3. How are tasks allocated/duties delegated?</li> </ol> <p><b>Business support</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Is the business support considered relevant, useful and accessible?</li> <li>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 &amp; Wiltshire?</li> <li>3. Is the customer journey clear for beneficiaries and what has the customer experience been?</li> </ol> <p><b>Brokerage/specialist support</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What has been the customer experience for business advice and support brokered to other specialist providers?</li> <li>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?</li> </ol> <p><b>Specialist advice grant</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Does the delivery approach adopted for the specialist advice grant add value?</li> </ol> <p><b>Enterprise centres</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do the centres provide the right type of business environment? Logistically – in terms of layout and space for businesses?</li> <li>2. Are there appropriate facilities – (especially ICT, e-conferencing, etc), and is the setting right for the types of beneficiary business users?</li> <li>3. Do the facilities represent good value for money given the budget that was available for them?</li> <li>4. Is the price appropriate?</li> </ol> <p><b>Monitoring</b></p>	<p>1-4 Stakeholder consultations - mgmt &amp; delivery) (ph1&amp;2)</p> <p><b>Process</b></p> <p>1-3 Stakeholder consultations - mgmt &amp; delivery) (ph1)</p> <p><b>Business Support</b></p> <p>1-3. Stakeholder consultations - mgmt &amp; delivery), participant surveys (ph1&amp;2)</p> <p><b>Brokerage/specialist support</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Participant survey (ph1 &amp;2)</li> <li>2. Stakeholder consultations - mgmt &amp; delivery) and participant survey (ph1&amp;2)</li> </ol> <p><b>Specialist advice grant</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Stakeholder consultations - mgmt &amp; delivery) and participant survey (ph1&amp;2)</li> </ol> <p><b>Enterprise Centre</b></p> <p>1-3. Stakeholder consultations - mgmt &amp; delivery, site visits, participant monitoring and participant survey (ph1&amp;2)</p> <p>4. Stakeholder consultations, participant monitoring (ph1&amp;2)</p> <p><b>Monitoring</b></p>

Issues	Topic areas/Questions	Method /phase
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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?</li> <li>2. What systems are currently being used to capture and monitor client data /receipt of services, where is the customer data held?</li> <li>3. How effective do you find the current monitoring approaches?</li> <li>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?</li> </ol> <p><b>Future elements</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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?</li> <li>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?</li> <li>3. What is the forward strategy for these schemes?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1-2. Document/desk based review and Stakeholder consultations – mgmt &amp; delivery (Ph1 &amp;2)</li> <li>3. Stakeholder consultations – mgmt &amp; delivery (Ph1)</li> <li>4. Stakeholder consultations – mgmt &amp; delivery (Ph1&amp;2)</li> </ol> <p><b>Future elements</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1-3. Stakeholder consultations strategic, mgmt &amp; delivery (Ph1&amp;2)</li> </ol>
Assessment of the capital aspect of TEN (i.e. four centres and satellite grants)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How were the four centres identified? What was the rationale for these locations?</li> <li>2. What procurement approach was used for the refurbishment of these facilities?</li> <li>3. Did the process of refurbishment progress as planned/expected?</li> <li>4. What factors (internal and external), if any affected the completion of the refurbishments?</li> </ol> <p><b>Marketing and promotion</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What marketing/promotional activities have been undertaken prior to and following the completion of the refurbishments – how effective has this been?</li> <li>2. What level/pattern of enquiries have been received for each facility?</li> <li>3. How did you become aware of the availability of this space?</li> <li>4. Are there appropriate facilities – (especially ICT, e-conferencing, etc), and is the setting right for the types of beneficiary business users?</li> <li>5. Is the price appropriate?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1-4. Stakeholder consultations strategic, mgmt &amp; delivery (Ph1&amp;2)</li> </ol> <p><b>Marketing and Promotion</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Stakeholder consultations mgmt &amp; delivery (Ph1&amp;2)</li> <li>2. Stakeholder consultations mgmt &amp; delivery (Ph1&amp;2)</li> <li>3. Participant survey (occupiers) (Ph1&amp;2)</li> <li>4. Participant monitoring approach (continuous)</li> <li>5. Participant survey (Ph1&amp;2)</li> </ol>

## 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	<p><b>General impact questions</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the gross economic impact of the TEN/WBSS project? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessing impact of refurbishment spend</li> <li>Assess catalytic impact of presence of workspace</li> <li>Impact of the services provided in the centre for those in receipt and particularly tenants of the centres</li> </ul> </li> <li>What proportion of the gross impact is attributable to each additionality component (deadweight, leakage, displacement and substitution)? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilising self-assessment of attribution and benchmark figures in addition to the application of IEF questions</li> </ul> </li> <li>What is the counterfactual scenario? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Derived from self-assessment of additionality</li> </ul> </li> <li>What is the net economic impact of the project (having considered multipliers)?</li> <li>Has the project delivered value for money? (Application of cost effectiveness analysis – not applicable to apply Return on Investment approach)</li> </ol> <p><b>Disentangling interventions</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Which elements of the support have been most useful/impactful on your business, why?</li> </ol>	<p><b>General impact questions</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analysis of primary research and desk based review of monitoring data (Ph1&amp;2)</li> <li>1-3. Participant Survey, Analysis of primary research and desk based review of monitoring data (Ph1&amp;2)</li> <li>4. Impact analysis (ph1&amp;2)</li> <li>5. Impact analysis, cost effectiveness analysis and desk based research for comparative assessment where appropriate (Ph1&amp;2)</li> <li>6. Participant surveys (ph1&amp;2)</li> </ol>



Issue/Objectives	Questions	Method(s)
The evaluation needs to investigate and report on the initiative's less tangible benefits	<p><b>General - WBSS</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In your opinion, do you think any particular elements of WBSS intervention have a greater impact on the beneficiary?</li> <li>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?</li> <li>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?</li> </ol> <p><b>General - Enterprise Centres</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do beneficiary perceptions of their own business performance change when using the centres? What is the effect on business confidence and productivity?</li> <li>2. Are there different benefits between resident businesses based at centres and non-resident businesses using centre facilities on a regular or irregular basis?</li> <li>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?</li> <li>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.</li> <li>5. What are the customer experiences of being part of a network as opposed to working in isolation i.e. in their own homes?</li> </ol>	<p><b>General</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Stakeholder consultations mgmt &amp; delivery (Ph1&amp;2)</li> <li>2. Stakeholder consultations Strategic, mgmt &amp; delivery (Ph1&amp;2)</li> <li>3. Stakeholder consultations strategic, mgmt &amp; delivery (Ph1&amp;2)</li> </ol> <p><b>Enterprise Centres</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Participant survey (Ph1&amp;2)</li> <li>2. Participant survey and data analysis (Ph1&amp;2)</li> <li>3. Participant survey (Ph1&amp;2)</li> <li>4. Participant survey and stakeholder consultations - mgmt &amp; delivery (Ph1&amp;2)</li> <li>5. Participant survey (ph1&amp;2)</li> </ol>
What is the projects strategic added value?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What impact did the pump-priming investment via A4W in WBSS have on the success of the Enterprise Network?</li> <li>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?</li> <li>3. To what extent does provision offered through the Enterprise Network duplicate existing services?</li> <li>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?</li> <li>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</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1-5. Stakeholder consultations - strategic and mgmt &amp; delivery (Ph1&amp;2)</li> </ol>

## Appendix 2 – Open Answer Responses to WBSS Improvements

**Are there any aspects of the WBSS support that could be improved? If yes, what and how?**

- *Providing basic skills and signposting where to find information about these skills - introductory skills*
- *What they offer is really relevant, and they genuinely care about my business*
- *I wasn't sure of the process and the criteria against which an application would be assessed against in the beginning. But maybe they weren't either as the support had only just been set up. It was effective, I was just a little uncertain initially*
- *No, it's just that people don't know about it, I've recommended it to a few people*
- *The support didn't address any of the specific needs of my business, but I appreciate that would be very hard to do as there's a range of different businesses receiving support but as a generic service it is excellent*
- *There should have been a follow-up after the course, especially for individual traders who don't have that much support*
- *The time it took from the application going in to getting the approval for funding. Should have been 7-10 but it was more like 21-25 days*
- *From what we have seen everything is fine, we would like to see more banking advice regarding funding and more funding available to small businesses*
- *I remember thinking that she offered one-to-one after the workshop which I would have taken up but I didn't hear from them again, so a follow-up would be good*
- *I'm seriously interested in starting a business and on the course/seminar I went on a lot of people were sent there from the Job Centre as they were looking to do something part-time like a little craft business. It should be sifted so as you're in a group of people wanting to start serious businesses, so they're not such diverse groups. I've not found it particularly helpful, I found the seminar online but there used to be a series of free things you can go to, now all I've seen are courses you have to pay for*
- *I wish there were more networking event in my local area*
- *If they took a greater interest in the totality of the business and try to find other ways in which they could support or suggest improvements so a more holistic approach*
- *The introductions could be shortened during the talks*
- *The allocation of the one-to-one support, we didn't have any and weren't offered any*
- *A follow-up from the initial one-to-one session would have been very helpful*
- *The cost of some of the courses was very expensive if you're just starting up and you have no income. If there's any way to lower those costs it would be appreciated but it's understandable and I'd rather have the good quality and pay. It would be nice to maybe offer three courses free to beginners*
- *The availability of additional support on-line or the advertising of it at the very least because I wasn't aware of much of it beyond the advert I saw on the Wiltshire Council website*
- *I applied to go on a seminar about social media but it was full and so if they could allow greater numbers on the talks or put more on so everyone could have the chance to go on the seminars*
- *The one-to-one advisers should have business sense and know what they're talking about*
- *The application process, they insist on having hard copy signatures which is a lot of hassle*

- *When people start a new business, normally they aren't very clued-up on what they're walking into. We find that when we come across an issue, we turn to them for support and get the advice necessary. If they'd given us some sort of outline beforehand of what we were to expect, so we're ready if issues arise, that would of been something really beneficial, as well as knowing what to expect with the tax man*
- *The forms for the grant were a bit complicated*
- *I think there could be handouts of the most frequently asked questions at the workshops, so everything's covered*
- *Maybe a bit more variety on workshops*
- *We would like the mentors to follow-up on aspects that were promised*
- *We've got two employees now and that was one of the most challenging things in terms of not knowing how to run a recruitment process initially and writing a job spec, this would be an excellent bit of support and things like where it's worth advertising and where it's not and how to lay out an advert - there's a lot of stuff like that that no-one tells you. It would be useful to have some kind of business coaching*
- *With regard to the funding it would be more helpful to have more detailed feedback on why an application was unsuccessful*
- *Maybe a bit more information and contacts for me to help set-up my business - like who to contact in the council*
- *More networking events would be brilliant, maybe a variety of times for it*
- *To make people aware of the support available because I only knew about the grants through our website company, I wasn't aware of the other support or the Enterprise Network*
- *It would be nice if the WBSS could provide a booklet for people starting-up their own businesses to let them know what help is on offer. It could include a checklist for each area to let them know what's on offer for each area of service e.g. marketing, website development etc. arranged by what they need to prioritise*
- *Possibly could be made more widely available to tap into. Needs to be advertised more*
- *There seemed to be a lot of people involved with the project, I think they could reduce it to about a half*
- *I am a very small business, the funding is match funded and I didn't have the £500 to put up in order to get it, I need a good website but don't have the money to get a grant to get one. I thought it was all theory and no actual practical support*
- *They have a huge job to do in a limited amount of time with limited resources, and they do a fantastic job. Because of this I'll only contact them when I absolutely have to, if they had more funding to provide more advisers they wouldn't be as stretched and I would probably use them more*
- *Some aspects of the Rural Economy Grant could be improved especially having to claim back, it creates a real problem for small businesses in terms of their cash flow. If the council could find a way to cover small businesses it would make a huge difference, but I appreciate that's difficult. If you achieve a grant you could also achieve a number of free training days to support small businesses*
- *I would've liked the support mentors, who you have the one-to-one discussions with to have a wider range of people that they can suggest or refer to me, outside of WBSS*
- *The networking events need work, they were not organised very well. I felt that they weren't proper networking groups, there was no rotation so I wasn't able to speak with people who might have been useful to my business and the ladies networking event was more like a coffee morning, I feel it needs to be a bit more professional and a more serious feel*

- *There could be more follow-up so you have it on paper what's been discussed and you can go back to it. They could also tell you what's available, maybe they could set up a hub on the internet and so you could log in and find out what's going on*
- *I'm in manufacturing, the basic business course I went to had the same modules as what anyone else would've had, someone with a manufacturing background should help and mentor. The course is good because it gave me a bigger picture about the start-up of the business but when you leave the course they should fine tune the mentoring*
- *I found out about it in a roundabout way, so they need better promotion*
- *The service should sign-post businesses to funding that is available from all agencies nationally, not only the finance they can provide, and I don't feel that the service tied in with other aspects of Wiltshire council activity like the area boards also they could introduce us to businesses in our area not only at networking events and they should introduce similar or complementary businesses to each other*
- *The application process could be improved. Make it more straightforward and make it possible to do online, this would be easier and would be less time consuming.*
- *They need to improve their communication as I did most of the chasing, but I understand that they have limited time with each company*
- *Their communication and they should stick to the timetable they've agreed to*
- *There should be more industry specific groups in the networking events*
- *They should make people more aware of the support and advice that's on offer and the grants they can have and achieve, there should be better promotion*
- *The workshops and seminars could roll into networking sessions and they could get people to show us how it should be done*
- *They could keep me informed about what's going on*
- *There could be a bit more time available to help. I was impressed with the support I was given on the marketing front but I feel like it was given and then not followed-up. It would be nice if they were a bit more proactive in checking*
- *The only thing would be the amount of time the application process took, and the fact that the support was very hard to find out about. They should target small businesses and let them know that help is out there*
- *It's too tied in with the Chamber of Commerce and they keep changing their prices and it's getting too expensive to join, and the way the money is distributed by the government is very confusing. The service seem to spend money on feedback and admin rather than the support itself. There should be money available to be spent on machinery and practical things rather than getting advice. The expos that the WBSS have are too inward looking and trying to get Wiltshire to trade to Wiltshire, they need to look further afield, and they need better quality advisers*
- *Maybe they could check up on people and businesses every six months to see what progress people have made and to address any issues with the business*
- *The networking event could have been arranged better and they could market the service better as a lot of companies didn't know about what was on offer*
- *If I hadn't been referred to the service I wouldn't have known about it, so maybe they could promote the service better*



wavehill

research  
evaluation  
surveys

01545 571 711  
[info@wavehill.com](mailto:info@wavehill.com)  
[www.wavehill.com](http://www.wavehill.com)