

Phoenix Development Fund: Themed Report Summary

Themed Report Title: Sectoral Perspectives

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Context

Eight projects took a sectoral approach to delivering enterprise support to communities in disadvantaged areas. Three were aimed at enterprises in secondary shopping areas where people from Black and minority ethnic groups dominated, two provided support to industry sectors popular with women from disadvantaged communities and three projects provide specialist support in the arts and cultural industries located in areas of regeneration.

Lessons Learned

Projects report that generalist business advice was often not appropriate for clients who needed sector-specific support. As not all mainstream support agencies and institutions can provide sector-specific specialist advice, this has implications for partnerships and for sign-posting clients.

Despite some elements of project 'overlap' in terms of the target groups, operational networking between sector-based PDF projects was largely on an informal basis and could have been exploited to a greater extent.

One project reported the need to greatly improve their professionalism in order to develop and support a more rationalised business based model of social franchise, as well as being able to use *aspects* of the franchising model to assist *individual* designer-makers.

Outcomes/Findings

By forging close links with critical community partners and local and regional business support agencies, one project was able to develop a well researched and respected, easy to access practical food relevant business start-up training programme, backed up with access to regulatory bodies, finance and shadowing opportunities.

Another project developed a well-researched engagement strategy that focuses on two key areas of activity - client recruitment, and service delivery. Their outreach methods include working through a network of local creative hubs and with affiliate partners like Train 2000, particularly those in poor communities around Merseyside. They also provide taster and awareness sessions, use community-based facilitators and creative ambassadors

One creative industries project was able to build on a successful 10 year track record of showcasing and specialist sector expertise to develop an on-line and off-line marketing and PR campaign. The website receives over 1 million hits monthly.

additional social and economic spin-offs are variously described as:

- increased local supply and trade through specialist supply chains and cluster groups
- boost to local wealth creation, jobs and skills base
- providing greater choice via a community-based service
- increasing and widening participation for enterprise gap groups
- benchmarking the demographic profile of direct and indirect beneficiaries
- developing cultural assets: principally a) local cultural producers; local physical cultural infrastructure (eg venues, galleries etc), and cultural diversity (ie the range of artistic sub-cultures represented)
- pride of locality living; increased visitor attraction; more role models
- additionality to manufacturing skills and specialist heritage.

Useful points for the Project

The projects claimed their success was based upon a set of relatively simple principles:

- Establish the credibility of the service: eg by ensuring service has appropriate sector and local (and where appropriate, national) knowledge, recruiting specialist staff, finding out about local peculiarities of market place.
- Raise awareness with other agencies: eg use of networking and establishing themselves within the wider business support sector, being clear about their areas of expertise.
- Use direct approaches: eg 'door knocking' and continuous outreach programmes, 'taster' sessions, effective local (and national) PR and innovative literature, website (some also utilised Freephone as well as computer-to-mobile communication).
- Develop referral mechanisms: eg accessing clients via an effective referral network through other service providers, PDF project sign-posting to other appropriate services, encouraging 'word of mouth' referrals from satisfied clients and key members of community groups.
- Develop sector-specific and/or local supply chains: eg sourcing and developing quality training, one-to-one support from pre- to post-start up, continuous client evaluation processes, sector specific shadowing and mentoring.
- Use sector- or locally based collective marketing initiatives: eg street fairs and festivals, trade shows and for a couple of projects, effective e-commerce and supportive virtual incubation

Policy and Service Delivery Implications

Creativebias brought together a wide range of business support elements in a **'braided' approach** to ensure that cultural industries entrepreneurs have the support they need along the route to business start-up. Based on a service matrix, the model links the project into affiliated specialist and generic support programmes already being offered or in development from other local and regional initiatives. This reduces duplication and maximises the resources available to businesses from a wide-range of sources.

RR project used a **multi-agency approach** to ensure that businesses and entrepreneurs could access stress management training, personal health advice, hazard management training (for restaurants in North West London), security measures and crime prevention initiatives (including 2-way radios).

BEST model **prioritised three themes** to ensure coverage of the needs of local enterprises – area-wide marketing initiatives, business development and property & environment support

Actions for Engagement

- Development of the "Eastside Designers' Forum" a platform for discussion and debate about the fashion industry.
- Consultations about area action plans as a mechanism for engaging with local businesses, gaining community involvement in decision-making and promoting 'ownership' of activities by local people
- Development of local traders' associations, during which the project team guided the development of an internet-based group purchasing scheme through which retailers collaborate
- Development of a cluster café concept to support start-ups; a range of project literature; toolkit for advisers; start-up information for new clients, and a very well constructed and engaging website.
- Creation of a range of web-based tools from web design support to contract advice, with online business support and start-up packs for commercial businesses, and social enterprises in the pipeline.