

Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund (CWGLEF) – Cultural Pillar Evaluation

Final Evaluation Report



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West Midlands
Combined Authority

West Midlands Combined Authority

CWGLEF Cultural Pillar Evaluation

Final Evaluation Report

March 2025

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This document including appendices contains 99 pages

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Executive Summary

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Executive Summary

i. Background

AMION Consulting have been commissioned by West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) to undertake an evaluation of the Cultural Pillar of the Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund (CWGLEF).

The £70 million Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund (CWGLEF) was secured by the WMCA from the government to build on the legacy of the 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games. As part of the Fund, the WMCA Culture Pillar has received £4.1 million in revenue funding to support the West Midlands cultural sector; provide more opportunities for people to engage with cultural activities; and promote the region internationally. The Cultural Pillar's programme ran until the end of March 2025 with activities including double-devolved grants for place-based activities focused on culture and heritage, artistic commissions to be created alongside local communities, business support schemes, and skills and training opportunities.

The overarching aim of this commission is to deliver an evaluation of the Cultural Pillar of the CWGLEF programme to inform the WMCA's Culture and Creative Industries team's future activities and meet reporting requirements to DCMS on the delivery of the fund. This evaluation is focused exclusively on the Cultural Pillar of the CWGLEF with a separate evaluation being prepared for the overall programme.

ii. Method

The evaluation aims to answer the following research questions:

1. Has it produced the short-term and medium-term outputs on a project-by-project and programme basis?
2. Has the CWGLEF Cultural Pillar delivered value for money?
3. To what extent did the CWGLEF Cultural Pillar achieve its five objectives (with a focus on diversity)?
4. What contributed to the success/shortcomings of the CWGLEF Cultural Pillar in achieving its outputs, objectives and value for money?
5. What lessons can be learned and recommendations made for future programmes?

Our mixed-method approach has consisted of primary data collection (surveys, interviews, workshops), secondary data collection (cost and output monitoring), and economic modelling through Social Cost Benefit Analysis SCBA). Overall, our evaluation utilised the following data collection methods:

- Cost monitoring data from WMCA, local authority partners and other key delivery partners;

- Output monitoring data from WMCA, local authority partners and other key delivery partners;
- Findings from the comprehensive engagement process consisting of interviews or workshops with over 30 stakeholders including the WMCA project teams, local authority project teams, training facilitators, workshop leads, creative commission partners, and placemaking activity partners; and
- Findings from a wide-ranging beneficiary survey programme consisting of the following:
 - 986 cultural event attendees;
 - 264 cultural event participants;
 - 105 charities, freelancers, and businesses receiving grant support;
 - 89 freelancers or businesses attending training courses;
 - 42 attendees to a West Midlands cultural symposium; and
 - 10 charities partaking in the Creative Futures campaign

iii. Evaluation findings

The CWGLEF Cultural Programme successfully delivered against its key objectives, exceeding output targets and generating meaningful cultural and economic benefits across the West Midlands. Despite challenges such as tight funding timeframes and evolving project scopes, the programme demonstrated adaptability and efficiency in delivering impactful activities that engaged a broad audience.

A key achievement of the programme was its ability to exceed initial expectations. Attendance at festivals and events reached 56,767—more than double the original target of 23,960. Similarly, 725 performers, freelancers, and artists received direct support, nearly four times the anticipated number. Additionally, 943 individuals participated in training courses, significantly surpassing the target of 328. These outcomes highlight the programme’s ability to enhance **cultural engagement** and sector development across the region.

Business growth and **creative sector resilience** were also key areas of impact. Seventy small businesses/freelancers received grant support, exceeding the target of 50, while training opportunities extended across 20 local authorities – far beyond the initial scope of seven. Additionally, the double devolved grants to local authorities facilitated 41 festivals and events, more than 50% above target.

The strong performance of the Cultural Pillar against its key objectives is presented below:

CWGLEF Cultural Pillar – Assessment of Key Objectives	
Objective	Assessment conclusion
A. Development of strategic frameworks for culture & heritage creating focused regional priorities and increasing the ability to attract further investment.	Fully met
B. Increasing cultural engagement, community cohesion, and social value through interventions that create more opportunities for residents to engage with a relevant and co-created cultural offer.	Fully met
C. Increasing civic pride and supporting culture-led regeneration, including high streets and existing cultural infrastructure.	Fully met
D. Increasing the resilience of the West Midlands cultural sector and creative freelancers.	Fully met
E. Ensuring the West Midlands cultural sector is globally connected and to develop new business opportunities.	Partially met

An assessment of value for money has been undertaken in line with Green Book and Magenta Book guidance. As can be seen below, **the CWGLEF Cultural programme has an BCR of 1.43:1, indicating ‘acceptable’ value for money.** The non-monetised benefits assessment indicates that the value for money of the scheme is likely to be greater than the BCR suggests. In particular, capacity building and image improvements for the West Midlands are likely to deliver substantial non-monetised benefits in the long-term.

Overall, based on the monetised and non-monetised impact assessments, the CWGLEF Cultural Pillar falls within the ‘**acceptable to medium**’ category for VFM.

CWGLEF Cultural Pillar – Evaluation Summary Table	
	CWGLEF Cultural Programme
A. Present Value Benefits (£000s)	£5,996
B. Present Value Costs (£000s)	£4,194
C. Net Present Social Value (A-B, £000s)	£1,799
D. BCR (A)/B)	1.43:1
E. Significant non-monetised impacts	Capacity building Image / perceptions
F. Value for money category	Acceptable to medium

Beyond the numbers, the programme made progress in promoting diversity, inclusion, and accessibility within the cultural sector. A focus on embedding inclusivity within grant and training initiatives ensured broader access to opportunities, while the wellbeing support within training programmes was particularly well received, acknowledging the challenges faced by those in the creative industries.

Overall, the CWGLEF Cultural Programme delivered strong results, meeting or exceeding expectations in key areas while **providing a solid foundation for future cultural investment**. Continued support for the sector will be essential to sustaining this momentum and ensuring long-term growth and resilience within the West Midlands' cultural and creative industries.

A series of recommendations have been provided as part of the conclusion to this evaluation to assist future decision making and cultural projects across the WMCA and delivery partners, as summarised below:

- **Ensure Measurable Outputs and Objectives** – Future programmes should establish clear and quantifiable objectives from the outset to facilitate accurate performance evaluation.
- **Set achievable goals based on sector needs** – The objective focussed at ensuring the West Midlands cultural sector is globally connected was assessed to be overly ambitious. In future, objectives should be realistic and aligned with the needs of the sector.
- **Address challenges posed by time-limited funding** – Explore and prioritise more sustainable funding models to mitigate the risks posed by time-limited funding allocations.
- **Secure ongoing funding for sustained impact** – Aim to secure continued investment for identified projects to build on existing strategies and ensure long-term programme success.
- **Recognise the value of cultural and heritage funding** – Maintain and expand funding for cultural and heritage initiatives to further support their development and deliver benefits to local communities.
- **Build on the momentum in the cultural sector** – Capitalise on this momentum by further embedding cultural initiatives within regional development strategies.
- **Prioritise inclusivity in future programmes** – Continue to prioritise inclusivity in programme design to ensure broad engagement across diverse communities.
- **Start projects early to improve efficiency** – Begin projects as early as possible after funding allocation to allow for structured planning and long-term strategic impact.

Section 1

Introduction

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1 Introduction

1.1 Overview and background

AMION Consulting have been commissioned by West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) England to undertake an evaluation of the Cultural Pillar of the Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund (CWGLEF).

The £70 million Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund (CWGLEF) was secured by the WMCA from the government to build on the legacy of the 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games. As part of the fund, the WMCA Culture Pillar has received £4.1 million in revenue funding to support the West Midlands cultural sector; provide more opportunities for people to engage with cultural activities; and promote the region internationally. The Cultural Pillar's programme runs until March 2025 with activities including double-devolved grants for place-based activities focused on culture and heritage, artistic commissions to be created alongside local communities, business support schemes, and skills and training opportunities.

The overarching aim of this commission is to deliver an evaluation of the Cultural Pillar of the CWGLEF programme to inform the WMCA's Culture and Creative Industries team's future activities and meet reporting requirements to DCMS on the delivery of the fund. This evaluation is focused exclusively on the Cultural Pillar of the CWGLEF with a separate evaluation being prepared for the overall programme¹.

This Evaluation Report forms the final output of the evaluation. The following outputs have been delivered as part of the commission:

- Research Plan (April 2024)
- Evaluation Framework (May 2024)
- Draft Evaluation Report (January-February 2025)
- **Final Evaluation Report (March 2025)**

1.2 Evaluation approach

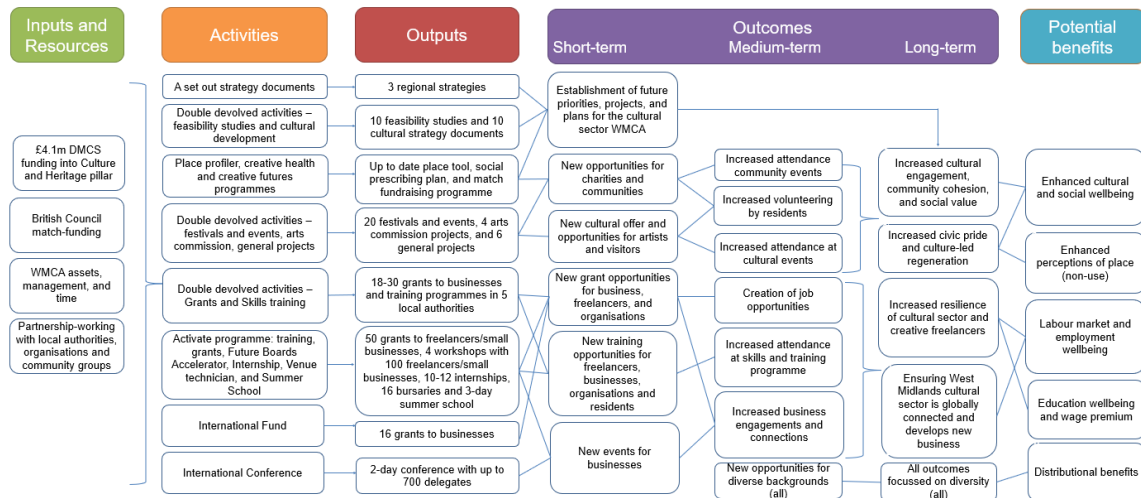
1.2.1 Key evaluation questions

A Theory of Change was developed for each intervention within the CWGLEF Cultural programme as part of the Programme Business Case process. The Theory of Change models from the Programme Business Case conceptualise each project, setting out the links between inputs, activities, expected outputs and outcomes, and expected impacts which are based around the

¹ ECORYS are leading the overall evaluation of the Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund. As part of this, FRY Creative Consulting are leading the evaluation of cultural impacts from the overall Fund, with a focus on the Cultural Pillar. AMION and FRY Creative have collaborated throughout the process to share insights and data.

four key mission pillars of impact. Using these models from WMCA, AMION Consulting have created an overarching Culture Pillar theory of change as presented below.

Figure 1-1 CWGLEF Culture Pillar Evaluation Theory of Change



Following discussions with the WMCA project team and a review of the programme's activities and context, the following research questions are proposed:

1. Has it produced the short-term and medium-term outputs on a project-by-project and programme basis (e.g. number of events, number of attendees)?
2. Has the CWGLEF Cultural Pillar delivered value for money?
3. To what extent did the CWGLEF Cultural Pillar achieve its five objectives (with a focus on diversity)?
 - a. Development of strategic frameworks for culture & heritage creating focused regional priorities and increasing the ability to attract further investment.
 - b. Increasing cultural engagement, community cohesion, and social value through interventions that create more opportunities for residents to engage with a relevant and co-created cultural offer.
 - c. Increasing civic pride and supporting culture-led regeneration, including high streets and existing cultural infrastructure. This will be delivered through Local Authorities to create flexible responses to meet specific needs, in collaboration with local communities. It will support the region's ability to secure future capital investment through feasibility studies.
 - d. Increasing the resilience of the West Midlands cultural sector and creative freelancers. This will be achieved through interventions focusing on regional level skills development and bespoke business support

- e. Ensuring the West Midlands cultural sector is globally connected and to develop new business opportunities. This will be achieved through interventions focusing on international partnerships and business development.
4. What contributed to the success/shortcomings of the CWGLEF Cultural Pillar in achieving its outputs, objectives and value for money? Factors to consider include:
 - a. Delivery of the programme and promotion of the opportunities
 - b. Management and governance of the programme
 - c. Engagement with partners and stakeholders
5. What lessons can be learned and recommendations made for future programmes?

1.2.2 *Evaluation methodologies*

Our mixed-method approach has consisted of primary data collection (surveys, interviews, workshops), secondary data collection (cost and output monitoring), and economic modelling through Social Cost Benefit Analysis SCBA).

Prior to implementation, AMION confirmed the beneficiary surveys and consultation guides with the WMCA project team. A wide-ranging beneficiary survey programme was subsequently implemented to gather quantitative insights, whilst a range of stakeholder interviews identified qualitative findings. The beneficiary survey programme was delivered partly in person by AMION's market research partner Spirul, as well as a thorough online survey process managed by AMION or WMCA depending on the project. This survey programme was delivered between July 2024 and February 2025. The stakeholder interviews were undertaken on Microsoft Teams from October 2024 and February 2025.

To assist with the secondary data collection, AMION created detailed cost and output monitoring forms, which were circulated to the WMCA and local authority project teams together with stated reporting timescales.

Overall, our evaluation utilised the following data collection methods:

- Cost monitoring data from WMCA, local authority partners and other key delivery partners;
- Output monitoring data from WMCA, local authority partners and other key delivery partners;
- Findings from the comprehensive engagement process consisting of interviews or workshops with over 30 stakeholders including the WMCA project teams, local authority project teams, training facilitators, workshop leads, creative commission partners, and placemaking activity partners; and
- Findings from a wide-ranging beneficiary survey programme consisting of the following:
 - 986 cultural event attendees;
 - 264 cultural event participants;
 - 105 charities, freelancers, and businesses receiving grant support;

- 89 freelancers or businesses attending training courses;
- 42 attendees to a West Midlands cultural symposium; and
- 10 charities partaking in the Creative Futures campaign.

Combining this qualitative and quantitative data has enabled an informed evaluation of the Cultural Pillar against its target outputs and objectives. In addition, social cost benefit analysis (SCBA) has been undertaken in line with Green Book and relevant departmental guidance to provide a robust assessment of value for money, further supported by the 3Es analysis. The thorough stakeholder engagement process has identified the key reasons for success, as well as the potential areas for improvement and recommendations for future schemes.

The alignment between the research questions and evaluation methodologies are shown below, as well as their section of this report which relates to each evaluation research question.

Table 1-1: Evaluation Question Categories and Methods

Question	Category	Core evaluation method	Section of this report
1. Has it produced the short and medium-term outputs on a project-by-project and programme basis?	Impact	Monitoring data against stated targets	Section 3.3
2. Has the CWGLEF Cultural Pillar delivered value for money?	Impact	Social Cost Benefit Analysis (SCBA) and 3Es analysis in line with Green Book and Magenta Book guidance	Section 4
3. To what extent did the CWGLEF Cultural Pillar achieve its five objectives (with a focus on diversity)?	Impact	Assessment of a series of key objectives (see above) using monitoring data, visitor surveys, and business survey/interviews	Section 3.4
4. What contributed to the success/shortcomings of the CWGLEF Cultural Pillar in achieving its outputs, objectives and value for money?	Process/Impact	See below 4a-4c below	Section 5
4a. Delivery of the programme and promotion of the opportunities?	Process/Impact	Monitoring data on costs/outputs Workshops and interviews with key stakeholders	Section 5.2
4b. Management and governance of the programme?	Process	Monitoring data on costs Workshops and interviews with key stakeholders	Section 5.3
4c. Engagement with partners and stakeholders?	Process	Workshops and interviews with key stakeholders Case studies of specific projects	Section 5.4
5. What lessons can be learned and recommendations made for future programmes?	Process/Impact	Consolidation of the overall evaluation including primary data, secondary data, and SCBA	Section 6.2

Although core methods for each evaluation question have been indicated above, a combination of our approaches has been used to ensure that a comprehensive and robust evaluation is conducted for each key research question.

Figure 1-2: Mixed method approaches to CWGLEF Cultural Evaluation

Question	Financial data	Monitoring Data	Visitor surveys	Business surveys	Workshops	Interviews	Case studies	Economic analysis	Cost benefit analysis
1. Has it produced the short and intermediate outputs anticipated?	✓	✓✓✓	✓	✓					
2. Has the CWGLEF Cultural programme delivered value-for-money, from a public value perspective?	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓		✓✓	✓✓✓
3. To what extent did the CWGLEF Cultural Pillar achieve its five objectives?		✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓		✓✓✓	
4. What critical factors to the success/shortcomings of the CWGLEF Cultural Pillar in achieving its outputs, objectives and value for money?	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	
4a. Delivery of the programme and promotion of the opportunities?	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓		✓✓	
4b. Management and governance of the programme?	✓✓✓	✓			✓✓✓	✓✓✓			
4c. Engagement with partners and stakeholders?	✓	✓			✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓		
5. What lessons can be learned, and recommendations made for future programmes?	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓

✓ = Contextual evaluation evidence
✓✓ = Informs evaluation
✓✓✓ = Key evaluation data

Our third evaluation question focusses on the extent to which the CWGLEF Cultural Pillar achieves its objectives. The overall objective is to deliver a series of revenue-based interventions across the four missions, in addition to a strategic regional framework for culture and heritage). Our discussions with the project team at WMCA have agreed to undertake a proportionate assessment of the first objective (development of strategic frameworks for culture and heritage), as this is in fact an output which will be measured within our first evaluation question based on evidence of completion. We have provided insights on how the development of these frameworks can contribute to the other four specific objectives for the Culture Pillar.

Due to the wide-ranging nature of the objectives, a series of key research questions need to be answered for each objective for an overall assessment to be made. **Table 1-2** presents the key research questions and evaluation methods and metrics for each objective.

Table 1-2: Evaluation Framework for assessing CWGLEF Cultural Pillars

Objective	Activities	Key research questions	Evaluation method and metric
Development of strategic frameworks for culture & heritage creating focused regional priorities and increasing the ability to attract further investment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Culture and Creative Industries Framework Regional Heritage Framework Regional Skills Plan Cultural Infrastructure Plan Creative UK Data Licence 	<p>Have the strategic frameworks been delivered?</p> <p>Have these frameworks established key projects and priorities for the cultural sector?</p> <p>Are these frameworks likely to attract further investment into the region?</p>	<p>Data collection – evidence of framework completion</p> <p>Interviews and workshops with stakeholders</p>
Increasing cultural engagement, community cohesion, and social value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creative Health programme and West Midlands Cultural Sector Research Project 2.0 Creative Futures Campaign Double devolved grants – festivals, arts commission, general projects 	<p>How many people have increased their cultural engagement?</p> <p>How many people have engaged with or participated in new cultural content?</p> <p>Are there more attendees from priority audiences?</p> <p>Are events attracting a more diverse audience?</p>	<p>Data collection – visitor numbers and profile</p> <p>Activity participants feedback and survey</p> <p>Visitor survey</p> <p>Online feedback</p>
Increasing civic pride and supporting culture-led regeneration, including high streets and existing cultural infrastructure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Double devolved grants – festivals, general projects, feasibility studies, strategies 	<p>Has the perception of West Midlands improved for residents and visitors?</p> <p>Do attendees intend to increase their cultural engagement?</p> <p>Do visitors intend to revisit?</p> <p>Are future projects more likely to be delivered?</p>	<p>Visitor survey</p> <p>Interviews and workshops with stakeholders</p> <p>Net promoter score feedback</p>
Increasing the resilience of the West Midlands cultural sector and creative freelancers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Double devolved grants – grants and skills Activate programme and other skills interventions 	<p>What new skills, experience and qualifications have been achieved?</p> <p>How do beneficiaries and freelancers intend to use them?</p> <p>Have priority groups been able to access new opportunities?</p>	<p>Activity participants feedback and survey</p> <p>Business and freelancer survey</p> <p>Workshops with stakeholders</p>
Ensuring the West Midlands cultural sector is globally connected and to develop new business opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International programme and conference International Fund – grants Other initiatives supporting international development 	<p>Have businesses created new connections?</p> <p>Has the perception of West Midlands improved as a place to do business?</p> <p>Have new jobs been created?</p> <p>Have priority groups been able to develop new business opportunities?</p>	<p>Data collection – number of businesses engaged</p> <p>Data collection – number of attendees at events</p> <p>Visitor survey</p> <p>Business and freelancer survey</p>

1.3 Report structure

This report continues in five sections, namely:

- **Section 2 Programme Context:** an overview of the CWGLEF Cultural Pillar along with a clear description of the activities and the key stakeholders, as well as a summary of the socio-economic baseline from the Research Plan;
- **Section 3 Project Performance:** an evaluation of the CWGLEF Cultural Pillar against its intended costs, outputs and objectives;
- **Section 4 Value for Money:** an assessment of value for money using Green Book social cost benefit methodologies and the 3Es analysis;
- **Section 5 Delivery and Management:** an evaluation of the key success factors and areas for improvement within CWGLEF; and
- **Section 6 Conclusions:** A summary of the evaluation findings and recommendations for future programmes.

Section 2

Programme Context

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2 Programme Context

2.1 CWGLEF overview

The Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund (CWGLEF) is an initiative by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) to ensure the benefits of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games continue to have a positive impact for many years to come. The Department for Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS) awarded WMCA £70 million for the programme, which must be spent by 31 March 2025, to ensure the region builds on the existing success of the Commonwealth Games legacy.

The fund is divided into four pillars of activity:

- Economy, trade and tourism;
- Culture and heritage;
- Inclusive communities; and
- Wellbeing and sustainability.

Funding is being spent across the region through a combination of open grants, grants aligned to existing funding, and direct funding awards to local authorities and regional partners. The overarching aim is to ensure a meaningful legacy that contributes to a fairer, prosperous, greener, and more inclusive West Midlands.

2.2 Cultural Pillar

2.2.1 Overview

Within the overall CWGLEF, the Culture pillar has received £4.1 million. This revenue funding will be used to deliver different initiatives to support the West Midlands cultural sector; provide more opportunities for people to engage with cultural activities; and promote the region internationally. These projects, with an ultimate leading goal of diversity and inclusion, seek to empower the cultural and heritage sector and ensure artists and creatives obtain a longstanding benefit from the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games.

A WMCA business case was approved for the delivery of this Fund and the majority of the activities will be delivered directly by WMCA, with some funding also double devolved to Local Authorities. The funding must be used, and the activities completed, by 31 March 2025. Delivery is focused on four key mission pillars, derived through the WMCA objectives for culture and the original objectives for the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games cultural programme, as set out below:

Figure 2-1: CWGLEF Cultural Pillar Missions

WMCA OBJECTIVES		MISSION		CWG PILLAR
Participation – Making sure that all our communities realise the benefits of culture (wellbeing, quality of life, cohesion)	→	1. Cultural engagement, communities & social value WTH SPECIAL FOCUS ON DIVERSITY, EQUALITY AND INCLUSION	←	Audiences are more representative of the regions communities regularly attend and participate in cultural activities. Increased levels of understanding and respect among different groups and levels of participation in the community
Placemaking – Harness culture's potential to transform our cities, towns and local centres through unique experiences, a thriving night-time economy and defining the identity of a place	→	2. Civic pride, placemaking & cultural infrastructure WTH SPECIAL FOCUS ON DIVERSITY, EQUALITY AND INCLUSION	←	Increased feelings of civic pride in Birmingham and the West Midlands region
Business Development – Support the cultural sector to grow and recover after Covid-19, strengthening regional networks and building resilience	→	3. Futureproofing our cultural sector WTH SPECIAL FOCUS ON DIVERSITY, EQUALITY AND INCLUSION	←	Increase in the diversity, capacity and skills of cultural workforce – leading to a stronger, more resilient cultural sector in the region
Promotion – Use our major cultural events and diverse cultural institutions to position the West Midlands as the best place to work, live, visit, and invest	→	4. Globally connected West Midlands cultural sector WTH SPECIAL FOCUS ON DIVERSITY, EQUALITY AND INCLUSION	←	Enhanced global perception of the UK, city and region as a investment and visitor location – leading to increased visitors, investment and attraction of major events

The focus of the CWGLEF programme was primarily on arts (performing arts, artistic creation), crafts, libraries, heritage, photography, museums & galleries and cultural education. It does not include sports or activities linked to 'culture' in the anthropological sense. However, there is likely to be some overlap with the wider creative industries and other sectors such as visitor economy.

The overall objective was to deliver a series of revenue-based interventions across the four missions, in addition to a strategic regional framework for heritage & culture. The specific objectives for the Cultural Pillar were set out in Section 1.

The programme looked to support inclusive growth by leveraging both economic and social value from procurement spend through regional supply chains, as well as direct social value benefits through delivering culture to residents and improving opportunities to engage with cultural activities.

2.2.2 Key activities

This section largely focusses on the proposed activities, costs, and outputs at programme outset to evaluate the success of the Cultural Pillar at delivering its targets.

Table 2-1 below presents a summary of each of the proposed activities at the outset of the CWGLEF Cultural Pillar alongside its programme funding requirements and co-funding (where applicable), as well as the updated allocation of DCMS funding based on the final project plans such that the reallocation of resources can be seen.

The proposed activities below total to £3.67m of DCMS funding. There was a further £0.43m allocated to programme administration, taking the total spend to the overall allocation of £4.1m. Based on the delivered activities, the projects totalled to £3.65m of DCMS funding with a further £0.45m spent on programme administration. Therefore, the total investment aligned with the overall allocation of £4.1m.

The project descriptions have been updated since the original Programme Business Case was developed, reflecting the updated project information at programme outset. The delivery arrangements for each of the activities is also presented, including the external partners procured through WMCA's established processes to enhance delivery.

Table 2-1: Proposed and Final Cultural Pillar projects

Proposed intervention	Proposed project description	Original DCMS funding	Actual DCMS funding	Planned match-funding	Actual match-funding	Notes
Objective 1: Development of strategic frameworks for culture & heritage						
Cultural Framework	<p>Recognising the lack of an existing strategy for the combined authority, this intervention will develop a Regional Cultural Framework. The Framework will be developed by an external partner and be used to guide the Culture team's long-term strategic plans.</p> <p>The 5-year WMCA culture framework will serve as the foundation for WMCA cultural policy going forward by setting out regionally shared strategic drivers and priorities for the WMCA area around arts & culture. The aim of the culture framework is to bring together key regional stakeholders to inform a more strategic approach to culture across the wider WMCA area, as well as provide an opportunity to articulate regional priorities to external and internal stakeholders more clearly. The framework will also demonstrate alignment with local, regional, and national strategies.</p>	£35,000	£51,008	WMCA staff resource	WMCA staff resource	<p>Cultural Framework was expanded to the Culture and Creative Industries Framework, setting out goals and ambitions for the overarching culture and creative industries sector of the West Midlands.</p> <p>Delivered in partnership with Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy and WMCA.</p>
Heritage Framework	<p>The project will produce a 5-year Heritage Framework for WMCA which sets out an ambitious vision for the heritage of the WMCA area. The framework will be developed by the Cultural Infrastructure Development lead with support from an external partner and serve as the foundation for WMCA's heritage policy going forward.</p> <p>The Heritage Framework will set out regionally shared strategic drivers and priorities for the development and protection of built heritage assets, as well as consider wider developments nationally. It will also set out the case for heritage, with a suite of clear actions and considerations for resource requirements that will deliver this vision.</p>	£35,000	£35,000	WMCA staff resource	WMCA staff resource	<p>Delivered internally by WMCA team, with data and research provided by Bradshaw Advisory.</p>
Sector Skills Plan	Skills Plan to focus priorities for cultural skills and training programmes. Plan will be procured from an external supplier.	£14,000	£19,475	WMCA staff resource	WMCA staff resource	<p>Focused on creative industries supply chain. Delivered by BOP Consulting.</p>

Table 2-1: Proposed and Final Cultural Pillar projects

Proposed intervention	Proposed project description	Original DCMS funding	Actual DCMS funding	Planned match-funding	Actual match-funding	Notes
Cultural Infrastructure Plan	New plan providing an overview of the region's cultural infrastructure and policy. Plan will be procured from an external supplier and produced in conjunction with WMCA's Culture and Creative Industries team.	£14,000	£20,000	WMCA staff resource	WMCA staff resource	Focused on creative workspace. Delivered by Colliers.
Creative UK Data License*	WMCA are licencing data commissioned by Creative UK on the status of businesses in the West Midlands, including cultural and creative businesses, to support the production of evidence and strategies for cultural and creative business development.	£0	£18,000	WMCA staff resource	WMCA staff resource	Commissioned from Creative UK.
Objective 2: Increasing cultural engagement, community cohesion, and social value						
Creative Health Programme	Delivered internally including a series of meetings with relevant stakeholders, theory of change, a research report and regional scoping exercise undertaken by a creative health specialist to scope creative health activities in the West Midlands and make recommendations for potential future steps, and participation in a new Arts Council England funded Creative Health network of Mayoral Combined Authorities including WMCA entering into a new Memorandum of Understanding with partners.	£22,000	£23,518	WMCA staff resource	WMCA staff resource	Delivered internally; research report delivered by Dr. Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt.
Creative Futures Campaign	Creative Futures Campaign forms part of Big Give's 2024 'Arts for Impact' Campaign. The campaign will support 11 charities and community groups in the region focused on children and young people, helping to reach and expand their potential through novel, exciting projects, raising the profile of the culture and creativity in the region. In addition to CWGLEF funding, an online fundraising campaign led by Big Give and New Philanthropy for Arts & Culture will aim to raise further donations. The campaign will look to double the initial public donation.	£85,000	£85,000	WMCA staff resource Fundraising activity through Big Give Campaign	WMCA staff resource £116,766 raised in public fundraising campaign	Delivered by Big Give.
West Midlands Research Project 2.0 (Place Profiler)	Partner organisation (Culture Central) and WMCA will update the West Midlands Research Project 2.0 with up-to-date information, making the tool available online for external parties to use in 2025	£40,000	£40,000	Culture Central match funding - £30,000	Culture Central match funding - £30,000	Delivered by provider Indigo and managed by Culture Central
Objective 2. Increasing cultural engagement, community cohesion, and social value; and Objective 3. Increasing civic pride and supporting culture-led regeneration, including high streets and existing cultural infrastructure						

Table 2-1: Proposed and Final Cultural Pillar projects

Proposed intervention	Proposed project description	Original DCMS funding	Actual DCMS funding	Planned match-funding	Actual match-funding	Notes
Place-based Activity	As part of the Local Authority double-devolved grants each local authority will deliver placemaking activities such as Cultural/ Heritage Action Zones to improve vibrancy in their town centres and increase pride in place. The projects were co-created and delivered in partnership with various organisations.	£2,149,000	£2,122,442	WMCA staff resource	WMCA staff resource	20 delivery partners ² were collaborated with to co-create and deliver the activities.
Creative Commissions	As part of the Local Authority double-devolved grants, a host of creative activities will be delivered by local authorities, with artistic commissions co-created with communities.			WMCA staff resource	WMCA staff resource	11 delivery partners ³ were collaborated with to co-create and deliver the activities.
Objective 4: Increasing the resilience of the West Midlands cultural sector and creative freelancers						
ACTIVATE Programme	The programme will deliver a range of business and skills support measures to improve the resilience of businesses and freelancers in the cultural sector, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Workshops• Mentoring• Facilitated cohort meetings• Wellbeing support• Masterclasses – Delivered internally	The total planned cost for Objective 4 was £1,140,000	£179,336	WMCA staff resource	WMCA staff resource	Overall programme managed internally,, with elements contracted to freelancers and delivery partner organisations
ACTIVATE Grants	The ACTIVATE Grants Programme will support freelancers, micro and small organisations in the West Midlands Creative and Cultural sectors to fund skills development projects and support the development of skills across the region through small-scale grants (£1,000 - £9,000).	See above	£499,841	WMCA staff resource	WMCA staff resource	Delivered by Smarter Society with sector support from Culture Central.

² Partners for each local authority are: Birmingham – Birmingham Cultural Compact, Culture Central, Legacy Centre of Excellence, Place Prospectors CIC, Grand Union and Eastside Projects; Coventry – University of Warwick, Talking Birds; Dudley: Brierley Hill Cultural Consortium, Red House Cone, Dudley Archives and Museum, Dudley Castle; Sandwell – Sandwell Cultural Compact; Solihull – The Core Theatre; Walsall: Walsall Cultural Compact, Bloxwich Theatre; Wolverhampton – Hands On Wednesfield, Newhampton Arts Centre, Molyneux Stadium

³ Partners for each local authority are: Birmingham – Culture Central; Coventry – Talking Birds; Dudley – Brierley Hill Cultural Consortium; Sandwell – ME Dance, Method in Motion, Black Country Touring, Big Bear Music, Multistory; Solihull – Art at the Heart, Arts in the Yard, Solihull Cultural Education Partnership, Core Creatives Network, Community Artists part of Hub and Spoke activity; Walsall – Creative Black Country, Walsall College, One Walsall, Walsall New Art Gallery; Wolverhampton – Wolverhampton Cultural Compact, Wolverhampton Art Gallery

Table 2-1: Proposed and Final Cultural Pillar projects

Proposed intervention	Proposed project description	Original DCMS funding	Actual DCMS funding	Planned match-funding	Actual match-funding	Notes
ACTIVATE Internships	ACTIVATE Internships will support a cohort of interns from underrepresented backgrounds in culture and creative industries to take up a funded internship experience with established organisations and freelancers in the sector.	See above	£195,053	WMCA staff resource	WMCA staff resource	Delivered by LearnPlay Foundation.
Venue Technician Bootcamp	Two 12-week venue technician bootcamps were delivered, supporting the skills gap for technicians in the theatre and venues space.	See above	£74,000	WMCA staff resource	WMCA staff resource	Delivered by Solihull College.
Heritage Buildings Retrofit Course	A two-day course designed for a variety of creative, cultural and heritage business owners and tenants, practitioners and stakeholders in addition to local authority staff, planners and other professionals, supporting the understanding of climate change adaptation or mitigation measures affecting heritage buildings.	See above	£6,637	WMCA staff resource	WMCA staff resource	Delivered by Morwenna Slade (Ingleton Wood LLP).
Future Boards Accelerator	A programme to support young adults from the global majority to develop skills and confidence to take on board memberships within the Cultural sector as well as train organisations to better support board members.	See above	£73,620	WMCA staff resource	WMCA staff resource	Delivered by People Make It Work.
VR Technician Bootcamp	The bootcamp has supported the skills development of VR Technicians for culture and creative industries projects, with practical experience gained as part of the "In Pursuit of Repetitive Beats" exhibition at BMAG, in summer-fall 2024.	See above	£14,831	WMCA staff resource	WMCA staff resource	Delivered by East City Films.
Wolverhampton City of Culture Youth Board Pilot	The pilot will explore how young people from the city of Wolverhampton can become more involved in strategic decision-making within the cultural sector in the city, thus enhancing the strategic dimension of a local partnership to platform youth voice. It aims to help address barriers to youth engagement on voluntary boards by paying young people properly for their time and expertise, supporting their confidence, skills development, and engagement.	See above	£9,998	WMCA staff resource	WMCA staff resource	Delivered by Newhampton Arts Centre.

Table 2-1: Proposed and Final Cultural Pillar projects

Proposed intervention	Proposed project description	Original DCMS funding	Actual DCMS funding	Planned match-funding	Actual match-funding	Notes
Culture and Creative Podcast	The project will engage students from Solihull College's podcast training bootcamp to develop a six-episode podcast series highlighting the creative industries and cultural assets of the West Midlands.	See above	£18,100	WMCA staff resource	WMCA staff resource	Delivered by Solihull College.
Objective 5: Ensuring the West Midlands cultural sector is globally connected and to develop new business opportunities						
International Fund	Project will deliver a series of grants to support and develop new international partnerships building on the legacy of the Commonwealth Games. WMCA International Fund grants will be distributed through the Global Creative Legacy Grants and West Midlands Future Growth Grants programmes. It is likely to consist of small grants (£2,500 to £8,000) for local artists, creatives, and organisations to boost their profile and create new partnerships abroad.	£64,000	£70,031	£64,000 British Council and WMCA staff resource	£64,000 British Council and WMCA staff resource	Delivered internally
International Cultural Conference (renamed Cultural and Creative Ecologies Symposium)	WMCA will host and organise a future-facing 2-day event focused on the creative and cultural sector in the West Midlands, including private investment opportunities, innovation and future growth opportunities. The one-day symposium was delivered internally with external production support, as part of larger Creativity Week (4th to 11th October) highlighting the cultural and creativity environment of the West Midlands.	£73,400	£53,655	WMCA staff resource	WMCA staff resource	Delivered internally. The budget allocation included the filming and creation of seven Local Authority films for Creativity Week and the Symposium (allocated budget £22,398).
Supersonic Festival International Mixer*	Hosted at Eastside Projects in Digbeth. Networking event attached to Supersonic Festival, bringing in international organisations and professionals to discuss expanding partnerships.	£0	£6,000	WMCA staff resource	WMCA staff resource	Delivered by Capsule
More than a Moment Festival Evaluation*	WMCA supporting established More than a Moment festival, with international participation, in producing a separate research report/evaluation.	£0	£5,000	WMCA staff resource	WMCA staff resource	Delivered by More than a Moment

Table 2-1: Proposed and Final Cultural Pillar projects

Proposed intervention	Proposed project description	Original DCMS funding	Actual DCMS funding	Planned match-funding	Actual match-funding	Notes
Night Time Economy Summit 2025 – Cultural Offer*	WMCA supporting the Night Time Economy Summit in Birmingham by commissioning a brief cultural offer and supporting the presence of speakers from the cultural and creative sector.	£0	£7,000	WMCA staff resource	WMCA staff resource	Delivered by the Night Time Industries Association
Music Venue Trust Fan-led Live Music Venue Survey Contribution*	WMCA supporting fan-led live music venue survey and commissioning specific WMCA focus, alongside other regional authorities in the UK.	£0	£3,000	WMCA staff resource	WMCA staff resource	Delivered by Music Venue Trust
The Space Digital Culture Talks 2*	WMCA supporting 2-day series of panels and discussions on digital and cultural innovation, including international panels and conversations.	£0	£7,000	WMCA staff resource	WMCA staff resource	Delivered by The Space
Kabbadi World Cup Documentary*	WMCA supporting the filming of a documentary around the experience of the Kabbadi World Cup Women's Team, as an international sporting event taking place in the UK for the first time.	£0	£4,000	WMCA staff resource	WMCA staff resource	Delivered by Sima Gonsai
Projects sub-total	-	£3,671,400	£3,641,545	-	-	-
<i>Programme Admin and Management⁴</i>	-	<i>£428,600</i>	<i>£455,250</i>	-	-	-
Programme total	-	£4,100,000	£4,096,795	-	-	-

* – Designates projects that were not initially allocated funding in the original programme plan but were later developed to enhance the achievement of each objective. Costs have been re-allocated from other projects where necessary to facilitate this programme development.

⁴ Including staffing (includes freelancers), evaluation, access costs, costs for marketing and publicity, external legal advice, and contingency

2.2.3 *Outputs*

The Programme Business Case identified the following outputs of the CWGLEF Cultural Pillar:

- A set of strategy documents;
- 7 grants to local authorities for locally delivered co-commissioned creative projects;
- A talent development fund for young people;
- 7 double devolved grants to local authorities for place-based culture and heritage activities and capital feasibility studies;
- A skills, leadership, and business support programme;
- A grant programme to support international cultural exchange and partnership development; and
- Delivery of a 2-day international cultural sector conference in the region.

Once commissioned, AMION issued detailed monitoring and evaluation forms to the WMCA and Local Authority projects to identify a series of other targets from the activities. The output targets from these completed monitoring forms have been collated and used as part of our evaluation in Section 3.

2.2.4 *Delivery arrangements*

WMCA have led the delivery of the entire CWGLEF programme, including the Cultural Pillar. Based on our stakeholder engagement with the WMCA and key stakeholders, it is assessed that the governance requirements as set out in WMCA's Single Assurance Framework (SAF), and in any grant conditions applied by DCMS, have been adhered to throughout the process. The WMCA Board, Mayor & Met Leaders Group and WMCA Senior Leadership Team (SLT) approved the overall approach at the start of the process. WMCA Board will also approve the strategic frameworks for culture and heritage once they are completed. The delivery process has been informed by advisory boards/groups such as the industry led WMCA Cultural Leadership Board and the WMCA Cultural Officers Group (including local authorities and West Midlands Growth Company).

The directorate complied with the requirements for SAF, with regular meetings undertaken with the assurance team to review the programme activity register and to ensure team members are completing and progressing projects or programmes through the necessary governance aligned to this, including SAF Appraisal Panel and Investment or Full Board.

The dedicated programme delivery team worked together with WMCA senior leadership to monitor performance against contracts and delivered change requests as required in line with WMCA SAF processes. Processes for performance and quality management were in place through WMCA's existing internal processes.

In terms of the Cultural Pillar specifically, the WMCA directly oversaw a number of activities whilst procuring specialists where necessary as shown in **Table 2-1** above. Of the £4.1m programme

budget, approximately £2.15 million⁵ has been allocated for the direct benefit of constituent Local Authorities as double-devolved funding, with allocations set aside for local capacity building, strategy building, and the delivery of direct activities by the Local Authorities benefitting their communities.

2.3 Key partners and stakeholders

The key partners and stakeholders for the CWGLEF Cultural Pillar are set out as follows:

National

- Departmental government bodies (Department for Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS), Ministry for Housing, Communities, and Local Government (MHCLG))
- Non-departmental government bodies (Historic England, Arts Council England)
- British Council
- Big Give (Creative Futures fundraising project)
- External suppliers and procured consultants

Regional

- WMCA (including WMCA's Cultural Leadership Board and Heritage Task Force, and WMCA Working Groups)
- Culture Central
- External suppliers and procured consultants

Local

- 7 Constituent Authorities as delivery partners
- 10 Non-Constituent Authorities
- Businesses and freelancers
- Artists
- Residents
- Participants
- Charities and beneficiary organisations
- External suppliers and procured consultants

⁵ £307,000 to the 7 constituent local authorities – namely Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall, and Wolverhampton

2.4 Socio-economic baseline

AMION's Research Plan within the first stage of this Evaluation provided a comprehensive review of existing socio-economic conditions in the West Midlands. The key findings of relevance to this evaluation are:

- In 2022/23, engagement with the arts, culture and heritage for West Midlands residents is lower than the national (England) average. It is calculated that **87% of West Midlands residents engaged with the arts in the preceding year** – a key metric the CWGLEF Cultural Pillar has sought to increase.
- Data from the DCMS Community Life Survey (2023) shows that in 2021/22, **16% of people in England participated in formal volunteering (at least once a month)**, with 26% of the population estimated to be involved in informal volunteering (at least once a month) in 2021/22. In the West Midlands, the rates of formal and informal volunteering are the same as nationally.
- The post-pandemic uplift in life satisfaction and happiness in the West Midlands has coincided with the Commonwealth Games and Coventry City of Culture events. **The baseline wellbeing position presents a life satisfaction score of 7.43 and happiness score of 7.43 for West Midlands residents in April 2022 to March 2023.** Wellbeing is recognised as an important aspect of Inclusive Growth within the CWGLEF.
- The West Midlands exhibits **high levels of deprivation, with a significant portion of areas ranked among the most deprived nationally.** The Cultural Pillar has attempted to address socio-economic disparities by increasing access to cultural activities, potentially uplifting communities affected by deprivation, and ensuring its activities are accessible to the most deprived and marginalised communities in the region.

Section 3

Programme Performance

AMION
CONSULTING

3 Project Performance

3.1 Overview

This section assesses the performance of the CWGLEF Cultural Pillar in terms of costs, outputs, and objectives.

3.2 Financial performance

This section evaluates the CWGLEF Cultural Pillar's financial performance, beginning with an overview of the original funding allocation and examining how resources have been managed to support cultural activities within the West Midlands.

The overall programme had a total allocation of £4.1 million from the UK government and has remained within the allocated budget. The overall programme was around £3,000 under its total allocation from DCMS (managed by WMCA), due to a marginal underspend from one of the double devolved grants.

Table 3-1 below sets out the projected costs and original budget for the CWGLEF culture and heritage programme alongside match funding forecast and secured.

Table 3-1: CWGLEF Cultural Programme Funding Profile against outturn total costs					
	WMCA budget (£000s)	Planned match funding (£000s)	WMCA – outturn (£000s)	Match funding – outturn (£000s)	Outturn total (£000s)
Objective 1	£98	-	£143	-	£143
Objectives 2 and 3	£2,296	£30	£2,271	£30	£2,301
Objective 4	£1,140	-	£1,071	-	£1,071
Objective 5	£137	£64	£156	£65	£221
Programme admin / other	£428	-	£455	-	£455
Total	£4,100	£94	£4,097	£95	£4,191

Note: Figures may not add due to rounding

The funding profile shows that the CWGLEF Cultural pillar is due to meet its expenditure targets by the end of 2024/25. However, it also shows that there has been some variation in expenditure compared to the indicative allocations across the identified objectives from the Programme Business Case. The largest variation in expenditure compared to the original budget related to Objective 4 (Futureproofing our cultural sector) which was primarily because the Activate Programme and Activate Grants were not fully scoped out when the original business case was developed. Contrastingly, expenditure on Objective 1 (Development of strategic frameworks for culture & heritage) exceeded the original budget, reflecting the additional research procured and commissioned by WMCA. It should be noted that the project team were provided with the flexibility to reallocate funds across strands as required to ensure delivery of the programme outputs and objectives.

In terms of match funding, the programme secured £30,000 from Culture Central for the West Midlands Cultural Sector Research project as part of Objective 2 and £63,533 from the British Council for the International Fund grants as part of Objective 5.

Overall, the WMCA project team has successfully managed the delivery of the project within the allocated funding envelope from DCMS. There is not expected to be a material underspend or overspend on the £4.1m allocation. Given the extensive activities and delivery partners managed within the Pillar, delivering these activities on time and budget can be seen as a real success for the WMCA. This Cultural Pillar provides the basis for the WMCA Culture and Creative Industries team to deliver further programmes in the future, building upon the relationships developed and detailed knowledge of the sector and stakeholders gained during delivery of the programme.

3.3 Outputs

This section reviews the programme's target outputs and outcomes, assessing how well the programme has achieved its intended goals. By measuring these outputs against targets set out in the business case and logic model, this section provides a clear indication of the programme's success in delivering outputs and outcomes impacting communities across the West Midlands.

3.3.1 Targets

The Programme Business Case identified the following outputs of the CWGLEF Cultural Pillar:

- A set of strategy documents;
- 7 grants to local authorities for locally delivered co-commissioned creative projects;
- A talent development fund for young people;
- 7 double devolved grants to local authorities for place-based culture and heritage activities and capital feasibility studies;
- A skills, leadership, and business support programme;
- A grant programme to support international cultural exchange and partnership development; and
- Delivery of a 2-day international cultural sector conference in the region.

In addition, AMION Consulting developed an overarching Culture Pillar theory of change as part of the Evaluation Framework report which identified several clear and measurable programme level outputs expected to arise from the programme:

- 3 regional strategies
- 10 feasibility studies and 10 cultural strategies
- Up to date place tool, creative health policy/plan, and match fundraising programme
- 20 festivals and events, 4 arts commission projects, and 6 general projects
- 18-30 grants to businesses and training programmes in 5 local authorities

- 50 grants to freelancers/small businesses, 4 workshops with 100 freelancers/small businesses, 10-12 internships, 16 bursaries and 3-day summer school
- 16 grants to businesses
- 2-day conference with up to 700 delegates

3.3.2 Output performance

Table 3-2 presents the performance of the CWGLEF programme in terms of the output targets identified above. The main assessment of outputs is based on the original targets set out in the Business Case and original Theory of Change. As the nature of the programme became more clear, certain activities changed scope which made their output targets unachievable⁶. The contribution to the revised targets is therefore also provided to reflect this context. **The key finding is that most of the activities and the programme as a whole delivered its key output targets.**

The programme has delivered a series of business grants and training activities, supporting the cultural industries in the West Midlands, which have exceeded expectations. For example, 70 businesses have received grant support, compared to an original target of 50. Whilst the training activities were primarily targeted to the seven constituent Local Authorities of the WMCA, businesses and freelancers within 20 local authorities, including non-constituent authorities, were reached by the programme.

Additionally, the double devolved grants to local authorities managed to deliver 41 events and festivals, over 50% above the original target for these cultural activities. In total, 31 arts commissions were undertaken, compared to a target of 28. The overachievement of these key outputs potentially demonstrates the benefit of local teams leading events within communities.

Originally planned as a two-day international event with an expected 700 delegates, the International Conference was instead adapted into a one-day Culture and Creative Ecologies Symposium focused on the West Midlands. Feedback from stakeholder engagement indicates that the initial plan for an international conference of this scale was overly ambitious. In this context, the decision to adjust the event was both pragmatic and aligned with the sector's actual needs. Among the headline numbers originally identified, the International Conference fell short of its original targets. However, the WMCA did instead part-fund several other cultural conferences and events which were successful in engaging with wider stakeholders in the cultural sector. Once these events are factored in, the revised attendees target has been achieved.

Furthermore, the basis for the original target of 700 delegates was unclear, highlighting the need for greater transparency in target-setting methodologies. To avoid perceptions of underperformance within a particular event, WMCA should ensure that future output targets are both realistic and clearly substantiated. Establishing robust reporting mechanisms will help mitigate the risks associated with setting overly ambitious goals, ensuring that performance is accurately reflected and effectively communicated.

⁶ For example, following further investigation and project development work it was decided to change the original two-day international cultural sector conference into a one-day Culture and Creative Ecologies Symposium which would better support local organisations in the sector to form partnerships and collaborate. It was also more relevant to the Cultural team's existing programme and aligned with other WMCA activities during Creativity Week.

Table 3-2: CWGLEF Cultural Pillar – Performance against headline output targets

Output	Original Target	Revised target (where applicable)	Achieved outputs	% of original target	% of revised target (where applicable)	Notes and key sources
Number of regional strategies	5	N/A	5	100%		Includes Culture and Creative Industries Framework; West Midlands Cultural Sector Research Report 2.0 (match funded by Culture Central); Heritage Framework; Regional Skills Plan; Regional Cultural Infrastructure Plan
Number of feasibility studies	17	15	16	94%	107%	Local Authorities Double Devolved Grants. Revised target reflects the reallocation of two feasibility studies to a different WMCA-funded project.
Number of cultural development plans / strategies or strategic interventions	10	15	15	150%	100%	Local Authorities Double Devolved Grants.
Number of Creative Health plans developed	1	N/A	1	100%		
Number of match fundraising programmes delivered	1	N/A	1	100%		Creative Futures Campaign, in partnership with Big Give
Number of festivals and events	27	N/A	41	152%		Local Authorities Double Devolved Grants only.

Table 3-2: CWGLEF Cultural Pillar – Performance against headline output targets

Output	Original Target	Revised target (where applicable)	Achieved outputs	% of original target	% of revised target (where applicable)	Notes and key sources
Number of arts commission projects	28	N/A	31	111%		Local Authorities Double Devolved Grants
Number of general projects	7	3	3	43%	100%	Local Authorities Double Devolved Grants Revised targets reflect a change of plan from one local authority. Their original plan was judged too ambitious and there were staffing changes in the delivery team.
Number of grants for cultural and creative projects	24	N/A	24	100%		Local Authorities Double Devolved Grants
Number of business and training programmes in local authorities	4	N/A	4	100%		Local Authorities Double Devolved Grants
Number of grants to freelancers/small businesses	50	N/A	70	140%		Activate Grants
Number of people supported to complete internships within cultural organisations	18	N/A	25	139%		-
Number of skills courses delivered by WMCA	6	N/A	9	150%		-

Table 3-2: CWGLEF Cultural Pillar – Performance against headline output targets

Output	Original Target	Revised target (where applicable)	Achieved outputs	% of original target	% of revised target (where applicable)	Notes and key sources
Number of people attending skills and training programmes delivered by WMCA	190	N/A	277	146%		Includes Activate Programme and Activate Internships. Also includes other smaller bootcamps funded through CWGLEF.
Number of grants for international partnerships and cultural exports	16	N/A	21	131%		-
Number of conferences/sector events supported	1	N/A	5	500%		WMCA part-contributed to a number of other sector-related conferences in addition to holding the Culture and Creative Industries Symposium. This was instead of the two-day International Conference originally planned.
Number of attendees at conferences	700	120	484	69%	403%	Original Business Case identified 700 attendees. Target revised when WMCA decided to change scope to the Symposium style event. The total attendees also include a proportion of attendees at additional events part-funded by CWGLEF.

Note: Assessment status is green for >=100%, amber for 65-100%, and red for <65%

3.3.3 Additional outputs

It is worth noting that several of the outputs identified within the original business case and theory of change did not have actual target figures attributed to them at the time which made measuring their achievement more challenging. The targets for these outputs have been calculated based on the first monitoring form received from each delivery partner. In addition, there are a number of outputs which were achieved by the programme which were not identified or quantified within the original business case.

Table 3-3 presents an assessment of these additional outputs. As can be seen, several outputs exceeded the original collated of expectations from the WMCA, local authorities, and delivery partners. The main key successes have been drawn out below, as follows:

- There were 56,767 attendees at festivals and events, compared to an original target of 23,960 attendees.
- There were 725 performers, freelancers, and artists supported during the programme, compared to an original expectation of 182.
- In total, 943 individuals took part in a training course, compared to a target of 328.

The overachievement of these key components of the Culture Pillar has ensured that the programme has reached many more West Midlands residents than forecast and therefore more strongly supports one of the key missions of the Cultural Pillar.

Table 3-3: CWGLEF Cultural Pillar – additional outputs and outcomes			
Output	Original target	Achieved outputs	% of original target
Number of attendees at festivals and events ⁷	23,960	56,767	237%
Number of event days delivered	481	485	101%
Number of performers / freelancers / artists supported ⁸	182	725	398%
Number of participants engaged in co-creating arts projects	1,513	2,080	137%
Number of attendees as audience (arts commission)	2,210	2,660	120%
Number of artists supported	64	121	189%
Number of charitable projects supported (Creative Futures Campaign) ⁹	11	11	100%
Amount of public donations generated (Creative Futures Campaign)	N/A	£144,943	-

⁷ Relates to festivals and events organised by local authorities funded through double-devolved grants, excluding attendees at WMCA-funded cultural conferences.

⁸ Note that there is some overlap between this and other outputs relating to artists and freelancers

⁹ Targets not set out for Creative Futures Campaign outputs

Number of days employment for trainers / facilitators (skills programmes)	653	820	126%
Number of days of volunteering for trainers / facilitators	10	19	190%
Number of individuals undertaken skills courses (WMCA and Double Devolved Grants total)	328	943	288%
Number of days employment supported by Creative Health project and WMCA admin	N/A	29.9	-
Number of consultees engaged in Creative Health theory of change	N/A	22	-
Number of data reports purchased ¹⁰	N/A	1	-

3.4 Objectives

3.4.1 Overview

The following section provides an evaluation of each of the programme's key objectives in turn. Using a combination of visitor survey data and qualitative consultation feedback, the extent to which each of the objectives have been achieved has been evaluated. For clarity and ease of interpretation, we have adopted a RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rating system, summarised in **Table 3-4** below.

Where appropriate, we break down the programme components, such as training and grants for a more detailed analysis. This detailed analysis is combined with and overall survey scores and consultation feedback, reflecting the evaluation aim of providing a comprehensive assessment of the programme as a whole.

Table 3-4: RAG rating of objective performance	
Rating	Conclusion
Red	Objective has not been met
Amber	Objective has been partially met
Light green	Objective has been largely met
Dark green	Objective has been fully met

¹⁰ Creative UK report

3.4.2 *Objective 1: Development of strategic frameworks for culture & heritage creating focused regional priorities and increasing the ability to attract further investment.*

Under objective 1, the intention was to deliver strategic frameworks for culture and heritage, to identify regional priorities and to increase the ability to attract further investment. The following section evaluates the extent to which this objective has been achieved.

The Culture Pillar has delivered all its planned strategic frameworks, pending final sign-off for one document by the 31st March 2025. As can be seen in **Table 3-2** above, five regional strategies have been delivered compared to an original target of three. For example, the WMCA has established the following frameworks which provide regional priorities to be taken forward in the future:

- **Regional Culture and Creative Industries Framework** – The framework was completed and has been approved by WMCA in March 2025.
- **Regional Heritage Framework** – The framework was completed and approved by WMCA in March 2025.
- **Regional Skills Plan** – The Skills Plan was completed and approved by WMCA officers in March 2025.
- **Cultural Infrastructure Plan (CIP)** – The provider was selected at the end of January 2025 and the draft CIP has been submitted to WMCA. It is expected to be finalised and approved by WMCA on 31st March 2025.
- **Creative UK Data Licence** – This project was a new addition to the programme. WMCA are licencing data commissioned by Creative UK on the status of businesses in the West Midlands, including cultural and creative businesses. The licence will provide WMCA with access to data on businesses (by SIC code, formation, income etc) to support the production of evidence and strategies for future investment in cultural and creative business development.

Objective 1: Development of strategic frameworks for culture & heritage creating focused regional priorities and increasing the ability to attract further investment.

Summary: This objective relates to the delivery of outputs relating to strategic frameworks. Two strategic frameworks and three strategic plans (pending final sign-off of the CIP), which form the evidence base for future policy development, have been developed for the region. In addition, several local strategies and studies have been produced for local areas in need, identifying deliverable cultural-led regeneration projects.

These strategies will increase the ability of the region to attract further investment, as it provides local areas with key information relating to areas of strength, opportunities and where further development of the sector is needed to showcase and leverage the existing eco-system to support sustainable sector growth. Securing funding for projects within the current economic climate will be particularly challenging, but these frameworks provide the basis for the funding discussions and applications.

It should be noted that local communities and stakeholders have been inspired to become involved with strategic discussions relating to the future of the sector and projects. However,

without the tangible evidence of progress and success from future funding and project delivery, the positive benefits of this engagement could be weakened.

Overall, the objective has been fully met based on the delivery of the key outputs.

Conclusion: Fully met (based on delivered outputs)

3.4.3 *Objective 2: Increasing cultural engagement, community cohesion, and social value*

Through various initiatives, including the Creative Health Workstream, Creative Futures Campaign and LADD funded festivals and events, the programme aimed to enhance cultural engagement, foster community cohesion, and generate social value in the region. The following section evaluates the programme's success in achieving the objective.

I. **Increasing cultural engagement**

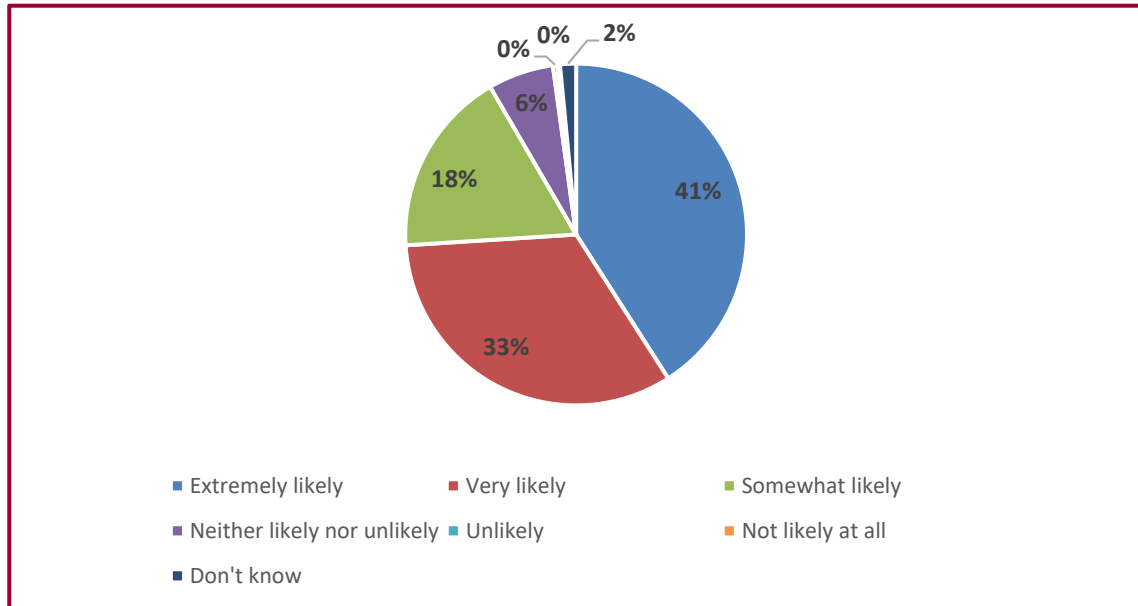
LADD festival and event attendees

As part of the Local Authority Double-Devolved Grants works package, a series of cultural festivals and events were delivered by local authorities. Surveys of attendees across the events were undertaken.

To capture insights on engagement. The aggregated data suggests that the festivals and events were generally **very successful in terms of increasing cultural engagement, as evidenced by the fact that 92% of respondents at the events were now more likely to attend cultural events in the West Midlands in future** with 74% either 'extremely likely' or 'very likely' to attend future cultural events.

The full response is set out in **Figure 3-1** below. It is worth noting that 43% of attendees said they had not taken part in any other culture or heritage events in the past 12 months. Given that many of the respondents were previously inactive in the cultural space but as a result of attending the event they are likely inclined to participate in the future, indicates that the events successfully sparked interest and engagement amongst a large number of attendees, including those not normally engaged.

Figure 3-1'Has this event made you more likely to attend cultural events in the West Midlands in future?'



Source: Beneficiary survey (2024)

To further test the strength of the engagement with the cultural event supported by the programme, survey respondents were asked 'how likely they were to recommend the event'. The response to this question further evidences the success in engagement with 75% of respondents across the LADD funded festivals and events saying they would strongly recommend the event. The events had an **overall net promoter score¹¹ of 67**, reflecting a very positive level of sentiment, indicating significantly more positive experiences than negative among respondents. When attendees have a positive experience at an event, they are more likely to return for future similar events and recommend them to others. Their word-of-mouth recommendations can inspire a broader audience to participate, leading to a widening of cultural engagement in the community.

Table 3-5 showcases a selection of quotes from the cultural event attendees explaining their scores. These quotes are categorised into the three groups: 'promoters,' 'passives,' and 'detractors,' with the number of quotes broadly reflecting the relative size of each category.

Table 3-5: Quotes from cultural event attendees		
NPS Category	% of responses	Quotes
Promoters	75%	'It was so interactive and such good fun! The performers were really engaging and great with all the families'

¹¹ A Net Promoter Score (NPS) is a market research measure based on the likelihood that respondents would "recommend" aspects of a place or an event they attended. After the event, attendees rate it from 0 to 10, with those scoring 9-10 classified as promoters, 7-8 classified as passives (neutral), and 0-6 classified as detractors. The NPS score is calculated by subtracting the percentage of detractors from the percentage of promoters, resulting in an overall NPS score of between -100 and +100. An overall NPS score for an event of 20-30 is considered solid, 50+ is excellent, and anything above 70 is outstanding, indicating strong attendee satisfaction and high likelihood of recommendations

		<p>'Really wonderful entertainment for all the family!! Local and free which is even better, thank you so much. Such talent and very funny!!!'</p> <p>'Brilliant idea and so lovely to be able to expose my children to these types of events and skills without having to pay a fortune. It also took us to a park we've never been to before which was great'</p> <p>'A thought-provoking performance which was told in a wonderfully engaging manner'</p>
Passives	18%	<p>'Great event: very good singing, costumes and piano playing. Thematic and engaging. Really fun'</p> <p>'It was a lovely community event spotlighting inclusive art and their connection to home.'</p> <p>'Free culture and entertainment is always a plus. Strong message. Good activity afterwards for kids'</p>
Detractors	8%	<p>'Good variety of performers but not enough organisation. Excellent execution even after last minute venue change'</p> <p>'It felt aimed towards larger organisations, ones with venues or wide audiences.'</p>

Source: Beneficiary survey (2024)

II. Social cohesion

The survey of attendees at LADD funded festivals and events provided valuable demographic insights, offering a detailed understanding of the audience. The following section presents key findings.

Ethnicity

The ethnic composition of attendees was predominantly White (including White British and White Irish), comprising 68.9% of respondents¹². Individuals identifying as Asian or Asian British represented 19.4%, while Black or Black British attendees accounted for 6.4%. Those identifying as Mixed or of multiple ethnic backgrounds constituted 5.0% of attendees, and 2.7% identified with other ethnic groups.

The survey suggests that the attendees were more ethnically diverse than the wider West Midlands population, with 64.2% of attendees identifying as White/White British/White Irish, compared to 79.5% in the West Midlands overall¹³. The proportion of attendees identifying as Black/Black British was higher compared to the general West Midlands population (6.4% vs 5.2%). This was also the case for those identifying as Asian/Asian British (25.8% vs 16.4%) This is important, given the baseline showed that there is a low proportion of Asian/Asian British and Black/African/Caribbean/Black British people engaging with the arts across England¹⁴.

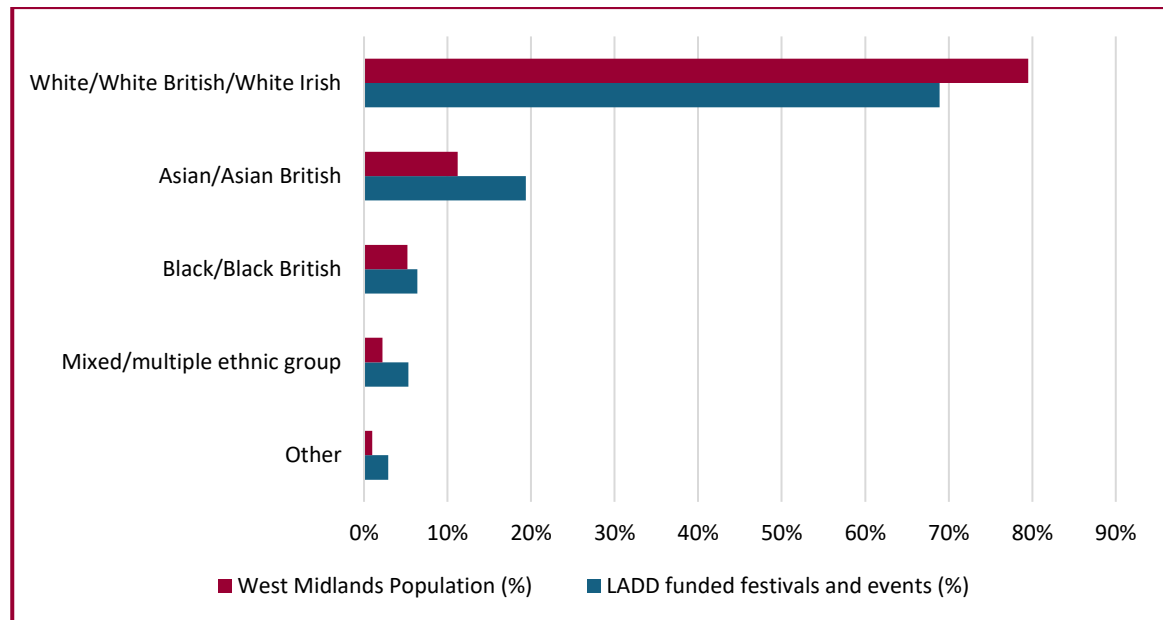
¹² To enable comparisons against the baseline population conditions, the responses which chose not to disclose their ethnicity (4.1%) have not been included in the analysis.

¹³ Office for National Statistics, (2025); Annual Population Survey 2024

¹⁴ DCMS, (2024); Participation in the arts, culture and heritage.

Figure 3-2 compares the proportion of event attendees that identify with each ethnic group (shown in red bars) with the overall ethnic composition of the West Midlands population (represented by blue bars). This allows for a direct comparison of event participation against regional demographics.

Figure 3-2 Ethnicity of cultural event attendees at LADD events



Source: Beneficiary survey (2024)

Age

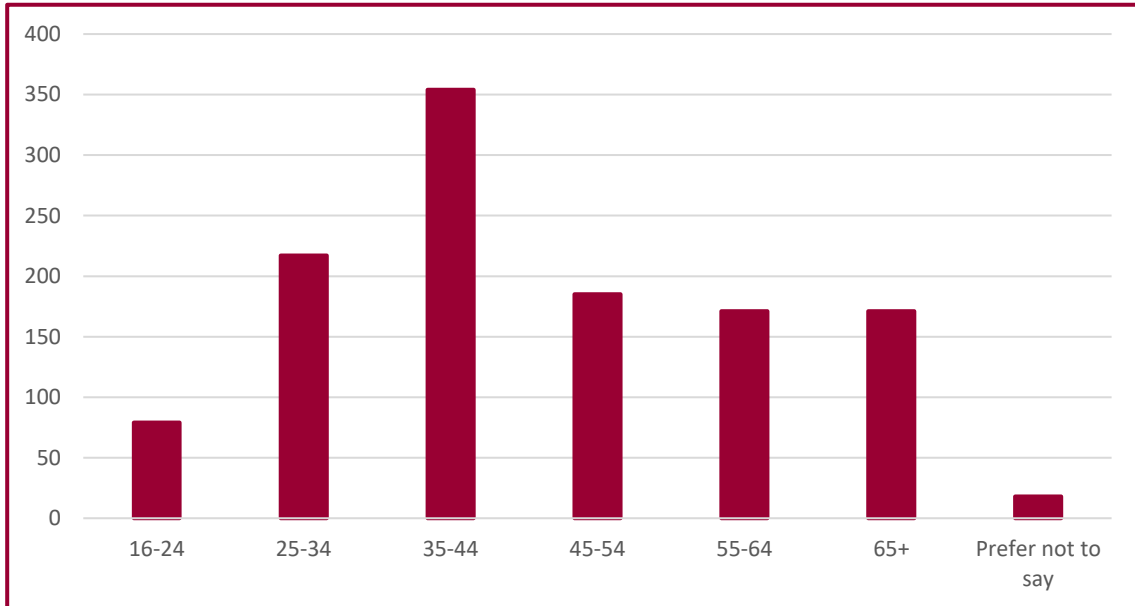
The respondent survey data indicates that those aged between 35 and 44 were the largest attendee age group. In the West Midlands individuals aged 35 to 44 make up 16.1% of the total population aged over 16 (to allow a direct comparison to the survey responses)¹⁵. However, survey data from the events shows that this age group accounted for 29.6% of attendees, nearly double their representation in the overall regional population. The probable reason for this is that the 35 to 44 age group are the most likely to have young children, who were the target audience group for many events.

The least represented age category at the events were those aged between 16-24, representing 6.6% of respondents. In the West Midlands region this age group represents 13.5% of residents aged over 16, suggesting there was a slight under-representation of this age group at the cultural events.

The age breakdown of survey respondents at events is set out in **Figure 3-3 below**. Overall, the survey results reflect a **relatively diverse range of age categories**, with a noticeable spread across all age groups.

¹⁵ Office for National Statistics, (2025); Population Estimates by Age Group 2024

Figure 3-3 Age breakdown of LADD event attendees



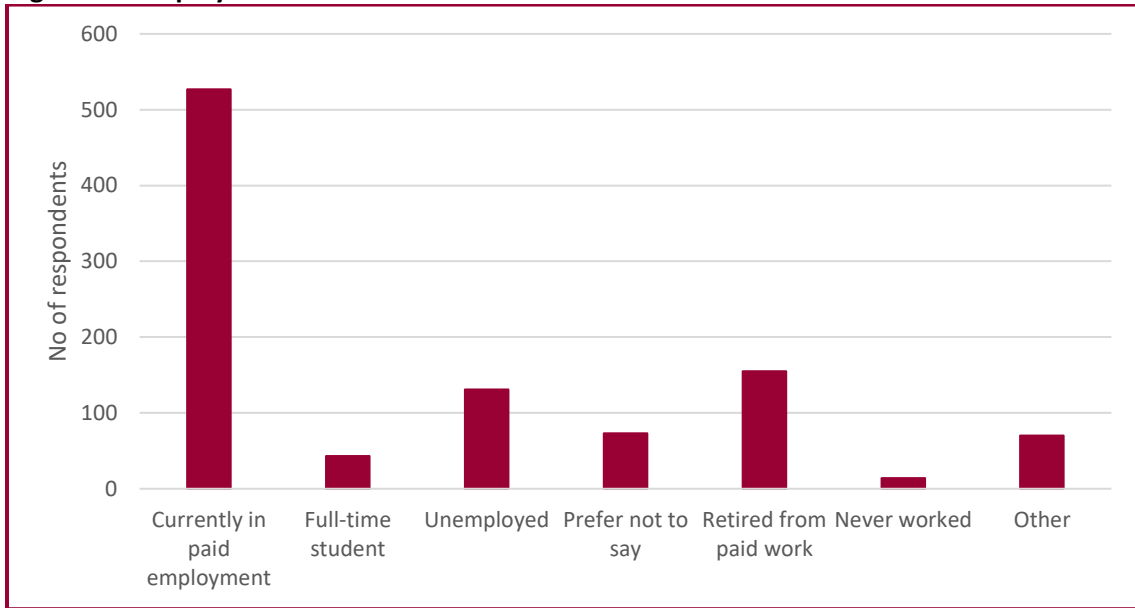
Source: Beneficiary survey (2024)

Employment status

Figure 3-4 shows the split of attendees based on their employment status at the time of attending the event.

The largest category of attendees was those in paid employment, representing 52% of respondents. Around 12.9% of respondents were unemployed and 15.3% were retired from paid work. In the West Midlands overall, the employment rate stands at 69.5%, with 5.9% of people unemployed and 6.6% of people retired. This shows that the LADD funded events had a higher proportion of retired and unemployed attendees compared to their representation in the population.

Figure 3-4 Employment status of LADD cultural event attendees



Source: Beneficiary survey (2024)

Proportion of respondents with daily activity limitations

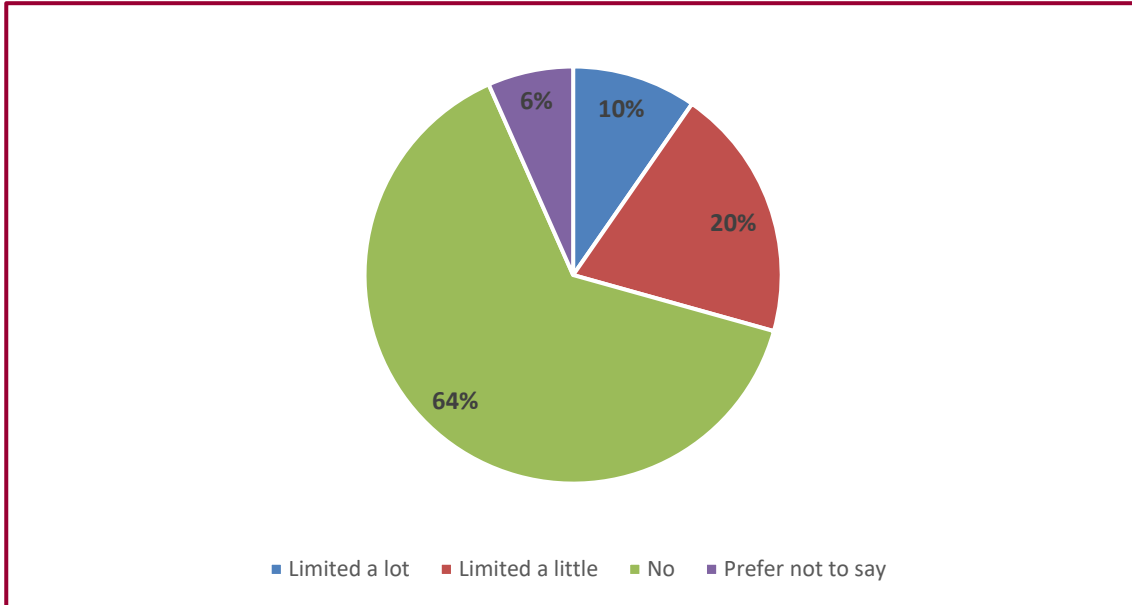
Figure 3-5 shows the proportion of LADD event respondents whose day-to-day activities are limited due to a health problem or disability that has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months. The majority of respondents (64%) reported that their activities were not limited. Of the remaining respondents, 19.7% said their activities were "Limited a little," while 9.7% said they were "Limited a lot."

For comparison, according to 2021 Census data¹⁶ the percentage of people in the WMCA seven constituent authorities¹⁷ whose day-to-day activities are "Limited a little" is 10.3%, and "Limited a lot" is 8.8%. This data indicates that the LADD funded events attracted a higher proportion of people with conditions that limit their day-to-day activities compared to the general WMCA population.

¹⁶ [Disability, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

¹⁷ Data is only available at a Local Authority level and so averages have been calculated across the seven WMCA constituent authorities.

Figure 3-5 Health or disability impact on daily activities responses (LADD funded events)



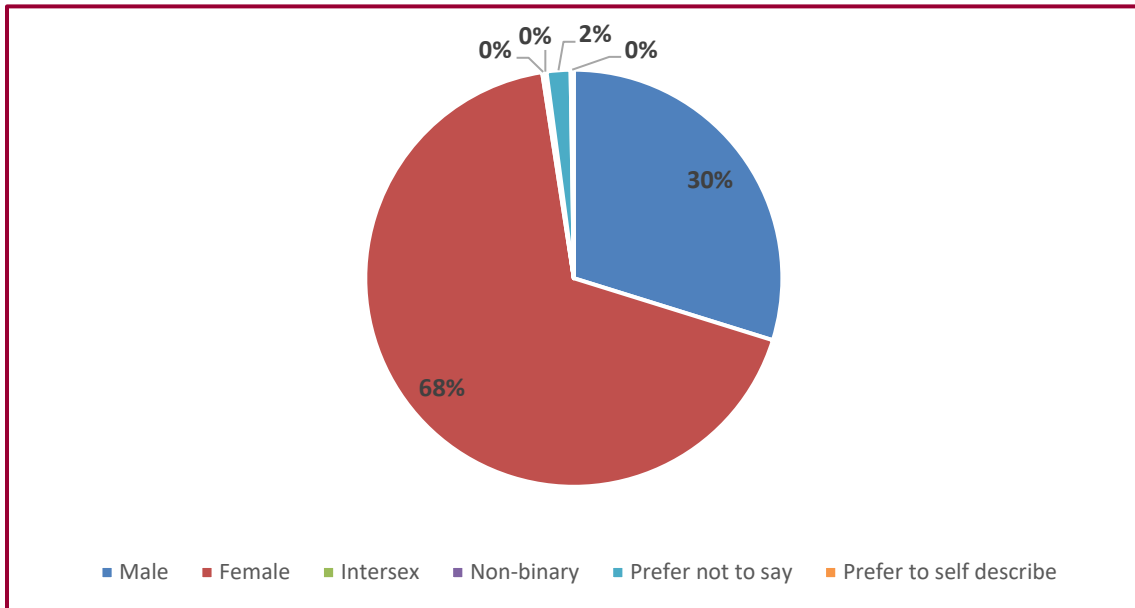
Source: Beneficiary survey (2024)

Gender identity

Figure 3-6 shows the breakdown in the gender identities of surveyed attendees from LADD funded events. The proportion of those that identify as female (67.8%) was significantly higher than those identifying as male (29.8%). According to ONS mid-year population estimates (2023), males account for 49.3% of the West Midlands population, while females made up 50.7% of the total¹⁸.

¹⁸ [Population estimates - local authority based by single year of age - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics](#)

Figure 3-6 Gender identity of LADD funded cultural events



Source: Beneficiary survey (2024)

This demographic data suggests that the events have effectively reached and attracted individuals from underrepresented or disadvantaged groups, potentially enhancing social inclusion and wellbeing as well as creating opportunities for greater and more sustainable community participation in cultural events.

LADD festival and event participants

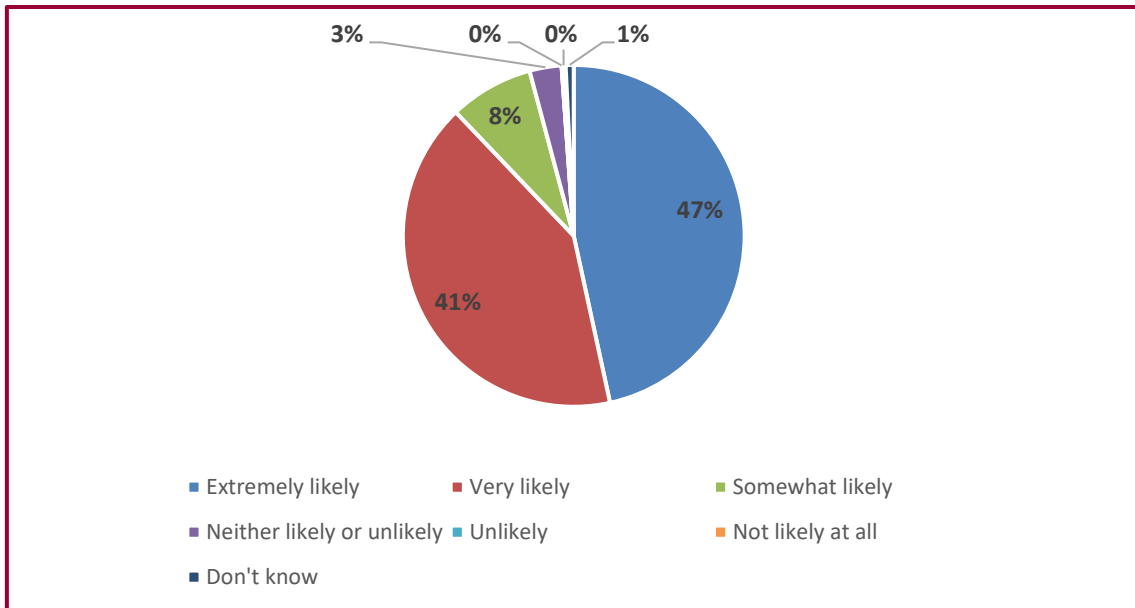
The survey of attendees also captured insights into the experience of the participants at the LADD funded festivals and events. A participant was someone who actively engaged in or contributed to the event, rather than being in the audience. The figures below demonstrate that the festivals/events that took place have helped participants to expand their networks and access new opportunities in the sector. Key insights include:

- 69% of respondents said the event has helped them to access new cultural opportunities
- 63% of respondents said that the event has helped them to develop partnerships/connections with local artists and businesses
- 70% of respondents developed new skills because of the event

The programme provided opportunities for cultural artists or local residents to experience new cultural activities. Around 28% of participants stated that they had not been involved anything similar to the event in which they participated in over the preceding 12 months.

Also encouragingly, as shown in **Figure 3-7**, 96% of respondents said that the event has made them more likely to participate in cultural events in the West Midlands in the future, with 88% stating either 'extremely likely' or 'very likely'. This suggests that engagement with culture is likely to rise as a result of the generally positive experience of the participants.

Figure 3-7 'Has this event made you more likely to participate in cultural events in the West Midlands in future?'



Source: Beneficiary survey (2024)

III. Generating Social Value

The Creative Futures Campaign was delivered in partnership with Big Give, as part of their 'Arts for Impact' campaign and surveys were collected from all 10 funded charities. Responses demonstrated that the programme delivered social value through supporting charities to provide creative equipment to artists and run musical and creative events for young people and disadvantaged groups, fostering increased cultural and community engagement, inclusion and empowerment. One charity stated that because of the funding they were able to provide bursary tickets to all their events and activities for those unable to pay and who otherwise would be unable to attend. Using the charities as a means of reaching disadvantaged groups and enabling access to cultural events clearly increased the accessibility and as a result the wellbeing benefits of cultural events whilst broadening the audience base.

Across all the charities involved, 49 volunteers supported the projects, delivering social value by providing individuals with new/valuable skills, promoting social inclusion and creating positive impact for the volunteers and communities that they serve. Volunteering is well known to be associated with positive well-being effects, through increasing personal fulfilment, reducing stress levels and promoting a sense of purpose, all of which can contribute to improved mental health and life satisfaction levels.

Objective 2: Increasing cultural engagement, community cohesion, and social value

Summary:

Overall, the programme has successfully met the objective of increasing cultural participation, promoting community cohesion and creating social value.

Through the wide variety of festivals and events across the CA, residents had the opportunity to engage with a relevant creative and heritage offer in their local area and beyond. The success of the approach and programme is evidenced by 43% of event attendees reporting that they had not participated in any other cultural or heritage events in the past 12 months and 92% stating that they are now more likely to attend cultural events in the region in the future. This indicates strong potential for **widened cultural engagement** in the region.

The aggregate net promoter score of 67 across the LADD funded cultural events suggests that attendees were very satisfied with their experience and would recommend the event they attended to others. Creatives Futures Grant has helped to increase **cultural engagement and generate social value** through encouraging volunteering which in turn has helped young people, disadvantaged groups and those who may not otherwise be able to experience cultural events to be involved. Broadening participation in such a way enhances social value through promoting equality, supporting well-being and creating a sense of belonging among generally underserved groups.

Conclusion: Objective has been fully met

3.4.4 *Objective 3: Increasing civic pride and supporting culture-led regeneration, including high streets and existing cultural infrastructure.*

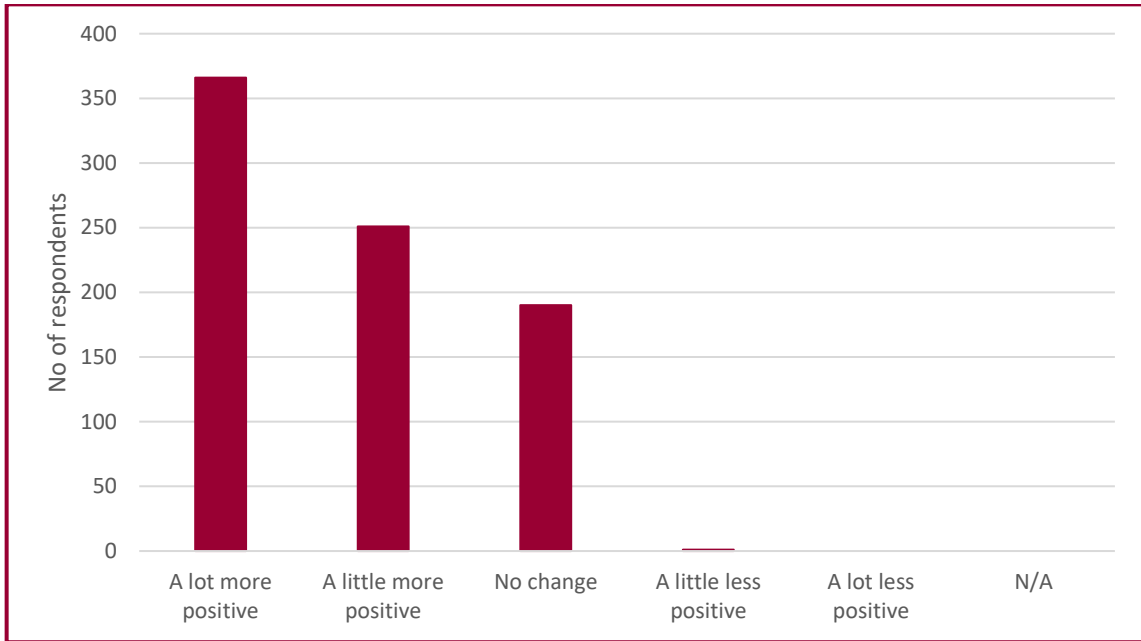
The aim of this objective, through the LADD funded festivals and events, was to increase civic pride in the region and support culture-led regeneration, including high streets and existing cultural infrastructure. The following section evaluates the extent to which this objective has been met.

I. **Increasing civic pride**

LADD festivals and event attendees

As shown in **Figure 3-8** below, **76% of respondents attending the LADD funded festivals and events, now have a more positive perception of the area as a place to visit**, with 45% of respondents stating that the experience has made their perception of the area as a place to visit 'a lot more positive'. This is likely to **increase feelings of civic pride** through making residents feel more connected and invested in their community, encouraging increased community engagement and contribution to its ongoing improvement.

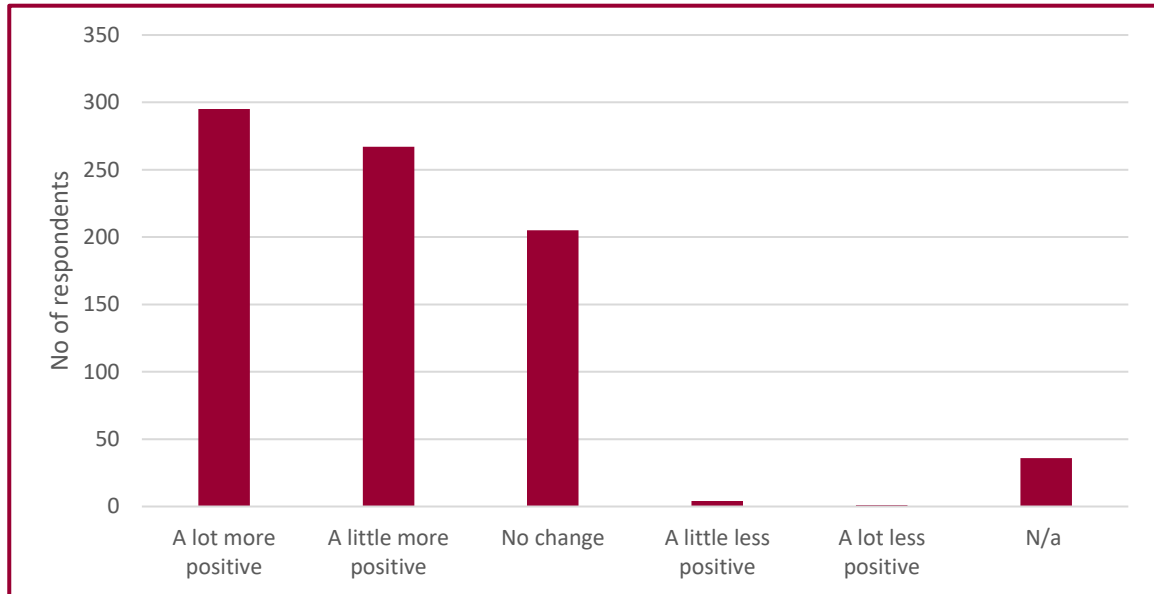
Figure 3-8 'Has your experience changed your perception of the area as a place to visit?'- LADD event attendees



Source: Beneficiary survey (2024)

Further evidence of the increase in civic pride is that 70% of attendees reported a more positive perception of the area as a place to live, with 37% stating that their perception was now 'a lot more positive' as set out in **Figure 3-9** below. A successful event can reshape residents' perception of their area and enhance civic pride through highlighting its strengths, fostering community connections, and creating a shared sense of celebration among residents.

Figure 3-9 'Has your experience changed your perception of the area to live as a place?'- LADD event attendees



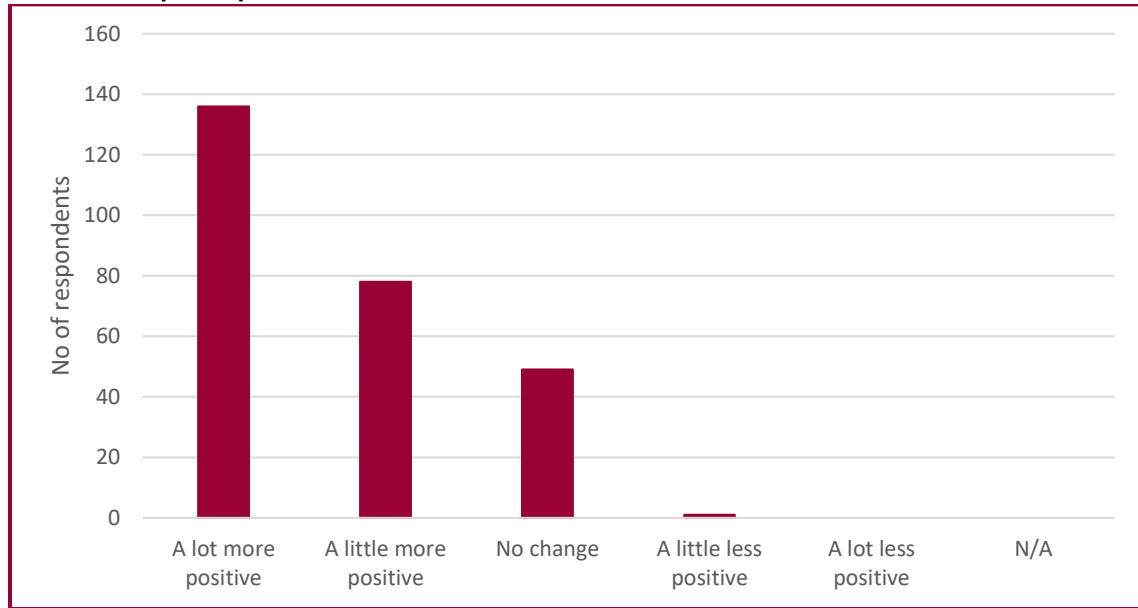
Source: Beneficiary survey (2024)

Additional evidence is provided by the net promoter score, in terms of how likely attendees are to recommend the West Midlands as a place to visit, with a score of **50 achieved**. Taken together this feedback suggests that the cultural events not only improved the area's image as a visitor destination, but have also contributed to a stronger sense of community and liveability amongst attendees

LADD festivals and event participants

As shown in **Figure 3-10 below**, of the individuals surveyed who participated in a LADD funded event, 81% now hold a more positive perception of the area as a place to visit, with 52% of respondents stating that their perception was 'a lot more positive'. Again, this increased positive perception is evidence of enhanced civic pride, as people feel more connected to and invested in places that they view more positively.

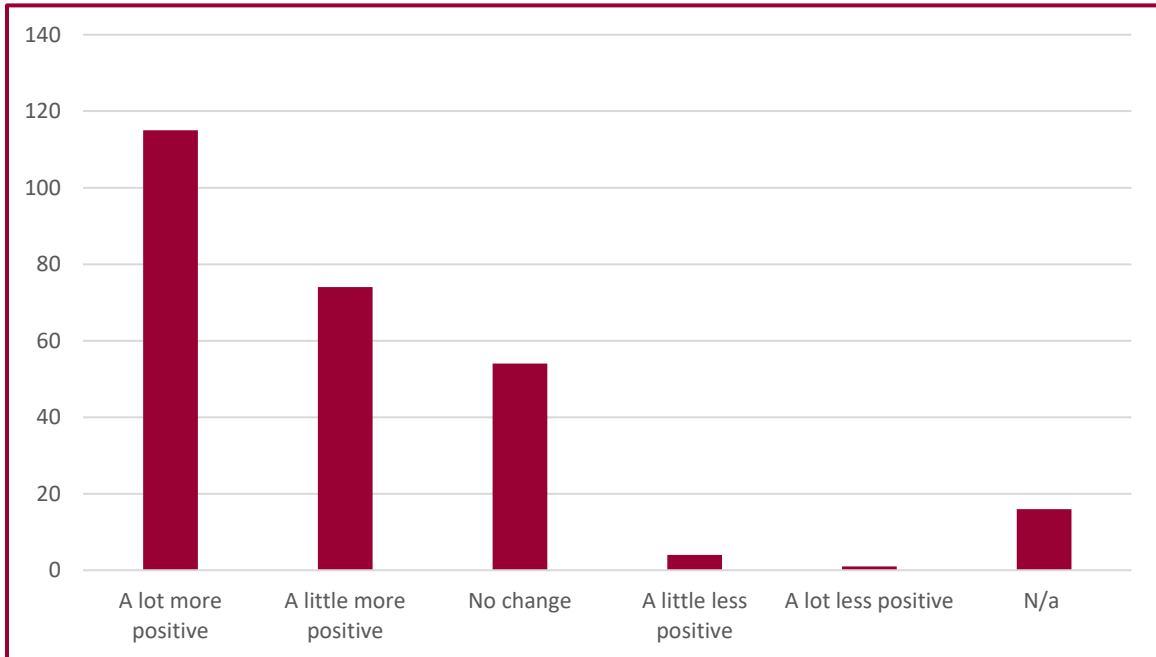
Figure 3-10 'Has your experience changed your perception of the area as a place to visit?'- LADD event participants



Source: Beneficiary survey (2024)

Additionally, 72% of respondents now view the area more positively as a place to live, as shown in **Figure 3-11**. As part of this, around 44% of people stated that their perception of the place to live was now 'a lot more positive' after the event, indicating that residents and attendees feel a greater sense of connection, value, and appreciation for their community. These scores, coupled with the high net promoter score for the participants of the LADD events (62) show that the cultural events have had a very positive impact on how the area is viewed by participants, enhancing their civic pride.

Figure 3-11 'Has your experience changed your perception of the area to live as a place?'- LADD event participants



Source: Beneficiary survey (2024)

LADD training and grants

The funding supported several training and grant programmes designed and delivered by Local Authorities. These programmes looked to enhance the capacity of the cultural sector, as well as the capability of local authorities to manage training programmes across the region. Amongst participants on the training programmes, there was a notable shift in perceptions of the local area as a destination to experience the cultural sector, with participants expressing significantly more positive views as a result of the programme they attended. Amongst freelancers, 72% of respondents now have a more favourable perception of the area as a cultural hub, while 76% of supported businesses now view it more positively as a place to do business. This demonstrates the effectiveness of the training in achieving Objective 3.

II. Supporting culture-led regeneration

As part of the double devolved grants package, 16 feasibility studies were conducted. These studies highlight the funding's role in supporting future culture-led regeneration, despite the absence of capital funding for direct physical development which was outside of its scope. These studies have laid solid foundations for future investment by ensuring that, should funding become available in the future, regeneration plans are more developed and are informed by community needs and stakeholder engagement. Some authorities, such as Coventry, developed cultural infrastructure plans and mapping exercises, providing a strategic framework to guide future investment, identify key assets, and ensure regeneration efforts align with local needs. Although some stakeholders noted the challenges of a short timeframe, the studies have provided a valuable starting point to secure external funding and advance capital investment plans. Consultations did in some cases highlight that more time would have allowed for deeper

stakeholder engagement. Feedback from consultations has been largely positive, with stakeholders emphasising that the studies have helped clarify priorities and ensure that regeneration efforts, if funded, will be designed with community input in mind. Walsall noted that the funding was particularly useful in facilitating community consultations around the relocation of the Leather Museum, enabling a more informed approach to site selection while engaging underrepresented groups in the process. Overall, the feasibility studies have strengthened the strategic framework for culture-led regeneration, ensuring that future investment will be well-targeted, inclusive, and more responsive to local need. However, while studies have created solid foundations for culture-led regeneration in the region, much of their impact depends upon the availability of future to bring plans to fruition.

Several place-based and cultural strategies were delivered as part of the double devolved grants work package, including hyperlocal place strategies in Birmingham, Coventry, Sandwell, Solihull, and Wolverhampton's which focused on culture, nighttime economy, public art, and cultural infrastructure mapping. These strategies have helped to identify cultural assets and priorities in key locations across the region and will contribute to the local authorities developing project pipelines, funding strategies and action plans for future culture led regeneration. However, there may need to be further support to attract the necessary funding to develop and deliver the identified projects.

Objective 3: Increasing civic pride and supporting culture-led regeneration, including high streets and existing cultural infrastructure.

Summary:

The programme has clearly enhanced civic pride, with attendees and participants across the LADD cultural events now holding a more positive view of the area as a result of the event that they attended. Furthermore, LADD training and grant recipients also had significant numbers of respondents that now feel more positive about the area as a place to experience culture and do business.

It is useful to note that whilst the ACTIVATE training and grants programmes did not primarily fall under the remit of objective 3, 76% of ACTIVATE respondents reported holding a more positive perception of the area as a place to experience the cultural sector as a result of the training received.

In terms of **culture-led regeneration** there was no upgrading of physical cultural assets as this was a revenue programme with no capital funding was available. This was not an expected deliverable of the funding. Sixteen feasibility studies were conducted across seven local authorities, laying strong foundations for future culture-led regeneration by identifying priorities, engaging stakeholders, and developing strategic plans. While these studies have provided a valuable framework for future investment, their impact ultimately depends on securing further funding to bring regeneration projects to fruition. It is likely that supporting the development of several key strategies has helped to identify local priorities in key locations across the region, that physical culture led regeneration will happen in the future.

Many of the supported events and festivals will have taken place in local high streets and cultural infrastructure such as art galleries and theatres. The increased animation of these

spaces and the positive results from attendees and participants means that, the programme has demonstrated the strategic value of culture as a driver for regeneration.

Conclusion: Objective has been fully met

3.4.5 *Objective 4: Increasing the resilience of the West Midlands cultural sector and creative freelancers*

The main activity supported to deliver on objective 4 was as the ACTIVATE training and grants programmes. These aimed to enhance the resilience of the West Midlands cultural sector and creative freelancers. The LADD training and grants programme also contributed strongly to this objective. This section will evaluate the extent to which the supported activity has successfully achieved this objective.

I. Increasing the resilience of the sector and freelancers

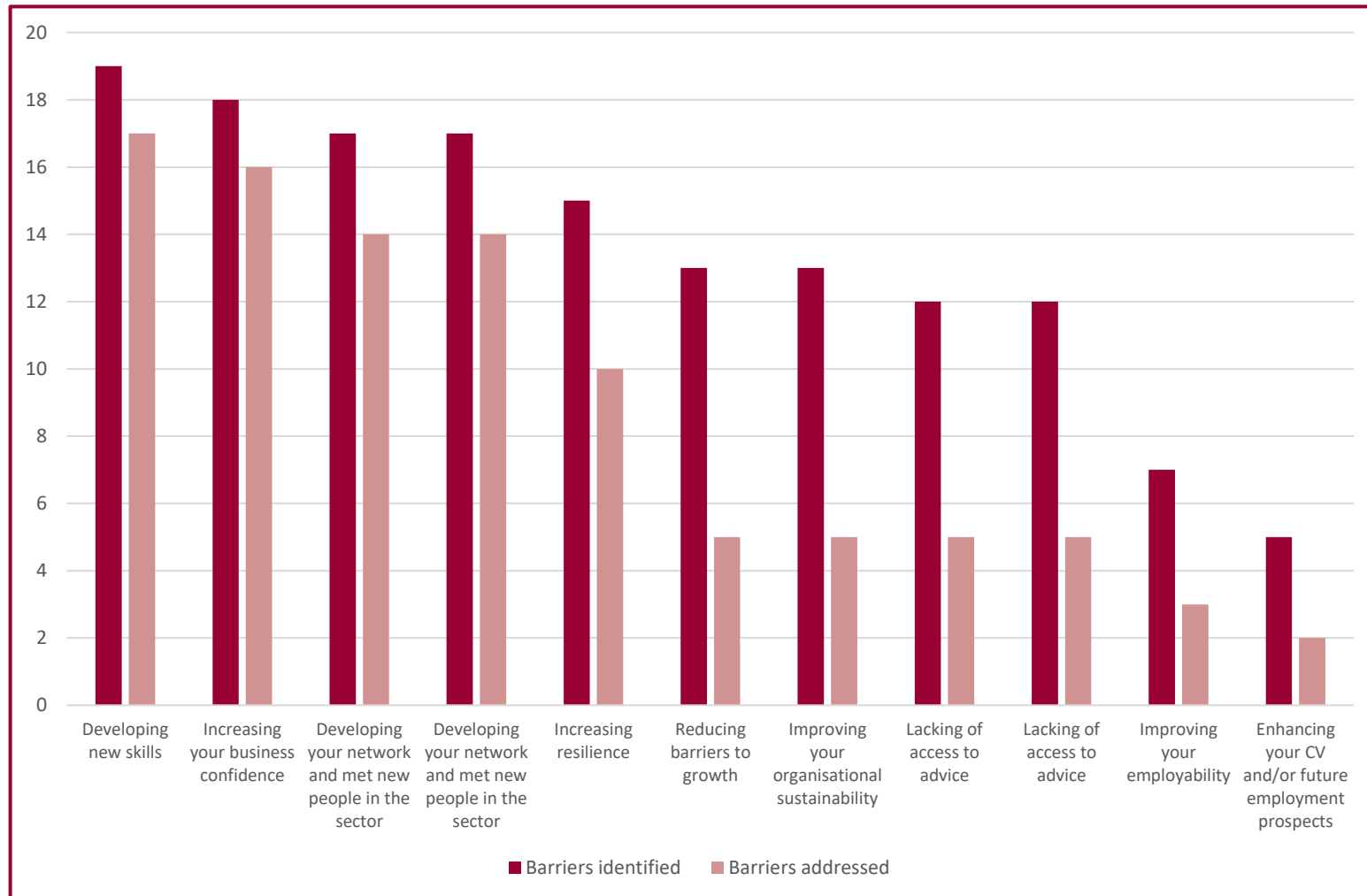
ACTIVATE training

The ACTIVATE training programme was designed to deliver a range of business and skills support measures to improve the resilience of businesses and freelancers in the West Midlands cultural sector. As part of the ACTIVATE training survey, respondents were asked 'Prior to joining the programme, what barriers to growth did you and/or your business face?', as well as 'Has the event/course helped address any of the following barriers?'. Both questions were asked after the training programme had occurred, allowing respondents to select from a list of barriers

Figure 3-12 below shows the most commonly identified barriers to growth were 'Developing new skills' followed by 'Increasing your business confidence'. shows the percentage of identified barriers successfully addressed by the ACTIVATE programme. The barriers with the highest rate of being addressed were 'Developing new skills' (89.5%) and 'Increasing your business confidence' (88.9%).

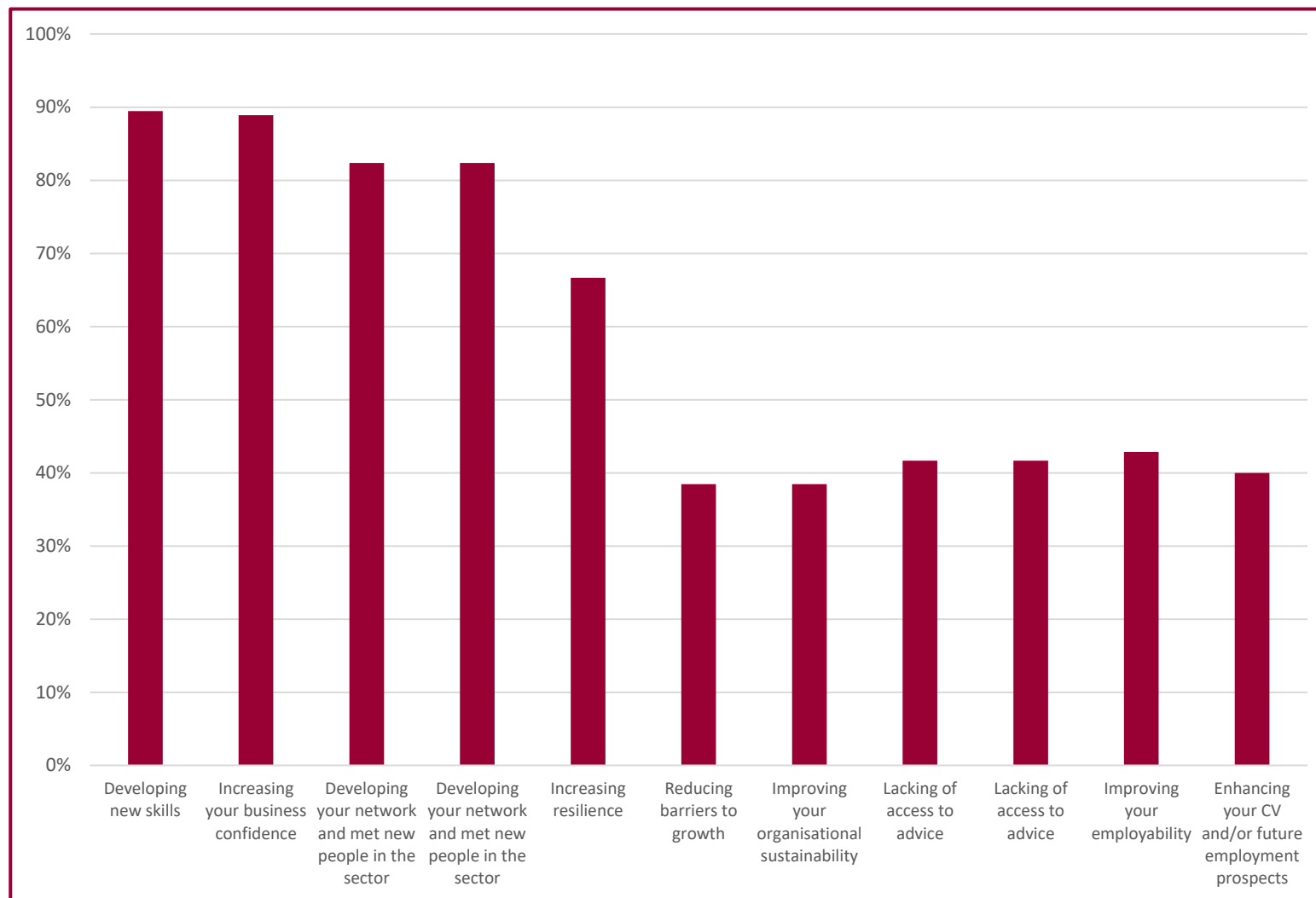
Of all the barriers identified, 65% were directly addressed as a result of the programme. It is important to note that several barriers were addressed for individuals who had not initially identified them as challenges, suggesting the training provided broader benefits than anticipated. This is likely to enhance the resilience of the sector through equipping individuals/businesses with the skills, knowledge and confidence to grow, secure future opportunities and better adapt to industry changes.

Figure 3-12 Number of times a barrier was identified and how many times was it directly addressed



Source: Beneficiary survey (2024)

Figure 3-13 Percentage of identified barriers successfully addressed by the programme

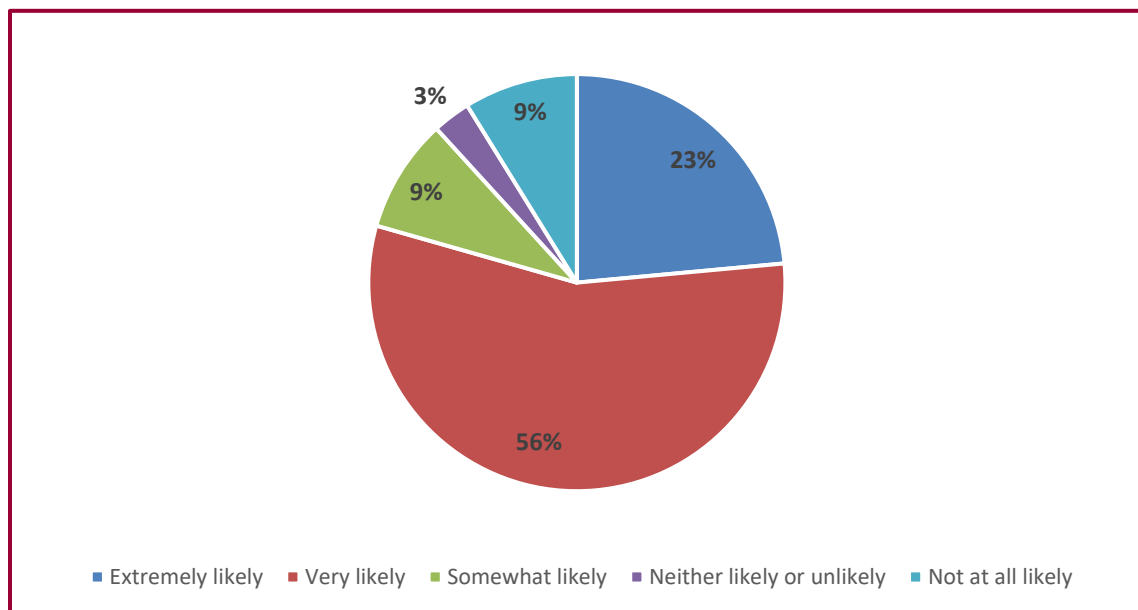


Source: Beneficiary survey (2024)

The survey also highlighted that 47% of respondents have not taken part in any similar training programmes to this in the past 12 months and 88% now feel more likely to attend a business support or training event in the West Midlands in future, as set out in **Figure 3-14** below.

A greater willingness to attend business support or training sessions is likely to strengthen the cultural sector in the West Midlands by ensuring that creatives and freelancers continue to develop their skills and access useful information, advice and guidance. This ongoing professional development fosters a more knowledgeable, connected, and sustainable creative workforce, improving long-term career stability and sector-wide resilience.

Figure 3-14 Has this event made you more likely to attend business support or training events in the West Midlands in future?



Source: Beneficiary Survey (2024)

LADD training programme

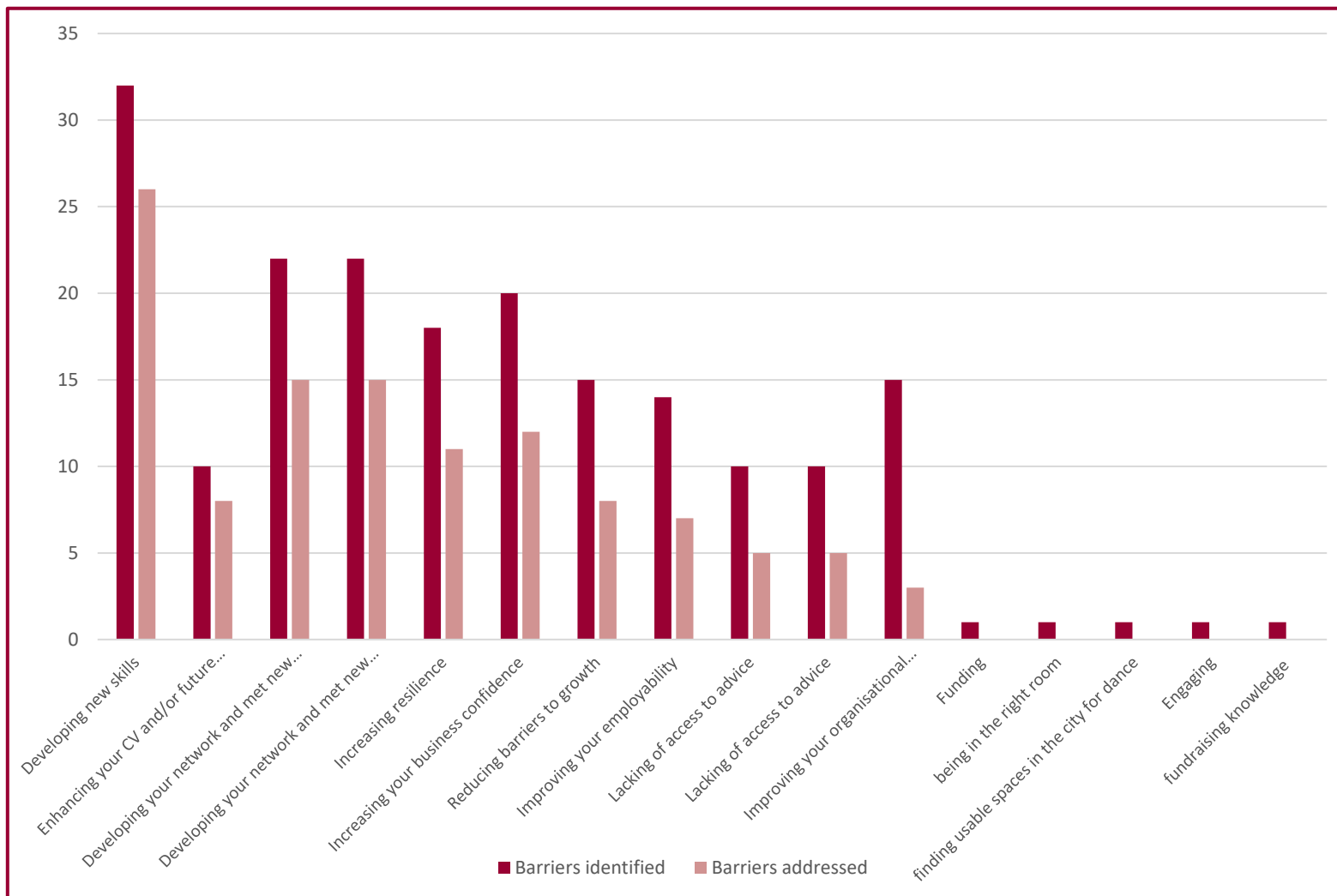
As part of the LADD training survey, respondents were asked ‘Prior to joining the programme, what barriers to growth did you and/or your business face?’, as well as ‘Has the event/course helped address any of the following barriers?’. Both questions were asked after the training programme had occurred, allowing respondents to select from a list of barriers. **Figure 3-15** below shows the number of times a barrier was selected by respondents, as well as how many times it was addressed. The most common barriers to growth identified were ‘Developing new skills’ and ‘Developing your network and meeting new people in the sector’.

Figure 3-16 Percentage of identified barriers successfully addressed by the programme

shows the percentage of identified barriers that were successfully addressed by the LADD training programmes. The barriers with the highest rates of being addressed were ‘Developing new skills’ (81.3%) and ‘Enhancing your CV and/or future employment prospects’ (80%). Of all the barriers identified, 59.6% were addressed because of the training programme. As was the case for the ACTIVATE programme of training, several barriers were addressed for individuals who had

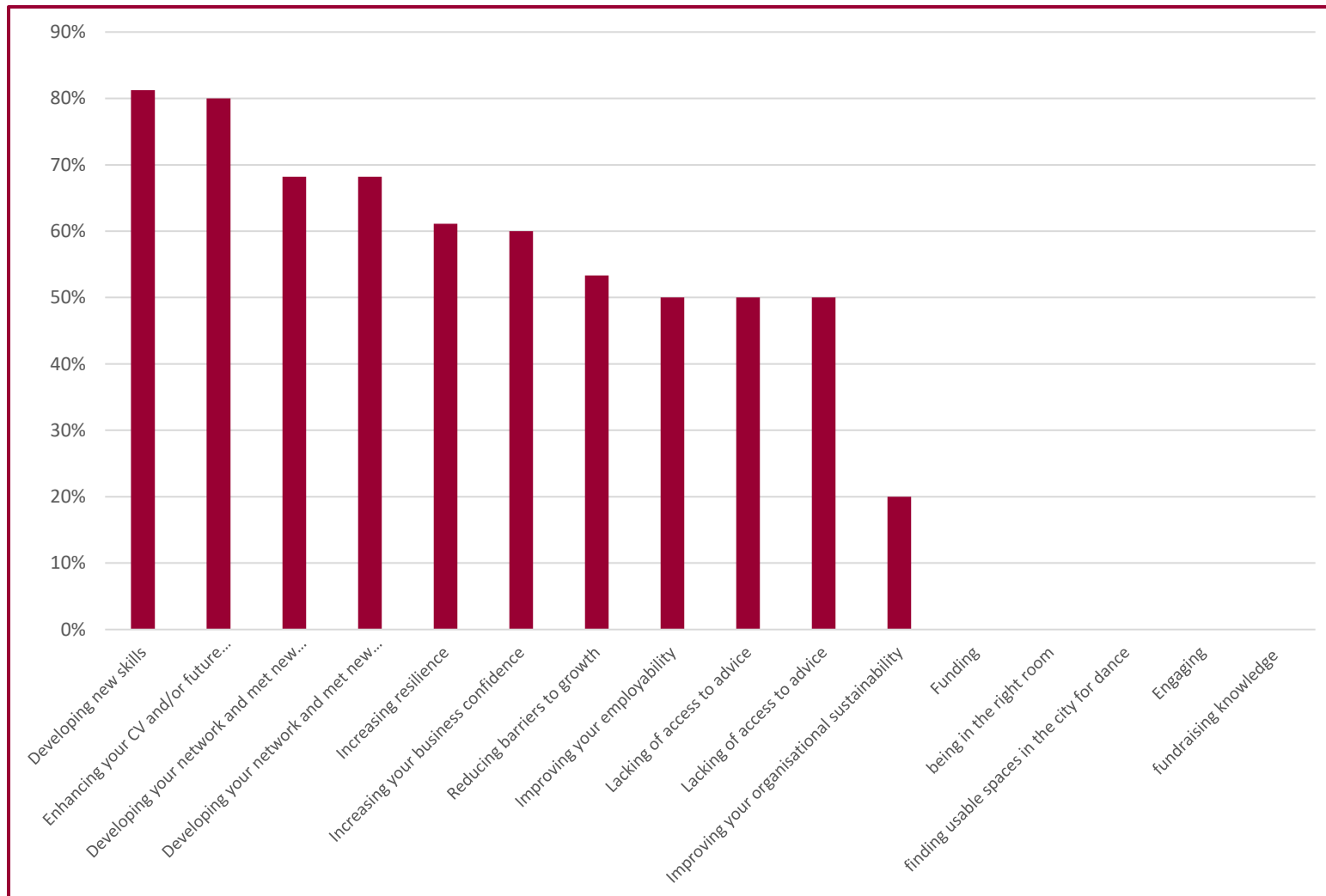
not initially identified them as challenges, suggesting again that the training provided broader benefits than anticipated.

Figure 3-15 Number of times a barrier was identified and how many times was it directly addressed



Source: Beneficiary survey (2024)

Figure 3-16 Percentage of identified barriers successfully addressed by the programme



Source: Beneficiary survey (2024)

Furthermore, 95% of businesses and freelancers surveyed are now more likely to attend business support or training events in the West Midlands in the future. This is significant, as 47% of respondents stated that they had not taken part in any similar training programmes to this in the last 12 months. Again, a greater willingness to attend support programme is likely to enhance the resilience of the cultural sector by equipping individuals and organisations with the skills, knowledge, and networks needed to adapt and thrive in the sector. Training can also foster collaboration and idea-sharing, which strengthens connections within the sector, leading to more sustainable businesses and a greater ability to navigate sector challenges.

However, across the LADD and ACTIVATE training programmes, the net promoter scores ranged between 6 and 18. This indicates generally positive sentiment among participants, with more participants likely to recommend the training to others than those who would not. However, there were a **significant number of neutral and some dissatisfied attendees** who may not be as likely to actively recommend the training.

Table 3-6 shows a breakdown of the NPS scores across the training programmes and provides a selection of quotes from attendees explaining their scores. These quotes are categorised into the three groups: ‘promoters,’ ‘passives,’ and ‘detractors,’ with the number of quotes broadly reflecting the relative size of each category.

Table 3-6 Training programme net promoter scores

How likely are you to recommend the event to a friend or colleague?	
LADD training (freelancers)	6
LADD training (businesses)	9
ACTIVATE (all)	18

Source: Beneficiary survey (2024)

Table 3-7 Quotes from training course attendees (Activate and LADD)

NPS Category	% of responses	Quotes from attendees
Promoters	40%	<p>‘Course leader was extremely knowledgeable’</p> <p>‘As a freelancer in the creative sector the information I have received through the Activate programme has been invaluable. It has helped me to hone in on certain projects I want to do, especially within the community and helped me to figure out my next steps.’</p> <p>‘To have received this much mentorship, tutoring, and guidance for free is immeasurable’</p> <p>‘Has been so helpful moving my career forward’</p> <p>‘Workshops deep dive into key barriers that I'm facing as a freelancer new in the creative sector. I can access to a recording to the presentation as well which was really helpful.’</p> <p>‘Great sharing of information, really knowledgeable team organising the talks and events.’</p>

		'It was amazing and extremely well done, I feel that my skills have improved massively since starting the workshop.'
Passives	43%	<p>'The workshops were really good in looking at different aspect as a freelance work, from contracts, branding, creativity, negotiations. There was a lot to choose from'</p> <p>'The courses and workshops give a lot of insight into people with first hand experiences in the arts which is very interesting to know when you are emerging.'</p> <p>'Really good to connect with other creatives, I didn't know how many there were in the midlands!'</p> <p>'I learnt about specific funds that I can apply for how to best contact funders'</p> <p>'Great variety of workshops and connections and valuable information'</p>
Detractors	17%	<p>'On the whole, the course was very useful and had some great modules, but it was planned very last minute and so I was already fully booked by then and missed a lot of the sessions.'</p> <p>'Lack of cohesion or purpose throughout. No central focus person or point, just a series of ever duller online sessions of which only 1 was informative. The mentoring - I've only just been contacted and it finishes next week. I decided to find my own mentor instead.'</p> <p>'There were some good elements but it also had a lot of bad elements'</p>

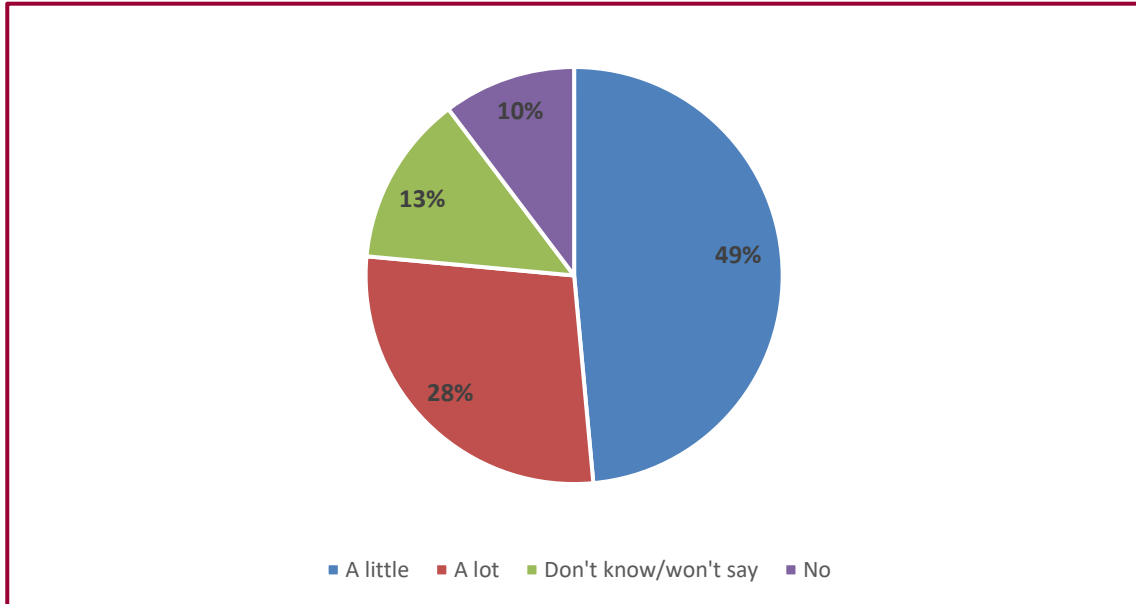
Source: Beneficiary survey (2024)

ACTIVATE Grant

The ACTIVATE Grants Programme was designed to support freelancers, micro and small organisations in the West Midlands Creative and Cultural sectors to fund skills development projects and support the development of skills across the region through small-scale grants.

Across the ACTIVATE grant programme, 76% of survey respondents felt as though participation in the programme has improved their profile within the West Midlands. This improved profile can lead to greater opportunities for collaboration, further funding, and stronger networks, all of which will help these individuals/organisations to increase their visibility, experience and expand their impact and credibility in the region.

Figure 3-17 'Has your participation in the programme improved your profile within the West Midlands? – ACTIVATE Grant



Source: Beneficiary survey (2024)

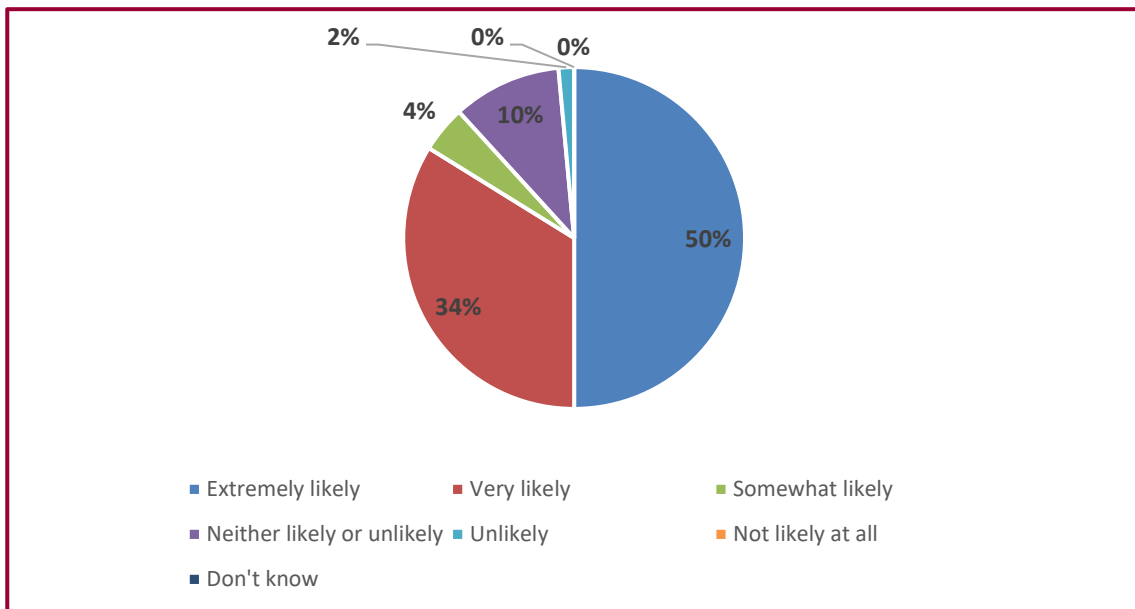
The programme helped to 71% of respondents to create partnerships with other cultural and creative organisations, with a further 14% stating the programme may have played a role in developing new partnerships. The qualitative feedback on the impacts of these partnerships has been extremely positive, helping to develop skills, connections, and leadership capabilities. Examples of the impact from these connections are demonstrated by direct quotes below:

- 'We intend to continue working with our partners after the programme ends. This initiative has given us the opportunity to work with organisations that were previously out of our reach due to financial limitations. Over the past 10 weeks, we've built strong relationships and developed a mutual understanding of each other's work. This allows us to access their expertise more effectively while ensuring they are well-informed about our capabilities and needs enabling ongoing collaboration and support'
- 'I've made key relationships with industry players that I will be working with in future'
- 'This grant has allowed the opportunity to initiate multiple projects with scope for future growth and expansion'
- 'I will continue working with galleries which I have managed to start doing during the course of the project. It is a hugely beneficial partnership'
- 'I always had the intention to work with the two tutors that I connected with through this scheme, however I didn't quite realise how much of a positive impact this would have for me. Particularly connecting to my tutor in Finland, I feel this has also opened up the possibility for me to extend my practice internationally, a goal I have been aiming to do for a long time now'

- ‘This grant has provided the funds for vital training in a range of software applications. As a result, I have gained very useful skills that allow me to access and work with more local organisations and partners for many years to come’

Furthermore, 88% of respondents stated that as a result of the programme they are now more likely to work with partners on creative projects in the future, with 50% ‘extremely likely’, 34% ‘very likely’ and 4% ‘somewhat likely’, as shown in **Figure 3-18**.

Figure 3-18 ‘Has this programme made you more likely to work with partners on creative projects in the future?’ – ACTIVATE grant



Source: Beneficiary survey (2024)

Increased collaboration amongst freelancers and organisations strengthens the resilience of the cultural sector in the region by fostering knowledge-sharing, resource-pooling and enabling access to wider audiences and supply chains. For creative freelancers, building partnerships can create new opportunities and provide greater financial security.

The grant survey asked respondents to identify (from 1 to 10) how much impact the grant has had on their practice/work (10 being significant impact and 1 being little to no impact). The average score was 9.2, demonstrating that the ACTIVATE grants have had significant impact on recipients in general, allowing them to develop new skills and expand their practice.

LADD Grants

LADD grants were primarily focussed on creative commissions and placemaking, in comparison to self-development and capacity building which were the main purpose for the ACTIVATE grants.

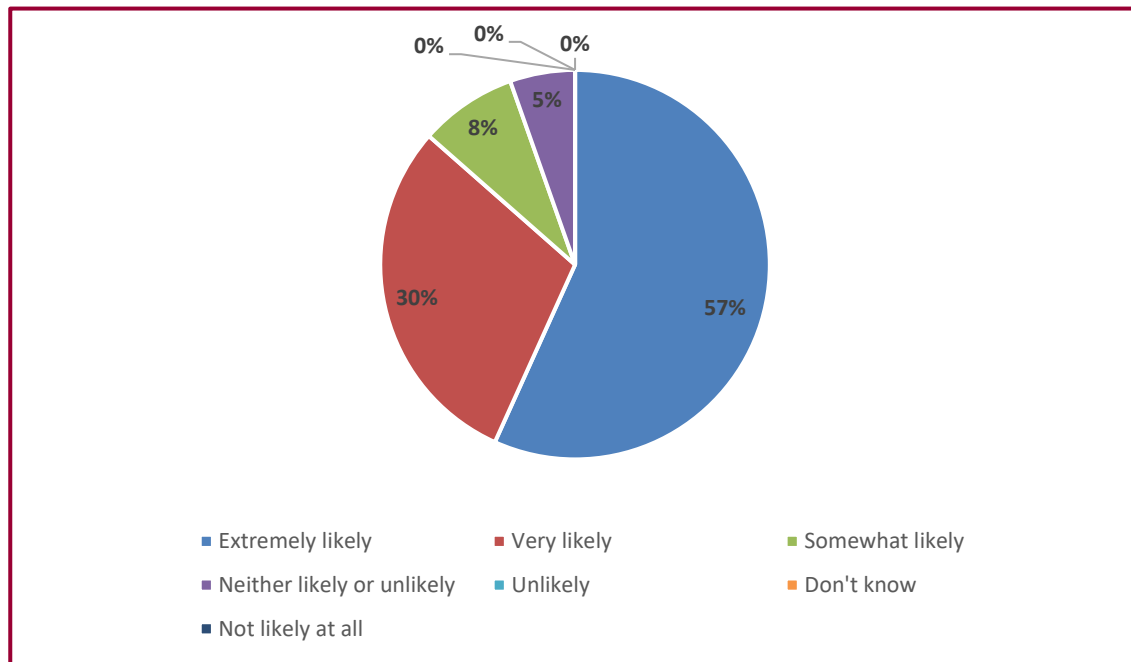
Among the businesses surveyed that received a grant, 86% are now more likely to collaborate with partners on future creative projects, and 90% felt the programme helped them establish partnerships with other creative and cultural businesses. Additionally, 86% believe their participation in the programme has enhanced their profile within the region. These strong results

indicate that the programme has been successful in building the resilience of the cultural sector in the region by fostering increased collaboration between creative businesses, enhancing their regional presence and helping to ensure long-term sustainability within the sector.

These positive sentiments were echoed amongst freelancers that received LADD grants, with 88% of respondents now more likely to work with partners on creative projects in the future, and 75% reporting that the programme has helped them to creative partnerships with other creative and cultural freelancers. 76% of respondents felt as though the programme has improved their profile in the West Midlands.

Figure 3-19 presents the combined analysis of businesses and freelancers, highlighting that the programme has made the vast majority more likely to work with partners on creative projects in the future.

Figure 3-19: "Has this programme made you more likely to work with partners on creative projects in the future?" – LADD grants (businesses and freelancers combined)



Source: Beneficiary survey (2024)

The table below shows the net promoter scores from LADD and ACTIVATE grant surveys. The scores were very high, ranging between 80 and 90, **indicating very high satisfaction levels amongst beneficiaries.**

Table 3-8 Net promoter scores – grant programmes	
How likely are you to recommend the programme to a friend or colleague?	
LADD grants (freelancers)	88
LADD grants (businesses)	90
ACTIVATE grants (all)	81

Source: Beneficiary survey (2024)

provides a selection of quotes from grant recipients explaining their scores. These quotes are categorised into the three groups: 'promoters,' 'passives,' and 'detractors,' with the number of quotes broadly reflecting the relative size of each category.

Table 3-9 Quotes from Grant recipients (both ACTIVATE and LADD)

NPS Category	% of responses.	Quotes from attendees
Promoters	85%	<p>'A brilliant opportunity for training and development.'</p> <p>'It's hard to find funding like this that supports organisational development not just project delivery'</p> <p>'Extremely communicative and supportive throughout the process from start to finish'</p> <p>'Straightforward application process with lots of scope for imagination and ideas.'</p> <p>'Really helpful and supportive team organising the funding and paperwork. Brilliant training scheme for producers on the side as well.'</p> <p>'Easy and highly effective programme. Great 1-1 support when needed too.'</p> <p>'It's a wonderful opportunity to raise awareness of our work and gain much needed match funding for impactful arts projects.'</p>
Passives	12%	<p>'It was a fantastic program to participate in; however, the timeline was too brief and didn't provide sufficient time for me to develop my research, coaching, and evaluation skills.'</p> <p>'Incredibly supportive programme to develop skills and projects in the West Midlands'</p> <p>'Great opportunity but a very condensed time frame to spend the £/organise the workshops'</p> <p>'was a good opportunity but the timescale was too short'</p>
Detractors	3%	<p>'It is a good opportunity however the deadline and timescale too complete was too short and very last minute.'</p> <p>'The time limit and long delays in responding with vital information. Not obtaining support at the right time was very stressful. It was a very stressful process and not enough time to apply or carry out the activity.'</p> <p>'Lack of time to complete the project and reflect.'</p>

Source: Beneficiary survey (2024)

Analysis on the varying grant levels within different programmes within the Pillar is shown below:

- **LADD grants** –The average freelancer grant based on survey responses was £13,691, whilst the average business grant was £11,034. The grants covered a wide range of amounts from £250 to 45,000.
- **ACTIVATE grants** – The average grant was £5,745. The grants covered a wide range of amounts from £1,030 to £9,255.

Particularly in the ACTIVATE programme, the grants were allocated based on a robust application process. The main criteria examined feasibility, in terms of the ability to deliver the funding and impact within the timeframe. Further criteria assessed why they required the support now, what benefit it would have and the potential value for money. The allocation process also had a balancing criterion to ensure that the funding was being spent across the region and across a wide group of artist styles.

One of the key successes for the ACTIVATE grants programme was accessibility. An innovation incorporated into the programme was to pay for people’s time as well as access costs, enabling individuals who would not otherwise be able to access these opportunities to do so.

Objective 4: Increasing the resilience of the West Midlands cultural sector and creative freelancers

Summary: This objective has been fully met

Overall, the programme has been successful in meeting this objective. The ACTIVATE and the LADD training programmes successfully addressed a high proportion of the barriers identified by attendees as previously constraining their growth. Furthermore, several barriers were addressed for those who had not initially identified them as challenges to growth, suggesting that the training provided broader benefits than anticipated. Helping attendees to develop new skills, build their networks and improve their employability, will in turn **strengthen the resilience of the sector** and ensure these individuals/businesses are equipped to seize future opportunities and navigate challenges.

Of note, 76% of ACTIVATE grant recipients stated that participation in the programme has improved their profile within the West Midlands. For LADD grant recipients, this was even higher, at 86%. This enhanced profile and visibility is likely to lead to greater opportunities for collaboration, further funding and broadening of networks, all of which will help these individuals/organisations to **enhance their credibility and resilience** going forward.

Supporting evidence for these important outcomes is that 95% of survey respondents who received ACTIVATE and LADD grants reported that, as a result of the programme, they are now more likely to collaborate with partners on future creative projects. This increased willingness to collaborate will help to expand their networks and foster stronger partnerships, both of which will help to **build resilience within the region’s cultural sector**.

Conclusion: Objective has been fully met

3.4.6 *Objective 5: Ensuring the West Midlands cultural sector is globally connected and to develop new business opportunities*

A range of activities were supported under this objective including the WMCA International Fund, the WMCA Cultural and Creative Ecologies Symposium, the Supersonic Festival International Mixer, the More than a Moment Festival, the 2025 Night Time Economy Summit, the Music Venue Trust Fan-led Live Music Venue research, The Space Digital Culture Talks 2, and the development of a documentary film for Kabbadi World Cup.

Through these events, the programme aimed to ensure that the West Midlands cultural sector is globally connected and to develop new opportunities for businesses. This section will review the various surveys to assess the extent to which this objective has been met.

I. **Ensuring the West Midlands cultural sector is globally connected**

Cultural and Creative Ecologies Symposium

The Cultural and Creative Ecologies Symposium was a one-day event that consisted of panel discussions, sharing of best practice and planning for the future to explore the range of creative skills and talent in the West Midlands region. Originally conceived as an international conference to foster global connections, the event's focus shifted towards supporting regional businesses. This adjustment was made as it was recognised that a two-day event was unlikely to generate significant international impact. The revised approach better aligned with the sector's needs and was more relevant to the Culture and Creative Industries team's existing programme and fitting with other WMCA activities during Creativity Week. Given these factors, refocusing the event to prioritise local area and business opportunities was both sensible and strategically sound.

However, the evidence suggests this re-prioritisation led to unmet expectations of attendees, resulting in a poor NPS of -48 for the event. This clearly demonstrates that the event had significantly more detractors than promoters. **Table 3-10** provides a selection of quotes from attendees and reflects their scores and the relative size of each category.

Table 3-10 Quotes from cultural symposium attendees		
NPS Category	No.	Quotes from attendees
Promoters	2	<p>'It bought variety of perspectives together and also created a space to exchange knowledge'</p> <p>'Good turnout and managed to maintain most delegates until end. Covered lots of ground across wide area of representation'</p>
Passives	18	<p>'Generally good to catch up with creative cultures community and some good panels and speeches'</p> <p>'It's a great opportunity to network and meet like-minded people to start the conversation which catalyse the outcomes we all want in the region'</p>

		'Great event and good to see range of cultural stakeholders from across the West Midlands. Some good panel discussions, but I would have preferred more interactive sessions of key areas.'
Detractors	22	<p>'Lovely to see people. Not sure what its purpose was sadly'</p> <p>'The event was well run and well-intentioned, but it felt like the same discussions the sector has been having with itself for the last twenty years. The most informative element was the discussion session at the end of the day.'</p> <p>'Repeating a lot of conversations that have been happening for years across the region. Please can we start prioritising action instead of conversation.'</p> <p>'It was an interesting and entertaining day, and I met some nice people – but also felt like it could've been more valuable if managed differently.'</p>

Source: Beneficiary survey (2024)

II. Develop new business opportunities

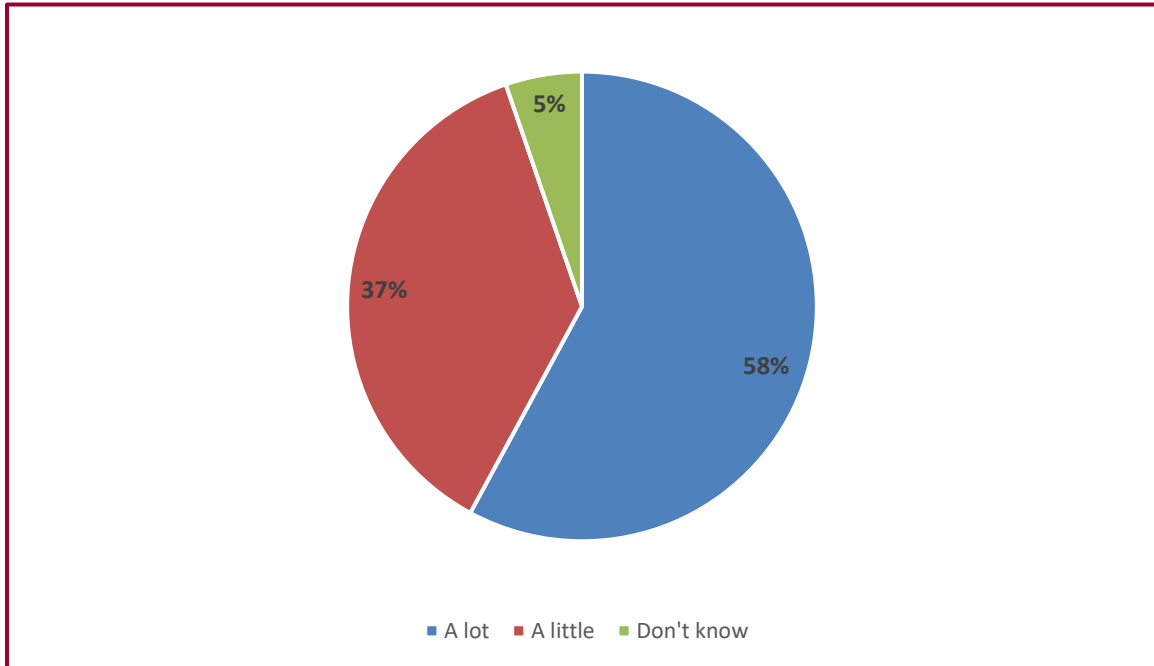
WMCA International Fund

The WMCA International Fund, delivered in partnership with the British Council, was a small grants programme for artists, creatives and organisations to boost their international profile, create new partnerships abroad and promote their work on a global scale.

As shown in **Figure 3-20**, 95% of survey respondents said that participation in the grants programme improved their organisation's profile internationally, with 58% stating that it has improved their profile 'a lot' internationally. Some of the quotes that accompany these high scores include:

- 'I have met with delegates from all over the world, connected with other producers and festival organisers.'
- 'We now have a strong connection with international collaborators and we intend to bring this production to the UK in 2026.'
- 'The programme has significantly elevated my international profile by establishing a strong presence across multiple cultural contexts'

Figure 3-20 'Has your participation in the programme improved your organisation's profile internationally?'

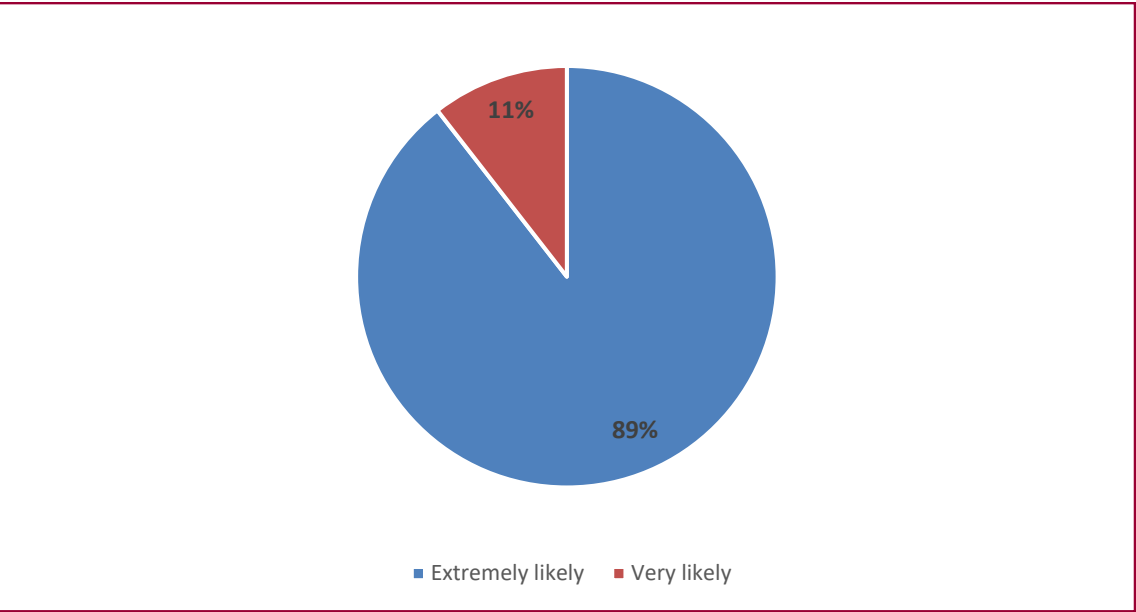


Source: Beneficiary survey (2024)

All respondents said that the programme has made them more likely to work with international partners on creative projects in the future, with 89% 'very likely'. Improving their profile internationally and increasing the likelihood of the recipients working with international partners on creative projects will help to ensure that the region's cultural sector is globally connected through expanding networks, increasing international visibility, and fostering cultural exchange.

Figure 3-21 presents the responses to this question. It should be noted that options from 'extremely likely' to 'extremely unlikely' were provided within the survey however, all respondents chose very likely or extremely likely as their response.

Figure 3-21 'Has this programme made you more likely to work with international partners on creative projects in the future?'



Source: Beneficiary survey (2024)

The positive impact of the grants programme is further evidenced by a **Net Promoter Score of 89**, an exceptionally positive result, indicating very high satisfaction levels and strong likelihood of recommendation. The score indicates that the grants programme has met or exceeded most of its participants expectations, of which all but one respondent was classified as a ‘promoter of the event’. **Table 3-11** provides a selection of quotes from recipients explaining their score, with the number of quotes broadly reflecting the relative size of each category.

Table 3-11 Quotes WMCA International Fund Grant recipients		
NPS Category	No.	Quotes from attendees
Promoters	18	<p>‘It was a relatively straight forward application process and offers flexibility for personal development.’</p> <p>‘The programme aids development, progress and opportunities to the regions and the international partner. and really is a great catalyst for creativity and progress.’</p> <p>‘Because it’s not often that you get international funding to build relationships - this has fundamentally transformed my creative practice’</p> <p>‘I would rate it a 10 because the programme was incredibly well-organised, accessible, and aligned with our goals. The flexibility of the criteria and the support offered throughout made it easy for our organisation to engage, and the overall experience has been</p>

		enriching. The connections made, alongside the resources and opportunities for growth, would be beneficial for any organisation or individual in the sector looking to foster cross-cultural exchange and drive meaningful impact.'
Passives	1	'It's nice to get some support with international projects, and important for promoting WM arts and culture abroad, but it needs better resourcing.'
Detractors	0	NA

Source: Beneficiary survey (2024)

Supersonic Festival

A networking event at the Supersonic Festival in Digbeth allowed professionals coming to Supersonic and strategic invited guests to include fellow producers, journalists, record labels and funders. The event provided the opportunity to raise the profile of the Supersonic Festival nationally and internationally and to create future opportunities for collaboration/commissions and funding for Supersonic. In the end, 76 professionals attended the networking event. Freelancer programmers and UK artists that were performing at Supersonic Festival were invited to feed into the conversation and network with press, labels and organisation, creating valuable new opportunities by facilitating direct industry connections.

The event covered costs for key press/professionals to attend, which in turn secured high profile national press, including a 5-star review in the Guardian. Furthermore, the event has sparked new businesses opportunities, such as a £100k new project which will be delivered as part of Bradford City of Culture 2025 programme.

The Space Digital Culture Talks

The Space Digital Culture Talks took place across two days for creative organisations and individuals, opening up new possibilities to collaborate, share and express ideas and profile talent. The talks provided opportunities for thought leadership, key notes and panel discussions from artists. Overall, respondents were highly satisfied with their experience across both days of the event. All attendees from day 1 reported being either 'Very Satisfied' or 'Satisfied,' while 88% of those who attended day 2 shared the same positive feedback. 100% of respondents from the first day of the event found the content of the roundtables at least 'Somewhat useful', with 47% finding it 'very useful'. This positive sentiment was echoed in the feedback from the second day, with 58% of respondents finding the content 'very useful'. Across the two days, 66% of respondents (on average) said that they would definitely attend a similar event in the future¹⁹.

The event explored how digital tools are transforming culture and their potential benefits, while also examining the opportunities and challenges of social networks and platforms in engaging audiences. Some quotes from respondents about the speaker presentations are shown below:

¹⁹ This data has been taken from the evaluation of the event conducted by The Space.

- ‘The afternoon sessions on mitigating online harm were some of the best discussions I've heard on the subject. So much to think about and many actionable takeaways for a small arts charity’
- ‘Well chaired which allowed substantial contributions from the speakers. Useful range of perspectives. Enjoyed the acknowledgement that different voices and types/scale of organisations including freelancers and sole traders are needed to make change and to amplify work’
- ‘Not in my area of work/expertise but very interesting’

Objective 5: Ensuring the West Midlands cultural sector is globally connected and to develop new business opportunities.

Summary

The vast majority (95%) of respondents from the International Fund felt the programme improved their organisation's profile internationally and 100% of respondents said they are now more likely to work with international partners on creative projects in future. Increasing the likelihood of collaborating with international partners on creative projects will broaden networks, boost international visibility and foster cultural exchange, all of which will strengthen the region's global connections going forward. The WMCA International Fund was very positively received by beneficiaries, with an overall NPS of 89.

Whilst there is no feedback from the More Than A Moment Festival, the 2025 Night Time Economy Summit and the development of a documentary film for Kabbadi World Cup, from the networking event at the Supersonic Festival in Digbeth delivered as part of Objective 5, demonstrated its success in terms of generating interest in the regional cultural sector and providing new businesses opportunities.. Furthermore, it is important to note that whilst the LADD and ACTIVATE training courses were not part of Objective 5, it is clear from the surveys that they have increased attendees' **awareness of new business opportunities** and enhanced their knowledge, while reducing barriers to growth.

However, the goal of ensuring the cultural sector is globally connected was not fully achieved and may have been overly ambitious from the outset. Initially planned as an international conference, the Cultural Symposium event shifted focus and instead became a platform for regional businesses to explore opportunities and share knowledge. The event originally had a budget allocation of £75,000, but this was reduced significantly to £31,000 following a shift in objective, with £22,000 redirected towards local authority promotional activities. While this adjustment proved to be somewhat successful, the event received a very low net promoter score (-48), reflecting significant attendee dissatisfaction. This may be due to unmet expectations arising from the change in the event's focus. Better communication of the Combined Authorities' revised intentions for the event may have altered attendees expectation and responses.

Conclusion: Objective partially met

Section 4

Value for Money Assessment

AMION
CONSULTING

4 Value for Money Assessment

4.1 Introduction

This section provides an assessment of the value for money of the CWGLEF Cultural Pillar programme.

The main approaches that have been used to assess value for money relate to:

- Social cost benefit analysis (SCBA) to determine the total net present social value (NPSV) and Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of the project; and
- 3Es analysis to examine the relative economy, effectiveness, and efficiency of the programme.

4.2 Social Cost Benefit Analysis

4.2.1 Guidance and overarching approach

As part of this evaluation, **AMION has undertaken social cost benefit analysis (SCBA) within a Value for Money (VfM) assessment**, with the results presented below using a Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) to enable the programme to be compared to other evaluation evidence and intervention benchmarks, in line with HMT Green Book (2022) guidance. Our assessment has been undertaken in line with HMT Green Book guidance and other Departmental publications, such as the DLUHC (now MHCLG) Appraisal Guide (2023) and DCMS Culture and Heritage Capital programme.

As set out within the Appraisal Guide²⁰, projects should be appraised based on a **Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR)**. As the name suggests, this is a ratio of the present value of benefits over the present value of costs and represents how much benefit in £s could be supported by £1 of public investment. BCRs²¹ are widely used in governmental appraisals and are the recommended VfM metric in the HM Treasury's Green Book.

Therefore, this value for money assessment of the CWGLEF Cultural programme has been undertaken in line with Green Book guidance, including the following assumptions:

- the costs and benefits are presented relative to the reference case with a 75% additionality rate applied;
- monetised costs and benefits have been converted to 2024/25 prices using Gross Domestic Product (GDP) deflators;
- the financial costs have been provided by WMCA, utilising expenditure figures from monthly and quarterly monitoring updates; and

²⁰ Accessed from: [DLUHC appraisal guide - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115444/dluhc-appraisal-guide-2023.pdf)

²¹ A BCR below 1 is considered poor value for money, between 1 and 1.5 is considered acceptable value for money, between 1.5 and 2 is considered medium value for money, between 2 and 4 is considered high value for money, and above 4 is considered very high value for money.

- the economic cost assessment is based on the public sector costs from the CWGLEF programme and match-funding where applicable.

A range of economic benefits have been monetised and evaluated using established methodologies from Green Book, MHCLG, DCMS, DfT, and other relevant government guidance.

The list of monetised benefits is presented as follows:

- Educational wage premium;
- Wellbeing benefits from training courses;
- Wellbeing benefits from volunteering;
- Wellbeing benefits from new employment;
- Labour supply benefits;
- Strategy development benefits;
- Cultural use value from attending and participating in cultural events;
- Cultural use value from attending conferences;
- Cultural non-use value;
- Wellbeing benefits from participating in arts activities;
- Wellbeing benefits from improved job quality; and
- Distributional analysis.

In addition to the above monetised benefits, there are several substantial wider benefits that are not currently capable of being captured in the SCBA monetised analysis. A separate analysis of these impacts has been undertaken.

4.2.2 *Economic costs*

Table 4.1 presents the financial and economic costs of the CWGLEF Cultural Pillar. The financial costs have been converted into economic costs within the social cost benefit analysis by adjusting for inflation in line with Green Book guidance. This adjustment ensures all costs are in present 2024/25 prices²². Optimism Bias has not been applied given the costs and expenditure have already been incurred.

In addition to the CWGLEF contribution towards the programme, there was also a total of £95,533 match funding from the British Council (for the International Fund grants) and from Culture Central (for the Place Profiler tool and report).

The total public sector economic cost totals to £4,193,758.

²² This adjustment has been made to reflect the fact that expenditure on the programme started in 2023/24 and continued until the end of 2024/25.

Table 4.1: Economic and financial costs of CWGLEF programme (£000)

Funding	2023/24	2024/25	Total
Financial costs			
CWGLEF	£107	£3,989	£4,097
Public sector match	-	£96	£96
Total	£107	£4,085	£4,192
Economic costs			
CWGLEF	£109	£3,989	£4,098
Public sector match	-	£96	£96
Total	£109	£4,085	£4,194

Note: Numbers may not add due to rounding

4.2.3 Economic benefits

The following economic benefits have been monetised and assessed:

- **Educational wage premium** – The programme has created skills and training opportunities throughout its delivery through the Activate programme. There is a wealth of existing evidence showing the positive impact of training and qualifications on employment and earnings. Utilising publications from the Department for Business, Innovation, and Skills²³, it is likely that the CWGLEF programme will lead to wage premium benefits for Activate participants. In this instance, a wage premium benefit of £831 per annum (24/25 prices) for completing a Basic Skills or Development Learning equivalent qualification has been applied to the number of attendees at Activate training activities, whilst a wage premium of £5,905 has been applied to the number of interns. It has been assumed the benefit will persist for five years for each individual.
- **Wellbeing benefits from training courses** – The Green Book Wellbeing Guidance shows that life satisfaction improves for individuals who complete adult learning courses and training. Within the CWGLEF Cultural programme, this benefit relates to individuals who have completed training projects delivered by the local authorities or other skills projects funded by WMCA such as bootcamps²⁴. The improvement in life satisfaction associated with completing one of these courses has an annual value of £1,280 (2024/25 prices) and has been applied as a one-off wellbeing uplift.
- **Wellbeing benefits from volunteering** – The Green Book Wellbeing Guidance shows that life satisfaction improves based on undertaking volunteering activities with local charities and communities, with an annual value of £1,093 (2024/25 prices) for an individual undertaking regular volunteering. Guidance suggests that regular volunteering relates to two hours per week over the year gives a value of £10.50 per hour. This has been applied to the number of volunteer hours across the CWGLEF Cultural programme in relation to the

²³ Department for Business, Innovation, and Skills (BIS), (2011); The Returns to Intermediate and Low Level Vocational Qualifications

²⁴ To avoid double-counting, participants in the more-intensive Activate training programme have been excluded with a wage premium applied instead.

Creative Futures project and local authority double-devolved grants. The number of volunteer hours has been approximated based on the number of the number of volunteers and number of sessions and events held.

- **Wellbeing benefits from new employment** – The employment generated will have well-being benefits associated with individuals moving into employment. These benefits have been estimated by applying a wellbeing value of £7,470 from the Green Book wellbeing guidance (2024/25 prices) to each full-time equivalent job. The overall wellbeing benefit is expected to last for one year. Based on the labour market availability and analysis of ONS Labour Market Flows data, it is anticipated that 10% of jobs will be occupied by new entrants.
- **Labour supply benefits** – the employment generated by the programme has been converted into Full-Time Equivalent jobs based on the number of days supported. A local GVA per worker figure has been applied to the jobs taken up by new entrants, based on Experian GVA forecasts. In line with the labour market availability and WebTAG guidance, it is assumed 10% of jobs will be occupied by new entrants and there will be a 40% welfare impact for these jobs with the benefit experienced across three years.
- **Wellbeing benefits from improved job quality** – The Green Book Wellbeing Guidance shows that life satisfaction improves based on a change in job quality, with an annual value of £4,076 (2024/25 prices) for an individual having high variety in their work. This benefit for improved job quality has been applied to the business grant recipients as they improved businesses' ability to explore new projects and conduct additional activities. The benefit has been applied to the number of grants distributed by the CWGLEF Cultural Pillar.
- **Strategy development benefits** – There has been substantial resource allocated to the wide-range of feasibility studies, cultural development plans and wider research studies. Our assessment has assumed that these studies are likely to at least deliver benefits in line with their costs, given that they have delivered action plans and measurable next steps for WMCA and local authority partners. Given that the benefits have been applied at a ratio of 1:1, additionality has not been applied to this benefit.
- **Cultural use value** – attending events and conferences – the DCMS Evidence Bank provides a range of values for attendance at cultural events and assets. These values have been applied as follows:
 - **Event attendees** – a value of £10.07 (2024/25 prices) per attendee has been applied to the known event attendees at public festivals and events organised by the seven local authorities.
 - **Cultural participants** – The DCMS Evidence Bank identifies the value of participating in the arts and cultural activities. Once adjusting to assume an average arts programme length of a week, a value of £118.69 (2024/25 prices) has been applied to the number of participants in arts activities funded through CWGLEF Cultural Pillar which were mainly part of the local authority double-devolved grants. The one-off benefit has been applied to all those who participated in the activities and creation of pieces.

- **Conference attendees** – a value of £21.74 (2024/25 prices) has been applied to the number of attendees at conferences funded by WMCA as part of the CWGLEF Cultural Pillar programme such as the Creative and Culture and Creative Ecologies Symposium. The value has been estimated using several sources cited within the DCMS Evidence Bank. For events which were part-funded by CWGLEF, the benefit has been applied to a proportion of attendees based on the funding contribution of WMCA.
- **Cultural non-use value** – cultural schemes deliver benefits to residents who do not visit the site, known as non-use value. The DCMS Evidence Bank identifies a non-use benefit of £5.76 (2024/25 prices) for local residents in relation to a festival. The West Midlands county has been selected as the appropriate catchment for the non-use value of the CWGLEF Cultural programme given it is where the activities were based. ONS Population Estimates calculate that there were 2,918,251 residents in the West Midlands in 2021. To be prudent, all visitors to cultural events previously identified have been removed from the calculation to avoid double counting. In line with the guidance document, this non-use value has been applied for one year and has been applied to 10% of residents to be prudent.
- **Distributional analysis** – The CWGLEF Cultural Pillar has had positive distributional effects, by encouraging investment into areas in need within the West Midlands as targeted by the local authorities and the WMCA themselves. The approach used to calculate distributional effects is that set out in the HM Treasury Green Book, based on equivalised disposable household income and welfare weights (the estimate of the marginal utility of income). The Green Book distributional weighting framework is constructed using data from the DWP Households Below Average Income (HBAI) dataset. This dataset takes information from the Family Resource Survey (FRS) and constructs an income distribution profile for the UK, based on (weekly) net equivalised income before housing costs (BHC) and after housing costs (AHC). An average AHC weight has been estimated for the seven local authority areas supported by the CWGLEF Cultural programme. To reflect the level of deprivation in the West Midlands and the impact on communities most at need, distributional benefits have also had a factor of 34.5% applied, reflecting the proportion of small areas locally within the top 20% most deprived in England²⁵.

Table 4-2 below presents the benefit assessment for the CWGLEF Cultural Pillar. Following Green Book methodologies for monetising economic benefits, **the programme is assessed to have delivered nearly £6.0 million of benefits.**

Table 4-2: Monetised Benefits (£000s)	
Benefits	CWGLEF Cultural Pillar
Educational wage premium	£1,034
Wellbeing benefits from training courses	£639
Wellbeing benefits from volunteering	£6
Wellbeing benefits from new employment	£3
Labour supply benefits	£40

²⁵ English Indices of Deprivation 2019, MHCLG (2019)

Strategy development benefits	£767
Cultural use value from attending and participating in events	£1,368
Cultural use value from attending conferences	£8
Cultural non-use value	£873
Wellbeing benefits from improved job quality	£352
Distributional analysis	£551
Total	£5,996

4.2.4 Non-monetised benefits

It is also important to recognise that the programme is also expected to result in several substantial wider benefits that are not captured in the monetised analysis. Building upon the analysis of quantifiable effects, an assessment of the wider benefits associated with the programme has been undertaken.

The Green Book highlights that not all benefits can be easily quantified or expressed in monetary terms. These non-monetised benefits might include social, environmental, or cultural impacts that are significant but difficult to measure in financial terms or monetise using HM Treasury approved methodologies. In line with the latest DLUHC (now MHCLG) Appraisal Guide best practice, an assessment of non-monetised impacts has been undertaken for the capital and cultural strand using a seven-point scale from large adverse to large significant based on the definitions set out below.

Table 4-3: Qualitative Assessment Scale for Non-Monetised Impacts	
Impact	Commentary
Large adverse	Large disbenefit likely to materially impact on VFM
Moderate adverse	Important disbenefit but will not on its own significantly impact on VFM
Slight adverse	Small disbenefit unlikely to have material impact on VFM
Neutral	No impact
Slight beneficial	Small benefit unlikely to have material impact on VFM
Moderate beneficial	Important benefit but will not on its own significantly impact on VFM
Large beneficial	Large benefit likely to materially impact on VFM

The delivery of the CWGLEF cultural programme is likely to have resulted in the following substantial wider economic benefits that are not captured in the SCBA analysis:

- **Guiding future activity** – The CWGLEF Cultural Programme has been instrumental in shaping future activities by giving the Cultural team the necessary resources and capacity to explore a number of strategic initiatives and opportunities. This includes giving them the capacity to develop a Creative Health Theory of Change which they will be able to use alongside other WMCA colleagues and will guide future policy measures and interventions related to the topic. The programme has provided the cultural team with clear direction and increased prominence, enabling them to advocate for the sector supported by evidence of its demand through various policies and strategies commissioned. Similarly, the Cultural Development Plans and feasibility studies commissioned can be used for future activities and funding rounds.
- **Capacity building** – A key part of the CWGLEF Cultural Pillar was to provide additional funding to local authorities dedicated entirely to the cultural sector and creative activities. A number of local authorities in the West Midlands are facing budgetary pressures which has resulted in a number halting all expenditure on non-essential services which do not typically include culture. By providing essential financial support and resources, the programme has helped sustain cultural activities and initiatives that might otherwise have struggled due to lack of funding. The legacy funding provided has also addressed other existing gaps such as the lack of legacy provision after Coventry City of Culture 2021, ensuring that recent programmes can continue supporting local communities.
- **Image / perceptions** – The festivals and events organised under the programme have predominantly taken place in local town centres and high streets, enhancing the vibrancy and attractiveness of these areas. Public art pieces will also have improved the appearance of areas and improved public perceptions of these spaces. Survey data demonstrates these positive impacts, highlighting the success of the CWGLEF in revitalising town and local centres. Additionally, the Activate programme has demonstrated WMCA's capability and willingness to support freelancers and small organisations in the creative and cultural sector, thereby enhancing the region's image as a place to do business and operate for the sector.
- **Community** – The programme has strengthened community relations and supported local organisations across the West Midlands through the double-devolved grants which funded a number of events and artist commissions. These events brought members of communities together, with many having a focus on working with local community groups and diverse communities. These activities have brought together diverse groups of people, creating a sense of shared experience and community pride. Furthermore, the programme has supported the creative sector community by organising and funding conferences that facilitate networking and collaboration among artists, freelancers, and cultural organisations in the West Midlands.

The table below presents the results of the non-monetised impact assessment.

Table 4-4: Non-monetised impact assessment		
Benefit	Reference Case	CWGLEF Cultural Programme
Guiding future activity	Minor adverse	Slight beneficial
Capacity building	Minor adverse	Moderate beneficial
Image / perceptions	Neutral	Moderate beneficial
Community	Neutral	Slight beneficial

4.2.5 Evaluation Summary Table

As can be seen below, the CWGLEF Cultural programme has an BCR of 1.43:1, indicating ‘acceptable’ value for money. The non-monetised benefits presented above indicate that the value for money of the scheme is, in reality, likely to be greater than the BCR suggests. In particular, image improvements for the West Midlands are likely to deliver substantial non-monetised benefits in the long-term.

The DLUHC (now MHCLG) Appraisal Guide emphasises the importance of a holistic approach to value for money assessments, which includes consideration of the non-monetised benefits in determining the overall value for money category of a programme. The non-monetised benefits of the CWGLEF Cultural Pillar are judged to be substantial and should therefore be included within the overall value for money assessment, to ensure the programme’s impacts are not under-valued. The programme is therefore likely to reach medium value for money once these non-monetised impacts are included. Overall, based on the monetised and non-monetised impact assessments, the CWGLEF Cultural programme falls within the ‘acceptable to medium’ category for VFM.

Table 4-5: CWGLEF Cultural Pillar – Evaluation Summary Table	
	CWGLEF Cultural Programme
A. Present Value Benefits (£000s)	£5,996
B. Present Value Costs (£000s)	£4,194
C. Net Present Social Value (A-B, £000s)	£1,799
D. BCR (A)/B)	1.43:1
E. Significant non-monetised impacts	Capacity building Image / perceptions
F. Value for money category	Acceptable to medium

4.3 3E’s Framework

The 3Es analysis (compliant with Magenta and Green Book approaches) involved an assessment of the following:

- **The ratio of costs to inputs (economy)** – e.g. has the level of funding allocated and administrative costs been appropriate and minimised where possible? This assessment considered analysis of baseline and monitoring data, and findings from consultations.
- **The ratio of public sector costs to outputs (efficiency)** – This assessment considered whether the scheme has delivered its primary output metrics and whether the delivery of these outputs represents value for money in terms of economic benefits against public sector costs.
- **The extent to which the programme has achieved its objectives (effectiveness)** – This assessed whether the scheme delivered its outcomes. While the programme has specific objectives, the assessment of value for money also considers ‘equity’ and the extent to which funding has been used to reduce inequalities or support disadvantaged communities.

4.3.1 *Economy*

The CWGLEF Cultural Programme was delivered in a largely cost-effective manner. Double-devolved grants were managed efficiently through an established process with local authorities, while external consultants were commissioned as needed in accordance with public procurement guidelines. The programme remained within budget, and all activities were completed within the required timeframe.

However, the tight allocation timeframe placed pressures on delivery, potentially affecting costs. The programme required a rapid start to ensure activities were completed within the year, yet early uncertainty around specific projects created challenges. Some cultural initiatives were still being delivered in early 2025, whilst the WMCA were continuing to develop and approve strategies in the final months of the programme.

The shift from an international conference to a one-day regional event may have also resulted in suboptimal use of resources. Approximately £53,000 was allocated to the conference, which appears substantial given the final number of attendees. It should be noted, however, that over half of this funding was allocated for videography and production of related materials for the local authorities’ use beyond the event.

Additionally, the programme's administrative costs, as a proportion of the total funding allocation, were relatively high. However, it should be noted that the WMCA also had to manage the local authority double-devolved grants and the activities it delivered, despite not being a delivery body. As the WMCA builds its expertise in culture and heritage, these administrative investments are expected to yield long-term benefits, particularly in fostering enduring sector relationships. Notably, the programme successfully managed budgets within allocations while exceeding output targets, underscoring the value of this investment in ensuring its overall success.

4.3.2 *Efficiency*

The project delivered against the vast majority of its primary output metrics, considered a real success of the programme. The key output metrics for training events, business grants, and strategies were exceeded. The number of attendees and businesses supported were also greater

than the expected target at the programme outset. Further analysis of achieved outputs is set out in Section 3.2.

Based on the achieved outputs, the Cultural Pillar has been assessed as delivering ‘acceptable to medium’ value for money. This calculation is based on the programme’s BCR of 1.43:1 and a number of significant non-monetised benefits.

4.3.3 Effectiveness

The programme largely delivered on its key objectives as shown in the table below, which summarises the assessments within Section 3.4.

Table 4-6: CWGLEF Cultural Pillar – Assessment of Key Objectives	
Objective	Assessment conclusion
A. Development of strategic frameworks for culture & heritage creating focused regional priorities and increasing the ability to attract further investment.	Fully met
B. Increasing cultural engagement, community cohesion, and social value through interventions that create more opportunities for residents to engage with a relevant and co-created cultural offer.	Fully met
C. Increasing civic pride and supporting culture-led regeneration, including high streets and existing cultural infrastructure.	Fully met
D. Increasing the resilience of the West Midlands cultural sector and creative freelancers.	Fully met
E. Ensuring the West Midlands cultural sector is globally connected and to develop new business opportunities.	Partially met

A golden thread through the CWGLEF Cultural Pillar was to deliver objectives with a special focus on diversity, equality, and inclusion. Analysis of the outputs, beneficiary surveys, and stakeholder consultations demonstrates that **this diversity objective was achieved throughout the Cultural Pillar**, both in terms of design and delivery.

Key projects were targeted towards priority groups. For example, the Creative Futures Programme supported charities and projects working with young people. Similarly, the cultural programming across the seven local authorities provided an opportunity for all residents to engage with events.

A focus was placed on inclusivity within the ACTIVATE programme, both training and grants. The training programme included dedicated wraparound wellbeing support, which was well received by participants. Given the impact of Covid-19 on the industry, the wellbeing check-ins were considered particularly important.

The various grant programmes had a special focus on accessibility, ensuring more freelancers and businesses across the region could access the funding. The programme was accessible to individuals from a diverse range of backgrounds as shown by the statistics below²⁶:

- **International Fund** – Around 70% of the International Fund grants recipients were ethnically diverse-led companies²⁷, 60% were female-led enterprises²⁸, 30% were LGBTQIA+ led enterprises²⁹, and 30% were disabled-led enterprises³⁰; and
- **ACTIVATE** – Around 65% of the ACTIVATE grants recipients were ethnically diverse-led companies, 47% were female-led enterprises, 22% were LGBTQIA+ led enterprises, and 28% were disabled led enterprises.

In addition, bursaries were awarded for the ACTIVATE and Future Boards programmes to ensure individuals from lower income backgrounds could access the training opportunities. Paid internships were also delivered as part of the ACTIVATE programme internship, demonstrating that WMCA aimed to address potential barriers to access across different elements of the programme.

Therefore, overall, the programme delivered additional equity benefits on top of the achieved objectives.

4.4 Summary

Overall, the CWGLEF Cultural Pillar represented value for money, as shown by both the value for money assessment and 3Es analysis. The programme is likely to have initiated further longer-term cultural impacts for a diverse range of audiences, particularly due to its focus on inclusivity.

²⁶ The surveys were undertaken in line with Market Research Society Code of Conduct. Respondents were informed that the questionnaire was confidential. For the demographic questions, there was an option to 'prefer not to say' and to self-identify.

²⁷ Ethnically diverse-led enterprises are those where people from diverse ethnic backgrounds make up more than 50% of the partners or directors in day-to-day control of the enterprise, or where the sole proprietor is from an ethnically diverse groups.

²⁸ Female-led enterprises are those where more than 50% of the partners or directors in day-to-day control of the enterprise identify as female, or where the sole proprietor identifies as female.

²⁹ LGBTQIA+-led enterprises are those where people who identify as LGBTQIA+ make up more than 50% of the partners or directors in day-to-day control of the enterprise, or where the sole proprietor identifies as an LGBTQIA+ person.

³⁰ Disabled-led enterprises are those where disabled people make up more than 50% of the partners or directors in day-to-day control of the enterprise, or where the sole proprietor is a disabled person.

Section 5

Delivery and Management

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5 Delivery and Management

5.1 Introduction

The previous sections identify that the programme was largely successful in meeting its outputs, objectives, and value for money. There were only a couple areas whereby the programme was judged to be fully successful.

This section will consider how the following factors contributed to the overall success of the programme, as well as potentially influencing the areas for improvement:

- Delivery of the programme and promotion of the opportunities
- Management and governance of the programme
- Engagement with partners and stakeholders

5.2 Delivery of the programme and promotion of opportunities

5.2.1 *Double devolved grants*

At the start of the programme, each local authority partner submitted top-line delivery plans and detailed delivery plans which set out timelines, activities, anticipated number of participants/volunteers/audiences, outcomes, and links to existing or future strategic plans. These delivery plans were regularly reviewed over the course of the year. WMCA managed this process through monthly meetings with the local authority teams.

Overall, the programme was successfully managed, but several challenges emerged throughout the process. A key factor in effective delivery was the ability of local authorities to establish detailed plans early on, including confirmed dates and locations for events. When there was uncertainty regarding cultural programming or the scheduling of key training and cultural events, it limited the ability to promote opportunities effectively and maximise engagement.

Solihull Council were particularly effective at establishing their event programme, which allowed for the events to be marketed more widely. The Fresh Air Theatre programme ran through the summer with free outdoor events for residents, as shown by the marketing brochure promoted on Visit Solihull below. Attendances at the Solihull events responded, with strong crowds throughout the parks. Feedback was also particularly strong, with a Net Promoter Score of 81 for the Solihull cultural events.

Figure 5-1 Solihull Open Air Theatre Programme

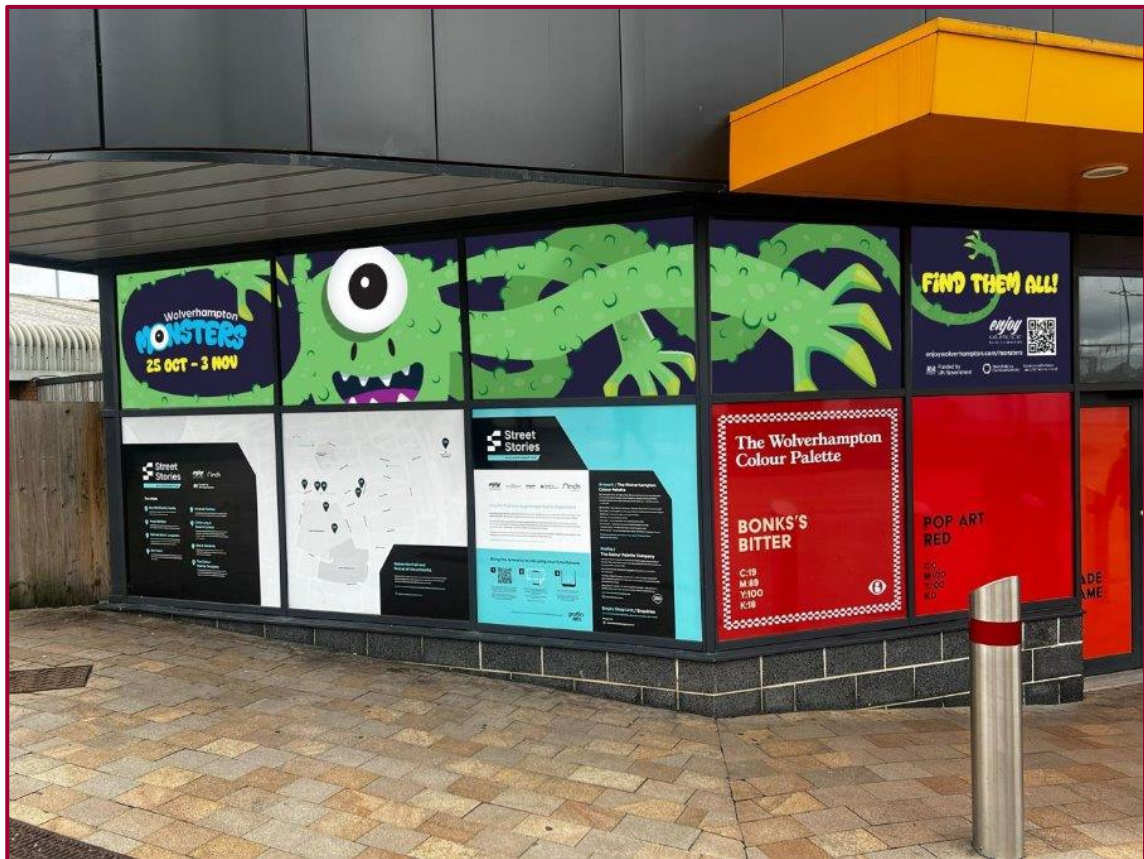


Source: Visit Solihull

Additionally, around 47% of attendees at Solihull events cited social media as the main way they heard about the event, compared to 30% for the rest of the double devolved cultural events. The marketing and promotion at Solihull's events were established far in advance of the programme which helps to garner interest in multiple activities at the same time. This approach should be replicated across all local authorities, ensuring that the dates and locations for events are clearly communicated to residents and visitors at the earliest opportunity to maximise attendance.

Wolverhampton's Monster Trail showcased the effectiveness of a multi-channel marketing approach, leveraging a comprehensive and diverse campaign to maximise outreach. JC Decaux sites across key city centre locations, along with striking yellow and black poster sites, ensured high visibility throughout the city. The event was also promoted across social media platforms and at the train station, as shown in **Figure 5-2**. This extensive and diverse promotional effort contributed to a strong turnout, with 4,000 attendees over the 10-day event, with footfall reports indicating an increase of 3,642 during this period.

Figure 5-2 Wolverhampton's Monster Trail



Source: End of Programme Report- Wolverhampton

5.2.2 WMCA led activities

The **ACTIVATE** training, grants, and mentoring programme was a success, attracting a high volume of applicants across all elements. Demand for the grant funding was particularly strong, which highlighted the need for financial support within the sector. The feedback from businesses and freelancers demonstrates that the grants created new opportunities and helped to address challenges faced by local creative workers.

The grant and training programmes were separate such that businesses and freelancers could engage with the intervention most appropriate to them. However, feedback from stakeholders suggests that the shared ACTIVATE name for the different interventions may have caused some confusion. For example, it is believed that many applicants did not realise it was a competitive process to receive the grants. In future iterations, establishing the grant and training programmes under separate names may help assist delivery, whilst the overall funding application process needs to be communicated at the outset.

In terms of training delivery, the online training model worked well, providing flexibility and accessibility for participants. However, there is still a place for in-person sessions, particularly to foster networking and peer learning. Stakeholder feedback suggested that a clearer programme

of activity needs to be circulated to both the workshop leads and attendees to maximise collaboration and ensure participants understand the expectations and benefits of each stage.

Mentoring should also begin earlier in the programme and be designed as a long-term commitment rather than a short-term intervention. Some participants found the overall programme intensive in terms of the number of workshops, and the workshop leads identified that the short timeframe risked burnout compared to other programmes that have been delivered. Where possible, future iterations should adopt a longer-term approach to provide sustained support, allowing individuals to develop at a manageable pace while making the most of training, funding, and mentorship opportunities.

The **WMCA International Fund** has seen great uptake, with the majority of freelancers and businesses identifying notable impacts. The Fund looks to have helped create international connections and new opportunities for businesses. The management of this Fund and promotion of opportunities has successfully supported key cultural businesses.

The **WMCA Cultural and Creative Ecologies Symposium**, however, did not receive strong feedback from attendees. The delivery of this event may have been a reason for this criticism, as comments focussed on a lack of interaction, clear objectives, and novel content. The Symposium was delivered instead of the International Conference, and the logic for this change was sound. The delivery of the Symposium did help to increase the knowledge of the West Midlands cultural sector to some extent however, unfortunately, feedback from attendees does not suggest substantial business connections were established due to the event. Any future conferences should have targeted aims, with the content tested with key stakeholders in advance of the session.

5.3 Management and governance of the programme

5.3.1 *Double devolved grants*

As part of programme monitoring, each local authority was required to establish a named lead officer and contact who was responsible for liaising with the WMCA team on the grant progress, conditions, activity, funding, and all other associated WMCA grant requirements including, but not limited to:

- Monthly check in points with the lead contact to offer support, advice, and guidance
- Documentation updates during the mid-point of the programme in October; and
- A final meeting reviewing a final report of activity

The delivery provider was responsible for the collection and storage of evidence to substantiate output and outcomes in line with their project outline and performance report. As part of the local authority's financial monitoring, WMCA also set out the expectation that each partner kept evidence of procurement, evidence of accountable match funding, staff resource and salary costs, receipts, and invoices. Lead delivery providers were responsible for ensuring that partners and/or sub-contractors adhere to the financial requirements as set in each funding agreement.

The local authority teams received 80% of the funding paid on signing, with 15% on provision based on a detailed delivery plan, and 5% on completion. Local authorities submitted monthly claims against the spend to justify their spending. WMCA kept a comprehensive record of spend by all local authorities. This process was successful as the double devolved grants were delivered on time and budget. Additionally, the required monitoring forms were completed and returned to AMION in line with the timescales for this evaluation.

5.3.2 *WMCA led activities*

The management of the ACTIVATE training programme had both notable successes and key challenges. The programme successfully delivered a wide range of workshops covering crucial topics such as legalities, safeguarding, finance, and marketing, which helped strengthen the resilience of the cultural sector. The inclusion of freelancers alongside businesses was particularly valuable, as this group often lacks access to similar support.

However, the tight timeframe placed significant pressure on both facilitators and participants, leading to inconsistencies in attendance, especially toward the end of the programme. A more structured schedule with clearer sequencing and a longer-term approach would have helped maintain engagement and momentum. Additionally, while feedback was collected, it was not always timely, making it difficult to adjust sessions in real time. A more iterative approach, where workshops could be refined based on ongoing insights, would have strengthened overall impact.

The feedback on the ACTIVATE grants programme was largely positive. It was managed by Smarter Society through an application process. The feedback from beneficiaries mainly stated that there were clear instructions on how to apply and that the overall application process was more accessible than other grant programmes they have previously been involved in. The management and communication from the WMCA team was also praised by beneficiaries, with a supportive environment provided throughout. The main criticism of the grant programme related to the tight timescales of delivery, which limited impact in some instances.

The International Grant programme has been managed by the WMCA Grants Officer for the CWGLEF Cultural Pillar. The feedback from these participants has been overwhelmingly positive in terms of how it was managed and the impacts it has brought.

5.4 Engagement with partners and stakeholders

5.4.1 *Double devolved grants*

The feedback from delivery partners has predominantly been positive. Local businesses have relished the opportunity to deliver cultural activities within their local areas.

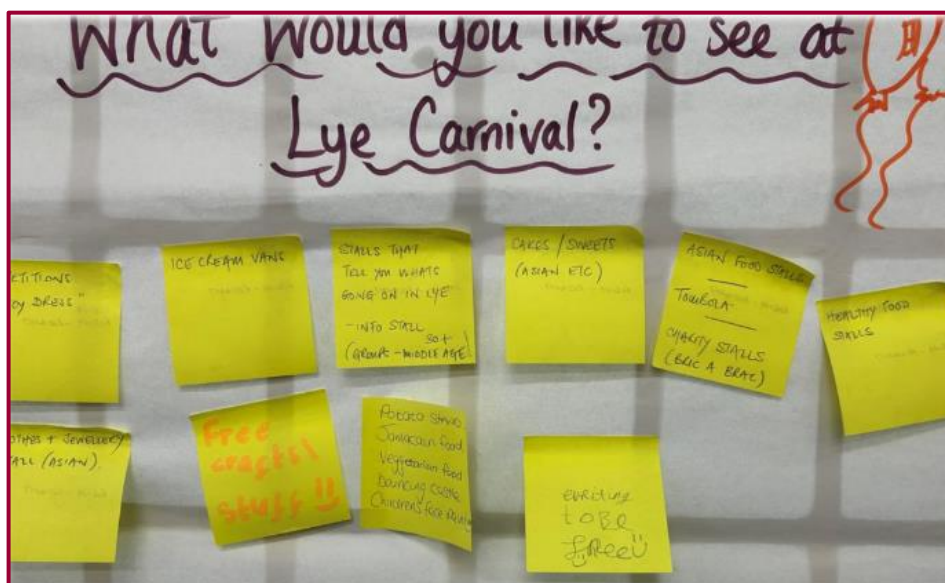
For example, the engagement with local partners across both the **Sandwell Festival** and **Solihull CEP activities** have suggested this engagement has helped to foster stronger community cohesion, cultural access, and support for local artists. Through collaborations with various cultural institutions, including libraries, museums, and community organisations, a wide range of events were delivered that appealed to diverse audiences.

In Sandwell, theatre performances, dance, and exhibitions were presented in community spaces like libraries, providing access to culture for families and individuals who may not typically engage with the arts. The bus exhibition in Sandwell, for example, reached a large portion of the community, particularly South Asian residents, through a tailored event that generated significant engagement and social media activity. In Solihull, projects such as Community Artists in Residence and Fresh Air Theatre reached people in a deeply meaningful way, with some activities having life-changing impacts on participants. Additionally, the Seed of Imagination project delivered ten weeks of arts workshops in three different schools across the borough, which received positive feedback from the head teachers.

The **Get Creative Project in Birmingham**, which supported nine artistic initiatives across the city generated very positive student feedback, with the staff, the crafts/activities and new skills frequently cited as positive takeaways. The Make Me Visible project exemplified the programme's commitment to inclusivity by curating a high-quality range of artworks and creative experiences with, for, and by children and young people with disabilities. The project experienced a significantly larger number of young people with SEN compared to their original application proposal, demonstrating the demand for engagement and retention for these young people.

Lye Carnival in Dudley was co-designed with residents, ensuring extensive and diverse community input, despite tight timescales. To maximise local people's involvement in the planning and delivery of the carnival, locals were invited to help shape key decisions on marketing, activities, and stalls through conversations with businesses, voluntary and faith groups, library ideas boards, and email outreach etc. Residents were also invited to attend the Lye Carnival Organising Group to discuss key things such as the day of the week and month the carnival should occur on, the site plan and road closures, contacts and connections to local businesses etc. **Figure 5-3** below shows an ideas boards from the organising group that captured community input, highlighting the event's inclusive and collaborative approach.

Figure 5-3 Lye Festival Organising Group ideas board



Source: Lye Carnival Evaluation Report

The **‘Made in Cov’ Willenhall Street Art** demonstrated significant efforts to ensure that the final mural installation represented the ideas of the wider community, rather than exclusively those attending the Haggard Centre itself. This was done through numerous different ways, such as completing a circuit of the local streets, engaging with passers-by and attendance of key community hubs such as the local library. Whilst working on the final mural, the team engaged with approximately 100 people each day. Community groups provided highly positive feedback on their experience creating the mural, with volunteers expressing pride in contributing meaningful work to their community.

One of the key learning outcomes of the **‘Walsall Makes’ project** is that partnership working has been the key success of the programme. The partners of the programme ensured that the opportunities available reached the people of Walsall first, with all their funding invested in local communities and artists. Through doing so, Walsall Council have learnt that there is a strong appetite and willingness in the community for future creative opportunities. This sentiment is reflected across the entire Cultural Pillar, where strong collaboration between stakeholders, community groups, and local organisations has been fundamental to delivering impactful projects.

The local authority teams have demonstrated the power of working closely with local partners to ensure that programming was accessible and resonated with residents. The wide variety of events, including theatre, workshops, and exhibitions, helped to increase cultural engagement and provide opportunities for people to experience and enjoy the arts in their own communities. However, there were also important lessons learned that will enhance future initiatives. In some instances, resource was focussed on a small number of beneficiaries to maximise impact however, there was the potential to reach and engage with wider audiences or stakeholders. Additionally, projects have laid the foundations for further development however, further funding is not confirmed at this stage. Forward planning for legacy and ensuring that successful programmes continue after the grant period would be beneficial for maintaining long-term impacts.

Overall, the collaboration between local authorities, artists, and community organisations has proven to be a successful model for bringing culture to people in a variety of settings, creating deeper connections, and supporting the local cultural sector and freelancers

5.4.2 *WMCA led activities*

Engagement with partners and facilitators within the ACTIVATE programme had mixed results. The workshop leads and training facilitators felt that the programme was successful and delivered learnings which are vital for the sector. However, there were areas for improvement to ensure the smooth running of the programme.

Many providers found the public sector tendering process overly complex, with what they perceived to be excessive documentation and unclear selection criteria, making it challenging to design their sessions effectively. While collaboration between different training providers was sometimes beneficial, it also introduced logistical difficulties, particularly when providers had to pair up to meet requirements.

There was also a lack of clarity on participant profiles and expected numbers, which made tailoring content to attendees' needs more difficult. A diagnostic process at the start to assess

participants' experience levels and direct them to the most relevant sessions would improve future iterations. Facilitators also noted the importance of long-term follow-up and support—without a structured wrap-around process, it was unclear whether participants needed further assistance after completing their training.

While the programme had clear value, better integration across its elements, clearer participant pathways, and a longer-term approach would enhance its effectiveness in strengthening the cultural sector

Section 6

Conclusions

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6 Conclusions

6.1 Summary of findings

The CWGLEF Cultural Programme successfully delivered against its key objectives, exceeding output targets and generating meaningful cultural and economic benefits across the West Midlands. Despite challenges such as tight funding timeframes and evolving project scopes, the programme demonstrated adaptability and efficiency in delivering impactful activities that engaged a broad audience.

A key achievement of the programme was its ability to exceed initial expectations. Attendance at festivals and events reached 56,767—more than double the original target of 23,960. Similarly, 725 performers, freelancers, and artists received direct support, nearly four times the anticipated number. Additionally, 943 individuals participated in training courses, significantly surpassing the target of 328. These outcomes highlight the programme’s ability to enhance **cultural engagement** and sector development across the region.

Business growth and **creative sector resilience** were also key areas of impact. Seventy businesses/freelancers received grant support, exceeding the target of 50, while training opportunities extended across 20 local authorities—far beyond the initial scope of five. Additionally, the double devolved grants facilitated 41 festivals and events, more than 50% above target.

The **Benefit-Cost Ratio (BCR) of 1.43:1** demonstrates that the programme delivered ‘acceptable to medium’ value for money, supported by significant non-monetised benefits such as increased cultural participation and strengthened community engagement.

Beyond the numbers, the programme made progress in promoting diversity, inclusion, and accessibility within the cultural sector. A focus on embedding inclusivity within grant and training initiatives ensured broader access to opportunities, while mental wellbeing support within training programmes was particularly well received, acknowledging the challenges faced by those in the creative industries.

Overall, the CWGLEF Cultural Programme delivered strong results, meeting or exceeding expectations in key areas while **providing a solid foundation for future cultural investment**. Continued support for the sector will be essential to sustaining this momentum and ensuring long-term growth and resilience within the West Midlands’ cultural and creative industries.

6.2 Lessons learned and recommendations

A comprehensive list of recommendations and lessons learned is set out below:

1. Ensure Measurable Outputs and Objectives

Lesson learned: Objective 1 mainly related to the achievement of outputs rather than a long-term objective. Additionally, a limited number of SMART objectives were established during the

programme development. For example, neither visitor targets nor training targets were set during the Business Case.

Recommendation: Future programmes should establish clear and quantifiable objectives from the outset to facilitate accurate performance evaluation.

2. Set achievable goals based on sector needs

Lesson Learned: This evaluation considers that Objective 5 was difficult to achieve within the funding envelope and timeframe. The correct decision was made to repurpose the planned international conference into a regional event to better align with the sector's needs and priorities. However, this change meant that a key project was not expected to contribute to the overall Objective in terms of creating international business connections.

Recommendation: To avoid perceptions of underperformance, objectives should be realistic and aligned with the actual needs of the sector to ensure successful delivery.

3. Address challenges posed by time-limited funding

Lesson Learned: Short-term funding cycles restrict long-term development, leading to rushed decision-making and potential loss of momentum once funding ended. Stakeholder feedback indicated felt that the time-limited funding programme affected delivery, particularly for the training and grant programmes. Beneficial outputs and outcomes were achieved however, there is not the continued support provided to participants after the delivery of these programmes.

Recommendation: Explore and prioritise more sustainable funding models to mitigate the risks posed by time-limited funding allocations.

4. Secure ongoing funding for sustained impact

Lesson Learned: One-off funding injections are beneficial but insufficient for maintaining long-term progress. For example, the funding to support strategy development engaged with a wide range of residents and helped to raise aspirations across the region. However, there is a risk that these expectations will not be met if further funding is not secured.

Recommendation: Aim to secure continued investment for identified projects to build on existing strategies and ensure long-term programme success.

5. Recognise the value of cultural and heritage funding

Lesson learned: The inclusion of culture and heritage in the Fund has been a significant positive step, providing a strong foundation for further development. Culture has been historically underfunded and the beneficiary feedback from vast majority of activities was overwhelmingly positive. The programme reached a significant number of residents and visitors, who felt enhanced pride in place, wellbeing and business confidence. This value should be recognised.

Recommendation: Maintain and expand funding for cultural and heritage initiatives to further support their development and deliver benefits to local communities.

6. Build on the momentum in the cultural sector

Lesson learned: The cultural initiatives have gained significant traction, demonstrating strong public and sectoral interest. The stakeholder feedback demonstrated that there is demand for the continuation of the majority of activities, including cultural events, training programmes, and grant programmes.

Recommendation: Capitalise on this momentum by further embedding cultural initiatives within regional development strategies.

7. Prioritise inclusivity in future programmes

Lesson learned: As identified within this programme, ensuring diversity and accessibility in cultural initiatives is essential for maximising their impact across communities. This programme ensured that diversity, inclusion and equality was a golden thread throughout the objectives. This clear commitment to inclusivity at the outset helped to ensure that as many priority groups were reached as possible, including residents who did not typically engage with culture.

Recommendation: Continue to prioritise inclusivity in programme design to ensure broad engagement across diverse communities.

8. Start projects early to improve efficiency

Lesson learned: The projects which were identified and planned early in the process performed particularly strongly. Being able to market and promote the events is particularly important for cultural activities, to maximise the reach of the programme. Delays in project initiation can lead to inefficiencies and last-minute spending pressures.

Recommendation: Begin projects as early as possible after funding allocation to allow for structured planning and long-term strategic impact.