

Evaluation of *Prosper North* Programme 2019-2021 Final Report



Creative United
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Executive summary

“This has been amazing, amazing support, amazing ideas, amazing to be part of a network. I've found it hard, inspirational and ultimately rewarding. We are in a much better place now. Although COVID-19 has got in the way a bit!!”

“We have gained confidence in terms of forging ahead with big plans for our future.”

“Through the support received we have strengthened our business plan and developed greater clarity of the priorities for growing income streams.”

In 2018, Key Fund, in partnership with Creative United and Social Investment Business, was awarded a Government contract to manage the Northern Cultural Regeneration Fund's £3.2m repayable social finance fund for creative, arts and cultural heritage organisations across the 11 northern-most Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) areas in England.

Creative United established the Prosper North programme with £249,400 investment from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, to provide business support and create a pipeline of investment-ready organisations for the Northern Cultural Regeneration Fund.

Between 2019 and 2021 Prosper North supported three cohorts of organisations. Activities included:

- 1:1 business advice
- Cohort workshops and webinars
- Meet-ups

Participating organisations were diverse in their scale, governance, cultural and audience focus. Most were small scale with fewer than 10 paid staff. A quarter were volunteer-run. 69 were venue-based. They came from across the North. 44% from the North West; 43% from Yorkshire and the Humber and 13% from North East England – representing all eligible LEP areas.

The first Prosper North cohort began their journey in September 2019 and completed in February 2020. The second cohort started in March 2020. March 2020 marked the first English COVID-19 lockdown, and what would be (at the time of writing) 15 further months of various restrictions and 'lockdowns'.

Headline outputs and outcomes

The original outputs were ambitious once the operating landscape changed. Having said this, the majority were achieved, or were on a trajectory towards being achieved at the time of this evaluation.

Outputs	Target	Achieved	Comment
Cultural heritage organisations in the target Northern LEP regions are reached by programme	200	556	10 briefings were held in Durham; Huddersfield; Grimsby; Kendal; Liverpool; Sheffield; Whitby Wirral.
Applications received	150	221	
Organisations supported	80	89	
Diagnostic reports created	80	77	1 st and 2 nd diagnostic
1:1 support provided	650 hours	667	

Group learning and networking events provided	30	34	25 workshop and webinars and 9 networking events
COVID-19 Recovery plans created	40	16	The country was still in lockdown at the completion of the programme.
NCRF investment deals made	8	4	A further 5 organisations indicated they will pursue this. COVID-19 put a halt to social investment, as organisations lost income streams and took stock of their short- and medium-term priorities.

Outcomes	Target	Achieved	Comment
Organisations improve their approaches to sustainable enterprise.	70%	71%	e.g. Grow/diversify market/ audience; new partners; Start or grow trading capacity
Business planning and finance skills improved.	80%	87%	e.g. Business plan created or strengthened; Cashflow forecast strengthened; Business skills and confidence increased
Organisations diversify their income streams.	70%	67%	e.g. Understand diversity of routes to funding and investment; Introduce earned/sales income; Securing new funder. 75% of participants also attended a Social Investment Webinar
Organisations can better articulate, measure and demonstrate their social and community impacts.	60%	78%	e.g. Social impacts mapped; Impact measurement plan created; Mission statement updated/ created
Organisations improve/safeguard their social and community impacts.	50%	76%	e.g. Learning and participation increased; Accessibility improved
Organisations apply to or secure NCRF investment deals.	10%	5% (10% pipeline)	COVID-19 put a halt to social investment, as organisations lost income streams and took stock of short- and medium-term priorities.
Pipeline of investable organisations is created for NCRF and other social investors.	30%	45%	e.g. Preparing for investment included in business plans and impact strategies; approaching social investors or lenders. NB 60% had also had, or planned to have, a conversation with Key Fund.

Additional outcome			
Organisations create a plan to either <ul style="list-style-type: none"> transition out of Coronavirus lockdown in order to restart their business operations in a sustainable way (if lock down has already ended) rebuild/recover their business operations in a sustainable way 	50%	45%	The country was still in lockdown at the completion of the programme, and business plan reviews still in train. 45% also had already or planned to secure COVID-19 related grants or loans.

Resulting difference

“[We] have been able to take a step back from day-to-day operations to explore commercial opportunities and growth potential. As a result of Prosper North, we have secured a Northern Regeneration Enterprise Fund grant, developed relationships across the sector and with social investors, and are much better equipped to develop our Trading Co business plan. We are planning to increase self-earned income by 100k over the next few years. Our consultant was very supportive and informed.”

Confidence was the word that almost every interviewee used to describe what they'd taken from Prosper North. Confidence in what they were already doing and that they were well-placed to take their organisation forward effectively. Interviewees refer to the programme as the reason they have been able to do the things they are doing, enabling them to step back, review and refocus their organisation and refresh business plans.

Support into action

“To have the mentor and Prosper North programme at the start of lockdown was incredibly supportive, personally and for our business. The practical advice from our mentor was good quality, realistic and achievable. Through encouragement and support we gained much needed emergency funding and were able to direct this to focusing on building our online presence. It has been a challenging time, but we have a clearer message and are focusing on what our local community and cultural needs are. We are planning the coming year with a clearer focus on how our business needs to be shaped and excited about new opportunities.”

While a key driver of the programme was social investment readiness, there was a recognition that the journey towards this had a number of stages, as each organisation reviewed their current business models and practices. And that COVID was also a disruptor in this journey. Therefore, the outcomes capture both achieved and planned activity – a pipeline of investment readiness, anticipating that organisations will continue their journey beyond their initial involvement in the programme.

In terms of sustainability and enterprise, the most immediate actions achieved or planned by respondents as a result of the programme were:

- Increased engagement with their community (87%)
- Grown or diversified their market / audiences (85%)
- Identifying the difference made to communities (82%)

Overall, the priorities were for growing or diversifying market / audiences and increasing engagement with communities. These are positive building blocks to organisations becoming more sustainable and enterprising.

The top business planning and finance practice developed or planned as a result of Prosper North were:

- Increased your business skills and confidence (93%)
- Created or strengthened their business plan (92%)
- Developed or reviewed their mission statement (78%)
- Strengthened their cash flow forecast (75%)

32% had already had a conversation with Key Fund, and a further 28% intended to – indicating the creation of a pipeline towards investment. In terms of income diversification, other immediate focuses were on grant funding with 30% having secured a new funder, whereas longer-term plans centred around increasing earned, sales or trading income.

52% had made plans to rebuild their business operations in a sustainable way, post COVID-19, with 12% of these already implementing them and the rest still awaiting restrictions to be lifted.

Cultural heritage organisations exist as part of a local ecology and their improved resilience and sustainability will not only safeguard the heritage, but also contribute to the local community economically, socially and culturally. The ambition of participants to increase their workforce to give capacity for income generation and trading activity, work with more freelancers, develop new partners and increase

engagement with audiences and community participation are all positive indicators of more confident, outward-facing and vibrant organisations. And something that would benefit from revisiting to see how these ambitions have been realised as the country moves on from these initial COVID-19 outbreaks.

However, evidence to date indicates the activity was important in supporting organisations navigate their way through the financial, operational and even wellbeing resilience challenges of COVID to become more stable and sustainable – helping safeguard a range of heritage.

Conclusion

“I’d absolutely recommend joining programmes such as this. There is a huge intangible but important benefit from seeing what others are doing, sharing problems, becoming aware of what’s going on in the sector and exchanging advice. It ^{is} worth making the time to get out of your own problems for a while, even when they are demanding and urgent, in order to undertake this kind of sharing. Opportunity to work with experienced consultants is very worthwhile, perhaps most of all in getting you to ask the right questions about what you’re doing and how you might get to where you want to be.”

Prosper North supported 89 cultural heritage organisations through timely and appropriate business support. This was delivered at a time of significant change, and while the target outcomes remained the same, the route towards achieving those took a detour or two during the course of the programme.

The evidence from participation, surveys, case studies and interviews indicates a high level of satisfaction with the programme and illustrates the breadth of business development actions taken and plans produced as a result.

In particular the programme’s core objectives have been met:

- Strengthen or improve growth and resilience (organisationally and as a sector)
- Increase social and community impacts
- Develop an investment pipeline for the Northern Cultural Regeneration Fund (NCRF)

All evidence suggests that there is an ongoing need for this type of support in the culture and heritage sector and that this model was an effective delivery mechanism.

Within the context of COVID-19 the programme performed strongly against the outcomes. However, it should be noted that its impact was much more than the data. The importance of delivering this support and confidence building at a time of huge organisational uncertainty and challenge to their sustainability cannot be underestimated. Participants welcomed the programme as an appropriate and vital source of support.

“As a result of the programme we have run business planning sessions with staff and board to lead towards the development of a new business plan underpinned by larger than usual applications to funders to support our whole programme rather than projects. We have also started working on the sustainability of the business through succession planning.”

“We are rewriting our business plan so that it becomes a more dynamic and relevant document.”

“We have secured our largest commission and grant to date and we have forecast this year to employ more freelancers than any year so far as a company.”

“We have become more confident, through having the time and guidance, to really consider the future, and a 5 year plan which was something we had wanted but not had the time or assistance to look at in detail.”

“Staff are more engaged with new ways of working and Prosper North learning has helped to strengthen new partnerships, and is encouraging the wider team to look at other ways to grow and develop this in the future. ... We have also been able to strengthen our Board and are looking at ways to increase diversity and to introduce a youth voice into our future planning.”

Overall, the programme delivered significant benefits (both planned and realised) to participants both enabling them to make informed decisions as to the appropriateness of Social Investment, and giving the confidence and tools to refocus their business planning, delivery activities, income streams and impact.

Contents

1. Introduction	8
2. Methodology	9
3. Programme overview	10
4. Outputs and outcomes	15
5. Findings and analysis	16
6. Conclusion	31
Case Study: The Auxiliary Project Space	33
Case study: Bacconsall – Lancashire’s Living Museum and Heritage Park	35
Case Study: Blaze Arts	37
Case Study: Green Croft Arts Ltd	38
Case Study: Guide Bridge Theatre	40
Case Study: Hatch (Incubating Arts Ltd)	42
Case Study: Junction Arts	44
Case Study: Norfolk Street Arts	46
Case Study: Norton Priory Museum and Gardens	48
Case Study: Our Big Picture Ltd	50
Case Study: The Quilters Guild	52
Case Study: Regeneration North East	53
Case Study: Salford Community Leisure Ltd	55
Case Study: Silsden Town Hall	57
Case Study: Watershed Arts	58
Case Study: West Cheshire Museums	60
Appendix A: Applied theory of change model	62
Appendix B: Participating organisations	64
Appendix C: Survey Data	67
Appendix D: Proposed outcomes	92
Appendix E: Business Advisors	93
Appendix F: Meet ups; Workshops and Webinars	95
Appendix G: Registration and Application form	97



I. Introduction

“A free business support programme for cultural heritage organisations based in the North”

Creative United is an entrepreneurial community interest company, that supports economic growth and social impact in the arts, cultural and creative industries. They provide a range of programmes and business services which enable the development, growth and sustainability of organisations and enterprises operating within these sectors. Their vision is for artists, creative enterprises and cultural organisations to have access to specialist skills, professional advice and services they need to achieve their ambitions for growth and impact within their communities - www.creativeunited.org.uk.

In 2018, Key Fund, in partnership with Creative United and Social Investment Business, was awarded a Government contract to manage the Northern Cultural Regeneration Fund's £3.2m repayable social finance fund for creative, arts and cultural heritage organisations across the 11 northern-most Local Enterprise Partnership areas in England - <https://thekeyfund.co.uk/>.

With £249,400 investment from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Creative United established *Prosper North* to provide free, tailored one-to-one business advice, group workshops and peer learning events in order to create a pipeline of investment-ready organisations. It aimed to support up to 80 organisations between 2019 and 2021 - www.creativeunited.org.uk/services/prospernorth/.

Prosper North was developed using practice developed through Creative United's *Prosper* (2017-8) and *Creative Industry Finance* (2012-2016) programmes.

Programme activities included:

- 1:1 business advice
- Cohort workshops and training sessions
- Meet-ups.

The first *Prosper North* cohort began their journey in September 2019 and completed in February 2020. The second cohort started in March 2020. March 2020 marked the first English COVID-19 lockdown, and what would be (at the time of writing) 15 further months of various restrictions and 'lockdowns'. The resulting closure of venues, furloughing of staff and financial impact required a rethink of how the programme best supported organisations in drastically changed and previously unimagined circumstances. For some, the support was timely, whereas others were left without the capacity to engage.

This report is intended to review the activity, evaluate the project's achievements and capture learning to inform future activity.

2. Methodology

2.1 Overview

Creative United commissioned Mustard & to work alongside the Prosper North team to

- Measure the progress of the programme in delivering its outputs and intended outcomes
- Summarise the extent to which the programme achieved its aims and objectives.

The resulting recommendations are intended to be used by Creative United senior management team to demonstrate accountability and inform future policy, decision-making and working practices, and the National Lottery Heritage Fund, as funder, to demonstrate accountability for public funds and enable it to share good practice and learning with other projects.

2.2 Evaluation framework

Our evaluation approach was based on the theory of change identified by Creative United (Appendix A) and adopted a structured approach to working with the Prosper North project team and participating organisations in each cohort, to understand and document the programme's approach and its effectiveness. Where possible we sought to use the evaluation to support organisations to consolidate their learning, by offering opportunity and prompts for reflection and review.

Even before COVID-19 it was seen that the three cohorts offered opportunity to log the anticipated fluid UK operating environment and plot the programme data against this – placing and understanding the programme within its wider context, sector needs and provision of and access to business support advice and guidance.

2.3 Data

Data was captured by the team at the following points:

- At application – including volume, geographical distribution, type of organisation and need.
- At start of each cohort – through each organisation completing a self-assessment diagnostic tool of their current skill and understanding.
- During support – Feedback forms after each workshop, webinar, or meetup
- At end of support – through each organisation revisiting the diagnostic tool and the end of cohort survey.

2.4 Survey

At the end of each cohort, participating organisations were invited to complete an online survey.

The response rate was:

- Cohort 1: 73%
- Cohort 2: 61%
- Cohort 3: 72%

The overall survey response rate was 67%. The survey data can be found in Appendix C.

Survey respondents' level of engagement overall correlated with the number of 1:1 support hours used. At the time of the survey 69% respondents said they had used the full 8 hours of support and a further 10% said they would use them before the end of the programme.

The surveys at the end of Cohort 1 coincided with the first March lockdown. The request to complete a survey for Cohort 2 was repeated at the end of Cohort 3, as many had been given longer to complete the work due to the disruption brought about by COVID-19. Many organisations were

still completing their programme and also building towards reopening up at the end of Cohort 3, which may account for a lower return rate.

The Surveys for Cohorts 2 and 3 included additional questions relating specifically to the impact of COVID-19.

Feedback from the first and second cohorts informed adjustments to the programme operation for each subsequent cohort.

2.5 Interviews and case studies

Follow up interviews were undertaken with a targeted sample of 16 survey respondents who had indicated that they were happy to be contacted. Representation across the different cohorts, geography and types of organisations was sought. These conversations aimed to better understand the survey data collected and to understand each organisation's journey, what had and hadn't worked for them, and their direction of travel. Recognising that organisational change can take time to implement we revisited Cohort 1 to understand both the immediate and medium-term organisational changes.

It was intended that the survey and interviews would help embed understanding and reflection on steps taken and future action needed. In the end a case study approach was adopted to better capture the journey of an organisation's change over time, including any changes due to COVID-19.

The number of case studies was increased, recognising that at this time of change and unpredictability the survey and performance data needed more contextual information, and qualitative information was potentially of greater value in understanding what had been achieved.

The business advisors were asked for feedback at the end of each cohort to inform the next programme. Structured, but informal conversations were held with the project team, business advisors and Key Fund to capture their experience and learning.

3. Programme overview

Between September 2019 and April 2021, the programme delivered a range of business development advice, guidance and coaching, tailored to 89 organisations with a heritage focus or strong heritage connection (for example working from a heritage building, or maintaining an aspect of intangible heritage).

The programme set out to: establish and grow a pipeline of organisations who are ready to use a diversity of funding options, at the forefront of which will be social investment. In doing so, the organisations and the sector across the North would be more resilient and impactful, with cultural heritage championed and safeguarded for communities to enjoy.

Core aims were:

- Strengthening or improving growth and resilience (organisationally and as a sector)
- Increasing social and community impacts
- Developing an investment pipeline for the Northern Cultural Regeneration Fund (NCRF)

The organisations were drawn from across each of the 11 northern Local Enterprise Partnership areas eligible for the NCRF. The ambition was that between 8 and 10 Prosper North organisations would secure NCRF investment deals.

3.1 Approved purposes

The purposes approved by the National Lottery Heritage Fund were:

- Working in partnership with Key Fund and Social Investment Business to deliver an outcomes-focused programme to grow enterprise and investment-readiness in cultural heritage organisations based in 11 northern Local Enterprise Partnership regions covered by the Government's Northern Cultural Regeneration Fund (alongside to the contract awarded by UK Government to deliver a repayable finance fund as part of the Northern Cultural Regeneration Fund)
- To make a significant contribution towards the management of cultural heritage across the North through beneficiary organisations becoming more resilient, sustainable and better equipped to secure diverse income and funding streams
- To appoint a full-time Project Manager and recruit 10 freelance business advisors to join Creative United's network to ensure strong coverage across the North in the heritage sector and a freelance marketer
- To enrol 80 organisations with a heritage focus or strong heritage connection, with business support plans created, business support objectives set and provision of 1:1 business advice and ongoing support (640 hours)
- Work undertaken with National Lottery Heritage Fund to identify candidate organisations for support offered and provided by Creative United
- To deliver 30 group training workshops for cultural heritage groups
- Evaluation and learning - analysis of outputs and outcomes; reporting measurement of outcomes against targets and objectives; and sharing learning with stakeholders.

Following the National lockdown to limit the spread of COVID-19 and the subsequent pivoting or hiatus for many organisations, an additional purpose was agreed:

- To provide, where appropriate, business advice and support to improve the ability and capacity of cultural heritage organisations to transition out of ‘Coronavirus lock down’ so they can restart their business operations, retain their workforce, safeguard their heritage and once more create a positive impact in their communities.

A list of the target outcomes can be found in section 4.

3.2 Timeline

2019						2020												2021											
May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May					
Applications																													
			Cohort 1																										
										Cohort 2																			
																Cohort 3													
																						Evaluation							
										Lockdown #1						Restrictions			Lockdown #2										

The programme launched in May 2019, and a dedicated Senior Project Manager started work in July.

The first application deadline was 5th August. Three cohorts of organisations were selected over the programme period. Starting in September 2019, each cohort ran for a successive 6-month period.

The strangeness, uncertainty and challenging circumstances of 2020 meant that each cohort has a quite different experience. The first completed before anyone had really heard of COVID and certainly before there was any real familiarity with Zoom and remote working. The second Cohort was just getting underway when the first lockdown was announced. From the distance of just over a year, it is hard to remember the hour-by-hour unrolling of the situation, deep uncertainty and successive changes. Many thought that a few weeks would resolve the situation.

The programme team had to adapt to a wholly online environment and be responsive to the priorities of the individual participants. The needs and availability of participants changed as they had to think about survival, radically altering their delivery or business model, staff were furloughed, and the vulnerable self-isolating in their homes.

By the third cohort online working had become the norm. The space away from day-to-day business as usual gave some time to reflect and plan. But towards the end their programme focus turned once more to reopening in line with the roadmap.

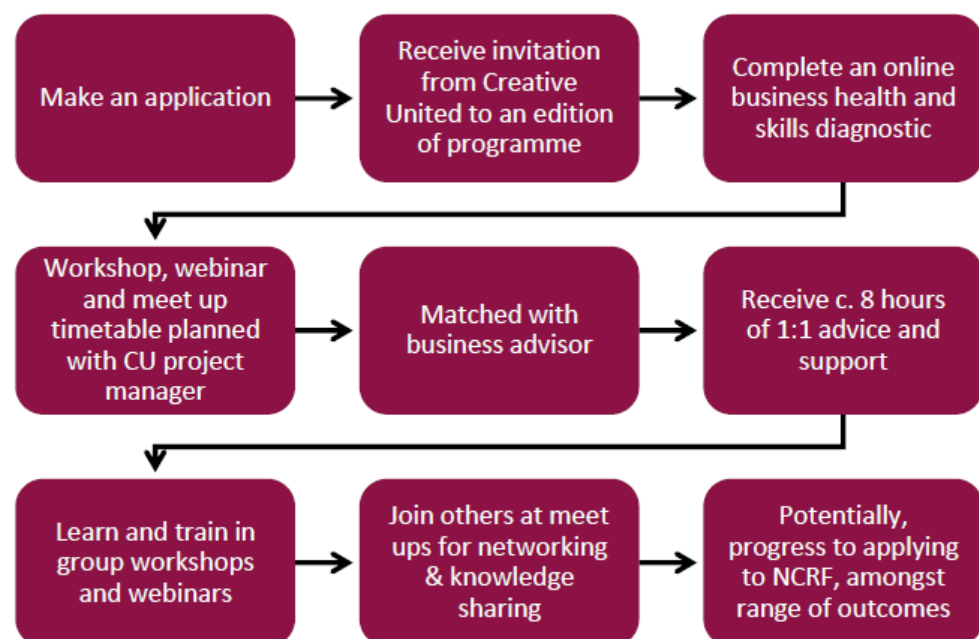
3.3 Pre programme

The programme had a dedicated Marketing Manager overseeing the launch of the programme and recruitment of the first cohort. The programme was promoted through the partners' social media, press release and the Creative United website. These were supported by information sessions at venues cross the North and sharing through Creative United and partners' sector networks.

Application was by a short form outlining eligibility, the current status of the organisation, direction of travel and need.

Shortlisting was undertaken against agreed criteria and a final selection made by the project steering group.

3.4 The participants' journey



Indicative Proper North route through available support (Participants Handbook)

Diagnostic Tool

The first thing a participating organisation was asked to complete, once accepted on the programme, was Creative United's online diagnostic - www.cu-diagnostic.org.uk. As a quick and straight forward way of finding out the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation, it asks for information on:

- Finances (e.g. annual turnover, amount of income from diverse sources, projections for the next financial year etc.)
- Capacity, and
- Skill and confidence-levels across a range of areas.

The output is an organisation-specific diagnostic report to help the understanding of strengths and weaknesses in the business, and inform the support focus needed to improve growth and sustainability.

Workshops

Three different half-day workshops were held and repeated for each cohort:

- Business Modelling Part One,
- Business Modelling Part Two and
- Social Enterprise and Trading.

They were held in person for the first cohort, and then moved to Zoom.

Webinars

A number of live and recorded webinars were commissioned.

- Introduction to Social Investment, delivered by Key Fund
- Monetising your IP and Assets, delivered by Bates Wells
- Essentials of Data Driven Marketing
- Understanding your Customer's Journey

Meet ups

Three Meet Ups were held for each cohort, providing opportunity for participants to meet and connect with other organisations, advisors and programme partners. The events aimed to give opportunities to share challenges and learning, as well as find opportunities and potential collaborations that will help organisations to develop and grow. Those for the second and third cohort took place wholly online.

1:1 sessions

Organisations were allocated 8 hours of 1:1 coaching and mentoring during the 6-month period of each edition of the programme. This flexible resource could be used for focussed and technical analysis of a particular challenge or reviewing and supporting a range of business development areas. The intention was that first 1:1 session would be held at the organisation's premises and carried out face to face. However, all of this work has been taking place online during lockdowns. Advisors were provided with templates for Business Development Goals, session timetable, and a session notes form.

eLearning resources

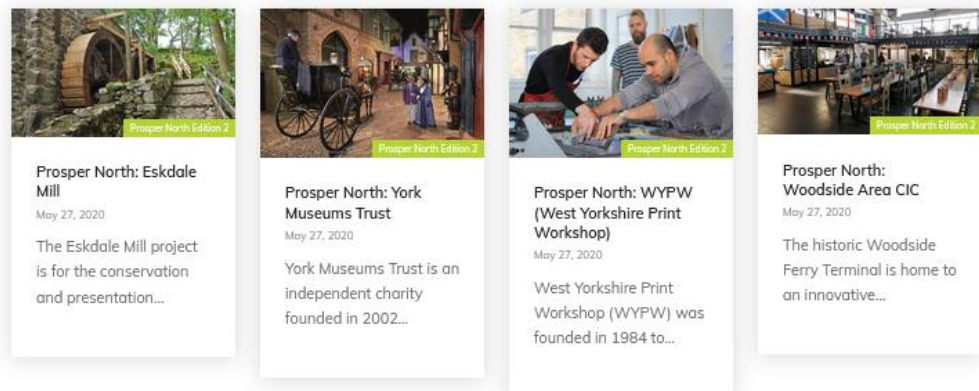
In response to the changing circumstances brought about by COVID-19 additional webinars and downloadable guides were created and made available via Creative United's Learnworlds platform. These were:

- Creating value for your digital media
- Crisis management
- Demystifying CRM
- Financial literacy
- Managing staff and volunteers remotely.

Additional resources

Profiles of each participating organisation were uploaded to the community section of the Prosper North web pages - www.creativeunited.org.uk/prospernorth_thecommunity. A Slack channel was introduced to support peer sharing of information and collaboration. Participants received a handbook to help navigate and get the most out of the programme.

Prosper North: Edition 2



Example of the Prosper North community web page

The move online meant the venue and travel budget could be reallocated, with each organisation being allocated an additional hour to work with their advisor on identifying their most pressing needs coming out of and recovering from the pandemic.

3.5 A social investment pipeline

In 2018, as a legacy of the Festival of the North, the Government announced a £15million fund to support culture in the North of England. £3.2 million of this was allocated for a repayable social finance pot, and Key Fund, in partnership with Creative United and Social Investment Business, was awarded the contract to manage and deliver this Northern Cultural Regeneration Fund (NCRF).

Between March 2019 and March 2021 it was scheduled to make 30 social finance deals, some of which would be a mix of grant and loan.

Parameters to the scheme were:

- Investments up to £150,000, which can be used for match funding
- Up to 1/3 as grant (dependent on need) for capital expenditure
- Loans can fund any purpose
- Repayment terms up to 10 years (possibly 15 years)
- Loan interest rate from 3.5% to 4.2%
- 2% loan arrangement fee payable

Key Fund anticipated a pipeline of one to two years for applying organisations to be loan ready.

Following the Social Investment session organisations could meet with Key Fund to discuss potential support. The session was not a prerequisite - organisations could be introduced to Key Fund at any time for a chat or progress to an application for finance – but was intended to help demystify the process of social investment and promote informed conversations.

Not every organisation taking part in the programme was a suitable candidate for Social Investment. Some weren't interested, others needed to work towards being investment ready and some discovered it was more appropriate to obtain funding from other sources at this stage.

Due to COVID-19, activity on this fund paused as organisations were not in a position to service loan debt, chose to access the COVID bounce back or Culture Recovery Fund grants or loans. The NCRF scheme has now been extended for a further year.

3.6 Programme Partners

Creative United developed the programme with the following partners:

- National Lottery Heritage Fund: providing the funding, advocacy and promotional support and supporting the selection process.
- Bates Wells: a legal firm developing and delivering workshops and webinar content on social enterprise trading models and intellectual property.
- Key Fund: Delivering NCRF and creating webinars about social investment for the programme.
- Social Investment Business: a partner on NCRF and collaborator with Key Fund on webinars delivery.

4. Outputs and outcomes

4.1 Headline outputs and outcomes

Outputs	Target	Achieved **	Comment
Cultural heritage organisations in the target Northern LEP regions are reached by programme	200	556	10 Briefing events were held in Durham; Huddersfield; Grimsby; Kendal; Liverpool; Sheffield; Whitby Wirral.
Applications received	150	221	
Organisations supported	80	89	3 of the 89 did not complete PN
Diagnostic reports created	80	77	1 st and 2 nd diagnostic
1:1 support provided	650 hours	667	
Group learning and networking events provided	30	34	25 workshop and webinars and 9 networking events
COVID-19 Recovery plans created	40	16	The country was still in lockdown at the completion of the programme.
NCRF investment deals made	8	4	A further 5 organisations have indicated they will pursue. COVID-19 put a halt to social investment, as organisations lost income streams and took stock of their short- and medium-term priorities.

Outcomes	Target	Achieved **	Comment
Organisations improve their approaches to sustainable enterprise.	70%	71%	e.g. Grow/diversify market/ audience; new partners; Start or grow trading capacity
Business planning and finance skills improved.	80%	87%	e.g. Business plan created or strengthened; Cashflow forecast strengthened; Business skills and confidence increased
Organisations diversify their income streams.	70%	67%	e.g. Understand diversity of routes to funding and investment; Introduce earned/sales income; Securing new funder. 75% of participants also attended a Social Investment Webinar
Organisations can better articulate, measure and demonstrate their social and community impacts.	60%	78%	e.g. Social impacts mapped; Impact measurement plan created; Mission statement updated/ created

Organisations improve/safeguard their social and community impacts.	50%	76%	e.g. Learning and participation increased; Accessibility improved
Organisations apply to or secure NCRF investment deals.	10%	5% (10% pipeline) [†]	COVID-19 put a halt to social investment, as organisations lost income streams and took stock of short- and medium-term priorities.
Pipeline of investable organisations is created for NCRF and other social investors.	30%	45%	e.g. Preparing for investment included in business plans and impact strategies; approaching social investors or lenders. NB 60% had also had, or planned to have, a conversation with Key Fund.
Additional outcome			
Organisations create a plan to either <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • transition out of Coronavirus lockdown in order to restart their business operations in a sustainable way • (if lock down has already ended) rebuild/recover their business operations in a sustainable way 	50%*	45%	The country was still in lockdown at the completion of the programme, and business plan reviews still in train. 45% also had already or planned to secure COVID-19 related grants or loans.

* Target set at 50% as the 1st cohort had already completed when it was introduced.

** % Survey respondents – Done or Planned; Mean % of the responses to identified questions.

[†] Key Fund data

The draft proposed outcomes from the original application can be found in Appendix D.

As the operating context has been uncertain in a way that could not have been anticipated at the start, that the programme has remained relevant and achieved a significant proportion of its indicators is notable.

To be more fully understood these outcomes can be read in conjunction with the case studies that capture the journeys of 16 participants over the course of the programme.

5. Findings and analysis

5.1 Participants

The 89 participants were a diverse selection of organisations, with a range of governance structures, areas of cultural heritage and audience focus. Most were small scale with fewer than 10 paid staff. A quarter were volunteer-run. 69 were venue-based. They came from across the North. 44% from the North West; 43% from Yorkshire and the Humber and 13% from North East England.

Cohort numbers

Year 1: 26

Year 2: 31

Year 2: 32

Geographic distribution

Each Local Enterprise Partnership area was represented.

LEP Area	Participants
Cheshire and Warrington	5
Cumbria	6
Greater Manchester	16
Hull and East Yorkshire	5
Lancashire	7
Leeds City Region	18
Liverpool City Region	5
North East	8
Sheffield City Region	9
Tees Valley	3
York and North Yorkshire	4
During this period the Government undertook a review to clarify the decision-making and remove overlap between LEPs. As a result, three organisations are now in areas that were in previously part of Northern LEPs	
Humber*	2
Sheffield City Region**	1

* Previously included North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire local authority in addition to East Riding and Hull

** Previously included Chesterfield, Derbyshire Dales, North East Derbyshire, Bassetlaw and Bolsover in addition to Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham, Sheffield local authority areas.

It is noted that rural distribution can be an important differentiating factor for organisational need, community and opportunity, given the geographic characteristics of Northern England. This was not a driver of the programme, therefore not captured, and can't easily be extrapolated from postcode data.

Governance type

Organisation type	Participants
Charity	41
Sole trader	2
Company limited by guarantee	33
Company limited by shares	1
Community interest company	20
Social enterprise	1
Volunteer collective	1

Turnover

Turnover	Participants
<£49,999	29
£50,000 - £99,999	20
£100,000 - £199,999	17
£200,000 - £499,999	12
£750,000 - £3,200,000	9
Over £6,500,000	3

Staff

Only 7 organisations have 10 or more full time staff members. 1 has over 75.

40 have no full-time staff members. And half of these (almost a quarter of the participants) are entirely volunteer run.

Culture and heritage focus

A breadth of cultural practice was present. Many organisations identified with more than one category.

Cultural focus	Participants
Visual arts and photography	31
Performing arts (dance, theatre, opera, comedy)	28
Museum	23
Festivals and events	22
Music (venue, label, publishing, songwriting or performance)	17
Architecture	10
Craft	10
Literature (including poetry, publishing)	9
Digital and the web	6
Design	3
Film, video or radio	2

Other areas of practice included:

- Archive and library
- Built environment, including Building Preservation Organisation
- Community Art, heritage and history
- Education
- Food and drink
- Heritage
- Heritage skills
- Heritage events
- Young people
- Outdoor and Parade Arts
- Public Art

5.2 Applications

Demand for the programme was clear with over 200 applications to Prosper North, giving a success rate of 44%.

The overall geographic distribution of the unsuccessful applicants mirrors that of the successful applicants.

The level of demand was not significantly affected by COVID-19. Some organisations found the timing wrong – unable to engage due to furlough, but others found it even more timely – an opportunity to reassess business models and purpose.

5.3 Levels of participation

Attendance at training sessions and meet ups

Feedback from participants and the business advisors noted the value of attending sessions in order to get the most out of the programme.

“Try your hardest to attend every session but have more knowledge of what you'll get out of it before you sign up.”

“In order to get the most out of the programme ensure that you have enough time to prepare for group and mentoring sessions and that you cascade learning to colleagues.”

Meet ups started strongly in each cohort, but then petered out. The exception is the final online event for cohort 3, where the team tried a slightly different format with external speakers and discussions. However, there was support for the value of networking with other members of the cohort in the feedback. See Appendix F

“Learn as much as you can. Liaise with other groups as much as possible. If someone offers help and advice, listen, always listen. There is a vast network of support and assistance out there, make the most of it ...”

“Be open to share ideas and observations with others, some of the best learning took place over coffee and informal groups sessions.”

“Connecting and sharing with peers is also a great way to reinforce your learning and helpful to know you are not alone!”

To strengthen this networking and sharing, a Slack channel was set up for each cohort, but feedback suggests that as a new tool, the time needed to maintain it was underestimated. Participants suggested that it would have benefited from greater maintenance and engagement by Prosper North.

It was also suggested that the breadth of different organisations was a barrier to sharing.

“For me, I think the spread of organisations was too broad. The opening meeting where I heard about other organisations was very interesting. But well over half were so different from us that I don't feel there was much actual knowledge to share beyond that first contact. Among our cohort, Tees Music Alliance and the venue in Huddersfield were ideal candidates for us to work with, but we were never 'together' as part of the programme.”

Barriers to attendance included:

- Geography, e.g. cost of and time required to travel.
“The meet and greets were just too far away to attend.”
- Scheduling
“I have had to take annual leave to attend the workshops, and the webinars were not accessible to me during the working day. From our perspective, having at least some of the workshops at a weekend would have been preferable.”
“I had problems attending the sessions ... as sessions took place on days I was committed to one of our projects. This is indicative of the capacity pressures small organisations face.”

The move online for cohort 2 and 3 mitigated these.

Options that might have overcome this would be providing more information at application stage, such as the session dates, and the expectation around attendance as part of the programme.

Overall, there were mixed views about the preference for Online or In-person sessions. For the majority of people, the move to online delivery was new. It worked well in many ways, but it was felt that physical meet-ups for certain elements of the programme would have been of greater benefit than Zoom, had COVID permitted.

1:1 Support

12 organisations didn't complete their full 1:1 support allocation. 6 of these were in Cohort 2 – a Cohort characterised by the outbreak and initial turbulence and significant uncertainty of the pandemic and first lockdown.

Reasons for non-completion were:

- COVID-19 – survival, hiatus or change of plans (7 replies)
- Changing circumstances (2)

- Competing demands (2)
- The support was not useful (1)
- Changes at Prosper North (1)

Diagnostic reports

Participants had identified key information in the application, and then were asked to complete the Creative United diagnostic at the start and end of the programme. As can be seen from the outputs in Section 4, this was not met.

The disruption caused by COVID at the end of Cohort 1 really set the tone for the programme, suggesting that participants prioritised other activity with their scarce time.

Some comments indicated that these became less relevant if not based on actual data – which was the case once businesses were placed in hibernation. And that if the tool had been adjusted it would have been more useful in a COVID operating environment.

5.4 1:1 Support

“Overall the Prosper North programme has been a positive experience and the support given has been excellent. Working with our Business Advisor was creative, challenging (in a good way) and was just starting to be productive; our advisor left the programme and we are in a ‘hand over’ period that so far continues to be working well.”

“There is a good network of arts and heritage business consultants on which to draw upon. Part of the problem when looking for someone to lead on away days or strategic planning is who would be a good fit for our organisation.”

This was considered by participants to be the most valuable and successful of all the programme elements.

The experienced advisors were able to respond to the situation they found on the ground and tailor their support appropriately. In practice the needs expressed on the application form often turned out to be quite different from the actual problem that needed solving once the programme was underway.

However overall, the matching of skills to organisations worked well, with only a handful asking for another advisor or being reallocated during the programme. And the ability of advisors to skills swap and share the hours, should a different expertise be needed, was also noted.

The business advisors themselves were conscious that they were separate from the training sessions and not privy to their content. This was a particular challenge as it meant they had to be cautious when supporting the development of business plans, to ensure they didn’t contradict the ModFin model taught to participants, or confuse them by introducing other models. While this was amended part way through and advisors given an overview of the model, most still felt they needed to exercise caution, or avoid additional advice.

The geography of the North meant that some advisors were allocated organisations several hours away. It was observed that the shift resulted in more focussed sessions, but lost some of the organisation-specific context gained from walking around a site and meeting a range of staff and volunteers – not just those directly participating in the programme. The different styles and preference of each advisor was noticeable in the feedback.

An observation of advisors was the isolated position of many staff – and the need for connection, as much as business support. This was something that they had not experienced in other business support programmes.

“All in all a great experience, I just wish it could have been longer. The end of the programme felt rushed.”

Participants and advisors have varying views on the length of the programme and adequacy of the 8 hours support. It should be noted that extra hours were allocated to organisations to support with preparing for post-COVID recovery.

Overall, the allocation of hours was perceived to be adequate to help organisations move forward if the purpose was sufficiently focussed and realistic, and if organisations did the necessary preparation and follow up work between sessions.

Any longer duration could result in drift, although several organisations have commissioned their advisor to deliver more work for them subsequently.

5.5 Resulting difference

“[We] have been able to take a step back from day-to-day operations to explore commercial opportunities and growth potential. As a result of Prosper North, we have secured a Northern Culture Regeneration Fund grant, developed relationships across the sector and with social investors, and are much better equipped to develop our Trading Co business plan. We are planning to increase self-earned income by 100k over the next few years. Our consultant was very supportive and informed.”

“We have gained confidence in terms of forging ahead with big plans for our future.”

Confidence was the word that almost every interviewee used to describe what they’d taken from Prosper North. Confidence in what they were doing and that they could take it forward. Even when the outcomes were different from those proposed – for example earlier steps of business support rather than investment-readiness, interviewees refer to the programme as the reason they have been able to do the things they are doing, enabling them to step back, review and refocus their organisation and refresh business plans.

Support into action

“To have the mentor and Prosper North programme at the start of lockdown was incredibly supportive, personally and for our business. The practical advice from our mentor was good quality, realistic and achievable. Through encouragement and support we gained much needed emergency funding and were able to direct this to focusing on building our online presence. It has been a challenging time but we have a clearer message and are focusing on what our local community and cultural needs are. We are planning the coming year with a clearer focus on how our business needs to be shaped and excited about new opportunities.”

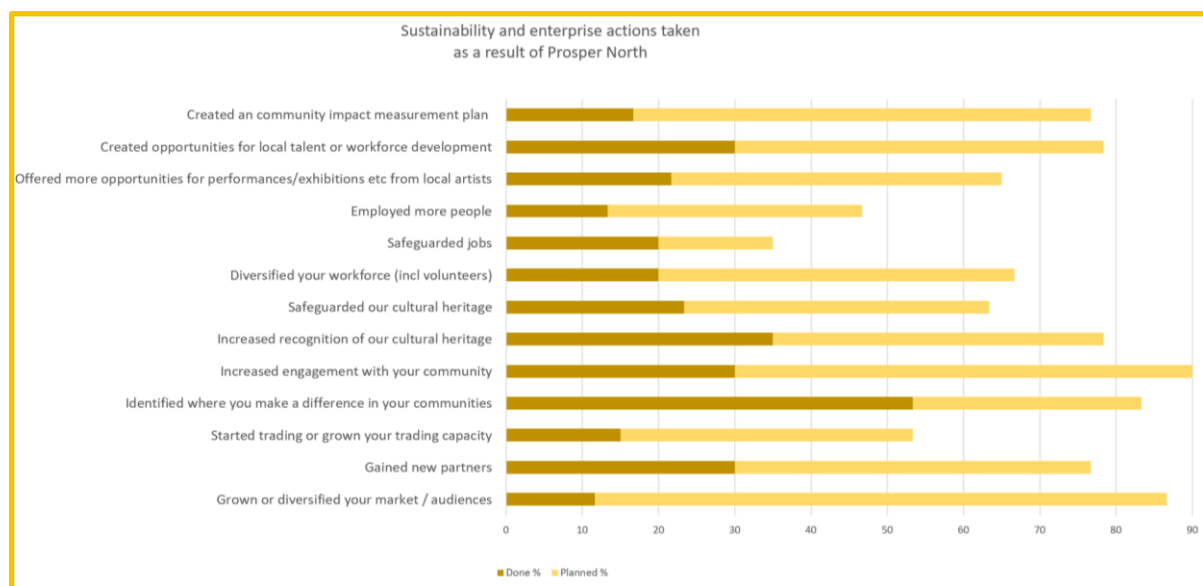


Table 1: Sustainability and enterprise actions taken as a result of Prosper North

While a key driver of the programme was social investment readiness, there was a recognition that the journey towards this had a number of stages and would take some longer to achieve than others as each organisation reviewed their current business models and practices. COVID-19 was a further disruptor in this journey.

In terms of sustainability and enterprise (See Table 1), the most immediate actions taken by respondents were:

- Identifying the difference made to communities (53%)
- Increasing the recognition of our cultural heritage (33%)
- Creating opportunities for local talent or workforce development (30%)
- Gained new partners (30%)

Given the concentrated timescale of the programme many further activities were planned, but had not yet taken place. These included:

- Grown or diversified your market / audiences (73%)
- Increased engagement with your community (58%)
- Created an impact measurement plan to demonstrate where you make a difference in your community (58%)

Overall, the outcomes capture both achieved and planned activity – a pipeline of investment readiness, anticipating that organisations will continue their journey beyond their initial involvement in the programme. Therefore, the top priorities (achieved and planned) were:

- Increased engagement with their community (87%)
- Grown or diversified their market / audiences (85%)
- Identifying the difference made to communities (82%)

These are positive building blocks to organisations becoming more sustainable and enterprising.

They were closely followed by:

- Gaining new partners (77%) and
- Created opportunities for local talent or workforce development (77%).

In addition to creating opportunities for workforce development 45% intended to diversify their workforce (incl volunteers). This reflects the need to diversify boards to strengthen the range of skills and breadth of experiences and perspectives in order to strengthen the resilience of an organisation was commented on by a number of the Business Advisers. 33% planned to employ more people in future recognising the need for capacity to generate sales / trading, with the potential to strengthen the sector workforce and local economy.

“Staff are more engaged with new ways of working and Prosper North learning has helped to strengthen new partnerships, and is encouraging the wider team to look at other ways to grow and develop this in the future. ... We have also been able to strengthen our Board and are looking at ways to increase diversity and to introduce a youth voice into our future planning.”

“We are employing a freelance member of staff in a marketing role as we have identified that as an area that would be helpful to delegate.”

“We have secured our largest commission and grant to date and we have forecast this year to employ more freelancers than any year so far as a company.”

“We have successfully applied for ACE Emergency funding to develop a creative project working with 10 local artists to support local communities and organisations. A part of this funding is towards developing the organisation post lockdown and to increase accessibility, audience development and diversify and increase the board, volunteers and participants. It has enabled us to rethink the direction of the business and consider what we need to go forward through the development of a long-term plan. This has all been supported by our Prosper North mentor.”

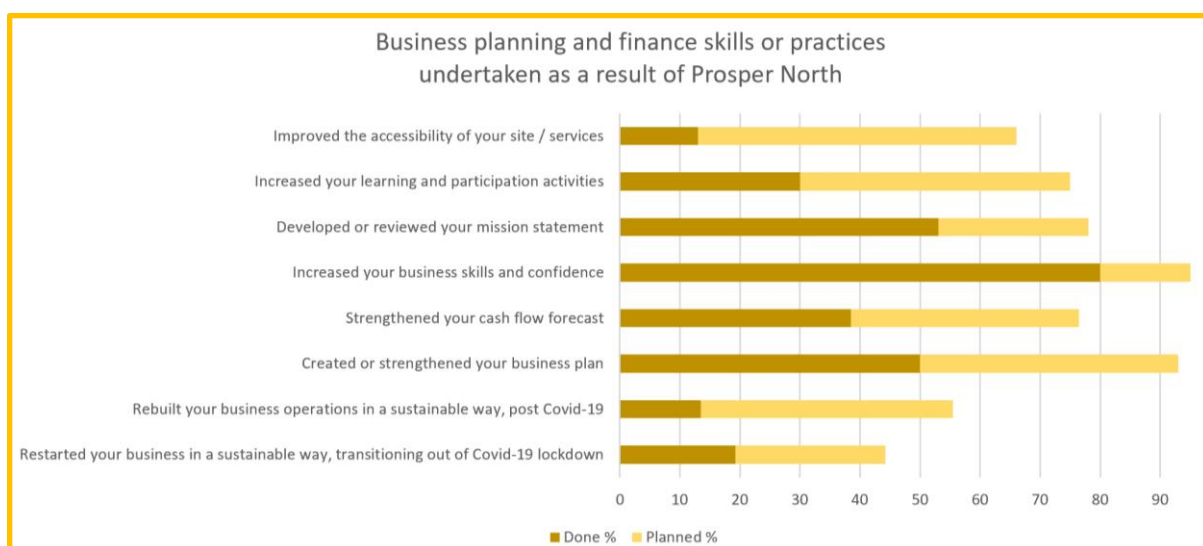


Table 2: Business planning and finance skills or practices undertaken as a result of Prosper North

The top business planning and finance practices (see Table 2) developed as a result of Prosper North were:

- **Increased your business skills and confidence (80%)**
- Developed or reviewed your mission statement (53%)
- Created or strengthened your business plan (50%)

This is consistent with the conversations held with the participants and business advisors – the biggest difference made was an increase in confidence in themselves, their business and their plans. While the number of completed diagnostics is small, analysis of the ‘before’ and ‘after’ reports of those organisations who completed both indicated that the ‘strength, robustness or effectiveness of the organisation’s business plan’ had increased by 43% as a result of the programme, and their skills in ‘business planning’ by 26%.

Activities on people’s to-do lists are:

- Improving the accessibility of site / services (52%)
- Increasing learning and participation activities (45%)
- Creating or strengthening their business plan (42%), and
- Rebuilding business operations in a sustainable way, post COVID-19 (40%)

“As a result of the programme we have run business planning sessions with staff and board to lead towards the development of a new business plan underpinned by larger than usual applications to funders to support our whole programme rather than projects. We have also started working on the sustainability of the business through succession planning.”

“We are rewriting our business plan so that it becomes a more dynamic and relevant document.”

Participants were asked whether, as a result of Prosper North they had diversified their income (Table 3). 32% had already had a conversation with Key Fund, and a further 28% intended to – indicating the creation of a pipeline towards investment. In terms of income diversification, other immediate focuses were on grant funding (30% had secured a new funder; 40% planned to). Whereas longer-term plans centred around increasing earned, sales or trading income with 48% planning to diversify their income through trading and 47% planning to increase sales income.

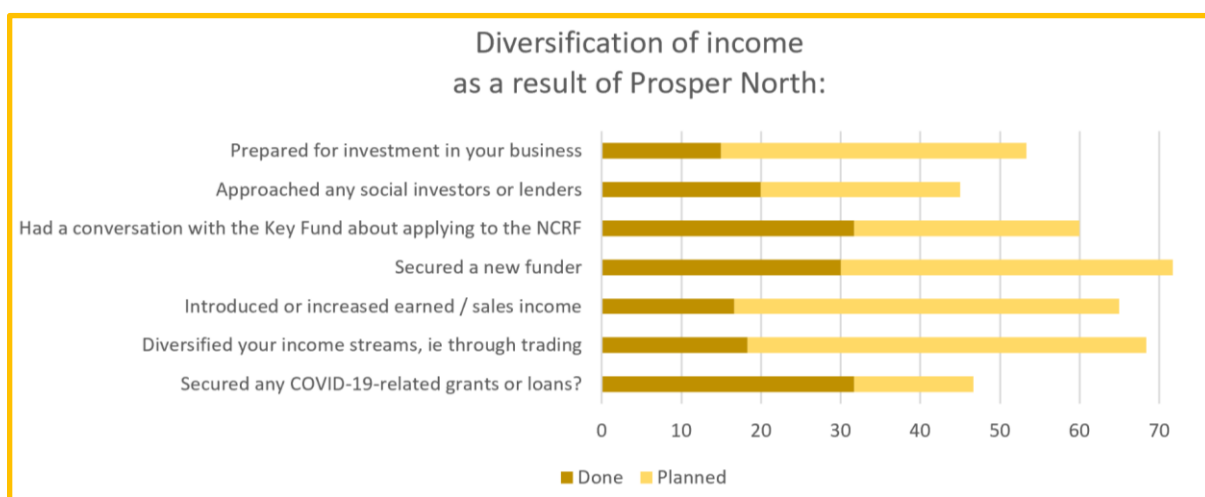


Table 3: Diversification of income as a result of Prosper North

Analysis of business diagnostics from the ‘before’ and ‘after’ reports of those organisations who completed both indicated that the ‘effectiveness of the organisation’s understanding of its commercial potential or income generation’ had increased as a result of the programme by 33%. And their skills and confidence in ‘Raising finance and investment (non-grant funding)’ by 29%.

“Our aim is to reduce reliance on the amount of core funding we need to support our overheads, in what is an ever more challenging funding climate.”

“We have made an application to the Northern Cultural Regeneration Fund.”

“... We have only been able to trade for 3 out of the 60 weeks since restrictions were first imposed. We are currently looking at ways to reduce reliance on earned income - which has been (and will be) inevitably affected by our inability to trade ... we will be looking at more socially focussed, grant-funded activity - alongside a gradual rebuild of commercial earnings.”

The quotes throughout the document are taken from the feedback forms, where participants described what they had achieved to date, and future plans. These answers were as varied as the participating organisations themselves.

5.6 Experience of the programme

Overall the programme was very well received. 100% of the respondents would recommend a business support programme like Prosper North to a peer

The case studies that follow in Section 6 bring to life a selection of the organisations and their different journeys through the programme.



5.7 Satisfaction with Programme

97% of participation organisations considered the level of service received from Prosper North to be Good or Excellent.

"A timely intervention that has changed the way we operate and think. It has taken us to the next step in helping us achieve our vision."

97% had a good or excellent relationship with their Business Advisor.

"The programme was excellent, I would strongly recommend it. I couldn't believe how lucky we got with the absolutely brilliant [business adviser]. The programme has strengthened our organisation, it is leading us to achieving what we have set out to do - be a centre of excellence for contemporary art in the Northeast."

This echoed the experience of the Business Advisers who thoroughly enjoyed working with their allocated organisations.

87% considered the support and advice received from the business advisor was relevant and appropriate. 85% considered it to be of a high quality.

This was further reinforced by a number of business advisers who have continued to keep in touch with the organisations and also offered additional support either in a voluntary or paid capacity.

5.8 Programme content

Of the individual programme components, the 1:1 support and the first Business Modelling workshop scored the highest, followed by the meet ups and webinar on introduction to social investment.

	Very Good %	Okay %	Not Good %	N/A %
1:1 support	82	10	2	7
Online Workshop - Business Modelling Part One	63	22	0	15
Online Workshop - Business Modelling Part Two	47	22	7	25
Online Workshop - Social Enterprise and Trading	23	35	0	42
Webinar - Introduction to Social Investment	28	43	0	28
Webinar - Monetising IP and Assets	20	27	3	50
Recorded webinar - Customer Experience	10	20	0	70
Recorded webinar - Essentials of Data Driven Marketing & CRM	12	25	3	60
Meet ups	37	33	3	27
Working with advisor on COVID-19 recovery	22	10	2	35
Short webinar series on LearnWorlds e-learning platform	0	10	0	33

The short webinars were only introduced later in the programme, and therefore a lower response rate should be expected.

Some minor points raised were about the workshop structure and content, some of which were addressed mid-programme, others are learning for future delivery:

- “... every single meeting included a section at the start where everyone introduced themselves. This was good for meeting one. But one time this took 45 minutes of a 3 hour meeting. There didn't seem to be much understanding how vital our time was Although I initially really appreciated this free resource, I came to realise it was in effect costing me time... I would have preferred it to be streamlined a lot more.”
- “Seminar settings where we looked at others in small groups (4-6), and discussed the potential for income generation of each one. this would allow us to think outside our own contexts, and really understand the ideal mix of income we can and would be able to go for”
- “I would have liked the webinar workshops to have been more practical so we leave with bit of work done or at least action items. Most of the information learned can be found online.”
- “I would have liked the 2nd business modelling workshop to follow the format of the first. We only had 15 minutes to do practical work in the second workshop and then were talked at all day.”
- “The Customer Experience webinar was particularly good and could have been a workshop too.”

Participants also suggested additional topics of business support, not covered in the current programme. These included:

- Funding (9)
- Operational and project management (incl COVID-19-specific) (8)
- Finance and business planning (5)
- Leadership and management – staff and volunteers (5)
- Change (4)
- Social investment (3)
- Marketing (2)

5.9 Adapting and learning

In response to participation feedback and interim evaluation reports the team were responsive and made adjustments to the programme throughout to ensure the outcomes remained in focus, and were relevant to the participants.

Without doubt the biggest adjustment was the reconfiguration of the programme following the outbreak of the pandemic - adjusting the focus and the rapid familiarisation with online platforms and collaboration tools.

“Despite such a difficult time, I found it useful and comforting to meet up with the cohort virtually. I think the Prosper North team did a great job continuing and adapting the programme during this time. It's such a shame we never got to actually meet and network but this programme helped me to feel supported. Thank you.”

“Thank you very much for the very useful tailored support that we have received. The fact that the programme immediately dropped onto the idea of resilience in the face of COVID recovery was very encouraging and provided positivity just when we needed it.”

COVID-19 more than anything highlighted the different positions organisations were in. The Prosper North cohorts were no different. Some welcomed support as timely, with the hiatus offering time or the urgency to review plans and business assumptions. Others found themselves overwhelmed, or without the necessary capacity to engage.

“I appreciate the difficulties in delivering the Prosper North programme during the COVID pandemic, I wonder if there were missed opportunities? Could the programme have been more flexible as a result of COVID? – As a direct result of the national response to the pandemic there appeared to be 2 distinct groups within the current PN cohort, those building based/salaried staff on furlough and the community based/freelance staffed groups continuing to deliver -creating a dynamic where support need, and current interests were different.”

“We would have gotten more from the programme if the timing had not coincided with COVID and all that implies. Half of staff were on furlough, others working from home and what time available was spent just surviving.”

While there was general appreciation for the flexibility and responsiveness of the programme. There were some suggestions as to refinements:

“A great shame that some of the Diagnostics could not have been adjusted in light of COVID - forecasting and trading/income stream questions were useful pre COVID but meaningless in lockdown. Guestimates are fine.....but only so far.”

5.10 Programme operation

The team

The role of the team in the efficiency of the scheme's operation and in creating a welcoming and supportive environment was noted. The recognition of Hannah Mason's contribution, in particular, was visible in the feedback from participants both through the survey and in interviews. The calm steer of Sarah Thirtle and capable hands of Carla Pianese who took on the running of the scheme should also be noted.

Application process

The process seemed to proceed smoothly, including the structured and systematic assessment.

However, there would be benefit in reconsidering how best applicant expectations can be managed throughout this process – so that they are able at an early stage to confirm the relevance of the programme, and its relevance to their organisation.

“I'm sorry that this is not a more positive response. We were delighted to have been accepted onto the programme as we were led to believe it was the key that would open so many doors. Sadly this wasn't the case. Indeed, I think we are more frustrated now than we were at the beginning in that although most people were sympathetic to our situation, there was very little that they could do that altered our very difficult

situation. Limited funds and no travel expenses also meant that we couldn't fully participate. Finally, [business adviser] was amazing. We got the impression that she went above and beyond to help us but in the end, she was just as disappointed as we were at the lack of actual support available to help us."

Similarly, different questions might elicit a different understanding of organisational readiness for support. If a more accurate view of the organisational need was understood earlier in the process, the actual need might be better understood sooner, and the programme might be even more effective in targeting its support. This could include the balance in the focus between social investment-readiness and the longer-term organisational development and pipeline.

In terms of managing expectations the following top tips and experience of participants are relevant:

- Put in the thinking and prep – don't underestimate the time commitment (15)

"Taking the time out to focus on strategy is extremely helpful and the course allows you to do that."

"Make time to prep for the sessions and do the follow up work it helps embed the learning."

"Stick with it, I think it can be hard to prioritise the slower thinking process when you are having to deliver so many projects or manage huge buildings however the benefit we are seeing from clarifying our vision, mission and how we do things is huge. We have become more productive and confident and it's worth taking the time to do."

- Learn from peers (10)

"Be open to share ideas and observations with others, some of the best learning took place over coffee and informal groups sessions."

- Openness and honesty (8)

"Be open to really scrutinising everything you do. It's so easy to become quite narrow-minded and not be able to see your processes objectively. The correct path is sometimes staring you back in the face but unless you are open to the process then you won't be able to see the bigger picture."

- Work with your trustees / Senior Management team (8)

"Ensure that you obtain buy in from SMT and that a representative attends the mentoring sessions with the business adviser."

"Getting your team excited about what you're all doing is crucial and if you do it is amazing to see how people take the ball and run with it."

Supporting materials

Comprehensive guidance for participants and advisers was produced in the form of handbooks.

Slack channels were set up to promote communication and collaboration – as already noted, there was a need to invest considerably in managing these, especially in small programmes without critical mass.

Advisers emailed completed paperwork to the team. This was noted to be a low-tech solution, appropriate to the available technology at the outset of the programme, and tested once homeworking began. Thought could be given to an overall online management system for any programme, for example web forms, which could streamline performance management and make it easier to track progress.

Business advisers

Overall, advisers were content with the allocation of organisations, proportionate paperwork and communications with the team. The ability to be responsive and tailor the approach used with different organisations was appreciated, as was the ability to call on other advisers with different skills. This contentment increased over the programme as glitches were ironed out and as understanding became shared.

Creative United was noted as a prompt payer – something that was much appreciated, particularly in the current climate.

The advisers' experience could be enhanced by sharing feedback from their participant organisations - to help them understand how their work has been valued, and what worked well / less well.

The responsiveness in the face of COVID-19 has previously been noted and should be commended. Aside from the necessary technological changes, it would have been wrong to continue the delivery as if nothing had happened. At the time the way forward was so uncertain, and the context changing minute by minute, that a pause may have been appropriate. In the end the decision-to press ahead with adjustments proved to be the most expedient course of action – providing significant support at a time of need.

Budget

The elimination of travel and venue hire as working from home became the norm released funds. These savings were reinvested in additional support for organisations, which was appreciated.

5.11 Business support, advice and guidance

The understanding of business support needs for organisations, both in terms of general advice and to enable access to social investment, identified in Creative United's original proposal, remains valid. COVID-19 has starkly demonstrated the need for organisations to operate robustly and with multiple income streams.

There appears to be gaps in available structured support, of a kind that is appropriate for heritage and cultural organisations. Many organisations were cautious about engaging consultants, which was overcome by having a selected pool on which to draw for this programme.

Organisations were attracted to Prosper North for various reasons, including:

87% the fact that participants incurred no financial cost for the support.

48% Business advisors and consultants with heritage expertise.

43% Recognised business advisors and consultants.

Just over a quarter were motivated by the support for accessing Key Fund (27%).

Other motivations include:

- Recommendation
- Connection and support – *"I often work in isolation"*.
- Subject matter – *"Not many programmes focus on self-earned income rather than fundraising"*.
- Opening doors – *"We believed it would help us with future funding application"*.

Other support accessed by participants in recent years included:

- A freelance advisor or consultant (48%)
- Voluntary sector agency, e.g. local Community Voluntary Service (37%)
- Arts Council England-funded initiative, e.g. Museum Development (28%)
- Local growth hub, Federation for Small Businesses or local Chamber of Commerce (28%)

Barriers to accessing support

Barriers to investing in business support were identified by participants as:

- Funding (85%)
- Staff capacity / time (72%)
- Knowing who to approach (62%)
- Knowing what's needed (45%)

Alongside this, the difficulty of making the case for investment given the difficulty of measuring the impact of advice was noted.

Despite these challenges 95% of respondents would invest in business support in the future. This would be reliant on accessing grant funding.

“It would have to be a blend of financial sources with clear aims and outcomes stated at the outset”

Immediate needs

Participants articulated their needs in taking forward the work facilitated through Prosper North as follows:

- Funding (21 responses)
- Staffing and capacity (12)
- Ability to reopen normally post COVID-19 (9)
- Further information, advice or guidance (7).

Business advisers noted a particular need for Board development; for boards to understand their role and have the diverse and relevant expertise to lead the strategic direction of the organisation and support any staff.

6. Conclusion

Prosper North supported 89 cultural heritage organisations through timely and appropriate business support. This was delivered at a time of significant change, and while the ultimate outcomes remained the same, the route towards achieving those took a detour or two during the course of the programme.

The evidence from participation, surveys, case studies and interviews, indicate a high level of satisfaction with the programme and illustrate the breadth of business development actions and plans taken as a result.

In particular the programme's core objectives have been met:

- Strengthen or improve growth and resilience (organisationally and as a sector)
- Increase social and community impacts
- Develop an investment pipeline for the Northern Cultural Regeneration Fund (NCRF).

Notable achievements include:

- The range of participants attracted – organisations of different scales at different stages in their development, located across Northern England.
- The quality 1:1 business adviser support. This was particularly valued by participants for the energy, positive challenge, organisation-specific advice and solution focus.
- Cultural heritage organisations increased their understanding of how best to access the available support – for some benefitting from the support of a consultant for the first time.
- Increased awareness of social investment, resulting in loans secured, expressions of interest and a longer-term pipeline of people developing their business models, but with their eyes now open to alternatives to grant funding.
- Grant and emergency funding applications facilitated following on from the COVID outbreak.
- Organisations improve their approaches to sustainable enterprise.
- Business planning and finance skills improved.
- Organisations better able to articulate, measure and demonstrate their social and community impacts – through a better articulation of their mission and understanding of their audiences and how to collect and interrogate data on these.
- Overall for participants one of the most important thing they took away was confidence in their own vision and their ability to drive forward the necessary change.

All these achievements were made despite the challenging year for organisations as a result of the pandemic. While the social investment funding paused during this period, the programme was able to support organisations to secure alternative funding, and also use the hiatus for thinking and review – revisiting their mission and business plans.

Evidence to date indicates the activity was important in supporting organisations navigate their way through the financial, operational and even wellbeing resilience challenges of COVID to become more stable and sustainable – helping safeguard a range of heritage.

Learning to inform future programmes should include:

- An understanding of the challenges of the Northern geography for programme delivery and operating context to inform programme design.
- Effectiveness of different online tools and techniques, and the benefits in delivering a hybrid online / in person programme.
- A practical understanding of the differing stages of organisational readiness for social investment, and different support for different parts of the investment pipeline.
- The importance in having a network of established heritage-experienced advisers to deploy.

Revisiting the organisations at a future point would help to establish longitudinal understanding – and enable confirm as to whether the direction of travel was realised and deepen understanding of the organisation’s development journey catalysed by Prosper North.

The evidence shows that there is an ongoing need for this type of mentoring and support from those who have participated and those who haven’t. This need is likely to continue for some time to come and is not being met in significant ways by other voluntary sector providers. Prosper North was an effective and timely model for this support.

Within the context of COVID-19 the programme performed strongly against the outcomes. However, it should be noted that its impact was much more than the data. The importance of delivering this support and confidence building at a time of huge organisational uncertainty and challenge to their sustainability cannot be underestimated. Participants welcomed the programme as an appropriate and vital source of support.

“We would like to thank you for the opportunity to connect with a fantastic cohort, to network, to share learning and most importantly for being afforded the time to refine and refresh our ... business plan.”

“A timely intervention that has changed the way we operate and think. It has taken us to the next step in helping us achieve our vision.”

Overall, the programme delivered significant benefits (both planned and realised) to participants both enabling them to make informed decisions as to the appropriateness of Social Investment, and giving them the confidence and tools to refocus their business planning, delivery activities, income streams and impact.

Case Study: The Auxiliary Project Space

<https://theauxiliary.co.uk/>
Community Interest Company
Middlesbrough

Prosper North Cohort 2

Experience of Prosper North:

Professional
Motivating
Gamechanger



The Auxiliary Project Space is a Community Interest Company based in a 10,000 square foot warehouse in Middlesbrough and led by Anna Byrne & Liam Slevin. It is a site for the production of experimental sound and art practices, promoting the sonic arts through investigating local industrial heritage and the reimagining of Tees Valley as a site for invigorated creative industries – part of a reinvigorated cultural ecology in the Tees Valley, supported by the Combined Authority and LEP.

In 2019 the Auxiliary had just taken over the warehouse and were coming to terms with the huge scale of the building, their big ideas and ambitions for it, and the reality of their capacity. On the recommendation of the Middlesbrough Borough Council Head of Culture, they applied to Prosper North.

Working online, and through numerous conversations, they built up a strong rapport with their advisor who was 'really excellent' and who they say 'gave us such a confidence boost', convincing them that they were more than capable of taking the Auxiliary to where their ambitions were leading them, and to bring on board specialists such as architects and accountants to support the skills of the organisation. They learned to cost their own time realistically, not assume they had to deliver every role and to value the space to think. The resulting five-year Business Plan looks at the potential of buying and refurbishing their building, staffing, developing a food and shop offer and the sliding scale of bringing in revenue from renting space versus opening it up to exhibitions, with a view to greater sustainability and less reliance on public funding. With the support and encouragement of their advisor, it takes them on a journey towards applying to Arts Council England (ACE) for National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) status.

They have re-focussed on their Mission Statement; are now looking at developing an Advisory Board to guide and support their progress; and are working with their advisor 'to identify who we want round that table', and what skills and networks they need to bring.

Their advisor also worked with them to develop an ACE Cultural Recovery Fund (CRF) bid, which delivered an audience segmentation project with Crystallised – a north-east based cultural research and marketing organisation. This will inform future work, including targeting specific audiences for the Middlesbrough Art Weekender.

In taking forward their funding aspirations for the building, the Auxiliary has benefited from support not just from their advisor but from ACE, Key Fund and REACH advisors. They were particularly impressed with REACH which was very friendly and straightforward, and they were told to 'just give us a call and we'll chat through it'.

The Auxiliary is extremely happy with the progress they have made with the support of Prosper North, and would 'strongly recommend it to others' – 'We wouldn't be doing these things if we hadn't got on the programme ... it far exceeded what I thought we'd achieve'. 'We have gained confidence in terms of forging ahead with big plans for our future.' 'The programme has strengthened our organisation; it is leading us to achieving what we have set out to do - be a centre of excellence for contemporary art in the North East'.

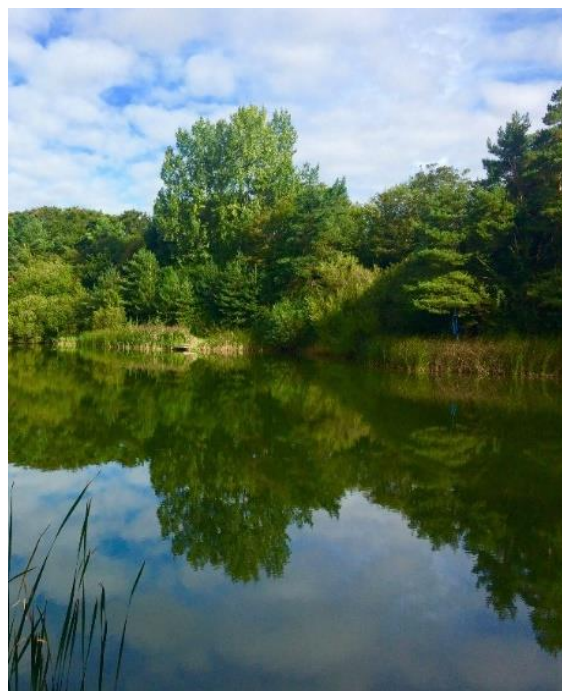
Case study: Becconsall – Lancashire’s Living Museum and Heritage Park formerly West Lancashire Heritage Park

**Community Interest Company
Lancashire**

Prosper North Cohort 2

Experience of Prosper North:

**Quality
Flexible
Inclusive**



West Lancashire Heritage Park – now known as *Becconsall* - Lancashire’s Living Museum - is set in 20 acres of a former brick works (a brownfield site with Biological Heritage status) and seeks to recreate the life and industry of the area. The organisation was established in 2018 and is currently entirely volunteer run. They were in the process of obtaining a NLHF start-up grant when COVID hit and the grant stream was removed. This has resulted in a very difficult 15 months as they have not been eligible for any funding support and yet were heavily impacted upon by the effects of COVID. They are fortunate to have a strong and supportive Board made up of cultural, business and educational members, with associates working pro-bono to support them, although they have identified gaps in their expertise, such as finance, retail and marketing.

They saw Prosper North as an opportunity to develop their business planning with business advice and funding support from outside the organisation, giving them a different perspective. They already had done a lot of benchmarking and had developed a sound understanding of the dynamics of living museums and also had workstreams for a Business Plan and Mission Statement. They had done quite a lot of work on these but were getting bogged down in the detail and realised external advice would be beneficial.

They worked well with their advisor, who has stayed on in a pro-bono capacity at the end of the project, and transformed their planning – ‘he helped us hammer out our business plan’ – and they now have an agile and robust business plan along with audience development and engagement plans and a mission statement, produced by the Board with advisor support.

Through this time they have also worked hard to strengthen their Board to increase the range of skills and diversity and have had some success in recruiting two new board members; one a young, newly qualified heritage consultant and the other a senior manager in one of the North West’s major museums. There are plans to further strengthen it by targeting identified gaps in their expertise, such as finance, retail and marketing.

As a new heritage business they have a high reliance on grant funding. They have approached the Key Fund, among other funders, and in April were successful in securing a £90,000 package of blended investment in their first phase development, which they hope will act as a shop window for the project.

They are also in discussion with the local authority for funding towards their visitor centre. They were unsuccessful in obtaining Cultural Recovery Funding and are now looking to access grants similar to the NLHF's 'Start-up' Grants, that would be used to support staffing costs in their establishment phase (including a part-time manager to pick up some of the heavy workload currently delivered by the volunteer Board members) and to commission more specialist consultancy support to deal with the natural environment of the site itself.

The Board were aware that to be successful needed good partnerships, and so they are building relationships across the area and sector, including National Museums Liverpool, Science Museum Group, Manchester. They feel that Prosper North has enabled them to engage more effectively with partners and with potential funders.

They particularly enjoyed the presentations at workshops by experts in the various fields such as legal, employment, intellectual property and website development.

As a result of a recommendation from Prosper North they have been working with Emily Sorrell, a designer working out of Cornwall, funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund to support the sector. They have worked on a full re-brand exercise and have taken delivery of a complete brand package that launches in June. They are very happy with the results – *'it's brilliant ... The way she presented it was masterly'*.

They gained a great deal from their contact with the wider Prosper North network, and received 'an incredible amount of support from the presenters and other partners'. They were able to chat and have free-ranging debates in webinars and have widened their networks and made useful contacts. It gave them more confidence in their own Board and its ability to take forward the project, as they saw others facing similar challenges and 'it put our moans into perspective'. The mix of heritage and cultural organisations in the cohort stimulated some ideas for a stronger cultural perspective in their concept; one way this is manifested being the introduction of a rustic amphitheatre within the site for small-scale amateur performances. They regret the ending of the project – 'it's a shame we can't carry on with it ... there was always something to look forward to every week'.

Case Study: Blaze Arts

<https://blazearts.co.uk/>
Charity
Lancashire

Prosper North Cohort 3

Experience of Prosper North:

Inspiring
Enriching
Relevant



Blaze is a youth-led charity which delivers high quality projects across North West England in a variety of settings, including museums and heritage sites. With a focus on developing young people's skills as leaders, producers, programmers and artists. Originating as a cultural legacy programme from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, young people take the lead at all levels of the organisation, from the board of Trustees to the Director, Project Coordinators and participants.

Its approach has evolved over recent years, including becoming a charity in 2019. The advert for Prosper North came at a pivotal point in its development. Being able to benefit from the meet ups, have their minds opened to different funding models such as social investment and, in particular, access to an external mentor allowed them to take a step back to plan and future proof.

Working together the two paid members of staff and two of the trustees were able to refresh and refocus the outdated business plan. They used the ModFin approach to confirm their mission and values, establish goals for the next 5 years and their theory of change, which in turn informed the programme activity. The facilitation by the Business Adviser was critical to this process. Their Adviser helped them to structure their thinking, holding a mirror up and reflecting back their ideas, bringing great energy and, importantly, held the space to allow the team to explore and develop their thinking in a constructive and supportive environment. This gave them the confidence to take an action-focussed approach – to try the plan for six months, then reflect and revisit it.

This business plan development took place during a concentrated period of change – including the various phases of the COVID-19 lockdown, when they were adapting their programmes and moving activity online and in the process of recruiting a new Director. Participating in Prosper North allowed Blaze to carve out the time for strategic thinking. The result was the ambition to position Blaze as a national organisation, and a thought leader in Youth led cultural co-production - with focussed short-, medium- and long-term goals, together with plans for how they will fund and achieve manageable and organic growth (including through traded income beyond grant funding). This clarity allowed them to strip back their activity and restored their key focus of youth voice, youth governance and young producer training.

Photographer: Rachel Bywater

Case Study: Green Croft Arts Ltd

www.greencroftonthewall.com
Company Ltd by Guarantee, Not for profit
Northumberland

Prosper North Cohort 2

Experience of Prosper North:

Relevant
Friendly
Lifeline



Amanda Drago and Kit Haigh are Green Croft Arts, a not-for-profit organisation offering arts, culture and wellbeing activities to rural communities and their visitors. They are based in an 18th century farmstead on Hadrian's Wall, on the border of Northumberland and Cumbria. Inspired by the landscape and heritage of the area, they are not only motivated to ensure rural communities have the same access to high quality arts activities and services as those in urban areas, but are keen to offer experiences for visitors. This is done by creating installations, and immersive experiences that engage people in a place or a space and offer activities that connect the mind with the body, with projects including yoga, music, and soundscapes.

Green Croft Arts participated in Prosper North to support them in developing their farmstead as a venue for their activities, in particular developing their Threshing Barn into an activity space and sound studio. Experienced and skilled arts professionals, they knew that the support they most needed was in developing a business plan to take forward their capital development in the challenging environment of a World Heritage Site, and were particularly drawn to Creative United for their national profile.

Early discussions with their advisor took place as the reality of COVID emerged and so focused on how to deliver amid the pandemic. Together they stabilised and focused the project by looking beyond the immediate crisis and towards the real opportunity that their project offered. The advisor's heritage and capital project expertise enabled Green Croft Arts to develop a business plan that includes the capital development of the barn and enable the organisation to be more financially sustainable.

Having now applied to Key Fund they have been assigned a business mentor who is supporting them through their application. His support has also given them a clear focus during lockdown. Having received outline planning permission they have advertised the contract for the building work, submitted their application for building regulations, and applied to Reach Fund in order to produce more detailed architectural drawings. Through their role in the Hadrian's Wall 1900 Festival Steering Group they are supporting the cultural tourism potential development of their immediate area with the delivery of a festival in 2022 to mark 1900 years since the building of Hadrian's Wall.

Each year 40,000 visitors pass by the farmstead as they walk the Hadrian's Wall Path, and Green Croft Arts will seek to engage with them, particular outside the peak tourist season. During lockdown they moved their work online – including the 'Move with Amanda' yoga and barre classes. They have begun to engage

with a family audience through the ACE-funded 'Collision and Conflict'- a geolocated soundwalk along the Wall featuring 9 sound installations that are triggered by GPS on visitors' devices.

Green Croft Arts are poised to realise their ambitions for the Threshing Barn and found their involvement in Prosper North to be really useful – 'we wouldn't have been in the position we are without it'.

Case Study: Guide Bridge Theatre

www.gbtheatre.co.uk
Company Ltd by Guarantee

Prosper North Cohort 3

Experience of Prosper North:

Relevant
Pragmatic
Focussed



Guide Bridge Theatre (GBT) is an entirely volunteer-run amateur theatre in Audenshaw on the edge of Ashton-under-Lyne. Founded in 1941 as a private members' club it became a company limited by guarantee in 2009 and currently has four directors. While the facilities of the theatre are of a high quality the organisation is 'in need of a reboot' to remain relevant to current and potential audiences.

The Theatre has developed beyond its amateur dramatic base to become a venue serving the local community. The Theatre produces 6 plays and a pantomime each year, and hosts a range of events from touring performances, through a weekly senior citizens tap class, to an active youth theatre group. It is seen as 'an essential community asset' by the local authority and was the recipient of a Queens Award for Voluntary Service in 2019.

The GBT Directors found Prosper North on Google and attended its launch at Blue Coat in Liverpool. When the Key Fund gave a presentation they realised 'it was right up our street' and had the potential to support the theatre in its aspirations to reboot. They were particularly looking for support, advice and encouragement in the development ideas of the Board, and to add business sense into the way they operated.

Experienced in business and culture, the directors found the ModFin model to be 'fascinating ... and extremely useful'. It confirmed their thinking that conventional bottom line and profit and loss accounting didn't give them the information they needed to run their cultural business, and it has influenced the production of their new business plan.

They appreciate that they 'need to develop the organisation if we are serious about rebooting' and so to drive forward the change needed, GBT's Articles of Association have been re-written and agreed. The theatre building and its potential will be managed by a team of Directors, with a Theatre Committee focusing on the productions. They are currently working on a new website, looking at membership categories, and seeking to recruit new directors with appropriate experience.

GBT has an ageing membership that is declining in numbers, and this poses a risk to the organisation's sustainability. Despite lockdown, a recruitment exercise has attracted 35 new people interested in being volunteers, and they are also working with the community support organisation 'Action Together' to

recruit more. As an organisation that is solely volunteer-run, they know that ultimately they will need to recruit a volunteer manager and introduce training.

The rebooting of the whole organisation ultimately depends on capital and revenue funding. Productions rarely make a profit and so GBT need to find other ways to increase resource in order to survive. They are working with Key Fund regarding support from the Northern Cultural Regeneration Fund to completely upgrade their kitchen, toilets, and the disabled access and parking. They have taken out a Government COVID 'bounce-back' loan, are engaging with small grant schemes, as well as looking at longer term grant/funding applications with support from Action Together Tameside.

Moving forward, GBT is looking at several projects to develop the business. Seeking to ensure more day-time use of the building they have agreed to weekly Slimming World sessions, alongside the development of work with 'Made By Mortals' a community participation organisation providing creative arts projects, learning, music drama for vulnerable adults, those not in education employment or training and people with mental and wider health issues. They are also working with the Joseph Rowntree Theatre in York, to share ideas, as well as experience of social investment and partnerships. GBT has also conducted extensive research into their audiences but have not been able to test it due to COVID.

GBT has been closed throughout COVID, but has used the time to develop their plans to reboot. They now have a roadmap in place to move forward that includes taster events from June to November, hopefully leading to their pantomime at the end of the year. All being well they will return to their normal season in 2022.

They valued the support and knowledge of their advisor, and while they found Prosper North more challenging due to COVID, it was nonetheless 'good, useful and valuable' in generating new ideas and confirming that 'the thinking we have is along the right lines'.

Case Study: Hatch (Incubating Arts Ltd)

<https://hatchprojects.org.uk/>
Community Interest Company
Leeds

Prosper North Cohort 3

Experience of Prosper North:

Informative
Useful
Inspiring



HATCH are Natalie Walton and Alison McIntyre, blending together their skills in art, education, project management and creative event organisation. They ‘establish and host events for communities to create, make and debate, with a collective interest in how art can make a real difference to people’s lives’. Their ethos and approach begins with consultation and ‘creates projects where everyone involved feels an ownership of what has been created and can see a legacy for themselves in the future of the project’.

They chose to engage with Prosper North support in order to rebalance their organisation after the major success of their WOVEN festival in Kirklees - ‘it was perfect timing’.

HATCH had burst onto the cultural scene of Yorkshire, establishing their new business alongside delivering WOVEN in 2019. It celebrated the innovation in textiles that made and continues to shape Kirklees through art, creativity and industry. Working with a range of communities, artists and businesses they delivered over 100 events from knitting, to dance, to science, to theatre and music, all telling the stories of the area and so creating a unique sense of place. They had been given a contract to deliver WOVEN to 2023 and so had a strong business base but wanted to ensure that they could respond to other opportunities and develop other projects within HATCH – in particular Art Doctors.

Working with their advisor they took the time to go on a journey, ‘as if building the business from scratch’ being reassured that ‘you’re never going to think it all out in advance... [&] the first five years is always reactive’ and that actually, what they were doing was right and is amazing!

From the basics of book-keeping and regular reporting to a new ModFin-inspired business plan, the new shape and thoughtful ethos of HATCH has emerged. They have recruited a pool of like-minded associates which gives them the time to think and add value to HATCH, and now invest 10-15% of any income into core funds, while supporting the creation of new partnerships, networks and initiatives. A new social media strategy enabled more targeted engagement and, exciting new ventures such as work around social prescribing mean higher visibility and connections beyond culture, while opening up new possibilities for targeted funding and greater sustainability.

Working throughout COVID-19, they maintained contact with their networks through new digital content, including videos such as the Art Doctors’ Lockdown Specials, online resources, workshops and talks for WOVEN and Art Brunch social sessions.

They took advantage of all the Prosper North support but particularly valued the 1:1 sessions they had with their Prosper North adviser, which gave them confidence to transform and strengthen their business, trust their skills and judgement, and take time in taking it forward.

‘It made us think differently about everything we are doing ... and reassured us we were getting it right.’

Case Study: Junction Arts

<https://junctionarts.org/>
Charity; Company Ltd by Guarantee
Chesterfield

Prosper North Cohort 3

Experience of Prosper North:

Helpful
Supportive
Transformative



Junction Arts is a participative arts charity which helps communities facing social barriers such as poverty, poor health, and low aspirations, to create a better future through the arts, through festivals, workshops, and events, giving people the opportunity to be creative, learn new skills and build stronger, healthier communities. It is led by Paul Steel with a small staff team.

Initially they signed up to Prosper North in order to investigate funding for a property purchase and to access business support and mentoring. The organisation was well established and in 2019 they had developed a list of long-term goals, including expansion and a property purchase. They were interested in the idea of social finance and in the long-term investment possible through Key Fund.

They joined the Prosper North programme in March 2020 as COVID-19 hit and by April their thinking had changed. They decided not to buy a building – ‘If we had bought the building it would have been huge risk in financial terms ... we survived last year well but would have struggled if we’d had a property’.

In discussions with their advisor, they decided to focus support on the development of an evaluation action plan to look at their impact, corporate partnerships and tools for a fundraising strategy.

Paul took advantage of a range of sessions and workshops, found some really useful and ‘took something from everything’ he attended. In particular, social enterprise, business planning and modelling, contracting and scenario planning which they built into the team (online) away day in 2020. While the reason for joining Prosper North had changed, they still gathered information on funding for future use.

He valued being part of the Prosper North network for its support - ‘it was good to have online meet-ups – it was useful and comforting to talk to people in the same situation’ - and he has made some useful contacts, and joined a festival organisers’ network run by one of them.

During 2020 they delivered all their work as outreach online – such as ‘Home Comforts’ a project supporting care home residents and isolated people. This enabled more people to access their work and so they plan to continue with a hybrid online and in person model in the future. Their first 2021 activity is planned for June.

Despite the challenges of COVID-19 changing Junction Arts aspirations for Prosper North, Paul is very positive about the scheme - 'I just want to say again how brilliant everyone was on Prosper North, keeping us all together and keeping a good programme going'

Photos – Bolsover Lantern Parade

Case Study: Norfolk Street Arts

www.norfolkstreetarts.com
Community Interest Company
Sunderland

Prosper North Cohort 3

Experience of Prosper North:

Reassuring
Relevant
Responsive



Founded in 2019, Norfolk Street Arts CIC (NSA) is a curator/artist-led community interest company supporting the development of artists and curators through facilitating spaces and mentoring, and permitting them to test and deliver creative practices. It is led by Vin Todd, supported by a small board and a co-director Mark Burns-Cassell. 'It is simple and small with not many funders, and its mission is strict and linear, so it's not too complicated – but it's part of a much more complicated picture'

NSA is one of a portfolio of creative vehicles in Sunderland which are directed and led by Vin and Mark, delivering a range of cultural outcomes from studio space to health and to exhibitions. This means that the support gained through Prosper North has benefitted a number of organisations and audiences. In particular facilitating the establishing of Marengo Estates, the company established to take forward the ambition of NSA and Vin.

NSA is committed to Sunderland and its regeneration through culture, and was looking to buy premises in the city centre, where they could run more public and curatorial projects post pandemic. They had identified the former Hills Book Shop which had originally opened in 1852, becoming a cultural institution in Sunderland for generations of readers and artists, before finally closing in 2006.

The Hills building covers 4600 square feet and will include a café, crafts shop, counselling rooms, artist studios, exhibition space, and community workshops with disabled access. NSA will move to a new home next to the café to attract 'an accidental audience by association.' They are working on partnerships with the Sunderland Business Improvement District and Sunderland Borough Council, and are generating interest from funders and the media.

With this vision/ambition in mind they had engaged with Prosper North which Vin says, 'showed us how the world works', 'provided reassurance that we were going in the right direction, and that what we were doing was OK'. 'Sunderland can be a silo' but their advisor was 'so knowledgeable and has seen it all before in Manchester' and gave them ideas and possibilities for moving forward, alongside business planning and modelling advice, financial problem solving, signposting research and links to real-world examples. 'There is so much groundwork to be done but we were reassured through the conversations ...helped to make informed decisions .. [and] .. in particular the permission to try new things and to make mistakes'.

After discussions with Key Fund, and working on the possibilities with their advisor, it was decided to set up a limited company – Marengo Estates - and to seek commercial funding from the bank. The result has been the bringing together a portfolio of funding large and small, from Nat West, through Sunderland University's Enterprise Place, to the Unlock programme, Energy Efficiency, Funding and NLHF, with other funding bids and projects planned. Achieving a diversity of funding is key to their planning. They have decided that all their match funding will emerge from their own earned income strategy in order to maintain their independence.

The place that the Hills Building has in the community has not been lost on the project, and they have secured a NLHF Community Heritage grant to interview people about what the building means to them historically and now. They will use the project and the engagement with people through their pop-up shop to understand the community aspirations for the building, and to inform their audience development.

Their current audiences tend to be in two blocks, up to thirty and over fifty, and so they are working on filling the gap between and also developing their student audience through building relationships with both Sunderland University and College. In the future they intend to grow their range of partners and funders, and widen the ecology of their project delivery.

Their energy, ambition and commitment is plain to see and they would encourage others to 'be open to new business adventures'.

Case Study: Norton Priory Museum and Gardens

www.nortonpriory.org
Charity and Company Ltd by Guarantee
Cheshire

Prosper North Cohort 3

Experience of Prosper North:

Inspiring
Knowledgeable
Connected



Norton Priory Museum & Gardens consider themselves one of the North West's best kept secrets. Hidden at the end of a modern business park it is home to the site of a medieval Priory and Abbey, a Tudor house, a Georgian mansion and walled garden, a museum, an archive and 42 acres of parkland. It is a company limited by guarantee which is managed by a board of Trustees, and led by Chief Executive, Rob Sanderson-Thomas.

Rob says that Prosper North project 'was highlighted by one of the Trustees, and was good timing for us.' 'We had already started evaluating our direction of travel as business'. 'We had become inward-looking ... and it offered a chance to give support to the wider staff team.' 'The link to a consultant mentor' and 'the webinars sounded really helpful for us'.

The organisation was quite strong going into COVID with the recent developments of a volunteer base and active budget management, but involvement in Prosper North has helped to transform their thinking. They have a new 'bolder' business plan and Rob feels he has a greater understanding of the business. It gave him the opportunity to listen to people from other parts of sector, 'it had become rare to have a conversation with people outside ... it was a useful sounding board ... and it was good not to feel like it's just me ... even just sharing that it was tough'. 'All our questions were always answered clearly, and it always felt like a safe space, never judgemental and supportive when speaking in front of other organisations'.

'I think it exceeded our expectations, if I'm honest. We'd heard good things about it, and its reputation was good, but it came fully formed ... and I didn't expect it to be fully formed – especially in COVID'

During COVID the site closed, most staff were furloughed, and contact with volunteer was maintained through Zoom. However, despite the challenges it raised, Rob says, 'the pandemic provided thinking space' and the organisation has been able to emerge stronger. They have strengthened their Board, including the 12th Baronet Brooke, a member of the family who used to own the Priory, and are looking at ways to increase diversity and to introduce a youth voice into their future planning. Despite the staff being furloughed, they have been able to benefit from the Prosper North learning since their return – in particular elements of the ModFin approach has been fed into their business planning and has been really

useful, especially in facilitating discussions on new ways of working, making the best use of all resources and being outward looking.

Norton has now opened the Grounds and welcoming people back for a reduced fee, and there is a plan for a phased return to full opening. The income generated has enabled them to pick up on projects that had paused during COVID, such as the restoration of the Rose Walk. They were one of the first to reopen in the area and Rob valued the discussion of opening with other Prosper North cohort members.

Rob points particularly at two new partnerships as examples of how Prosper North learning has directly strengthened Norton Priory's business: a new garden plant business on site, which gives the Priory new reach into a local market and sizeable and affluent audience; and a major partnership with 'A Place for Us' theatre company to use the outdoor theatre space to produce a series of high value shows, linked to Halton Borough of Culture 2021.

Moving forward, Norton Priory are discussing three new projects with funders, including Arts Council England. They are looking at an outdoor theatre space that will also be used for weddings, talks and picnics; a gallery development that will improve the quality of their exhibition space but also create a rentable venue; and a partnership with Liverpool University in keeping with the traditions of 'peace, body and soul' of an Augustinian priory. They feel that Prosper North created an environment that enabled them to develop these ideas, enabling them to think about partnerships, commercial activity and community, within an organisation that feels more joined up.

Much of their plans depend on the successful reopening of the site and the return of visitors, alongside grant support, with a greater emphasis on marketing. 'Prosper North has brought us new awareness and skills, but the reality of the post-vaccine world remains hard to predict.'

Photo: Christmas Concert 19.12.2020

Case Study: Our Big Picture Ltd

<https://ourbigpicture.co.uk/>
Company Ltd by Guarantee
North East Lincolnshire

Prosper North Cohort 2

Experience of Prosper North:

Supportive
Reflection
Options

our big picture



Our Big Picture is an arts and heritage social enterprise based in North East Lincolnshire, and led by Paula Dalton. They work with artists to deliver inclusive community projects that, 'enable everyone to take part in, experience, and enjoy art at its best, resulting in the collective exploration, learning, sharing, and shaping of our home.' They 'deliver positive experiences where nobody is excluded and bring new creative opportunities to the area.'

OBP applied to be part of the Prosper North programme in order to be supported in shaping their direction of travel. They were five years old and were concerned that they were moving away from their original artistic ideals and delivering projects that weren't uniquely theirs – 'we needed to think who we are and where we fit'. They also wanted to look at the potential of applying to become an ACE National Portfolio Organisation, and whether they should consider Capacity and Delivery Funding.

Before they could engage in any of that work, COVID hit. They lost almost £30k of business overnight (and many times more over the year). So, instead of focusing on the organisation's identity, the Prosper North project became about its survival. The Prosper North business advisor responded to the needs of the organisation, delivering support whether talking through challenges, being a critical friend reading website copy, delivering a mission and vision training session for senior managers, or general hand holding. - 'To have the mentor and prosper North programme at the start of lockdown was incredibly supportive, personally and for our business.' In particular it was their advice that persuaded OPB to apply for the initial emergency funding, which enabled them to develop the website and support the work on 'Our Haven', a local heritage project. Further tranches of support funding from ACE, National Lottery and the government ensured a manageable cash flow.

They were commissioned to produce a wide-ranging public artwork by the local authority, and learned how to deliver community engagement with art at a social distance in public spaces, and with individuals through craft bags. Working all through the pandemic, they didn't furlough any of their team, and have even recruited two new members of staff.

Moving on from COVID the market space OBP uses is closing and it is unlikely they will be offered temporary space in the new area. So, they are looking to buy a property in Grimsby and have attended Key Fund training sessions, with a view to obtaining finance. They have identified a short list of properties, and have been offered an Architectural Heritage Fund grant for a feasibility study on their preferred building. They are now looking strategically at where in the town they would like to locate

based on current and projected footfall and engagement potential. Paula has even found the time to take a National Arts Fundraising School course to support her and OBP's development.

OBP is now taking stock, and using what they learned through Prosper North to shape their business plan, which they aim to complete in June. They have decided that for the next five years at least, they are happy that they are still an arts and heritage social enterprise – 'It has been a challenging time but we have a clearer message and are focusing on what our local community and cultural needs are. We are planning the coming year with a clearer focus on how our business needs to be shaped and excited about new opportunities.'

Case Study: The Quilters Guild

www.quiltersguild.org.uk
Charity; Company Ltd by Guarantee
York

Prosper North Cohort I

Experience of Prosper North:

Enlightening
Beneficial
Systematic



The Quilters' Guild is the national membership organisation for people involved in patchwork and quilting. It is a registered charity and, although it has a Chief Executive and small staff team, the majority of its activities are led by member volunteers. This also extends to its trustee Board.

The Guild applied to Prosper North for a business adviser to work with the staff team and trustees, to prepare them for the next business planning round. The Chief Executive, Chris Gatman, has a strong business background but appreciated the need for external support – 'it is important not to become too insular'- and had found previous projects with a business consultant to be extremely useful.

The Prosper North advisor visited the Guild and engaged separately with both trustees and staff, asking specific questions about the business. Their responses have supported the creation of the new business plan and were used to inform the questions for a member and volunteer questionnaire that ran during 2020.

Chris attended a number of the Prosper North workshops but describes her 'light bulb moment' as being the IKIGAI modelling session and its values-based approach to purpose. - 'It helped me to see our organisation overall pictorially when we placed the individual cards - seeing where each of our activities fall in relation to each aspect of this model and enabling me to better express and share with the Trustees the central importance of our Museum Quilt Collection'.

The business plan for 2021/25 is nearing completion and has indeed placed collections at the centre of the Guild activity, with the three key strands being:

- *To ensure the future of the organisation in the short to medium term and to lay a strong foundation for the future.*
- *Provide services, education and advice that match the diverse needs and expectations of our members.*
- *Promote and protect our unique collection of historic and contemporary quilts, making them accessible to our members and the wider public via a range of engaging and informative mediums.*

During COVID the Guild were able to successfully apply for emergency funding and engage with their members remotely. They are now engaged in an ongoing conversation with their members and volunteers to foster a greater understanding, and confirm the organisation's direction of travel. They have identified the need to change internally, with a new website and a dedicated marketing / membership / recruitment team. It is expected that the changes will take 18 months to implement.

Case Study: Regeneration North East

<https://regenerationne.org>
Community Interest Company
Durham

Prosper North Cohort 3

Experience of Prosper North:

Focussing
Reassuring
Supportive



Regeneration NE CIC is a County Durham-based disability-led consultancy offering art as creative therapy around the north east, for people with physical disabilities or long term mental health issues. It is led by Gary Nicholson, who specialises in heritage and Kathryn Barnett, who is an artist.

They engaged with Prosper North to take their business to the next level, and were supported to focus their limited resources, and given the reassurance and confidence to pursue new business, sponsorship and earned income.

As part of the work with their Prosper North business adviser they reviewed what their specialisms were, concluding that they weren't just artists and heritage professionals but campaigners and advocates, able to educate people about their day-to-day work as disabled practitioners and advise not just about disability but about inclusion and access more widely. As a result, they were able to engage with organisations beyond the cultural sector, such as the Hartlepool Creative People and Places.

With support from their advisor, they were able to secure more than £100,000 funding during 2020, including £75,000 Round 1 Cultural Recovery Funding (CRF), and now have the confidence to consider the idea of becoming a NPO, look at a range of funding options and to look for the finance to obtain their own premises. Despite being turned down on a Community Asset Transfer for a new building, and not being successful with Round 2 CRF, they are still infectiously upbeat and seeking new opportunities.

When COVID hit Regeneration NE knew that they needed their work to engage with their audiences more than ever – 'we're good at being excluded, so we knew what they needed'. Despite shielding themselves, they continued through COVID, not merely keeping in constant touch with their networks via social media but by delivering online and practical cultural activity and information. They developed online exhibitions, distributed arts materials to those shielding, produced a heritage colouring book for care home residents (which in pilots proved really useful for those with Alzheimer's), created activity packs, supported online artists' residencies, ran quizzes, delivered digital training, developing their YouTube channel and audiences, and partnered with Sunderland and South Tyneside's Cultural Spring Creative People and Places programme to deliver the organisations first disability arts project.

In October they moved into a new flexible workspace and, when they were successful in gaining Round 1 Cultural Recovery Funding, such is their profile, that they were quoted in the regional press. Supported by the learning and confidence they gained from Prosper North they have revised their business plan and, in

May 2021 they delivered, *Nothing About Us Without Us*, a manifesto for inclusion in the Arts, which sees disability as an opportunity. They are now encouraged that once it is safe to do so they can grow their business further and expand into Teesside and beyond – ‘we’ll engage with anyone – never mind who’.

The online delivery of the workshops ensured that the sessions were accessible and particularly liked the smaller groups within the workshops where discussion was possible, particularly with organisations of a similar size. By far their most positive experience of Prosper North has been through the interaction with their business advisor. They were very approachable and had ‘the right attitude ... was a shoulder to cry on ... but knew when to give us a kick up the pants!’. Anything that they didn’t know, they would find out and, if the Directors doubted their ability the advisor ‘would give us a pep talk’. Prosper North has given them, the confidence to move forward with what they need for the business - ‘things we weren’t looking for’. They have always wanted to secure premises and, despite setbacks, they are confident that they will.

Case Study: Salford Community Leisure Ltd

<https://salfordcommunityleisure.co.uk>
Co-operative & Community Benefit Society
Salford

Prosper North Cohort 3

Experience of Prosper North:

Informative
Comprehensive
Transformative



Salford Community Leisure (SCL) is a Co-operative and Community Benefit Society with charitable status. It is responsible for the delivery of the leisure services to almost a quarter of a million people, including libraries, museums, community centres, sports centres and cafes on behalf of Salford Council.

It exists 'To enhance the lives of people through sport, leisure and cultural opportunities'. It consists of more than 60 venues, employs around 500 people and engages with over 3 million visits every year. It delivers its purpose through: improving health and wellbeing; increasing community involvement; developing education and skills; and enriching the environment. SCL runs two museums - Ordsall Hall and Salford Museum and Art Gallery – which operate independently of each other.

SCL participated in the original Prosper programme, focusing mainly on the Heritage sites and looking at weddings and operating costs, and they were keen to apply again for Prosper North. They were looking at taking a business-like approach to consolidating the practices and staffing at the museums, looking at how best to move them closer to together and to the parent organisation. Neither site has a business plan that reflects the realities of the service and current environment, and so SCL wanted to develop a consensus on joint priorities, both in terms of income and supporting goals. This would be particularly important post-COVID.

Salford is changing rapidly as a place. Massive residential development is attracting a whole new potential audience. SCL has engaged the Audience Agency to deliver a two-year research project to really understand how this change will affect the museum audiences over the next five years. They are now working on new audience development strategies at both museums in order to target the new residents as they move into the area, and to ensure they are able to respond to the opportunities offered by the development. SCL worked with the Prosper North business advisor to think strategically about the audiences, funders and on the developers of the areas. So much is happening that was not foreseen when they joined Prosper North, that is now aided by the workshops and the work they did with their advisor.

Working with their advisor they developed recommendations for a restructure, something new to SCL 'and a blue-print we never expected to use so soon.' Recent staff moves have offered the opportunity to begin an implementation of the ideas as an interim solution, take stock and to look at different options moving forward.

Despite the networking sessions moving online, they were still helpful and SCL were even able to link up with other local organisations from their cohort – Salford Victoria Theatre Trust and Stretford Public Hall.

As with all cultural services COVID has proved challenging for SCL. During lockdown there were fewer than c.90% of the 500 staff furloughed, with most furloughed part time in the summer. This meant more challenges for those remaining but also gave them the opportunity to think, plan and reimagine the service, focusing on the learning from Prosper North, not least with the support of Cultural Recovery funding of more than £170,000. The CRF funding has also helped SCL develop a range of other things such as online learning and digital engagement.

The development of the business plans is planned to begin in Autumn 2021, since SCL is starting from scratch, amid COVID and in changing internal and external environments.

They particularly appreciated the business modelling and ModFin sessions and have been able to deliver cut-down versions of them as training sessions for their team, including calculating the real cost of their many activities, and considering how critical they are to SCL's overall mission.

Case Study: Silsden Town Hall

<https://silsdentownhall.org.uk/>
Charitable Incorporate Organisation;
Company Ltd by Guarantee
Bradford

Prosper North Cohort I

Experience of Prosper North:

Supportive
Informative
Fun



Built in the 19th Century, Silsden Town Hall near Bradford is home to a 120-seat capacity ball room with stage and sprung dance floor. It also houses a community-run library. The Friends of Silsden Town Hall took on the building in 2019 through a community asset transfer, after £400,000 investment in the building from the Council. They receive a grant from the Town Council and generate their operational costs through room hire and events, they have also been successful in securing a range of other grants.

The Prosper North-facilitated business modelling and advice helped direct conversations and development really well. An away day to develop the business plan and future strategy was delayed due to coronavirus, but activities to develop thinking have been able to be completed in short spells at trustee meetings. Identifying and then finding solutions to the challenge of increasing the number of hours the hall was hired for across the day and week, including securing regular corporate users. This consolidated their ambition to be a multi-arts venue with music events, comedy and exhibitions in addition to the day-time community group meetings.

The various COVID-19 closures and social distancing requirements halted their plans almost at the outset and forced some rapid rethinking. A grant intended to refurbish the kitchen was repurposed to purchase live streaming equipment, which enabled existing groups to continue to use the building and open up new options for hybrid conferences and meetings. It has been a tough 12 months – but now things are able to reopen they are hopeful that they can once more turn to action, aiming to increase their turnover from £110,000 to c£150,000 and reduce their reliance on Town Council funding.

In the meantime, board development has continued – ensuring that the trustee body has the skills and understanding to work collaboratively, run a charity and reflect the breadth of their local community. This has included a shift to take a more strategic overview and employing staff to do day-to-day operational running. An intern programme is supporting marketing and £25,000 was secured from Key Fund to employ a managing director to drive the changes forward.

Their business mentor was fantastic, she had wealth of experience in arts, really understood their situation and helped generate really good ideas. These included increasing income throughout the day through writers groups or an art exhibition to help drive footfall. Discussions included focussing on return, rather than turnover – recognising that a higher quality band might cost more, but would be more likely to sell out, and exploring additional income that could be earned at smaller events – such as raffles or other entertainment. Equally useful were the meet ups, which allowed them to share experience and potential solutions with other programme participants.

Case Study: Watershed Arts

www.thewatershed.org.uk
Company Ltd by Guarantee
Kirklees

Prosper North Cohort 3



The Watershed Workshops was originally a weaving shed. It has been fully refurbished and is now a fully accessible participatory arts space, boasting an activity studio, workshop, meeting spaces, multi-sensory room and kitchen. It is home to three long-standing arts organisations, known together as the 'Watershed Arts Practice' (WAP), who have steered the development of the centre and produced the majority of the community arts programming.

'The opportunity to participate in the Prosper North programme came at a pivotal moment for The Watershed'. One of the core companies will be moving out during the summer of 2021 which, alongside the closure due to COVID gave the Trust an opportunity, 'working with the remaining resident groups, to review and refocus the participatory arts programme on offer'.

Jan reported that 'Participating in the workshops and sessions gave me the opportunity and time to focus on the future needs and potential of The Watershed.'

She found the Business Modelling the most interesting. It enabled her to look at the purpose, mission and vision of the organisation, produce a simple business plan – a statement of intent – saying 'This is what we're about and this is where we want to get to', and they have used it as an advocacy document to send to people, 're-establishing relationships and reputation and introducing The Watershed to new and potential funders, partners artists and volunteers.'

Working with their business advisor proved particularly valuable, with listening, talking, signposting, advice and challenge that helped shape thinking and give her the confidence to put it into practice.

They worked together on five areas:

- Stakeholder mapping and partnership development – establishing a group of critical friends such as Slung Low, Huddersfield Literature Festival, Creation Centre 101 in Newbury;
- Board development – setting up 3 task and finish groups – fundraising, community engagement and wellbeing - to help identify the strength and gaps in Board skills and write job descriptions for future members. While initially existing Board members feared they would not be able to keep up with the change they have now realised they still have a great deal to contribute, and it has 'Given the Board a new lease of life';
- A building audit – 'Looking at the building with fresh eyes' they have developed plans to refurbish and redevelop it, with the intention of gaining the maximum output from the building. They are looking at developments to the building that would make it greener and fully accessible, including

solar panels, a new heating system, and a lift. In addition, they will install a soft play area/studio and a creation centre workshop in the basement, alongside sinks and toilets. They are speaking to the Key Fund about an application;

- Staffing – creating a two-year Creative Producer for Community Participation post to deliver their aspirations. They will be looking at an ACE grant to take this forward; and
- Sustainability - they have looked at the financial viability and longer-term cash flow for the organisation, and while they do not have the answers yet, they understand much more about their business and their assets.

The Watershed Board has particularly valued working with their advisor, who has helped them to understand their business and taken them on a journey to improvement, sustainability and exciting new areas of work. They would very much like to work with their advisor again in the future.

Case Study: West Cheshire Museums

<https://westcheshiremuseums.co.uk/>

Local Authority

Cheshire West and Chester

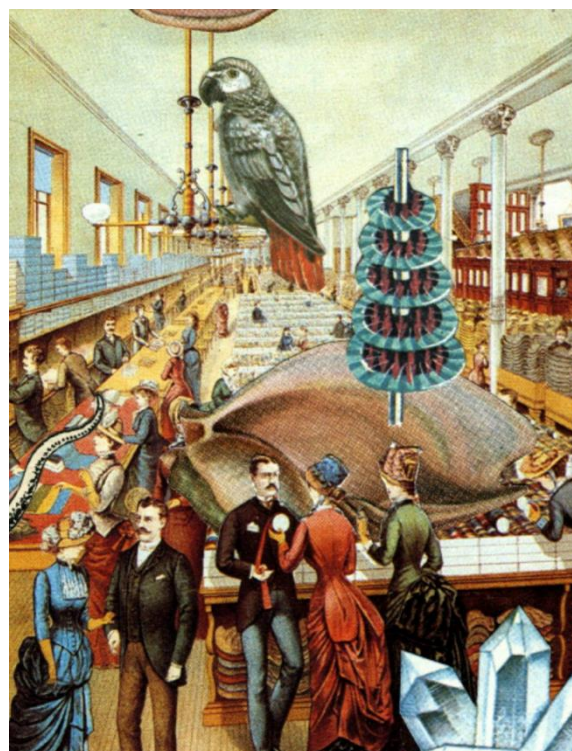
Prosper North Cohort I

Experience of Prosper North:

Transformative

Supportive

Consultative



West Cheshire Museums manages Chester History and Heritage; Weaver Hall Museum and Workhouse; Stretton Watermill; Lion Saltworks; and Grosvenor Museum. These diverse group of local museums and their collections cover a huge slice of Cheshire's history and tell the stories of the area's people and places, from prehistoric times to the present day.

Their ambition is to inspire their community and visitors to discover, explore and enjoy West Cheshire's rich heritage, culture and history by providing a fun, engaging and memorable visitor experience through the conservation and interpretation of the collections and buildings in our care.

Within the local authority, the museum team is small, long-standing and often stretched to deliver. They are trying to modernise the service and are looking at their skills gap in areas such as technology, income generation and marketing through the 'Curating Change' project. Large established services, such as the museum often prove are notoriously complex to adapt their direction of travel and managing change has been likened to steering a large ship.

Richard Hall is the Development and Partnerships Officer (Cultural Services) for West Cheshire Museums, a role that is designed to seek out opportunities and move the business forward. He attended several sessions and disseminated his learning among other team members and managers. 'All the sessions were excellent, but my lightbulb moment was the in-depth business planning in Bolton'. He could see both internal and external opportunities emerging from this session. He particularly benefitted from interaction with other people in the cohort who were experiencing similar challenges and willing to share their learning. He commented that the people who led sessions were very knowledgeable and had a genuine interest in helping the participants. Due to the size of the groups they were able to adapt the sessions to suit the needs of the participants.

As a result of the business planning sessions and as part of an on-going buildings and staffing review, they are looking to rewrite both their five-year business and marketing plans, together with reviewing and integrating the retail and merchandising, and developing an online shop.

Building on the learning from Prosper North, they are now looking at wide range external partners as long-term relationships rather than one offs. These include numerous small community partnerships linked to museums, CICs delivering education, catering and training, Marketing Cheshire to get the message out and the Bank of America, who are giving advice on customer relationship management.

Richard gained a great deal from his involvement in Prosper North. It gave him the confidence to take forward his role, support the change process, develop thinking around the ambitions for his service within the authority and the community, and make the work with partners a reality. 'Maybe I steered the ship just a degree.'

Appendix A: Applied theory of change model

Rationale/Objective	Activity	Output	Outcome	Impact
<p>Build investment pipeline of eligible and interested arts and cultural organisations & enterprises</p> <p>Community arts and cultural organisations in the North are making use of NCRF investment</p> <p>Local communities are more engaged with their local arts and cultural organisations</p> <p>Arts and cultural organisations and SMEs are more resilient</p> <p>NCRF investment unlocks additional investment into the arts and cultural organisations</p>	<p>£249,400 from National Lottery Heritage Fund</p> <p>10 outreach and awareness raising events</p> <p>Enterprise and investment readiness support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1:1 advice • Workshops • Webinars • Meet ups <p>Adaption of programme to COVID environment</p> <p>Client relationship management via dedicated programme manager</p> <p>Marketing and</p>	<p>556 cultural heritage organisations in the target Northern LEP regions are reached by programme</p> <p>221 applications received</p> <p>86 organisations supported in the programme</p> <p>77 diagnostic reports created</p> <p>667 hours 1:1 support provided</p> <p>105.5 hours of group learning provided (34 workshops, webinars and networking events)</p> <p>4 NCRF investment deals made (a further 5 in immediate pipeline)</p>	<p>Cultural heritage organisations understand the support available, its value and benefits 60% had had, or intended to have a conversation with Key Fund. 95% of respondents would invest in business support in the future.</p> <p>Organisations improve their approaches to sustainable enterprise: 85% Grown or diversified your market / audiences; 52% Started trading or grown your trading capacity; 48% plan to diversify your income streams, ie through trading; 47% plan to Introduce or increase earned / sales income</p> <p>Business planning and finance skills improved: 80% increased</p>	<p>Given the disruption of COVID-19 and the fundamental nature of the planned business improvements it is too early to accurately ascertain impact.</p> <p>However, conversations indicate positive direction of travel towards the following impacts:</p> <p>Arts and cultural organisations more likely to actively seek social investment</p> <p>Increase understanding of needs and impact of cultural heritage sector in communities across the North</p>

	<p>communications including press release; social media; programme website www.creativeunited.org.uk/services/prospernorth/</p> <p>Data monitoring and evaluation commissioned</p> <p>Dissemination of learning to the sector</p>	<p>16 COVID-19 Recovery plans created (additional output)</p> <p>Survey of all organisations engaged with and supported 58% response rate. See Appendix C</p> <p>End of programme evaluation report delivered</p>	<p>business skills and confidence</p> <p>Organisations can better articulate, measure and demonstrate their social and community impacts 53% have identified where they make a difference within their communities; A further 58% intend to create an impact measurement plan to demonstrate where they make a difference in their community.</p> <p>NCRF investment is secured and used within organisation in the most optimum way to improve resilience, community impact and cultural outputs. A pipeline for NCRF was created. 4 secured loans; grants were secured. NB the pipeline lengthened due to COVID lockdowns making normal models of trading / income generation unfeasible.</p> <p>Additional headline outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased confidence • Increased recognition of cultural heritage (33%) • New partners (30%) • Opportunities created for local talent or workforce development (30%) 	<p>The focus on and championing of cultural heritage organisations in the North increases community engagement and participation</p> <p>Cultural heritage sector in the North is more resilient and able to adapt to change and new opportunities</p> <p>Organisations use NCRF funds to lever further investment</p>
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Appendix B: Participating organisations

Cohort 1		LEP Area	
1.	Artlink Hull	Hull & East Yorkshire	artlinkhull.co.uk
2.	Annapurna Indian Dance	Leeds City Region	annapurnadance.com
3.	Bright Box Makerspace	Sheffield City Region	brightboxmakerspace.com
4.	Capacity Buildings	Hull & East Yorkshire	capacitybuildings.org.uk
5.	Cartwheel Arts	Greater Manchester	cartwheelarts.org.uk
6.	Friends of Birley Spa	Sheffield City Region	friendsofbirleyspa.org
7.	Friends of Silsden Town Hall	Leeds City Region	silsdentownhall.org.uk
8.	Gawthorpe Textiles Collection	Lancashire	gawthorpetextiles.org.uk
9.	Homotopia	Liverpool City Region	homotopia.net
10.	KensingtonVision CIC	Liverpool City Region	
11.	Lancashire Mining Museum	Greater Manchester	lancashireminingmuseum.org
12.	Multicultural Cumbria	Cumbria	mcc1.org.uk
13.	Museum of RAF Firefighting	Hull & East Yorkshire	firemuseum.uk
14.	People's History Museum	Greater Manchester	phm.org.uk
15.	Place Education CIC T/A PLACED	Liverpool City Region	placed.org.uk
16.	Re:Source Blackburn	Lancashire	exchangeblackburn.org.uk
17.	South Square Centre	Leeds City Region	southsquarecentre.co.uk
18.	Sunderland Maritime Heritage	North East	
19.	The Culture House Ltd	Hull & East Yorkshire	theculturehouse.co.uk
20.	The Joseph Rowntree Theatre Ltd	York and North Yorkshire	josephrowntreetheatre.co.uk
21.	The Met (Bury Metropolitan	Greater Manchester	themet.org.uk
22.	The Modernist Society CIC	Greater Manchester	modernist-society.org
23.	The Old School	Cheshire and Warrington	fairfieldhowley.co.uk
24.	The Pankhurst Trust	Greater Manchester	pankhursttrust.org
25.	The Quilters' Guild of the British Isles	York and North Yorkshire	quiltersguild.org.uk
26.	West Cheshire Museums	Cheshire and Warrington	westcheshiremuseums.co.uk
Cohort 2		LEP Area	
1.	Art Gene Ltd	Cumbria	art-gene.co.uk/
2.	Artworks Creative Communities	Leeds City Region	artworkscreative.org.uk
3.	Ashton Empire and Hippodrome	Greater Manchester	
4.	CADS South Yorkshire	Sheffield City Region	theabbeydalepicturehouse.com
5.	Cloth Cat	Leeds City Region	clothcatleeds.org.uk/
6.	Dingy Butterflies CIC	North East	dingybutterflies.org/
7.	Eskdale Mill & Heritage Trust	Cumbria	eskdalemill.co.uk/
8.	Fusilier Museum & Learning Centre	Greater Manchester	fusiliermuseum.com
9.	Green Croft Arts	North East	greencroftonthewall.com
10.	Grimsby Minster	Humber**	grimsbyminster.com
11.	Haarlem Artspace CIC	Sheffield City Region	haarlemartspace.co.uk
12.	Handmade Parade	Leeds City Region	handmadeparade.co.uk/

13.	Hexham Book Festival CIC	North East	hexhambookfestival.co.uk
14.	Huddersfield Literature Festival	Leeds City Region	huddlifest.org.uk
15.	Junction Arts	Sheffield City Region*	junctionarts.org
16.	Live Site Project	Leeds City Region	livesiteproject.com/
17.	Ouseburn Trust	North East	ouseburntrust.org.uk/
18.	Sheffield Civic Trust	Sheffield City Region	sheffieldhods.com
19.	The Auxiliary Project Space	Tees Valley	theauxiliary.co.uk
20.	The Craft Centre and Design Gallery	Leeds City Region	craftcentre-leeds.co.uk
21.	Theatre Delicatessen Ltd	Sheffield City Region	theatredeli.co.uk/sheffield
22.	They Eat Culture	Lancashire	theyeatculture.org
23.	Tyne & Wear Building Preservation Trust	North East	twbpt.org.uk
24.	Utopia Theatre Limited	Sheffield City Region	utopiatheatre.co.uk/
25.	West Lancashire Heritage Park	Lancashire	-
26.	West Yorkshire Print Workshop	Leeds City Region	wypw.org
27.	Whippet Up CIC	Tees Valley	whippetup.org.uk
28.	Woodside Area CIC	Liverpool City Region	woodsideferryvillage.co.uk
29.	Yorkshire Museums Trust (YMT)	York and North Yorkshire	yorkmuseumstrust.org.uk
30.	Theatre Royal Wakefield	Leeds City Region	theatreroyalwakefield.co.uk/
31.	Wirral Museums Service	Lancashire	williamsonartgallery.org & thebirkenheadpriory.org

Cohort 3		LEP Area	
1.	About Time Dance Company	Lancashire	abouttimedancecompany.co.uk
2.	Barnsley Museums	Sheffield City Region	barnsley-museums.com
3.	Beck Isle Museum	Hull and East Yorkshire	beckislemuseum.org.uk
4.	Blaze Arts	Lancashire	blazearts.co.uk
5.	Calderdale Industrial Museum	Leeds City Region	calderdaleindustrial.co.uk
6.	Chester Cathedral	Cheshire and Warrington	chestercathedral.com
7.	Chetham's Library	Greater Manchester	chethams.org.uk
8.	East Leeds Project	Leeds City Region	eastleedsproject.org
9.	Friends of Stretford Public Hall	Greater Manchester	stretfordpublichall.org.uk
10.	Guide Bridge Theatre Ltd	Greater Manchester	gbtheatre.co.uk
11.	HATCH	Leeds City Region	hatchprojects.org.uk
12.	Healthy Arts	Greater Manchester	healthyarts.org.uk
13.	Historic Motor & Sail LLC	Humber**	
14.	Kapow - Dance Circus Theatre CIC	Greater Manchester	kapowdance.co.uk
15.	Kirkgate Arts	Cumbria	kirkgatearts.org.uk
16.	Long Division CIC	Leeds City Region	longdivision.org
17.	Minerva Arts	Cheshire and Warrington	minervaarts.com
18.	Norfolk Street Arts CIC	North East	norfolkstreetarts.com
19.	Northern Quarter Huddersfield	Leeds City Region	spiraspaces.wixsite.com/northernquarter
20.	Norton Priory Museum Trust Ltd	Cheshire and Warrington	nortonpriory.org
21.	Regeneration NE CIC	North East	-
22.	Rural Arts	York and North Yorkshire	ruralarts.org
23.	Salford Community Leisure Limited	Greater Manchester	salfordcommunityleisure.co.uk

24.	Salford Victoria Theatre Trust	Greater Manchester	salfordvictoria.co.uk
25.	Senhouse Roman Museum	Cumbria	senhousemuseum.co.uk
26.	Tees Music Alliance	Tees Valley	teesmusicalliance.org.uk
27.	The Beacon Museum	Cumbria	thebeacon-whitehaven.co.uk
28.	The Foundry at Victoria Hall	Sheffield City Region	victoriahallsheffield.org
29.	The Portico Library and Newsroom	Greater Manchester	theportico.org.uk
30.	Tribe Arts	Leeds City Region	tribearts.co.uk
31.	Watershed Workshops	Leeds City Region	thewatershed.org.uk
32.	Wirral Festival of Firsts	Liverpool City Region	wirralfestivaloffirsts.org.uk

* At the time of application Chesterfield was part of two LEPs. Derby Derbyshire Nottingham Nottinghamshire (D2N2) LEP and Sheffield City Region. As a result of review it is no longer part of Sheffield, and just a member of D2N2.

** Humber LEP has now changed to Hull and East Riding LEP and Greater Lincolnshire LEP. These two organisations would now fall under the Greater Lincolnshire LEP.

Appendix C: Survey Data

Survey Response

The survey response rate was 58%: 60 of 89 participants.

Engagement with programme

Did you use all 8 hours 1:1 business support?

69% Yes

10% Will complete 8 (or more) hours by end of March 2021

21% No

Reasons the 21% gave for non completion were:

COVID-19 – survival, hiatus or change of plans (7)

- We've got an hour remaining (I think) but Covid-19 got in the way!!
- Our intention when applying to the programme was to do an options appraisal on applying for funding to re-design and transform the loft at the [...] into a gig and multi-purpose venue. Then to assess the partnership arrangements for the four organisations working at the [...]. The first step of this is not currently viable - the businesses and organisations are currently trying to navigate through survival of the pandemic and have been adapting their delivery models. Expansion into a venue, which would mean sourcing high levels of grant or loan funding, is no longer high on the agenda particularly as many other gig venues are facing considerable risks and their futures are in doubt. Therefore, the requirement for advice and support to achieve this ambition is not a priority for us and our partners.
- Due to COVID we were unable to engage in any meaningful way. This was completely on our side, we had reduced staffing and crisis fundraising and management had to come first. I was really looking forward to engaging but did not have the time or the head space to do so.
- We put our sessions on hold while we waited for guidance to come from government about re-opening, retail and catering. We have restarted them as we move towards re-opening.
- Due to C 19 pandemic nothing has been as expected therefore advice and support has been focussed on crisis management, we intend to use our remaining time at a late date
- I couldn't really think what to use the hours for, The position of our business was in flux and I (only staff member) was on some level of furlough throughout the process. A lot of the time period was taken up completing funding applications and awaiting their results.
- We are aiming to by the end of April. Several key staff were furloughed following the lockdown after Christmas, and we did not have the capacity to arrange/attend meetings.

Changing circumstances (2)

- [...] underwent a transitional period, appointing a new director and we felt it would be best to utilise the remaining hours with the new director in post so they can input to the [...] business plan.
- We came to the end of the programme and reviewed what we had managed to do and decided that, due to my capacity issues, I was really still on the journey that we had set and there was no need to hold another session for the sake of it. More than happy with what has come out of the sessions I have had with [Business Advisor] so no need to be tied to a number.

Competing demands (2)

- We delayed the beginning of this as we had two other consultancies already happening (Audience development and Retail) and we didn't want them all to crash into each other. Along with other business this meant we hadn't the time to use all the available sessions before February.
- Due to receiving funding for a project that had to be delivered in February and March, my capacity to focus on Prosper North was limited during the last couple of months.

Not useful (1)

- We didn't find the support being offered helpful. We don't think it was the best fit for our needs at the time or it wasn't obvious what skills the person had - I'm sure they had them, we just couldn't gain a concrete understanding of how they matched our business needs at the time.

Changes at Prosper North (1)

- Our business support consultant pulled out of Prosper North to take up full time employment - handover is currently taking place - the support has been good - but handover is time consuming
Sustainability and enterprise actions taken as a result of the Prosper North programme:

Benefits and impact

	Done %	Planned %
Sustainability and enterprise		
Grown or diversified your market / audiences	12	73
Gained new partners	30	47
Started trading or grown your trading capacity	15	37
Identified where you make a difference in your communities	53	28
Increased engagement with your community	28	58
Increased recognition of our cultural heritage	33	42
Safeguarded our cultural heritage	22	38
Diversified your workforce (incl volunteers)	18	45
Safeguarded jobs	20	13
Employed more people	13	33
Offered more opportunities for performances/exhibitions &c from local artists	22	42
Created opportunities for local talent or workforce development	30	47
Created an impact measurement plan to demonstrate where you make a difference in your community	17	58

	Done %	Planned %
Business planning and finance skills or practices		
Restarted your business in a sustainable way, transitioning out of COVID-19 lockdown	15	23
Rebuilt your business operations in a sustainable way, post COVID-19	12	40
Created or strengthened your business plan	50	42
Strengthened your cash flow forecast	38	37
Increased your business skills and confidence	80	13
Developed or reviewed your mission statement	53	25
Increased your learning and participation activities	30	45
Improved the accessibility of your site / services	13	52

	Done %	Planned %
Diversification of income		
Secured any COVID-19-related grants or loans?	32	13
Diversified your income streams, ie through trading	18	48
Introduced or increased earned / sales income	17	47
Secured a new funder	30	40
Had a conversation with the Key Fund about applying to the NCRF	32	28
Approached any social investors or lenders	20	25
Prepared for investment in your business	15	37

Other achievements and plans

- We asked for an external advisor to work with the staff and trustee body in preparation for the next business planning round. [...] visited our premises and met with both groups separately to tease out of them answers to specific questions about the business. The responses will inform the business plan and will also inform some of the questions we are developing for a member and volunteer questionnaire. As [...] what was really useful for me personally was the IKIGA! modelling as it helped me to see our organisation overall pictorially when we placed the individual cards - seeing where each of our activities fall in relation to each aspect of this model and enabling me to better express and share with the Trustees the central importance of our [...] Collection. This is a piece of work that I hope to build on with the trustees prior to developing the final business plan towards the end of 2020.
- Analysis of money-making and loss-making operations allowed us to rethink our business and understand the urgent need to diversification of income. We re-wrote a 80 page business plan to become just a 5 page document, and made it more applicable to funders and partners.
- We want to develop new trading activities and increase income generation by exploring options to repurpose our building. We are looking at ways of supporting development activities to help us appraise our options. This will lay a foundation for [...] to enhance our facilities and services to meet the needs of a growing and more diverse audience, whilst creating new income streams to increase our financial resilience. Our aim is to reduce reliance on the amount of core funding we need to support our overheads, in what is an ever more challenging funding climate. Through working with Prosper north and [...] we have developed strategy to address this by creating a more entrepreneurial element to our activities, particularly regarding the medium to longer-term purpose of our building. [...] is in the advantageous position of owning our own building and although it is a major business asset, it is also over 12 years since any updates have been made to it. As our business plan and operating environment have both evolved over this time, the building does not currently support our function very well. There is some level of redundancy in rooms with under-utilised spaces, and some areas that are not well suited to purpose.
- Through the support received we have strengthened our business plan and developed greater clarity of the priorities for growing income streams. This has enabled us to identify areas where further support is needed both in terms of expertise and funding. We are currently seeking funding to support creation of a dedicated commercial post, access consultant support and build trading activity. We are also planning to establish a trading arm to drive this activity forward for the future.
- As our building is in dire need of repair, we have been limited to what we can do, particularly regarding fundraising or indeed implementing any sort of business plan. We have however held showcasing events, raising awareness and interest in the site and its historical importance and value as a unique piece cultural heritage. This has worked to provide validity to our business plan in the long term, and helps towards our application for funding to restore the building.
- We have introduced a 'membership scheme' to secure regular income (at low cost) and 'buy in' to the project from supporters. We are focusing on growing the subscriber base for our quarterly magazine. We are reorganising our web shop to encourage additional sales through bundles and other project links. A stronger focus on marketing. We are considering business plan in particular targets for growth. We have made an application to the Northern Cultural Regeneration Fund.
- As a result of our business planning sessions we are looking to rewrite both our five year business and marketing plans. We will also be reviewing our retail offer across all sites and adopting a more integrated approach to merchandising including setting up an online museums shop.
- Due to a situation beyond our control it was impossible to take full advantage of the programme. The best outcome for us was the 1:1 engagement with our business manager Jo. She really tried hard to help us survive. Sadly, nothing has really come out of it despite her saying we, as a group, had clearly fallen through the cracks! We hope to take on some of her ideas in the future.
- We are working towards major capital re-development and as part of this are looking at our business plan for the next 5-7 years. As the first stage in this process, we will be completing a detailed feasibility study.
- From the first business modelling workshop, we have a better understanding of our business activity and how we can be more focused. From this we created a business plan with 1, 3 and 5 year goals

and an operating plan for year 1. This has helped us understand when we should hire, close our venue and make contact with key partners.

- We have developed a new project which would improve our financial security as well as developing a new project which would create new job and opportunities in our community.
- Through [...] we have thought carefully about the next year and made the necessary adjustments and additions to our plans. We have taken advantage of a loan from GMCVO and considered our accounting system again.
- We had planned an away day to develop the business plan and future strategy but that is most likely going to be delayed due to the coronavirus. We are collecting more data about our service users. We have started an intern programme to support our marketing and PR manager.
- The 1-2-1 support encouraged us to focus and be clear about our priorities, and to consider how to communicate these. It supported us in developing our own solutions to supported growth - so rather than a Board, we're running events for new markets.
- [...] have been able to take a step back from day-to-day operations to explore commercial opportunities and growth potential. As a result of Prosper North, we have secured a Northern Regeneration Enterprise Fund grant, developed relationships across the sector and with social investors, and are much better equipped to develop our Trading Co business plan. We are planning to increase self-earned income by 100K over the next few years. Our consultant was very supportive and informed.
- We are just putting together a large NLHF bid up to £250k to increase our volunteering, make the building more accessible and installing better services and employing 2 more part time staff. The IKIGAI model helped to find which areas we can impact and are impacting and were able to focus on those better.
- Apologies but due to global crisis this will be brief and please see previous answer: revised mission statement; updated business plan; new way of thinking about our approach; reported in detail via 1-2-1 coach
- We have developed a new business plan, vision and a devised timescales/targets for our objectives over the next three years. We have redeveloped our board of trustees to ensure we have the right individuals (after a skills matrix) and created sub-committee groups to utilise individual's skills, knowledge and experience. We have increased the number of opportunities for artists to create and exhibit work. We have reviewed and implemented revised hire charges and set in place new agreements for new and existing hirers. We are planning to secure additional funding to help develop staff structure, building refurbishments and projects that specifically meet the needs of our community.
- this has been amazing, amazing support, amazing ideas, amazing to be part of a network. I've found it hard, inspirational and ultimately rewarding. We are in a much better place now. Although Covid-19 has got in the way a bit!!
- We have improved our business skills and our approach to business planning. We have increased our awareness of where value lies in our undertaking. The session on Intellectual Property was useful here. We have benefited from the 1:1 contact with business advisor. We have benefited from the networking opportunities.
- 1 We have identified all of our activities and assessed them using the financial planning tools provided in the workshop which has helped us to plan and prioritise work going forward. We are about to hold meetings across the organisation to plan further
2 We have applied for funding to develop a new area of work - a Repair and Recycle workshop to train volunteers, improve their confidence and mental health and repair and sell musical equipment online.
3 We are in discussion with a brewery to develop a [...] branded beer that supports the charity
- The Prosper North scheme has helped us to focus on business strategy, resilience and planning. In particular we have looked at ways to improve our financial resilience, which has helped us to update our 3-Year Sustainability Plan with specific measures to follow. These are both income generating and ways to save money. It also helped us to think about the customer journey and how to build audiences.
- Unfortunately we have not been able to achieve anything as we have not been able to engage in the programme
- We have successfully applied for ACE Emergency funding to develop a creative project working with 10 local artists to support local communities and organisations. A part of this funding is towards developing the organisation post lockdown and to increase accessibility, audience development and diversify and increase the board, volunteers and participants. It has enabled us to rethink the

direction of the business and consider what we need to go forward through the development of a long term plan. This has all been supported by our Prosper North mentor.

- We: Re-wrote our vision and mission statement; Developed a strategic plan; Started a process of governance development and recruitment (ongoing), including board profiling and skills audit Created Terms of Reference for the board. Planning: Revitalised and larger board with developed skills; New income streams; More online and digital working; Organisational development programme, including rebranding and investment in fundraising
- We have streamlined our retail outlet to make it more cost effective. We have planned additional income streams that support existing and emergent local artists and makers; including wall space for selling exhibitions and plans to organise funders/business support events for the sector. We have reviewed our mission statement and are developing our income strategy.
- We are developing our corporate partnerships plan. We still have 4.5 hrs of mentoring time which is planned for the remainder of September and October to look at Corporate Partnerships and some more tools for a fundraising strategy. The business development workshops which looked at emerging business plans were very useful during this time.
- Prosper North have helped us create the draft of a new business plan - but this is at a very early stage. It has helped us explore potential new ways of working by marketing what we deliver as a training programme
- The programme has enabled us to have structured guided time with and without a mentor which we would not have prioritised. This has enabled us to write out business plan which includes the capital development of the barn to enable us to be more financially sustainable. We have applied to Key Fund and have been assigned a business mentor who is supporting our application. It also enabled us to have a focus during lockdown particularly financially.
- In response to the COVID-19 restrictions and lockdown we secured a digital grant from Historic England to enable us to translate our current offers and develop new ones to virtual platforms. These are just about to go live.
- [...] is awaiting the outcome of a bid to Arts Council England Culture Recovery Fund, if we are successful with this we will be able to programme a limited Festival in 2020 with live screened events and C19 secure measures which should in turn bring us in a Box Office income. If not we will deliver our Young People's Festival - for which we have funding- in May 2021 and following that the business will down size and possibly close.
We are actively looking for other funding support and planning alternative fund raising strategies to avoid this outcome.
- We have gained confidence in terms of forging ahead with big plans for our future. We have refocused on our mission statement and business plan, and are looking forward to being more sustainable, without having so much emphasis or need for public funding. We are planning on buying/developing a commercial space for our own use.
- Due to COVID19 our allocated time has only just started. As part of the process we are looking at our Vision, Mission and Values with a view continuing the programme via our own budgets looking at a full whole of organisation reorganisation.
- tailored business management strategies and tools to support more sustainable future and aid post COVID recovery
- To have the mentor and prosper North programme at the start of lockdown was incredibly supportive, personally and for our business. The practical advice from our mentor was good quality, realistic and achievable. Through encouragement and support we gained much needed emergency funding and was able to direct this to focusing on building our online presence.
It has been a challenging time but we have a clearer message and are focusing on what our local community and cultural needs are. We are planning the coming year with a clearer focus on how our business needs to be shaped and excited about new opportunities.
- Greater flexibility in respect of the thinking around the business.
- Achieved the insight into what social investment is and how it can help businesses grow.
- Re-structured the company. Recovered from a difficult time for the company and reviewed and re worked vision and mission with Prosper North. New partners and more onsite learning with new partners.
- We are planning a move into a larger more central secondary High Street property where we can run more public and curatorial projects post pandemic. We have recently submitted our first

heritage fund project to begin this. In addition we have secured a space in the centre of Sunderland and we are working to make it fit for purpose for us. We intend to grow our range of funders in the future and grow the scope of our project delivery.

- The period with Prosper North was used to plan for our post COVID period of time. By the time Prosper North started, we had done most of it; Prosper North backed up some of what we'd already done. We have rescheduled our festival for the third and hopefully last time. Our education work due to take place October 20 - June 21 is now taking place in the Summer. We have expanded into online educational work (but not as a result of PN). We are awaiting news of our CRF Round 2 bid and an important Youth Music bid. Earlier in the process we were looking at opening a venue. This has since changed to opening a rehearsal space as the one in our city closed. None of this was referenced during PN though, bar conversations with our mentor.
- Our time with Prosper North and [business advisor] has been invaluable. We spent the mentoring sessions discussing [...] business plan and streamlining our strands of work. This has given us clarity and we have a short term, medium and long term goals which are SMART and we have plans in place for how we will fund and achieve them. We want to position ourselves as a national organisation, and a thought leader in Youth led cultural co-production.
- working group addressing reopening: business plan; capital investment programme to improve facilities: partnerships strengthened: social enterprise opportunities explored: changes to governance: new membership and friends structures: changes to articles of association to facilitate re.governance, management, membership and friends: exploring social impact low interest loans through Key Fund and BBLs: small grant schemes: community partnerships: discussions with similar organisations within the programme: revenue funding for more partnership working
All are in advanced planning stages as we are still in COVID lockdown
- We have focused mainly on restructuring and fundraising
- Working with prosper north has helped us to identify some key areas to strengthen our resilience
- The company was successful in receive ACE funding for a project. More so was the confidence and resilience development work that I undertook with [...]. Being self-employed my business also includes any part time work and I was greatly supported with my personal financial situation. I plan to keep working on a projects-based approach and continue to network to find more links.
- Throughout COVID we have diversified what we have offered through the use of digital. This has brought us new partners. As a result of the programme we have run business planning sessions with staff and board to lead towards the development of a new business plan underpinned by larger than usual applications to funders to support our whole programme rather than projects. We have also started working on the sustainability of the business through succession planning.
- We have worked with our business advisor on three main strands:
 - Look at opportunities for [...] to be a more integral part of local regeneration schemes and to become a key partner in these schemes.
 - Post-COVID recovery planning for our Heritage venues
 - Plans for a more sustainable and effective Heritage service
 We plan to work with senior managers to act on some of the learning from the Prosper sessions, including business modelling, calculating the REAL cost of our many activities, and considering how critical they are to our overall mission.
- Through the prosper north training program at the back end of our business we have overhauled our operating systems, actioned a 3-year financial forecast, and clarified our use of cash flows and how they interact with project budgets in order to monitor our finances as a CIC more closely and effectively. We have also dug into the business modelling both with [...] our advisor and through the Mod Fin method and have made invaluable headway on our vision and mission as a company. We have identified 3 clear strands to our work and this has opened up new ways to connect with our communities that we plan to pursue in the months (and years) to come. We are about to look in more detail at the diversifying of our income streams to enable us to be more sustainable financially, and are planning to look at the Key Fund as a potential avenue. We are rewriting our business plan so that it becomes a more dynamic and relevant document.
We are employing a freelance member of staff in a marketing role as we have identified that as an area that would be helpful to delegate.
We have secured our largest commission and grant to date and we have forecast this year to employ more freelancers than any year so far as a company.

We have become more confident, through having the time and guidance, to really consider the future, and a 5-year plan which was something we had wanted but not had the time or assistance to look at in detail.

- Much of what we had intended to do by now has remained at the planning stage because of the post-Xmas lockdown. We are in the May stage 3 reopening cohort. We are planning - thanks to the one-to-one support sessions with consultant Andrew Davies - a rebuilding and reprise of our former bid to HLF for capital work to enable widening audiences and extending access via physical changes to the site. This is very important for us and provided a main focus..
- We have a new draft business plan, which is in the process of being strengthened as a result of the learning from the Prosper North programme. Staff are more engaged with new ways of working and Prosper North learning has helped to strengthen new partnerships, and is encouraging the wider team to look at other ways to grow and develop this in the future. Work is ongoing to find an appropriate online ticket solution (online ticket sales being a new development for our site) and we are currently advertising for new casual facilitators to help release manager time for other development and planning work. We have also been able to strengthen our Board and are looking at ways to increase diversity and to introduce a youth voice into our future planning. It was unfortunate that due to ongoing lockdowns and furlough we weren't able to engage the wider team at all stages of the training, but during March we have been able to find ways to resolve this.
- We adopted a high-level strategy for both capital and organisational sustainability development last year (2020). With the help of PN we have been driving forward a great deal of change in the organisation to both make the most of new opportunities and improve our financial performance. It feels a little like a complete re-boot of the organisation and although participation in Prosper North was not the catalyst to this process (it predates involvement with PN), the involvement with PN has helped shape our thinking and the process of decision-making about how to move forward. The options appraisal process in particular has made us focus on having sufficient data to make sound decisions. This has generated a lot of work but because we have been delivering minimally on the operations front because of lockdowns, we have had more time and capacity to do this detailed strategic work.
- As a new company, who took on a very big project before being able to set structures and systems in place, it has been really useful to make space for more thoughtful business and financial planning. We have set up regular reporting structures and planning days and the combination of 1-2-1 support and workshops has supported this stage of our development really effectively. The ModFin system in particular has helped us to think about everything we are doing and how it is funded in a more systematic way. We've also developed a more effective social media strategy and have been supported to think in a more targeted way about alternative funders and revenue streams.
- With the help of [business advisor] we were able to come up with a coherent plan of how to undertake our project, develop a phased approach and secure approval from our governing body to proceed with the project. We secured a grant of £15k from the AHF to undertake a feasibility study of the project. We are planning to continue developing our business plan using the business modelling tools provided and then plan our funding strategy based on our needs.
- We've identified potential new revenue streams and approaches to fundraising which we intend to incorporate into a revised fundraising model
- The opportunity to participate in the Prosper North programme came at a pivotal moment for [Organisation]. From the beginning, the organisation has been the base for the 3 resident arts companies who have steered the development of the centre and produced the majority of the community arts programming. One of the core companies is now developing a new building base as a centre for creative projects with children with additional needs and will be moving out during the summer of 2021. This, on top of COVID 19 closure, has given [Organisation] an opportunity, working with the remaining resident groups, to review and refocus the participatory arts programme on offer. Participating in the workshops and sessions gave me the opportunity and time to focus on the future needs and potential of [Organisation]. The most important session for me was the Business Modelling 1:2, where we looked at the Purpose, Mission and Vision of an organisation. As a result of this session, we produced an interim Business Plan which gives background of the organisation, previous work and direction of travel. It is proving to be a really useful tool for advocacy, re-establishing our relationships and reputation and introducing The Watershed to new and potential funders, partners artists and volunteers. The sessions with our business advisor were

particularly useful. As well as good listening, advice and challenge, [she] provided use with many useful links and documents to support our work. For example: • Stakeholder mapping and partnership development – which has led us to the idea of setting up a partnership group of critical friends from across the region and country: Slung Low, Huddersfield Literature Festival, Creation Centre 101 in Newbury. • Board development skills audit – as part of this we have set up 3 task and finish groups to help identify the strength of skills within the Board and where the gaps are that we need to address. The groups are Fundraising, Community Engagement and Wellbeing. As part of our refocus of The [Organisation], we have done an audit of the building with fresh eyes and are developing a plan to refurbish and redevelop areas of the building to maximise and diversify the range of activities that we can present and develop in the building. To achieve this we are preparing an application to The Key Fund and are in touch with Adrian Bean to progress this. The other part of our funding plan is to apply to Arts Council England for funds to create a new role for The [Organisation], Creative Producer, Community Engagement, for 2 years

- We will be revisiting the best status of our organisation, thinking about the make-up of our board and management committee. We have done a lot of work around improving our digital presence - including website improvements, creation of digital workshops and films. We want to improve our Marketing Strategy, leading to audience development and increased engagement. We are networking more effectively with local authority and culture partners within our area.
- Consolidated business strategy and community engagement plans. Focus on governance and development of the group.
- We are planning to work with a social media manager on a part time basis to strengthen our outreach. We have also started to think differently now about ways in which we engage our current and new audiences online. We also have a clearer idea about incorporation and business structures.
- [Business advisor] has mainly helped us focus our limited resources, given us lots of reassurance and increased our confidence to pursue new business/ earned income.
- The Prosper North programme has enabled us to much better plan for the maker space project we are developing - it has given us tools (Mod Fin) to use with our community when we are able to meet again and restart the project. We have also really valued meeting [...], our business mentor, and are hoping to keep working with her going forwards.
- We are one of the sectors most rigorously suppressed by C-19 restrictions. As a result, we have only been able to trade for 3 weeks out of the 60 weeks since restrictions were first imposed. We are currently looking at ways to reduce reliance on earned income - which has been (and will be) inevitably affected by our inability to trade. Although contrary to the direction in which we were being encouraged to move (pre-COVID); we will be looking at more socially focussed, grant-funded activity - alongside a gradual rebuild of commercial earnings.

Things needed to take plans forward

Ability to reopen normally post COVID-19 (9)

- To be able to work and deliver :)
- for our community hub to be re-opened to allow us to deliver our services very soon
- for people we planned to support to be operational again after the crisis is over
- We're all set and ready to go post virus.
- I am waiting for internal documents to ensure the golden thread from the Council Plan and we need a timeframe for re-opening, which is not possible at the moment.
- time and tourist season to resume; open public events to return; support from board; COVID recovery
- Much of this depends on the reopening of our site and the return of visitors. Financial grant support remains key during these challenging times, and marketing is anticipated to be more important than ever. Prosper North has brought us new awareness and skills, but the reality of the post-vaccine world remains hard to predict.
- On the operational front, ongoing COVID-19 restrictions will significantly affect our ability to break even then make surpluses, especially without capital improvements/developments to our buildings in the short-term. We need some new-build and redevelopment capital funding to ensure the long-term survival of the community assets, including heritage assets, that we own, as well as the service we provide to our local communities.

- We need the risk of COVID19 to disappear! Disability-led projects such as ours need *very* careful management to ensure safety from infection for the disabled and Clinically Extremely Vulnerable people we work with. Our programmes will be delayed until at least 21 June 2021, (perhaps later). COVID19 is also bad for networking, finding project partners and business confidence generally but we are making some progress in this department.

Board development (3)

- More time with our Board on focussed plans / business planning / plans for growth
- Increase my board members in particular someone with financial experience
- * More access to wider funds - possible governance change / Develop a wider mixed ecology
- * Wider support from local authority - working progress
- * New partnerships - working progress

Building (2)

- A permanent home.
- We are re-acquiring property that is currently leased to a tenant with a complex arrangement that may mean we regain half or all of the building. Once we know whether we are getting part or all of the building back, we will be able to move forward with our funding strategy and engage our local partners in a better way.

Business models and processes (3)

- We are looking at carrying out a detailed review of our building and appraise options for future configuration and usage (in consultation with a range of potential building users and groups) with a central aim of realising the potential for the building to generate more income. We have identified 3 areas for potential business development that could increase building usage and profitability:
 1. Gallery business development – increase occupancy and exposure to attract new investment Our building houses an art gallery acting as a main point of entry to [...] and is a focus for our work. It has traditionally been linked to creative projects that we run with communities and groups, so that the outcomes of projects are displayed and celebrated in this formal setting. Although this works well, we do find a significant tail-off in visitor numbers in periods following exhibition openings and there is around a 70% under-utilisation of space. We feel that the Gallery has more potential to generate income by becoming a continuously utilised, flexible and multipurpose space. We want to increase engagement activities and space utilisation in the Gallery by introducing an Artist Residency programme. An Artist will be commissioned to ‘own’ and programme the Gallery for a fixed residency duration. Through this pilot residency we’ll model a new business approach and produce a case study with evaluation. We anticipate this will best place [...] to attract future investment (from a wider range of funders) to support an ongoing gallery residency offer, where we could build in a contribution to our overheads and on costs from each residency cycle.
 2. Increase referrals to [...] services with Social Prescribing Social Prescribing is a way for health professionals to refer patients to a Link Worker, who can assess the needs of a patient and refer them to a range of services for support. We want to understand the current local context and cultivate relationships with Link Workers and agencies. This should lead to a better understanding of the needs and contexts of NHS patients who have been referred to Social Prescribing, and of the financial and business models that enable it. We anticipate this could lead to [...] developing new products or services based in our building, to attract client referrals and generate income.
- Ideally we need to generate more income in order to bring on another team member in due course as we are finding we are reaching our capacity for delivery and management however we feel much more clear on delegation of work and are going to trial hiring people to span projects rather than be project specific where possible as that will help build relationships that are meaningful and longer term.
- We are restructuring our financial management and will re-open our venue over the course of 2021 with greater discipline over financial performance. We have more work to do on data gathering and analysis and capacity building to create more efficiencies and sustainability. As our future depends on some significant capital requirements we have some way to go to complete our options appraisals using the PN methodologies. We will then need funding for feasibility studies and, ultimately, capital funding.

Developing new audiences / marketing (1)

- Need to develop new audiences and encourage existing audiences to move to this new format through effective marketing.

Digital (2)

- Increase audience engagement through digital platforms [...] updated its brand identity and launched a new website in April 2018. This helped achieve a 236% increase in website unique page views in the first year of roll-out, and feedback suggests our new identity works well to represent our offer to our audience and investors. Although the website functions reasonably well for us as a presence, we don't feel that the full potential of digital platforms is realised by its current configuration. In particular the website could better enable groups, communities and artists who interact in our building to continue creating and sharing new work digitally, whilst serving to encourage new participants to interact and become involved in our projects. The website could also facilitate the sale of artworks and stock items to further support our Gallery business. We aim to maximise the potential of our digital presence to generate new business activity whilst lowering the business overheads costs associated with its operation. Development and maintenance of our current platform lies with a legacy provider. We have an uncompetitive contract that can make day to day updating and development of our website expensive and slow. We will look at commission an IT consultant and developer to give us an options appraisal and carry out works to reconfigure the platform to better suit our needs and goals.
- We have almost completed our website (having not had one before!) and will be re-launching our brand in December this year.

Equality and inclusion (1)

- We need to make the arts/ culture/ heritage much more aware of the difficulties and barriers experienced by disabled people. Recently, we were told we are not value for money (ACE). Our disability-led projects are about access, inclusion and diversity, not about bums on seats. We shall continue to campaign and advocate and educate.

Funding (21)

- Funding to enable our income diversification strategy, in areas around marketing, merchandising and fundraising. Hopefully secured!
- We require funding which will enable us to increase our capacity and create a dedicated post which focuses on commercial development, growing our past activity and establishing new.
- Simply put, funding to repair the building. But also whole-hearted co-operation from [...] City Council, which is still lacking, a stance which is sadly not unique to our group.
- We need to secure funding for the feasibility study to take place and continue to develop relationships with funders.
- To make these plans happen, we need an initial investment of £30,000 and credibility to grow relationships with local authorities and the Libraries North relationship manager.
- We need access to funding to develop the project further, as well as working with an architect who could work pro bono to develop the idea further
- Win the bid hopefully and create more staff and increase volunteers dramatically thus increasing resources.
- For our new funders to understand our position and defer contract deadlines
- We need to be able to access grants similar to the Lottery Fund's 'Start-up' Grants. This would be used to provide more specialist consultancy support and to engage a part-time manager to pick up some of the high workload being carried by volunteer board members currently.
- Support in developing a long-term fundraising strategy; Apply for longer term funding
- We have applied to Key Fund for Northern Cultural Regeneration funds to develop the barn. Whilst we have planning permission the business manager would like building regulations in place and 3 tenders from builders. He has identified Reach Fund as a means to get us to the next stage and we have made an application which is pending and we should hear the outcome in the next 2 weeks.
- Plans are in a state of uncertainty until the result of our funding application.

- We also need to be successful in securing funding to do a feasibility study (we have applied for this through the Reach Fund). This will lead us onto further discussions with the Key Fund.
- Funding
- We need to wait and see if the funding bids come off and if we are able to run our future events and education work.
- We are currently working through applying for various funding grants, including for core costs which we have previously not secured as an organisation. We are working with new partners to reach a more diverse range of young people which we will continue to look for opportunities for partnership working. We need to connect with a learning provider to provide accredited training for our programmes.
- I need cash to be able to work with a fundraiser.
- We need to continue to fundraise and aim to apply for larger grants to sustain us growing and reaching further than we have so far.
- Funding!
- We need funding, earned income and sponsorship to ensure our future is sustainable.
- We now need to secure funding for our Options Appraisal which is the next step in co-creating the maker space. We also need to secure capital funding in the longer term and will be speaking to the Key Fund about possibilities for that in the near future.

Further information, advice or guidance (7)

- Further advice/support on e-commerce.
- 1. We have the support of an external programme called Pilotlight about to begin internal development work with us; 2 Awaiting decision on funding applications; 3 Continue to progress these discussions
- More 1:1 support to support the Executive Director and help provide focus and priorities
- The work came to a stop when the business support person changed - we are now in the process of starting to work with a new consultant
- We need to continue discussions with our excellent mentor, [...].
- Although we wish to build a blended funded businesses, it is an uncertain until COVID responses have been completed how we are going to do this. We will need more advice as we progress through this year.
- We have another session with [...] to finish the piece of work around diversifying income streams and that will tie into our planning overall.

Partnerships (3)

- Continue to work with partners and charities with the same vision.
- Communication and partnerships with stakeholders and community groups.
- Further conversations and building with some of the people we have been able to connect with through the program to realise these goals

Planning (2)

- Project plans and consultant recommendations
- We have plans in place to grow the company as well as still developing these.

Sharing with colleagues (2)

- We have plans in place to deliver workshops to colleagues and due to a lack of tech, plan to do these in person when the current restrictions are eased. We have a meeting planned to review the work we've done with our business advisor and to feed back his findings to our leadership team.
- A recent strategic meeting with key managers used elements of the ModFin programme and helped to facilitate discussions on new ways of working as we move forwards. The team is on the same page, as one of the managers said, and we are now planning how to embed new ways of working and make best use of our resources, which includes staff time and expertise.

Staffing and capacity (12)

- Additional capacity (to focus on marketing - to deliver marketing activity (social media and e-commerce in particular).

- As part of an on-going buildings and staffing review we will be looking closely to either modify current roles or create new ones to deliver on key areas of service development including marketing and retail.
- Ideally additional team members. This is 18 months off and will be dependent on funding, sponsorship and increased revenue.
- Implementation of new management structure including formation of Theatre Committee: recruitment of "team leaders" to fill committee posts: membership and volunteer recruitment drive: new website and promotional communications: essentially a "reboot" of a successful organisation in continuous existence for 80 years rebranded with a stronger business plan and partnerships which places the organisation at the heart of the local community for the next 80 years.
- I need to negotiate with staff and board a new structure for the organisation
- We are taking forward many of the recommendations of our I-I advisor, looking at the skillsets of our trustees, staff and volunteers. This has been planned in for this year.
- We need capacity, this is a struggle for me personally although I will be putting time aside in the new financial year to make this happen. We also need to make sure that we secure some of the funding that we have asked for.
- We have increased our work to 4 days a week as we realised that we can't grow and manage all project activity within 3 days a week.
- Carving out the time from routine work of keeping day-to-day task under control, more support from programmes like this would be a big help too.
- To make sure that we continue to make time and have resources for core activities and business planning, even when projects get really busy.
- Time and human resources
- We need to appoint an additional, senior team member - with loan funding already secured to cover 12 months' salary costs via Key Fund. The additional team member will provide increased staff capacity and a dedicated channel through which we can focus on increasing earnings.

Time (2)

- Time - we will be further discussing the outcomes of this work as part of the business planning sessions throughout this year.
- Time to meet in person as a committee is needed, when physical meetings can happen. Considering recruiting a social media / digital apprentice. More time needed in developing our marketing strategy, perhaps further training.

Working with creative practitioners (1)

- Understand how we can work closer with our local community and develop a pool of volunteers and artists; Develop the next stage of the creative project with the artists

Nothing more, thank you

- We are doing just fine thank you
- We have the tools and the team in place to take these plans forward.
- I will try to use what we have learnt in training and what I had received from our business advisor in the future
- It's difficult to say as we are still going through the programme. We will know more in October when we have had our final sessions.
- Nothing at the moment, we have been successful in our application to the Culture Recovery Fund, which has an allocated budget to take this forward.

Learning and tips to share with others undertaking a similar journey

Adopt a business ethos (3)

- Approach the undertaking as a business; this even though it may be charitable. Ideally try to find several business streams ('legs to support the undertaking'). Be aware of where one is creating value and don't let go of this carelessly. Be aware of legal issues. There are a lot of these.

- As a local authority museums service it is very easy to lose sight of the cost of income generation because it seems like a good idea. Being rigorous on accounting for staff time is vital to see if the income stream is really worth the cost.
- Know your mission, vision and audience.

An holistic approach (2)

- The course allows you to have a holistic approach to examining your business model
- When under financial pressure, keep an eye on the cash flow forecast first and foremost, Staying solvent is the most important thing so act in good time to keep a bit of money in the bank and do not trade if that is likely to reduce cash, especially unrestricted cash, to danger levels. Then take the time to get the drains up on the business and really look hard at whether you really know what is going on month by month - never let assumptions drive your decisions. Once you have done that you are in a better position to devise a budget that really works for your longer term and go down the path of what is realistic rather than what is desirable. Regularly check your understanding with each other on your team and any external advisors as you might get into unfamiliar territory and that could be uncomfortable, leading to avoidance or resistance to change. Breakthroughs will come and don't forget, you will have to explain how and why your business is changing to many different stakeholders once you have made your decisions, Carry people with you by thinking carefully about how you communicate and when to those not involved in the process but who are invested, or might become invested, in your organisation.

Apply the tools (6)

- Try and not take the full context of your previous understanding of how to run a social enterprise into the room. This can be unhelpful - try and apply the learning you pick up to your context.
- Thinking about looking doing less, but with more depth and content. And being willing to think about the structure of the organisation, and real capacity of delivery.
- Looking at why you do the things you do, how much impact it has, and are you staying true to your aims and values as you start to think about ways you generate income and support the work you do.
- Opportunity to work with experienced consultants is very worthwhile, perhaps most of all in getting you to ask the right questions about what you're doing and how you might get to where you want to be.
- Make sure you have a clear three-year plan and budget and make sure you and people involved in your organisation understand and agree with it.
- Be ambitious; Focus on longer term but also plan the short term; Be open to new structures and business adventures

Be at peace with the change (4)

- Be positive about change - the pandemic has provided 'thinking space' which is more valuable than you might think
- There are times when you have to dig deep, when your personal and work life may fall apart. Allow yourself to rest and if your drive and desire to make work come back the fantastic and if they don't that's okay too. Be at peace with change.
- Keep a steady course; don't panic - and don't be afraid to turn activities on or off if it helps to remain sustainable.
- There is no such thing as failure. Call it experience.

COVID-19 change (5)

- Our journey, thanks to COVID-19, looks entirely unlike what we expected. Be prepared to identify new/different development needs as part of the process.
- It is essential to develop digital skills and communicate the message effectively. Think about new opportunities not just about replicating what you used to do.
- In the current crisis, flexibility & versatility are vital.
- I don't feel there are any tips that are universally useful. COVID was clearly a unique situation for every organisation and business.
- Timing is everything!

Have confidence (2)

- Be confident and look for solutions rather than focussing on the problems
- I really benefitted from participating in the business modelling workshops and would say to anyone who felt nervous about this topic that it's not as hard as you think! It made me realise that we've done a lot of the work - we just need to structure it properly and use data in the correct way. I'd also say to ensure you make space for doing this kind of work. Especially over the last year it's been tempting to just deal with the firefighting of getting sites open, closing again, dealing with building issues etc, but having carved out time to focus on this properly has made a big difference.

Learn from peers (10)

- Embrace the activities within the programme and be open to learning from the experience of peers.
- Learn as much as you can. Liaise with other groups as much as possible. If someone offers help and advice, listen, always listen. There is a vast network of support and assistance out there, make the most of it, not least because trying to deal with reluctant councils can be very disheartening, you are not alone.
- Be open to share ideas and observations with others, some of the best learning took place over coffee and informal groups sessions.
- Attend the meet ups! Learning from others in the cohort was invaluable. We also really liked the first business modelling workshop and highly recommend attending with someone else from your organisation to get the most out of it.
- Sharing with other organisations brings the added benefit of sharing knowledge and resources together, often answering or helping each other's problem areas.
- Network with the other groups, really spend time thinking about the bigger picture, and what it is you want. How will you get the organisation to work for you in a really positive way. Don't be afraid to think big.
- I'd absolutely recommend joining programmes such as this. There is a huge intangible but important benefit from seeing what others are doing, sharing problems, becoming aware of what's going on in the sector and exchanging advice. It *is* worth making the time to get out of your own problems for a while, even when they are demanding and urgent, in order to undertake this kind of sharing.
- Connecting and sharing with peers is also a great way to reinforce your learning and helpful to know you are not alone!
- be resilient; share experiences
- Learn as much as you can from the experience of others.

Openness and honesty (8)

- Be open and honest with yourself, your organisation and your mentor regarding the position the organisation is in. Be willing to make changes, even if it is difficult.
- Be realistic and honest when setting goals for future development and action planning.
- Grant funding is only going to get more and more competitive in our sector - it is so important we diversify our income streams and develop self-earned income. We thought we weren't at all social investment ready - and that it's too risky to consider borrowing money. We learnt we were wrong. We have a resilient Trading arm and potential for growth, which social investors are interested in supporting.
- Be open to really scrutinising everything you do. It's so easy to become quite narrow-minded and not be able to see your processes objectively. The correct path is sometimes staring you back in the face but unless you are open to the process then you won't be able to see the bigger picture. Embrace change, communicate the journey with your users and community and encourage them to join you.
- Be open to new ideas and ways of working
- be open to new ideas
- Be open minded to new ideas and ways of working
- Trust the process, don't over think it, go with what feels right and be open to new ways of working and challenging the way things have been done.

Pick an area of focus (4)

- Choose some specific areas you'd like to focus on rather than trying to work on everything at once - it will be more manageable and make it more likely you will see results. Definitely worth spending time looking at the online resources.
- Find and focus on activities / products /projects that have the least cost but biggest impact.
- I would suggest that it is useful to have an idea of what you want to get out of the programme in advance of taking part. This helps to guide your thinking but also enables you to be flexible in welcoming other ideas and thoughts.
- Be clear on the journey you wish to take and use the time wisely.

Put in the thinking and prep – don't underestimate the time commitment (15)

- *Taking the time out to focus on strategy is extremely helpful and the course allows you to do that.*
- *Make time to prep for the sessions and do the follow up work it helps embed the learning*
- *Stick with it, I think it can be hard to prioritise the slower thinking process when you are having to deliver so many projects or manage huge buildings however the benefit we are seeing from clarifying our vision, mission and how we do things is huge. We have become more productive and confident and it's worth taking the time to do.*
- In order to get the most out of the programme ensure that you have enough time to prepare for group and mentoring sessions and that you cascade learning to colleagues.
- Try your hardest to attend every session but have more knowledge of what you'll get out of it before you sign up.
- Working in a community enterprise and developing a new project means some distancing from day to day, in order to prioritise the new project, this proves difficult in small SEs with limited capacity
- It's crucial to take a step back from the busy everyday to develop business plans and processes, to digitise, to improve efficiency and to agree clear goals.
- I would also say that it's important to understand that it can involve a lot of additional work so be prepared to roll your sleeves up and work late! We have a constant flow of people coming into the building and the current relationships demand a lot of time which means trying to complete tasks takes a lot longer. It also highlights areas you need to develop and evaluate to enable you to streamline and be much more proactive and proficient.
- Put in the hours, do the thinking, it's worth it in the end.
- Set the time aside to do the thinking work with your team and make it a fun process. Be focused in what you want to achieve with your mentor during the sessions you will get more out of the time.
- Invest your time into attending as many workshops and support sessions as possible as they have all been useful in one way or another.
- Take the time you need out of the 'doing' into strategic thinking, and take heart in doing this alongside other organisations
- Allow yourself time to do this and time to reflect
- Attend as many courses, seminars as possible - taking advantage of what is on offer. Be prepared to put in the work between sessions with mentor.
- Plan as many of your sessions in advance as possible. A large workload and lack of other staff meant that it was hard for me to find time to arrange sessions along the way and left us panicking at the end trying to fit them in.

Reach out (2)

- Remember people are interested in what you do and are usually happy to help
- To reach out to likeminded people and programs in order to assist with planning and learning new ways on engagement

Tools and models (5)

- Continue to modernise processes and tools that you use - there are so many on the market that it is useful to learn from others about the tools they use and their functionality
- Explore the ModFin system is possible. I found this a really helpful way to think about what your business is doing, the priorities of activities and how those activities are being funded (or not!)

- A stronger business approach to cultural and artistic endeavour but along firm "Modfin" lines rather than bottom line accountancy models allied to a "can-do" approach and a positive attitude to culture change and change management.
- Jam board is fantastic for remote working! We are loving the jam board for creative chats and strategy.
- Clockify is a great time management app, you can monitor how long projects are taking and what the tasks are you are doing within them.

Work with your trustees / Senior Management team (8)

- If you already have business plans in place ask for someone to work with the Trustees using the IKIGAI model - it may throw up areas that haven't previously been considered.
- 2.Ensure that you obtain buy in from SMT and that a representative attends the mentoring sessions with the business advisor
- Make good use of the mentor, ours was excellent! Get more than one or two people from your board / management team to engage with the training and mentor.
- share learning with other team members as you go along and involve them in the process
- Understand your own skills and experiences and find out what other people are able to bring to the table.
- Ensure that if working with someone, make sure both parties are invested to the same level and both have the same vision for the company. Make sure this is established at the beginning. Talk to people with business experience.
- Getting your team excited about what you're all doing is crucial and if you do it is amazing to see how people take the ball and run with it.
- Consolidate priorities and gain the support of all the team and those involved with developing your strategy.

And finally...

- Be kind to yourself. You can't do everything!

The programme

The level of service received from Prosper North	Excellent	66%
	Good	31%
	Okay	3%

Reason for poor satisfaction:

- You couldn't really help us, but just kept pushing out e-mails, invitations and yet more social media inputs that overwhelmed us.

Relationship with Business Advisors	Excellent	72%
	Good	25%
	Okay	3%

Reason for lack of satisfaction:

- We could have benefited from our advisor more had we understood their skills. I also think we needed more time to learn about the business modelling workshop and understand our own position before the initial meeting. Perhaps having the advisor paired to us after the workshops would have worked better for our organisation.
- It was our fault we were not able to engage
- We did not feel our first advisor was as fully engaged as they should have been and did not meet our needs. The advisor did not meet deadlines and this was disappointing when our team had worked hard as volunteers to deliver material. The scores reflect this advisor. Our second advisor was more focused and met our needs. This advisor would have scored: 'Agree'.

Support and advice received from business advisor was:	Relevant & appropriate	87%
	Of a high quality	85%

Rating for each element of the programme

	Very %	Okay %	Not Good %	N/A %
1:1 support	82	10	2	7
Online Workshop - Business Modelling Part One	63	22	0	15
Online Workshop - Business Modelling Part Two**	47	22	7	25
Online Workshop - Social Enterprise and Trading	23	35	0	42
Webinar - Introduction to Social Investment	28	43	0	28
Webinar - Monetising IP and Assets	20	27	3	50
Recorded webinar series – Customer Experience	10	20	0	70
Recorded webinar series - Essentials of Data Driven Marketing & CRM	12	25	3	60
Meet ups	37	33	3	27
Working with advisor on COVID-19 recovery*	22	10	2	35
Short webinar series on LearnWorlds e-learning platform*	0	10	0	33

* NB Introduced part-way through the programme in response to COVID-19, but percentages reflect rating across all cohorts.

** Content reviewed in response to Cohort 1 feedback.

Additional topics of business support, not covered

Topics

Change (4)

- Change Management - As a result of attending workshops and speaking to my business advisor it became apparent that changes need to be made to staffing and operational structures. A session at the end of the programme on how to work towards facilitating change would be hugely beneficial as part of possible next steps.
- Alternative sources of income
- Writing a social investment strategy
- Change management

Funding (9)

- Session on grant applications would be useful.
- How to approach sponsors would be useful.
- Crowdfunding/fundraising
- Blended Fundraising
- More time to look at setting out the structure and approaching funders. Due to the circumstance our time was taken up dealing with a more pressing matter, which was extremely helpful.
- Fundraising
- Approaches to funding for volunteer organisations
- Fundraising and grants
- Fundraising/ experience of the Heritage Sector

Finance and business planning (5)

- Reading (commercial) finance accounts - management and annual. Understanding cash flow better
- We often have skills in charity finances, but it can be a challenge to understand business finances.
- More on financial business planning
- Practical examples from arts organisations of projects, business planning or activities which either went well or hasn't, and especially what was learnt and any tips.

- I feel that the business modelling workshops only took us so far and needed to progress further and be more detailed in how to take forward the plans we were making. It would have been useful to have some opportunities to share business planning more with the others on the cohort and get feedback.

Leadership and management – staff and volunteers (5)

- Leadership and management of staff and volunteers
- Session on recruiting, retaining volunteers and managing interface issues between paid staff and volunteers would be useful.
- team management and leadership - change management, HR.
- recruiting and supporting new members of supporting staff
- Employment support - especially around differences between freelancers and employed staff etc

Marketing (2)

- Essentials of data driven Marketing etc (less on GDPR, more about the actual subject)
- Online marketing

Operational management (incl COVID-19-specific) (8)

- Operational management tips
- Time management, project development, understanding how organisational structures impact on organisational development.
- Online tools - the pros and cons of different functions e.g, eventbrite, mailchimp, these types of tools
- Topics that became relevant due to COVID - as workshops/discussion groups not webinar - especially for organisations that were delivering Covering: Taking sessions online - how to make zoom work; Diversification in creativity & culture as a result of COVID; Making cultural venues safe - applying social distancing guidance
- project management
- Something more specific to our situation as a CIC, as an events-based organisation, specifics on funding pots available during COVID (BBL, Furlough, Additional Restrictions Support Grant, CRF) that would have had an immediate effect. Strategies for managing staff and freelancers remotely. CIC vs Charity status.
- Partnerships and collaborative working
- Resilience

Social investment (3)

- Social Impact: How to measure and present impact and feedback for stakeholders and how to interpret it.
- The workshops were understandably adapted towards our experiences of the COVID restrictions and trying to survive during this period. Other examples of how to grow social finance would have been useful but understand that these didn't really apply during this period!
- How to tap into different income streams as a CIC.

Session format

- Seminar settings where we looked at others in small groups (4-6), and discussed the potential for income generation of each one. this would allow us to think outside our own contexts, and really understand the ideal mix of income we can and would be able to go for
- I would have liked the webinar workshops to have been more practical so we leave with bit of work done or at least action items. Most of the information learned can be found online.
- I would have liked the 2nd business modelling workshop to follow the format of the first. We only had 15 minutes to do practical work in the second workshop and then were talked at all day.
- The Customer Experience webinar was particularly good and could have been a workshop too.

Timing

- I wasn't able to join the live webinars because I was at work, another way of viewing this would have been preferable

Other

- I think the topics were good, but because our organisation is quite large in comparison to others, we found there were a lot of things that were covered that we were already familiar with.

Overall experience

100% participants would recommend a business support programme like Prosper North to a peer

Attractiveness of the Proposer North programme

What attracted you to take part in Prosper North?

- | | |
|---|-----|
| • Creative United's reputation | 28% |
| • Recognised business advisors and consultants | 43% |
| • Business advisors and consultants with heritage expertise | 48% |
| • Access to Key Fund's Northern Cultural Regeneration Fund | 27% |
| • Free support | 87% |

Recommendation

- Friends with good reputation in the sector recommended the programme and we wanted to use the programme as a way to grow and gain credibility in the sector.
- I'd seen it shared through people I know and respect on Twitter and thought I'd apply!
- A one-to-one call with Hannah helped me decide that it was right for us.
- Recommendation from previous participant

Connection and support

- I often work in isolation and
- Mentoring
- potential to explore collaborative working - potential to explore delivery consortia with other organisations
- It came around at the right time as we are transitioning from being a CIC in its first year to trying to become a year-round organisation. We have no formal business training or support, so the opportunity to learn from experts and peers was a good one.
- Sharing problems and opportunities with similar organisations
- Professional development / broader horizons
- An opportunity to have an external consultant advise on the business planning activities - it is important not to become too insular. As it happens it was the modelling that ended up being the most useful part of the process.
- the ability to go on a learning journey with others, to take time and advice over the business strategy.
- I was asked to attend on behalf of my company.

Subject matter

- Not many programmes focus on self-earned income rather than fundraising.

Opening doors

- We were pushed into applying for the programme by the local council who implied it would give us more credibility within the Council which in turn would help us secure our future. Nothing could have been further from the truth.
- We believed it would help us with future funding applications.

Future investment in Business support

What things make it difficult (if any) to invest in business support?

- | | |
|---|-----|
| • Money | 85% |
| • Time | 72% |
| • Knowing who to approach | 62% |
| • Knowing what's needed | 45% |
| • Getting your governing body or staff on board | 15% |

Other:

- Having the capacity to think strategical alongside delivery.
- At present we are volunteers who have other jobs, most of whom have young children, so time has been a major issue.
- Hard to measure the value of the investment - how do you measure the impact of advice?

Would your business/organisation invest in business support in the future? Yes: 95%

How would you pay for it?

- | | |
|-----------------|-----|
| • Core revenue | 28% |
| • Grant funding | 75% |

Other:

- We have no source of income other than donations as without a permanent home, we cannot open to the public. If we can't open, we cannot generate more income for these luxuries.
- I don't know. It may be we pay from our revenue if there was something specific we needed support and advice with. The only element of the programme we used was the 1-2-1 support due to clashes with our work / workload pressures. This was however great.
- It would have to be a blend of financial sources with clear aims and outcomes stated at the outset
- Through accessing other funded programmes where possible.
- I believe more local government funding should be available for local business support, especially where businesses align strongly with local government strategies for an area. For example, our future success will depend on in-depth market research for our town and hinterland, but our local council is not doing it despite having a tourism strategy.
- Not sure, Grant Funding if possible or from core if not.
- Potentially both depending on the financial position of the business at the time
- Sponsorship

Where else have you sought business support from over the last 5 years?

- | | |
|---|-----|
| • A freelance advisor or consultant | 48% |
| • Voluntary sector agency, e.g. local CVS | 37% |
| • Arts Council England funded initiative, e.g. Museum Development; Leadership development | 28% |
| • Local growth hub, Federation for Small Businesses | 28% |
| • Another sector support organisation | 20% |
- British Science Association (Community Leaders programme)
 - Business Durham, (economic development arm of Council).
 - CABAD
 - Cause 4
 - Clore Social Leader Programme
 - Creative Fuse with Teesside University
 - Dancers career development
 - Golant Media Ventures

- Historic England
- Julie's Bicycle
- Local Authority
- Locality
- Museums Development North West
- Museums Development Yorkshire
- Participate Projects
- Regional development programme, Durham Sparks
- RSA - as a fellow, Power to Change Bright Ideas programme and Trade Up.
- School for Social Entrepreneurs
- Social Enterprise Exchange
- Social Enterprise Yorkshire & Humber
- Sunderland Culture
- The Foundry Sheffield
- Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) or local Chamber of Commerce 20%
- Via a resilience grant from NLHF 13%
- An established management consultancy 10%
- Something else
 - We are now in the process of applying for a resilience grant from NLHF.
 - Armed Forces Covenant
 - Heritage Trust Network
 - University of Sheffield Enterprise programme, UnLtd
 - School for social entrepreneurs
 - We have needed start-up grant support for business advice and were badly affect by COVID-19 when this ceased to be available. Most grant funders stopped this type of funding to concentrate on emergency funding to established organisations.
 - The other problem as a new starter museum is that until one gets Accredited Museum status, one is not eligible for Arts Council Funding.
 - By building relationships with academia - in our case Teesside Uni to carry out evaluations and write pieces for journals etc
 - Tyne and Wear Cultural Freelancers Facebook group is amazing hive of information and members with expertise.
 - Peers in relevant organisations.
 - We haven't. This was our first support
 - We haven't. We're too small for it to be worthwhile.
 - We haven't had any business support for the last 5 years
 - Our previous director gained business support in how to set up a charity.
 - expertise gained from my former professional life

Final thoughts and feedback

Thank you!

- Hannah was really personable and helpful, I really appreciate all the support she provided.
- I would like to say a big thank you to Hannah Mason for being such a wonderful coordinator for the programme, taking the time to understand our organisations and supporting us.
- A special mention to Hannah who managed a complicated programme including many variables with good grace and sound judgement. Thank you Hannah.
- Hannah was brilliant at keeping us informed and making us feel like we were part of something much larger than ourselves.
- Hannah Mason was excellent. She is highly competent and contributed a lot to the success of the programme. Her management task was far from easy (and wouldn't have been easy even if we had all been in one place!). The participants were from a wide variety of organisations and had quite different needs and expectations. She managed everything well - especially with the meetings all having to be in

virtual format. She is clearly very knowledgeable about the sector and has a style where that comes over wholly in an inclusive and supportive way. She was forever patient and calm even when problems occurred with Zoom etc and made sure everyone could benefit with the sessions. She communicated well and resolved a particular problem we had in an effective way.

- I have to say how incredible [...] has been. Sadly the prosper north programme came to me during a very difficult personal time which meant I was unable to participate in some of the events as fully as I would like. However I maintained a strong connection with Alison and she not only supported me with my business but all areas of my well being. She is fantastic, with huge capacity to support, empathise, encourage and promote. I want to give her a very heart felt Thank you for being a part of my journey through this programme and a very challenging time.
- Thank you for your support over a very difficult time :)
- We would like to thank you for the opportunity to connect with a fantastic cohort, to network, to share learning and most importantly for being afforded the time to refine and refresh our [...] business plan.
- Overall good, useful and valuable especially in confirmation that existing thinking and planning was along the right lines
- Great programme, thank you.

Distance

- The meet and greets were just too far away to attend.

Identifying the need

- Maybe the external advisors should be introduced after the workshops as what people think they need may change based on the workshop activities.

COVID-19

- We would have gotten more from the programme if the timing had not coincided with COVID and all that implies. Half of staff were on furlough, others working from home and what time available was spent just surviving.
- It goes without saying that we appreciated the support from this programme but we feel that in 'normal times' it would have been of much greater use than under the current pandemic restrictions and challenges
- Due to COVID and pressure on volunteer time due to a number of other factors that arose during the duration of the programme, we unfortunately did not have the resources to participate as fully as we had intended, which is a source of regret. We did, however, develop an extremely productive working relationship with our advisor [...], which has generated a number of very positive outcomes. Overall, I thought it was a well-designed and potentially very useful programme.
- Sadly, my time with Prosper North overlapped with a particularly intensive period to restart our corner of the economy and I was unable to attend any sessions. As things turned out, the restart was short-lived and we have still not restarted our operations and won't do until mid-May 2021. So, doubly frustrating for me. I did manage to connect with our 1:1 advisor [...] - which was very worthwhile.

Business advisors

- Are the one-to-one business advisors the people who could support the modelling e.g. IKIGAI
- Overall, the Prosper North programme has been a positive experience and the support given has been excellent. Working with our Business Advisor was creative, challenging (in a good way) and was just starting to be productive; our advisor left the programme and we are in a 'hand over' period that so far continues to be working well.
- There is a good network of arts and heritage business consultants on which to draw upon. Part of the problem when looking for someone to lead on away days or strategic planning is who would be a good fit for our organisation.

- Really helpful and professional service. Gave some fantastic guidance during some very challenging circumstance Prosper North were very supportive and gave really clear advice.

Workshop structure and content

- I feel the people in the room were the right people, and it was a diverse mix which helped me think about my own business needs (allowing some contrast to find the distinctiveness of the business). However, there needs to be a stronger rule around oversharing and questions tailored at individual problems; perhaps more 1-2-1 time to deal with these. Questions like 'how is this applicable to associations of volunteers' or 'how do you deal with an inactive board' are obviously fine, but 'we have this specific situation, how do i deal with it' can be unhelpful. Perhaps it is a gentle rule - sharing experiences is useful but can deem large sections of discourse not relevant to others.
- Also, the second Business Planning day (the last one), felt like it went over exactly the same things in the morning, as the first Business Planning day. This needs to be more distinct.
- Some PN training and the group meetings worked better than others on Zoom; a personal frustration was time consuming rounds of introductions. We had all completed 'boiler plate' pen pictures at the start of the programme so the information about who we were, where we were based and what we do was all there – but it kept getting repeated.
- Initially it was very useful, the opening business support session was interesting and practical. But by session 2, no one else had done the 'homework' and it seemed to become more irrelevant to us in particular. Over the course of the programme (I think I attended everything I could) it became less relevant and less useful. A major gripe for me was that every single meeting included a section at the start where everyone introduced themselves. This was good for meeting one. But one time this took 45 minutes of a 3-hour meeting. There didn't seem to be much understanding how vital our time was and what we were giving to it. Although I initially really appreciated this free resource, I came to realise it was in effect costing me time. We are an organisation with one staff member. When not on Furlough, I only work 25 hours a week. I would have preferred it to be streamlined a lot more.

Scheduling

- For us as a group of volunteers, trying to work with a reluctant council, to see other groups succeeding on the path we want to take has been inspirational. It has however, also created problems, as I have had to take annual leave to attend the workshops, and the webinars were not accessible to me during the working day. From our perspective, having at least some of the workshops at a weekend would have been preferable.
- I had problems attending the sessions, apart from the consultant support as sessions took place on days I was committed to one of our projects. This is indicative of the capacity pressures small organisations face
- I found the 1-2-1 support really useful... [...] I'm sure the rest of the programme was also great so sorry i missed it! Unfortunately things clashed with our work and with just 2 of us it is hard to sometimes commit...
- It would have been useful to have all dates in the diary for sessions at the point of application.

Duration

- My only suggestion is that maybe the time period could be slightly extended. At the end it only felt as if we have started going!
- Making any change within a local authority setting takes time and I am slightly concerned that the impetus I have obtained being part of the programme may gradually begin to dissipate.
- All in all a great experience, I just wish it could have been longer. The end of the programme felt rushed.

Expectation management

- I'm sorry that this is not a more positive response. We were delighted to have been excepted onto the programme as we were led to believe it was the key that would open so many doors. Sadly this wasn't the case. Indeed, I think we are more frustrated now than we were at the beginning in that although most people were sympathetic to our situation, there was very little that they could do that altered our very

difficult situation. Limited funds and no travel expenses also meant that we couldn't fully participate. Finally, [...] was amazing. We got the impression that she went above and beyond to help us but in the end, she was just as disappointed as we were at the lack of actual support available to help us.

- The programme did a brilliant job of delivering a huge amount on very little funding - though it did seem 'spread thin'. Outcomes could be a lot stronger if the programme was able to invest in staff time and venues.

Cohorts

- For me, I think the spread of organisations was too broad. The opening meeting where I heard about other organisations was very interesting. But well over half were so different from us that I don't feel there was much actual knowledge to share beyond that first contact. Among our cohort, Tees Music Alliance and the venue in Huddersfield were ideal candidates for us to work with, but we were never 'together' as part of the programme.

Responsiveness and flexibility

- Thanks for the flexibility in enabling one to one advisors to extend their availability and in the potential crossover between programmes to enable us to catch up if any workshops were missed
- Despite such a difficult time, I found it useful and comforting to meet up with the cohort virtually. I think the Prosper North team did a great job continuing and adapting the programme during this time. It's such a shame we never got to actually meet and network but this programme helped me to feel supported. Thank you.
- I appreciate the difficulties in delivering the Prosper North programme during the COVID pandemic, I wonder if there were missed opportunities? Could the programme have been more flexible as a result of COVID? – As a direct result of the national response to the pandemic there appeared to be 2 distinct groups within the current PN cohort, those building based/salaried staff on furlough and the community based/freelance staffed groups continuing to deliver -creating a dynamic where support need, and current interests were different.
- I welcomed the questionnaire that looked at changing support needs as a result of COVID but this did not lead to any change in support for me (although the timing of the questionnaire coincided with our business support consultant leaving the PN programme so my experience may be a one off).
- The last few months has been a busy time for our organisation – we kept delivering, started new sessions and moved into a new base. I personally 'lost track' of the Prosper North programme and much of what is included in the evaluation survey I failed to take part in. I did notice a fall in attendance for the sessions I attended – so maybe I was not alone? Turning the intention to access webinars into action was perhaps down to online fatigue; we were delivering a lot of sessions online and there was an increasing amount of online content available from a wide range of providers; increasingly the PN content looked similar to what else was out there as other agencies changed their offer (we were seeing a lot of training and support that was traditionally charged for being offered for free – a lot of content offered from Power to Change/School for Social Enterprise etc).
- A failure to access the PN programme was maybe a response to the relevance of the PN pre-pandemic programme running in the background of a changing world. This left me feeling that potentially exciting themes (for those still delivering) about the creative challenges of making zoom work, how to run socially distanced workshops and diversification within arts and culture were missed.
- Thank you very much for the very useful tailored support that we have received. The fact that the programme immediately dropped onto the idea of resilience in the face of COVID recovery was very encouraging and provided positivity just when we needed it.
- A great shame that some of the Diagnostics could not have been adjusted in light of COVID - forecasting and trading/income stream questions were useful pre COVID but meaningless in lockdown. Guestimates are fine.....but only so far.

Online / In person

- Excellent - really helpful and great to 'meet' others in similar fields. Would be lovely to have an in-person meet up next year when it's safe to do so.

- Online workshops are difficult. I hope the workshops are able to happen in person
- But the Slack app wasn't kept up to date and quite often I couldn't get on the events via EventBrite.
- A great shame that COVID made it a virtual experience. Physical meet-ups for certain elements of the programme would have been of greater benefit than zoom
- My only criticism would be that the online community on Slack wasn't hosted effectively and so no one really contributed to it as a result.
- This came at the right time when we were less busy due to lockdowns. Might have struggled to attend meetings more if normal practice was happening. Online meet-ups were just as good as physical ones and, in some ways, more convenient.
- We feel COVID19 had a big impact on this course. It would have been nice to get more opportunity to network.

Other

- *It was a well organised and well put together programme pitched at the right level for boards or senior managers*
- A timely intervention that has changed the way we operate and think. It has taken us to the next step in helping us achieve our vision.
- The programme was excellent, I would strongly recommend it. I couldn't believe how lucky we got with the absolutely brilliant [...]. The programme has strengthened our organisation, it is leading us to achieving what we have set out to do - be a centre of excellence for contemporary art in the Northeast.
- The delivery of the programme was well executed and helped our IT skills progression. There were lots of new skills and techniques gained which has ultimately supported our business delivery. These new tools helped to provide confidence, establish realistic goals and manage trustees' expectations.
- We've done a lot of things, but I can't attribute them fully or much to PN, so many of my answers are N/A.
- I massively appreciate this was delivered during a pandemic, so I think it was broadly well run.
- I would still recommend the programme. For us, it's come at a time where we have been fairly inactive, with no premises or staff. Our solutions to our situation have been quite specific and beyond broad areas such as defining our goals, the coloured cards, Ikigai, nothing else really dug into the issues. But I can definitely see that it would suit other organisations, or perhaps ourselves at a different point.
- The one-to-one support has really borne fruit and we will benefit very much from the outcomes.
- It was really beneficial to be part of the programme and I think it was very well run and put together.

Appendix D: Proposed outcomes

Original outcomes proposed in the application.

Original outcomes	Target	Achieved **	Comment
Organisations supported with business development support progress to secure finance from the NCRF fund with Key Fund	10%	5% (10% pipeline)	COVID-19 put a halt to social investment, as organisations lost income streams and took stock of their short- and medium-term priorities.
Supported organisations improve understanding of routes to a diversity of funding and finance	60%	74%	66 attendees at Social Investment Webinars
Increase business and enterprise confidence and skills	60%	80%	Survey respondents (Done).
Improve investment readiness	60%	60%	Survey respondents (done or planned conversation with Key Fund).
Improve measurement and articulation of social impacts	60%	75%	Survey respondents (done or planned).

** % Survey respondents.

Appendix E: Business Advisors

Alison Edbury
Andrew Evans
Andy Balman
Bryn Jones
Claire Antrobus
Ellen O'Hara
Emma Clarke
Fiona Mitchell-Innes
Gill Thewlis
Graham Niven
Jane Rice-Bowen
Jo Boardman
John Anderson
Marc Collett
Matthew Brown
Pamela Johnson
Sabina Strachan
Sarah Perks
Vanessa Rawlings-Jackson
Tracey Sage



Sarah Perks



Patricia Stead
Prosper North



Sabina Strachan
Prosper North



Pamela Johnson
Prosper North



Matthew Brown
Prosper North



Marc Collett
Prosper North



John Anderson
Prosper North



Jo Boardman
Prosper North



Jane Rice-Bowen
Prosper North



Fiona Mitchell-Innes
Prosper North



Emma Clarke
Prosper North



Claire Antrobus
Prosper North



Andrew Evans
Prosper North



Alison Edbury
Prosper North



Gill Thewlis
Prosper North



Vanessa Rawlings-
Jackson
Prosper North



Tracey Sage



Graham Niven
Prosper North



Bryn Jones
Prosper North



Ellen O'Hara
Prosper North



Andy Balman
Prosper North

www.creativeunited.org.uk/advisors-prospernorth/

Appendix F: Meet ups; Workshops and Webinars

Cohort 1			
11.9.2019	Meet up 1		Social/evening
18.9.2019	Business Modelling Pt 1	ModFin introduction & toolkit, map & evaluate current business model. Applying the model, putting the plan into practical application	Workshop
9.10.2019	Introduction to Social Investment	Overview of social investment; how it can help an organisation grow its social or community enterprise	Webinar
30.10.2019	Social Enterprise and Trading	Learn how a social enterprise model could work for cultural heritage; & how to incorporate trading opportunities from IP and assets	Workshop
6.11.2019	Business Modelling Pt 2	Focus on the money, managing risk & change; Business scenario planning	Workshop
13.11.2019	Monetising IP and Assets	Essentials of recognising your IP or assets, & how to capture their value	Webinar
20.11.2019	Meet up 2		Social/evening
4.12.2019	Business Modelling Pt 1		Workshop
15.1.2020	Introduction to Social Investment		Webinar
29.1.2020	Business Modelling Pt 2		Workshop
19.2.2020	Meet up 3		Social/evening
Cohort 2			
18.3.2020	Meet up 1		Social/evening
1.4.2020	Business Modelling Pt 1		Workshop
22.4.2020	Introduction to Social Investment		Webinar
6.5.2020	Social Enterprise and Trading		Workshop
20.5.2020	Business Modelling Pt 2		Workshop
27.5.2020	Monetising IP and Assets		Webinar
3.6.2020	Meet up 2		Social/evening
17.6.2020	Business Modelling Pt 1		Workshop
8.7.2020	Introduction to Social Investment		Webinar
29.7.2020	Business Modelling Pt 2		Workshop
19.8.2020	Meet up 3		Social/evening
Cohort 3			
9.9.2020	Meet up 1		Social/evening
16.9.2020	Business Modelling Pt 1; Session 1		Workshop
23.9.2020	Business Modelling Pt 1; Session 2		Workshop
7.10.2020	Introduction to Social Investment		Webinar
14.10.2020	Demystifying CRM	Introducing the different types of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems there are and finding out which will work for your organisation.	Webinar
21.10.2020	Social Enterprise and Trading		Workshop
4.11.2020	Business Modelling Pt 1; Session 1		Workshop
11.11.2020	Business Modelling Pt 1; Session 2		Workshop
11.11.2020	Monetising IP and Assets		Webinar
9.12.2020	Business Modelling Pt 2; Session 1		Workshop
16.12.2020	Business Modelling Pt 2; Session 2		Workshop

16.12.2020	Meet up 2	Social/evening
13.1.2021	Introduction to Social Investment	Webinar
13.1.2021	Business Modelling Pt 2; Session 1	Workshop
27.1.2021	Business Modelling Pt 2; Session 2	Workshop
18.2.2021	Meet up 3	Social/evening

Meet ups			Attendees
09/11/2019	Edition 1 Meet up 1	Halifax	22
11/20/2019	Edition 1 Meet up 2	Manchester	7
06/04/2020	Edition 2 Meet up 1	Online	12
21/05/2020	Edition 2 Meet up 2	Online	17
03/06/2020	Edition 2 Meet up 2	Online	8
15/07/2020	Edition 2 Meet up 2	Online	8
09/09/2020	Edition 3 Meet up 1	Online	36
16/12/2020	Edition 3 Meet up 2	Online	8
18/02/2021	Edition 3 Meet up 3	Online	34

Workshops			Attendees
9/18/2019	Edition 1 Business Modelling Part 1 (1)	Bury	12
09/10/2019	Edition 1 Introduction to Social Investment	Online	16
30/10/2019	Edition 1 Social Enterprise and Trading	Leeds	13
11/06/2019	Edition 1 Business Modelling Part 2 (1)	Lancaster	9
11/13/2019	Edition 1 Monetising IP and Assets	Online	11
04/12/2019	Edition 1 Business Modelling Part 1 (2)	Hull	12
15/01/2020	Edition 1 Introduction to Social Investment	Online	7
29/01/2020	Edition 1 Business Modelling Part 2 (2)	Huddersfield	20
01/04/2020	Edition 2 Business Modelling Part 1 (1)	Online	23
22/04/2020	Edition 2 Introduction to Social Investment	Online	14
06/05/2020	Edition 2 Social Enterprise and Trading	Online	15
20/05/2020	Edition 2 Business Modelling Part 2 (1)	Online	15
27/05/2020	Edition 2 Business Modelling Part 2 (1)	Online	11
27/05/2020	Edition 2 Monetising IP and Assets	Online	13
17/06/2020	Edition 2 Business Modelling Part 1 (2)	Online	3
24/06/2020	Edition 2 Business Modelling Part 1 (2)	Online	5
08/07/2020	Edition 2 Introduction to Social Investment	Online	6
29/07/2020	Edition 2 Business Modelling Part 2 (2)	Online	3
16/09/2020	Edition 3 Business Modelling Part 1 (1)	Online	14
23/09/2020	Edition 3 Business Modelling Part 1 (2)	Online	10
07/10/2020	Edition 3 Introduction to Social Investment	Online	19
14/10/2020	Edition 3 Demystifying CRM	Online	18
21/10/2020	Edition 3 Social Enterprise and Trading	Online	13
04/11/2020	Edition 3 Business Modelling Part 1 (1)	Online	15
11/11/2020	Edition 3 Business Modelling Part 1 (2)	Online	11
11/11/2020	Edition 3 Monetising IP and Assets	Online	12
09/12/2020	Edition 3 Business Modelling Part 2 (1)	Online	12
16/12/2020	Edition 3 Business Modelling Part 2 (2)	Online	7
13/01/2021	Edition 3 Business Modelling Part 1 (1)	Online	7
13/01/2021	Edition 3 Introduction to Social Investment	Online	8
27/01/2021	Edition 3 Business Modelling Part 2 (2)	Online	9

Appendix G: Registration and Application form

Quick eligibility quiz

Q1. Which northern Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) region is your organisation based in? If you're not sure, click [here](#) for a map of LEP regions.

Q2. Does your organisation preserve, present, curate, exhibit, promote or educate about local, regional or national cultural heritage? Please note: cultural heritage could be physical (e.g. buildings, artefacts etc.) or non-physical (e.g. traditional dance, music or craft/making practices etc.)

Q3. Does the work your organisation does, either directly or indirectly, provide positive social impacts, such as: training, education and participation opportunities for your local community; or a safe, inclusive space to experience art and culture; or improves wellbeing and reduces isolation for local and diverse communities; or safeguards and promotes local stories and heritage?

How we will use your data

Q4. Please check the box to confirm you agree to the following use of your data:

I consent to my data being used by Creative United to assess my application for a place on the Prosper North business support programme.

I also consent that my data may be shared with programme partners in the following ways:

- with a Creative United business advisor who my organisation might be matched with for the purposes of 1:1 support;
- if applicable, progressing my organisation to Key Fund in order to begin the process of applying to the Northern Cultural Regeneration Fund;
- shared in anonymised form, unless my permission is sought otherwise, with programme funders the National Lottery Heritage Fund;
- shared in anonymised form, unless my permission is sought otherwise, with programme evaluators.

You can find Creative United's Data and Privacy policy on our website www.creativeunited.org.uk/privacy-policy/

Q5. We would love to include you on our mailing list so we can keep you up to date with all Prosper North developments and other news from Creative United. Please check the box below if you're happy to be added.

I consent to my name and email address being added to the Creative United emailing list.

You and your organisation

Q6. Your details

First name
Last name
Job title
Email
Telephone

Q7. Your organisation

Organisation Name
Website

Twitter
Instagram
Facebook
Linkedin

Please provide a very brief description or summary of your organisation. For example: what service, exhibition, product or type of performance do you provide? Who is your audience or market? Do you operate locally, regionally or nationally? What's your mission and vision? (max. 100 words)

Some more information about your organisation

Q8. What is your organisation's address?

Address line 1
Address line 2
Address line 3
City/Town
County
Postcode

Q9. How is your organisation legally constituted?

Q10. Do you operate out of publicly accessible building or venue?

Q11. Do you rent, lease or own the building or venue?

Please tell us some more details about your organisation

Q12. Which of these sub-sectors best describes your organisation. (You can select up to 3 options.)

Q13. When was your organisation set up? (mm/yyyy)

Q14. Please tell us about the people that work in your organisation.

Number of full time staff
Number of part time staff
Number of volunteers
Number of freelancers
Number of board members

Please tell us about your organisation's financial position.

Q15. What was your organisation's turnover in the last financial year? (please enter numbers only)

Q16. Roughly speaking, what percentage of your income in the last financial year was from the following sources? (Please note, your answers across the options must total 100%)

Crowdfunding
Debt finance (loans)
Earned income (ticket sales, retail, commissions, contracts etc)
Equity investment

Friends and family	
Grants (Trusts, Foundations, Arts Council England, Heritage Fund etc)	
Local authority	
Patrons and philanthropy	
Social equity investment	
Social finance (repayable loans)	
Sponsorship	
Other	
Total:	100%

Your organisation's investment need.

Q17. Have you used social finance (repayable loans) or social equity investment in your organisation before?

Q18. Please indicate the level of investment your organisation is currently interested in securing? If you don't know, that's fine. Simply select 'Not sure yet'.

Q19. Which of these best describes what you need the investment for? (You can select up to 3 options.)

How business support might help

Q20. Where would support and advice be most needed in your organisation? (You can select more than one option.)

Business planning
 Preparing for organisational change
 Setting vision and mission
 Becoming ready to access social finance
 Something else (please specify):

Q21. Please indicate how much of a priority the following changes would be for your organisation.

	High priority	Medium priority	Low priority	Not a priority
Job creation				
Increased engagement with local community				
Increased participation of local community				
Improved accessibility				
Increased sales income				
More commissions or contracts of work				

More opportunities for performances/exhibitions etc from local artists

More opportunities for local talent development

Increased training opportunities for local people

Increased diversity of audience

Increased diversity of workforce (including volunteers)

Job/s safeguarded

More volunteers

Increased diversity of income/funding sources

Cultural heritage safeguarded

Cultural heritage recognised

Please tell us any other changes you would like to see:

Some more information about the cultural heritage of your organisation

Q22. Prosper North is being funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. It would help us if you could please describe the cultural heritage your organisation produces, presents, promotes or safeguards. (max. 100 words)

Q23. If you want, you can upload a copy of your current business plan here. This would be useful for our business advisors in getting to know your organisation.