

ENTERPRISE ROAD

Learning and sharing best practice on enterprise development in deprived communities

Final report

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This report was commissioned by the East of England Development Agency with part funding from the European Social Fund



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1 Executive summary

The East of England Development Agency (EEDA) has a significant responsibility for reducing economic exclusion of individuals and communities in the region. One way to approach the task is to stimulate enterprise in these communities, thereby growing solutions from the grassroots. However, this is a significant challenge, and raises many questions.

EEDA commissioned The Ideas Mine to run a year-long programme – which came to be called Enterprise Road – driven by formal action-learning networks to work with practitioners, policymakers and funders to develop a shared understanding of effective interventions and appropriate delivery models for enterprise support in economically deprived communities.

A very wide range of people drawn from across the private, public and third sectors at national, regional and local level contributed to the programme, and their commitment and willingness to think deeply and differently enabled a rich and very constructive debate.

Legacies from Enterprise Road include the successful application of the action learning process, which EEDA may use in future; the creation of a range of new cross-sectoral networks, which are working together to tackle mutual challenges; a shared understanding of issues which did not exist before; and a commitment from EEDA to fund a pilot programme, based on learning from Enterprise Road.

2 Background

2.1 Introduction

Regeneration of communities is an extremely complex, multi-faceted issue. In the past, Government policy placed emphasis on physical regeneration and social cohesion within areas of multiple deprivation. Only within the last twenty years has it paid more attention to the importance of economic regeneration as the third element of community regeneration. Recognition that enterprise should be a central component within the package of economic regeneration has been even more recent¹. The role of the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) in providing leadership for all aspects of economic development gives them a crucial responsibility in regeneration partnerships. Yet, in many areas, these partnerships are still fragile and have yet to reach their full potential in delivering the impact sought by central government and the RDAs.

The East of England Development Agency (EEDA) introduced Investing in Communities (IiC) in 2003. The high level aims of this innovative programme were twofold; firstly, to bring a strategic approach to tackling economic disadvantage in the region; and secondly to combine local, sub-regional and regional initiatives in a way that complemented each other and responded to the individual needs of clients. A crucial element of the IiC philosophy was to stress the value of sharing learning and good practice to maintain high quality services for clients.

One strand of the programme focused on the contribution enterprise can make to reducing economic exclusion of individuals and communities. This strand of the programme was slower to get off the ground, and complicated by the changes in the role of Business Link and mainstream business support. It was clear that there needed to be better links between projects on the ground and between policy and delivery.

¹ HMT, 1999, Policy Action Team 3 report, *Enterprise and Social Exclusion*.

EEDA therefore proposed the development of a formal action-learning network focusing on enterprise in under-represented communities. The rationale for choosing the action-learning methodology for this purpose was sound. Creating a learning network amongst key partners requires mutual understanding, and a relationship between members based on trust and shared values. The membership should encompass partners involved in all stages of the process from policy to delivery, and from regional, sub regional and local agencies. Through participation, members would be encouraged to take ownership of, and responsibility for, identifying good practice at all levels. In turn, this would ensure the adoption of that good practice throughout the enterprise development process.

2.2 Programme objectives

The aim of this action learning programme was to capture and disseminate lessons learnt on enterprise development from the IIC programme and to influence key funders of enterprise and business support services across the region.

There were two elements to the work. Firstly, to work with practitioners, policymakers and funders to develop a shared understanding of effective interventions and appropriate delivery models for enterprise support in economically deprived communities. This was to be achieved primarily through a participative learning approach, working with people involved in the delivery of IIC projects, as well as other relevant stakeholders, to explore the impacts and lessons learnt from the programme. In addition, the work would draw on best practice from outside IIC and the region.

A series of 'expert seminars' would also be held to examine specific issues from an informed perspective.

The second purpose of the programme was to capture the information, evidence and learning in a series of briefings and discussion papers for wide dissemination to IIC partnerships and other relevant organisations across the region.

A conference, designed to disseminate the learning from the programme to a wider audience, would conclude the programme.

In the event, two key policy initiatives intervened to influence the programme. The Sub-National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration (SNR), commissioned and announced as part of Comprehensive Spending Review 2007, took effect. It was designed to:

- o further the empowerment of all local authorities to promote economic development and neighbourhood renewal
- o support local authorities to work together at the sub-regional level
- o strengthen the regional tier

In response to SNR, EEDA changed the delivery arrangements of the liC programme in order to devolve more effectively to local authorities and to integrate more closely with Local Area Agreements (LAAs).

A second policy initiative, the Business Support Simplification programme (now called *Solutions for Business*), was introduced from April 2008, with a roll-out that was scheduled to go fully live by March 2009.

These policy developments impacted on the programme in a number of ways. First, the programme was less about direct influence on liC funded projects and more about broader engagement with stakeholders including LAAs. In addition, the business support simplification programme and the role of mainstream business support became focal points for discussion.

3 The policy context

3.1 Investing in Communities

From 2003, EEDA worked with partners in the public, private and third sectors to increase employment, skills and enterprise in the lowest performing areas of the region. Nine local liC partnerships were responsible for strategic planning and managing delivery of local projects and EEDA manages several regional projects.

The overarching objective for the enterprise strand was to create the right conditions for enterprise in disadvantaged communities, ensuring that anyone who was interested in self-employment or starting a business had the advice and support

necessary to make the most of their opportunities. The specific objectives for 2007-2011 were:

- o promoting access to finance
- o creating pathways to enable disadvantaged communities to access mainstream business support
- o supporting the development and growth of social enterprise
- o enhancing enterprise development and innovation in disadvantaged communities
- o supporting linkages between LEGI (Local Enterprise Growth Initiative) and City Growth Strategies

Assessment of the first phase of delivery and of the business plans for the second phase identified a need for clearer targeting and improved co-ordination of enterprise support activities. In response, EEDA initiated a major programme to share knowledge and develop a more strategic approach with higher impact and greater innovation.

3.2 Regional and National Policy Drivers

The Enterprise Road project was introduced to encourage partners to work together to develop solutions to some of the key issues relating to enterprise and EEDA's broader economic participation priority.

In identifying the issues, we took into account the main policy drivers for Enterprise Road at the regional level and national level together with relevant evidence on economic performance and enterprise programme delivery in the East of England.

The Regional Economic Strategy states that: By 2031, the East of England will be:

- *internationally competitive with a global reputation for innovation and business growth*
 - *a region that harnesses and develops the talents and creativity of all*
 - *at the forefront of the low-carbon and resource-efficient economy.*
- and known for:*

- *exceptional landscapes, vibrant places and quality of life*
- *being a confident, outward-looking region with strong leadership and where communities actively shape their future.*

The overarching aim of all RDAs is to improve the economic performance of their regions, put simply, by increasing economic outputs. The latter is achieved by either increasing the level of resources dedicated to producing outputs or increasing their productivity. Within that overall aim are two important principles for expenditure of public funding – first it should address market failures rather than replace private sector activity; and second it should address issues of equity in the economic sphere. EEDA has proposed three headline targets: increasing GVA, increasing employment and reducing CO₂ emissions.

People are one of the key resources available to any economy. If one way to increase outputs is to increase resource, then moving people from economic inactivity into economic activity aids the quest to improve economic performance. When those people are also claiming benefits there is a double pay-off for the economy as they gradually move from being a cost to the public purse to being contributors.

In the East of England, Labour Force Survey (LFS) data to January 2008 showed that 34.6% of the working age population (1,566,000 people) were economically inactive. In the same period Job Seeker Allowance (JSA) data showed some 58,000 people were unemployed and seeking benefits giving official unemployment rates of 1.7%². The very low unemployment rates at that time reflected the generally healthy jobs market in the East of England and that the region serves as a source of workers for London. A year later, and the economic downturn has been felt in the East of England with JSA claimants rising to about 95,000 or 2.8%. These claimant figures are still low relative to other parts of the country. However, looking below the regional level reveals pockets of high unemployment and particularly areas where incapacity benefit claimant rates soar. (See Figure 1)

Where pockets of high unemployment persist in an otherwise strong labour market it is often due to issues of place (e.g. the loss of jobs in rural areas, lack of opportunities

² According to figures released by JobCentre Plus

in neighbourhoods of high deprivation), or of the individuals (e.g. lack of qualifications or a poor skills match). There are some groups who, in addition, are disproportionately highly represented in the claimant count due to employer discrimination, such as people suffering from mental health problems, people with disabilities, ex-offenders and new immigrant groups.

The Treasury has identified enterprise as one of the drivers of increased productivity. As well as being a source of employment and wealth creation, the constant churn caused by new enterprises entering the market place with new ideas, new energy and new products is beneficial for the economy as a whole as it encourages innovation and competitiveness. In the RES, EEDA has identified the need to strengthen the entrepreneurial culture of the region and that enterprise can be a tool for tackling economic and therefore social exclusion "***Entrepreneurship is also a vehicle for economic inclusion if it occurs within a deprived community or disadvantaged group***".

There is a need to create an embedded culture of entrepreneurship amongst all groups and parts of the region, and to increase leadership and management capacity for both new and existing enterprises. As well as improving enterprise performance and the survival and growth rates of business, this will lead to improved rates of enterprise start-ups, particularly where there is untapped potential for entrepreneurship such as amongst women, ethnic minorities, the disabled, in deprived neighbourhoods and amongst young people.

This priority recognises the need to harness the untapped potential of communities of place and identity which are currently under-represented as entrepreneurs. Again the region as a whole performs relatively well in comparison with most other regions on enterprise indicators but there is a very diverse performance within the region as can be seen in Figure 1. Although there is not a direct match between the location of communities of identity that are economically excluded and deprived geographic communities, there is a correlation between the two. So for example, higher proportions of IB claimants, ex-offenders and new migrant communities live in the most deprived areas.

The Enterprise Strategy, published by DBERR in March 2008, identified five enterprise enablers, one of which closely matches the above priority:

A culture of enterprise – develop a culture, where talent can be unlocked and flourish, recognising differences in enterprise culture across different social groups, reducing fear of failure that prevents start-ups, and giving everyone the opportunity to be entrepreneurial³

The other relevant priorities identified in the strategy are knowledge and skills, innovation, and access to finance, all of which feature in the RES. The enterprise strategy also stresses the 'equity case' for supporting more enterprise

...where it can be used as a tool to bring significant social and economic benefits to the more deprived parts of our country, and to those groups in the population heavily represented there.⁴

The enterprise strategy is not the only national influence on regional policy. SNR requires regional and sub regional partners to review their approach to economic development, including

- o an enhanced role for local authorities in economic development, including a requirement to produce local economic strategies that are consistent with the single regional strategy
- o a requirement for agencies to work effectively on the basis of real economic geographies and therefore to develop Multi-Area Agreements where necessary
- o increased devolution of funding and powers to the local level
- o the need to better engage the private sector in economic decision making

³ Enterprise: Unlocking the UK's talent, DBERR, March 2008

⁴ <http://www.berr.gov.uk/bbf/enterprise-smes/enterprise-framework/index.html>

The review also called for action to support enterprise growth to be consistent with the Government's agenda for business support simplification. This national programme, delivered regionally by RDAs, required regional, sub-regional and local bodies to work together to transform business support products and delivery by 2010. Funders of business support should work together to purchase services based on a nationally agreed portfolio of products according to local needs.

Other areas of national policy that are particularly relevant are the targets for reducing incapacity benefit claimants and the objectives for the Working Neighbourhood Funds. These agendas attract large amounts of public funding that can be used flexibly at a local level and offer important opportunities for partnership working.

3.3 Key issues for Enterprise Road

The issues below, loosely grouped under five categories, underpinned the debate in Enterprise Road:

- o strategic direction
- o barriers to enterprise
- o service delivery
- o diversity of service and quality standards across delivery agencies
- o confusion of access routes and service offers available to customers

3.4 Strategic direction

It was clear that while good progress was made in trying to define a regional strategy for enterprise in liC, its implementation had been less successful. In particular, there were some doubts amongst providers as to how well the programme was integrated with other regional and local initiatives, and it was difficult to see how the individual elements combined to create synergy leading to achievement of the overarching objectives. Key issues were

- o providing clarity about EEDA's strategy for enterprise in disadvantaged communities and ensuring all partners understand and share the vision of success
- o defining and managing the relationship between BLE and specialist providers of enterprise services to deprived communities

- o developing working relationships, and where necessary integration with other relevant programmes e.g. Rural Development Programme
- o reducing confusion for the customer and working together in partnership to manage funding streams

3.5 Barriers to enterprise

As well as generic barriers to enterprise faced by individuals in disadvantaged circumstances, there are specific barriers particular to the region. Use of detailed research to create an evidence base to direct services seems to be patchy across the region. Hence the barriers to growth are not always addressed in as effective a way as is possible. Data has to be gathered locally, but taking account of regional and national trends, and analysed from a long term and regional perspective. Research needs to include the evidence of what has already worked well within the region to tackle barriers to enterprise. Specific issues for the region include:

- o East of England is the worst performing region for general IT skills and there is a lower than average levels of skills generally⁵
- o There is a net outflow of graduates from the region
- o East of England has a high rate people who quote fear of failure as a barrier to entrepreneurship
- o 50% of the population in East of England will not have access to next generation of broadband, at a time when more people than ever are relying on new technologies to work from home
- o Housing prices in rural areas are rising faster than wages, forcing people into low cost housing in towns (the economic downturn which began at the end of 2008 may have influenced this trend)

3.6 Service delivery

Delivery of outputs from the individual elements of the LIC programme and across the piece did not meet expectations. There were concerns about the robustness of the enterprise interventions and the extent of joining up locally and regionally. This raised questions about strategic focus, partner engagement and delivery capacity. Also, there was little indication of cross fertilisation of ideas between parts of the programme or with initiatives outside the programme. Issues included:

⁵ 'The Knowledge Economy and East of England, EEDA, 2005

- o capacity issues for the service providers, particularly given the public funding regimes in which they operated and the increasing number of larger, private sector organisations with more aggressive tendering techniques
- o raising the understanding of enterprise as an option for their client groups with all relevant stakeholders
- o planning service provision for future not just the present e.g. demographic changes such as aging population and inflow of retirees (highest rate of growth in over 50s), new immigrant communities
- o coping with extremes within sub-regions e.g. differences between residents and commuters; rural v urban; qualifications levels; etc
- o driving up the quality of provision across the board
- o joined up delivery

3.7 The economic climate

The Enterprise Road programme was launched in May 2008. By the end of the year, it was clear that public sector funding (including resources controlled by EEDA and the local authorities) would be squeezed. At the same time, the international economic climate worsened into the worst financial conditions for many years. These two phenomena were naturally hugely influential on the focus for discussions during the project.

Figure 1 Claimant counts showing comparison with regional and national averages, June 2007, LFS

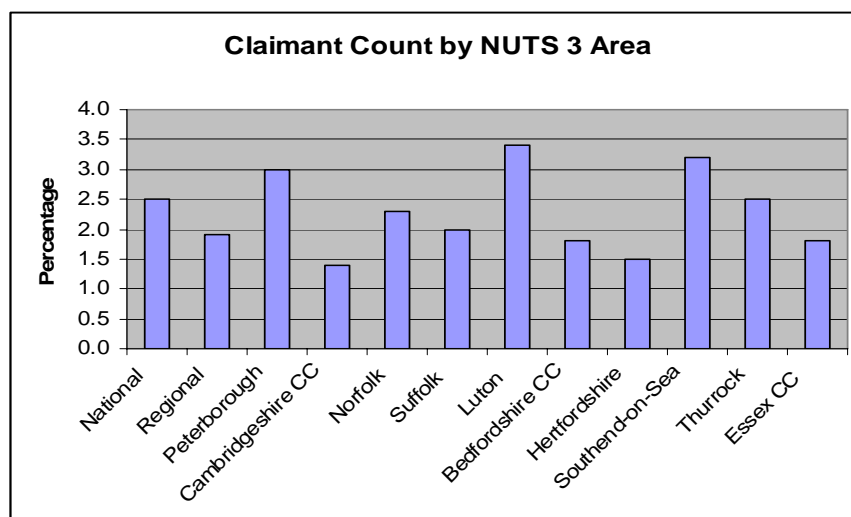
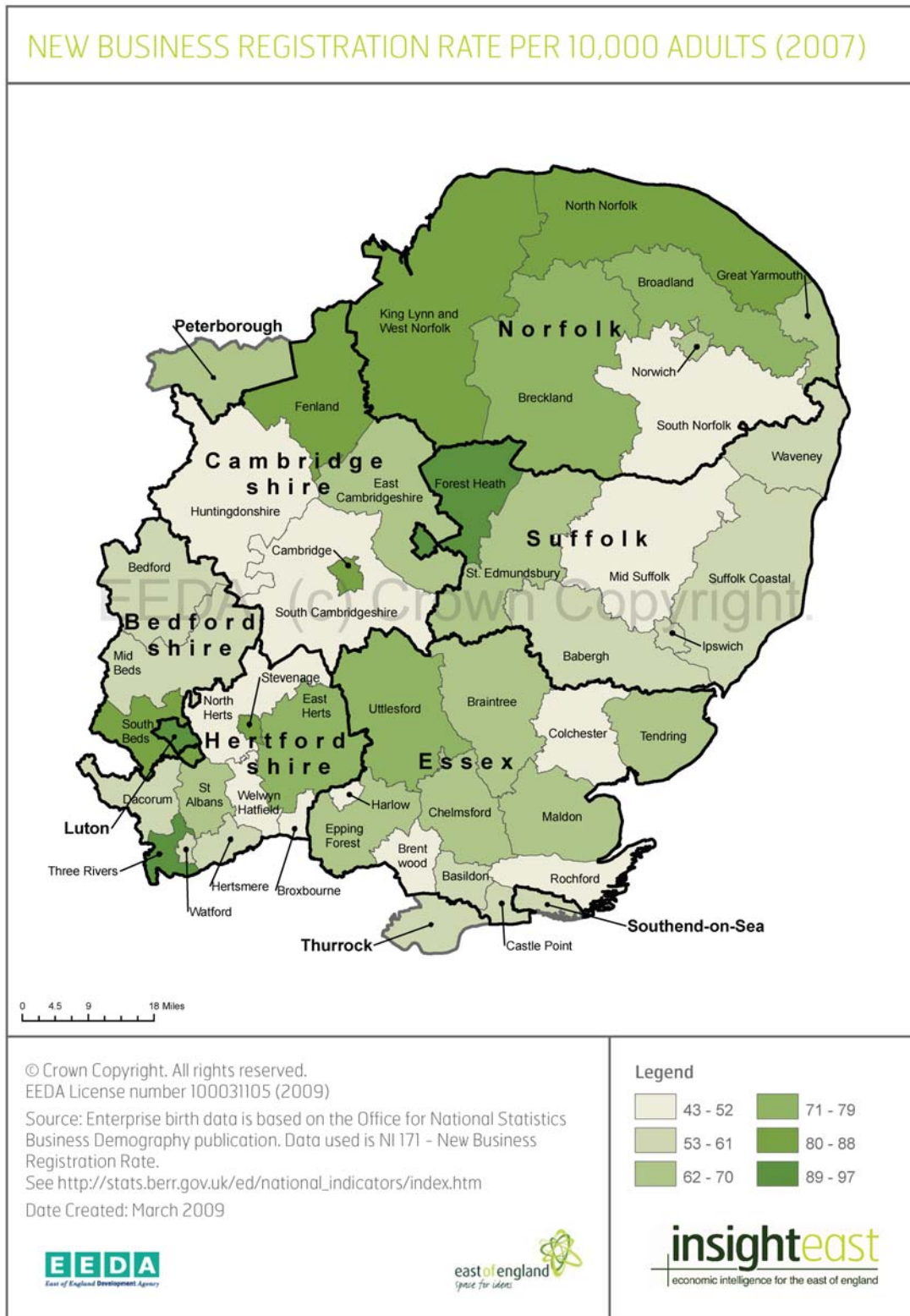


Figure 2 East of England – showing new business registrations per 10000 head of population



4 The programme

The Ideas Mine christened the programme 'Enterprise Road', to signify the key aim and process which the project was designed to take. The approach taken by The Ideas Mine was based on the premise that when EEDA introduced liC, it was seeking a long-term change in the culture of the partnerships working to promote enterprise in deprived communities.

From our experience, sharing good practice and influencing are most effective when all parties are in a strong relationship and where everyone understands their purpose and their role in delivering the outcome desired by all – in this instance, creating the right conditions for disadvantaged people to benefit from enterprise. Purchasers and suppliers are in a symbiotic relationship, dependent upon each other for success. But strong relationships do not happen instantly, they are developed over time, built upon shared values and principles, trust, mutual respect, and understanding of each other's perspectives. Evidence suggests these same characteristics are also important for mainstreaming to occur⁶.

Good policy is created when it is based on good evidence from delivery and customers; effective services are delivered when the frontline understands policy imperatives. Therefore, a measure of the programme's success would be the extent to which stakeholders from all steps of the end-to end process were involved in the action learning.

Our analysis of EEDA's strategic aims suggested that the project could deliver a cultural change in the region based on a new relationship between purchasers and suppliers of enterprise services. The programme sequence was therefore structured around the following process:

- o stakeholder analysis
- o stakeholder buy-in
- o initiation and planning workshop(s)
- o evaluation of existing liC programme

⁶ SBS, 2007, Mainstreaming Business Support Targeted at Disadvantaged Communities

- o management of the action learning circles, meeting bimonthly to review good practice from inside and outside the region, and to formulate the content for the expert seminars
- o management of the expert seminars
- o high level conference to make decisions on the adoption of good practice in specialist and mainstream services and to launch an ongoing learning network
- o production of materials capturing the learning and good practice from those events

4.1 The audience

Enterprise Road was directed at a cross-sectoral audience of stakeholders interested in the potential of enterprise to influence social and economic regeneration in communities which were not thriving. Specifically, they included people at director and operational level from enterprise support agencies, regional and national development agencies, local authorities, Business Link, Jobcentre Plus, the Learning and Skills Council, universities and colleges, and the third sector.

4.2 Website

A dedicated website – www.eeda.org.uk/enterpriseroad - was created to support the communication and dissemination needs of the programme. The site carried news about enterprise initiatives, case studies, a section devoted to resources relating to enterprise development, events, and a blog.

4.3 Newsletters

A newsletter carrying information about Enterprise Road was distributed bi-monthly to a database of people who had engaged with the programme during its lifetime.

5 The launch

Almost 100 delegates at both director and operational level, from enterprise support agencies, local authorities, Business Link, Jobcentre Plus and the Learning and Skills Council, universities and colleges, and the third sector assembled to hear about the programme's key themes, meet the people running it, and build their own networks.

Presentations from Marco Cereste, EEDA Board member and Enterprise Road champion, Alison Webster, EEDA Executive Director, Skills and Communities, Kate Welch, Chief Executive of the Acumen Community Enterprise Development Trust, Jane Barnes of Yakkety-Yak Multimedia, and Sian Prime, formerly Head of the Creative Pioneer Team, National Endowment for the Sciences, Technology and the Arts, gave perspectives on what enterprise meant for the region, regional priorities for enterprise and economic participation, perspectives on overcoming barriers to successful enterprise, and how action learning could contribute to the Enterprise Road programme.

Feedback was instructive and useful; 81% were positive about the programme's approach to enterprise and most (86.1%) said that the event was relevant to their field of interest.

6 Action learning

Action learning is a facilitated process which works through structured discussion with a cohort of people (who may not know each other at the start of the process) about live issues, problems or projects; it leads to action to implement fresh approaches based on the discussion; and gathers feedback to inform the process as it progresses. The process is a combination of support and challenge, and has been found to be particularly useful for developing:

- o new approaches to learning
- o solutions to problems (big issues and day to day problems)
- o developing peer support frameworks, leadership, change management, and learning and sharing of practice with colleagues from a range of work settings.

The Enterprise Road action learning programme was regional, with five groups ('action learning circles') meeting three times over the Spring and Summer of 2008 in Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire.

The participants were recruited from launch attendees as well as through the networks and connections of Business Link's partnership directors.

Three key themes emerged:

- o how individuals from disadvantaged communities can be successfully engaged and, in particular, how their psychological barriers and lack of confidence can be overcome
- o the relationship between policy and local implementation, and the interface between mainstream and specialist support
- o how the arrangements which enable third sector organisations and small businesses to win business from public sector bodies can be changed to enable a more accessible procurement process

Three barriers to effective delivery of enterprise activities in disadvantaged communities in the East of England emerged:

- o the cost of providing support that tackles lack of self confidence as an integral element of pre-start and start-up support
- o funding issues, and particularly access to public sector contracts, for third sector organisations that are best placed to provide services to the target groups
- o lack of coordination between agencies and lack of clarity in regional strategies leading to a disconnect between policies and delivery of services.

There was a perception that while all main public sector funders of enterprise activity in the region (EEDA, the local authorities, the LSC and JobCentre Plus) signed up in principle to a regional strategy (the RES), that in practice there can be inconsistencies when it comes to commissioning delivery. Some bodies can be internally inconsistent in the way that they implement their policies with regard to the priority given to enterprise, and at a local level there are a range of different challenges (for example territorialism).

For third sector delivery agencies this leads to

- o confusion about funding opportunities
- o a lack of understanding about how they can contribute to each agency's agenda as well as the regional agenda
- o waste of valuable resource trying to keep up to date with relevant policy and funding developments
- o wasteful competition rather than fruitful collaboration

6.1 The Suffolk Model

A new model designed to facilitate an individual's journey into mainstream business support emerged from the action learning circle in Suffolk. Demand rather than supply-led, it focused on individuals who are not currently being picked up, and had three key objectives, which were to:

- o move people to a point where they can take advantage of mainstream support
- o provide clarity on the route and support available on the journey
- o recognise the importance of measuring distance travelled, not just hard business start-up outputs.

The model takes a hub and spoke approach, with mainstream enterprise support at the centre of the wheel. An 'independent access gateway', sitting between hub and spokes, provides consistent access to services for people on the journey. Individuals would receive independent advice on their most appropriate start-point and the best-fit journey to the mainstream.

The Independent Gateway would be a separately funded post or, alternatively, one which could be established within existing support organisations. Its benefits would include:

- o consistent, quality access
- o independent and transparent advice to the individual
- o the involvement of the third sector in the development of proposals and as partners to BLE
- o value for money
- o shift in funding emphasis from outputs to outcome and impact and the importance of journey
- o regional buy-in
- o regional model with local flexibility
- o longevity
- o opportunity to benchmark against other region's business support initiatives

The model recognises that while individual flexibility may be more expensive, the overall gains, both in quality of service and value to the region, will be greater once the full range of outcomes is measured.

6.2 Other issues for Enterprise Road

The action learning process led to

- o a cross-sector (and cross-circle) network that is forging mutually beneficial partnerships to drive the regional enterprise agenda forward
- o the development of an arm's length enterprise model that could be used as a template of good practice
- o a county-wide enterprise provider database including eligibility criteria, location and local media for use by enterprise support agencies in Norfolk

One of the circles – in Peterborough – resolved to continue to meet after the programme had formally finished. Co-ordinated by Business Link, its role is to focus on supporting the IIC team at Peterborough Council.

7 Entrepreneurs' panel

In order to effectively represent the views of practising entrepreneurs a dedicated panel was recruited (see appendix).

The panel's role was to provide a practical and experiential perspective by:

- o act as a sounding board for ideas, perceptions, suggestions, recommendations etc that are generated by the action learning circles and network
- o enterprise proofing the developing thoughts, direction and strategies that came from the project by ensuring that policy perspectives are informed by people engaged in enterprise
- o providing EEDA with a direct line of engagement with recipients and beneficiaries of activity funded by their programmes which can enhance the understanding of what has worked and why.

Emphasis was placed on entrepreneurs from disadvantaged communities so that the Enterprise Road programme had a bottom-up and lateral development potential. Panel members also included entrepreneurs who came through more traditional and market-led routes: those who immediately engaged with mainstream provision and had no need of additional or specialist support programmes.

The Entrepreneurs Panel met as a group twice; a number of individuals also attended action learning circles and the expert seminars.

The entrepreneurs were asked to consider the issues and recommendations emerging from the action learning sets and expert seminars. They endorsed the findings of these groups and added their own unique perspective, focusing in particular on the relationship between public and private sector bodies in the region. Issues included:

- o access to public procurement for SMEs
- o access to financial resources for SMEs
- o communications.

The discussions ranged over a broad spectrum of issues and led to calls for action from within the region. They included:

7.1 Procurement

- o access to small business innovation is currently not facilitated by the procurement process
- o the current 'preferred suppliers' list should be abolished, and opportunities should be opened to SMEs by reviewing eligibility criteria
- o the establishment of consortiums of small companies should be encouraged so that they can beat the 'too small to bid' argument
- o feedback should be automatic after every tender in order to promote continuous improvement
- o the public sector process should be equally open and transparent so that companies can make informed decisions about their chances of success in the bidding process

7.2 Process

- o EEDA should run an outreach programme that encourages visits to small businesses to better understand their procurement processes and other needs. In some cases grant applications should be accompanied by visits to companies.

- o referees who support tenders should be in similar work, but not exclude relevant work experience (currently SMEs have to demonstrate public sector working experience to become eligible for contracts)
- o something needs to be introduced to protect small business from bad debtors (for example access to credit checking services for SMEs).
- o the intellectual property of small companies should be protected and NOT used as part of approved roll-out programmes delivered by larger players.
- o change the evaluation system to have a matrix of outcomes and outputs in order to encourage small businesses and get wider benefits than best value
- o task BLE to work with small businesses to review their suitability for public sector tender bids and use BLE as a portal to appropriate small business suppliers. Public sector contracts could also be colour coded by value.

7.3 Resources

- o implement a new start-up grant regime that makes money available on a no-interest loan repayment basis. Following repayment the company then has eligibility for double the money.
- o would it be possible for the RDAs rather than the Banks to administer the £9bn available to UK business on preferential business rates?

7.4 Communication

- o communication between the public and private sector needs to improve. Communications should not just be left to online systems but people should talk to people in plain English.
- o Enterprise Road should continue in order to keep building capacity and networks
- o respect the worth of the silent majority and what they can contribute
- o monthly brainstorming sessions could be coordinated by EEDA and include Third sector organisations and entrepreneurs (preferably off-site in business locations), but the time of participants must be paid for
- o active listening needs to be followed by tangible actions
- o business needs to understand better the relationship between BERR and the RDA and how results are measured.

8 Expert seminars

A series of three expert seminars were held in which the themes and issues which emerged from the action learning process were explored with the benefit of specialist perspectives.

The seminars had on one overall theme – to consult on the regional/local process of ‘commissioning’ and delivering two BSSP products: Local Community Coaches and Business Creation for under-represented groups and the interface between the two products.

The first seminar was aimed at regional and sub-regional funders of business support and social inclusion initiatives and used to develop a shared ‘vision’ of what outcomes or impact should be prioritised for the region.

The following two seminars used the shared vision to engage local funders and deliverers of support and to consult on the form and content of local community coaches and business creation for under-represented groups in the region.

Inputs to the first seminar came from DBERR, DCLG and DWP. Inputs to the second and third seminars came from EEDA officers responsible for social inclusion and enterprise, community coaches, and recipients of coaching.

8.1 Issues raised

There was recognition that in a reduced funding environment, there was a need to shape outcomes appropriately. For EEDA, this meant appraising its approach to measurement and targets (and could, for example, include the adoption of social accounting processes).

A clearer understanding of the emerging arrangements around BSSP was developed through the process, and the new cross-sectoral and agency networks that had been created through the Enterprise Road process should help to facilitate the successful introduction of the new products.

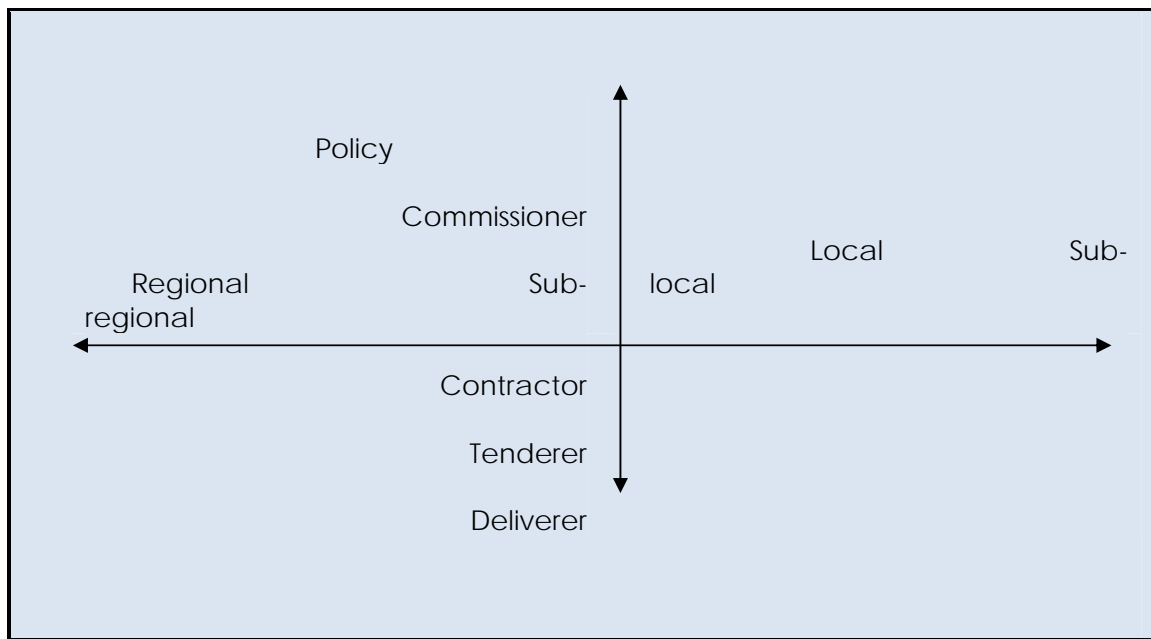
Partnership, communication, targets and flexible funding emerged as key issues in the process going forward.

The recession will provide opportunities for third sector organisations to develop a greater role in service provision, but their challenge was to demonstrate their added value while at the same time developing the skills and processes to manage larger contracts. This meant, for example, accurately costing contracts, understanding the real cost implications of taking on larger contracts, refining their business models to manage the greater demands which will be placed on them, and understanding concept of full cost recovery.

The public sector, and in particular EEDA, has a pivotal role in joining up strategy and delivery, understanding how to manage change, and capturing and sharing good practice.

An effective model will make connections both vertically and horizontally through the public procurement supply chain, and geographically across it at all levels.

Figure 3: An integrated procurement supply chain model



Serious consideration was given to the creation of a forum where third sector providers and public commissioners could discuss mechanisms for developing effective contractual arrangements.

9 Outcomes

9.1 Networking and cross-sector working

In approaching a location-specific challenge – stimulating enterprise development in economically-deprived communities in the East of England – Enterprise Road has led to the development of a number of new networks of people who may not otherwise met. They have shared views, experiences, and challenges, and as a result they have developed a mutual understanding of the issues which they face. Bound by a shared commitment to addressing a significant social challenge, Enterprise Road has fostered an environment in which people across all three sectors – public, private and third – have worked together and begun to develop innovative and thoughtful solutions.

The value of this achievement should not be under-estimated; one of the most persistent fault-lines identified throughout the year-long programme was poor communication, exacerbated by the use of sector-specific language. A consequence of the failure of communication has been a lack of understanding (both linguistic and conceptual) which has hampered progress in this important arena.

9.2 Action learning

EEDA was keen to explore the potential of the action learning process as a tool for consultation, debate, and problem-solving. Its use during Enterprise Road has demonstrated that it can be a powerful process with valuable applications within the public sector context.

9.3 Cross-sectoral Forum

An issue which dominated much of the debate in the Enterprise Road programme was procurement, and the potential its careful use may have to enable enterprise in economically-deprived communities. The last of the three expert seminars was

devoted to the subject, and one of the ideas which was explored was to create a cross-sectoral forum with a remit to continue the debate and explore practical actions which could be taken by commissioning bodies in the East of England. This would be a very useful vehicle to continue the debate which has been stimulated by Enterprise Road, and it is to be hoped that the desire for such a forum, which was articulated at the seminar, might be shared by others who have been touched by this programme and turned into a reality.

9.4 Pilot

EEDA will commission two pilot projects to test out partnership-based delivery models for the Enterprise Coaching product which is part of the Solutions for Business framework.

The pilots will use one-to-one coaching to help individuals who would not normally access mainstream start-up support to understand the opportunities and risks of self-employment and to guide them to the most appropriate service.

The pilots will provide an opportunity for local partners to try out new delivery arrangements building on the lessons learned from Enterprise Road.

In particular the pilots will encourage collaborative working, effective management of the interface between specialist and mainstream support and measurement and evaluation on the basis of progress achieved towards employment and economic activity rather than number of start ups.

Acknowledgements

Enterprise Road has asked many people from a wide range of organisations and places to contribute their thoughts, effort, and time to a process which has often been intensive and demanding. The willingness on the part of participants to be open, innovative, and receptive to people with different views and experiences has been impressive and, as a consequence, the quality of the debate has been high.

We are grateful to everyone for their contributions, and we are particularly grateful to the entrepreneurs for their generosity in making time for Enterprise Road when they were not being remunerated.

Appendix

Programme participants

Simon	Crossland	Business Link
Dianne	Hardy	Haven Gateway Partnership
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Fiona	Lascalles	Business Link
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Robert	Tull	Business Link
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Kate	Douglas	Exemplas
Andrew	Cawthorpe	Princes Trust
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Viv	Starkiss	Business Link
Barrie	Stainstreet	Business Link
Bob	Baggalley	COLBEA
Michael	Veasey	Stevenage Business Initiative
Tony	Comber	Braintree Enterprise Centre
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Ingrid	Bennett	Business Link
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Alison	Webster	EEDA
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The Entrepreneurs' Panel		
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Paul	Downer	Oak View Landscapes
Jim	Galpin	James Galpin Associates Ltd
Jane	Horwood	Catfish Web Design
Saskia	Kent	Make Your Mark
Sarah	McPherson	Heart & Sole
Julian	Thompson	On Demand Technology
Hazel	Johnson	Make Your Mark
Robert	Ashton	Social entrepreneur, writer