Evaluation of Black Country ERDF Investment & the Technical Assistance Programme

A Final Report by Regeneris Consulting
This study is a Black Country Technical Assistance Partnership project, part funded through the European Regional Development Fund 2007-13 and the four Black Country Local Authorities.
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1. **Introduction**

1.1 Regeneris Consulting was appointed by the Black Country Technical Assistance (TA) Team to undertake a review of:

- **Lessons learned in delivery of ERDF projects in the Black Country over 2007-13**, including an overview of spend and outputs generated in the Black Country, good practice in project delivery, and the experience of Black Country project deliverers

- **Delivery of the Black Country technical assistance project**, including performance against spend and outputs targets, and the perspectives of stakeholders on project effectiveness and impact, as well as what more technical assistance support could provide in the future.

1.2 Both elements of the work will help to draw out important lessons and recommendations for future LEP approaches to the use of technical assistance and to ERDF project prioritisation in the next ERDF programme (2014-20).

1.3 The study has drawn on a number of key research tasks, including:

- analysis of spend and outputs of the TA project to date

- analysis of feedback from workshop attendee beneficiaries, through both event feedback and a separate survey of beneficiaries.

- consultation with members of the TA team, DCLG, other Black Country partners (including the four local authorities and Black Country Consortium)

- case studies of other TA projects, in the Humber, Stoke & Staffordshire and the East Midlands

- case studies of Black Country projects, reviewing both good practice and lessons learnt about how delivery could be enhanced in the future.

1.4 The remainder of the report comprises the following:

- Section 2 sets out an overview of ERDF Investment in the West Midlands and the Black Country over 2007-13, as well as an overview of the Black Country Technical Assistance Programme

- Section 3 provides a summary of Black Country performance and good practice learning from the 2007-13 ERDF Programme

- Section 4 sets out an assessment of delivery and performance of the Technical Assistance Programme

- Section 5 sets out a forward view of the 2014-20 programme and guidance on technical assistance

- Section 6 sets out conclusions and recommendations from the study.
2. Overview of ERDF Investment 2007-13 and the Technical Assistance Programme

2.1 This section sets out:
- An overview of the 2007-13 West Midlands ERDF programme and projects funded in the Black Country
- An overview of the Black Country technical assistance partnership project, including rationale, aims and the anticipated inputs, activities and outputs to be delivered.

2007-13 ERDF Programme in the West Midlands

2.2 The 2007-13 ERDF programmes in England were set up at regional level, with Regional Development Agencies acting as the managing authority for funds. In the West Midlands, the €400m ERDF fund was managed by Advantage West Midlands.

2.3 The fund was set up under five priority axes:
- Priority 1: Promoting Innovation and Research and Development (£145m)
- Priority 2: Stimulating Enterprise Development (£142m)
- Priority 3: Achieving Sustainable Urban Development (£100m)
- Priority 4: Developing Inter-regional Activity (£1m)
- Priority 5: Technical Assistance (£12m).

2.4 In 2010, following the general election and change of Government, the nine regional development agencies in England were abolished, and replaced with 39 local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) at a smaller sub-national geography, but taking on a strategic economic development role. The managing authority role for ERDF funding across England transferred to DCLG, with LEPs taking on a role in identifying, co-ordinating and bringing forward ERDF bids from organisations within their areas.

2.5 In the early stages of the programme, the majority of investment went into region-wide projects across the West Midlands, with only Priority 3 having a particular focus on local level investments in a number of targeted areas under-performing economically. This priority focused on five designated urban regeneration zones, including Black Country North & South Staffordshire, and South Black Country and West Birmingham. In later stages following the closure of AWM however, more LEP-level projects also came forward under priority axes 1 and 2.

2.6 The table below sets out a summary of local Black Country projects, as well as projects covering a wider area, led by Black Country based organisations. In each case it also shows whether each project was a local project, or a project with LEP-wide or region-wide coverage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Local / LEP / Regional</th>
<th>ERDF Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agile Office Demonstrator Project</td>
<td>University of Wolverhampton</td>
<td>P1</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>£357k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project</td>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>Priority</td>
<td>Local / LEP</td>
<td>ERDF Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Built Environment Climate Change Innovations (BECCI)</td>
<td>University of Wolverhampton</td>
<td>P1</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>£584k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classic Knowledge Transfer Partnerships</td>
<td>University of Wolverhampton</td>
<td>P1</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>£7.89m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation First</td>
<td>University of Wolverhampton</td>
<td>P1</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>£1.66m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative Product Support Service</td>
<td>University of Wolverhampton</td>
<td>P1</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>£649k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Technologies and Applications for Identification, Location and Sensing (NTAILs)</td>
<td>University of Wolverhampton</td>
<td>P1</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>£614k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPEED West Midlands</td>
<td>University of Wolverhampton</td>
<td>P1</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>£2.39m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPEED Plus</td>
<td>University of Wolverhampton</td>
<td>P1</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>£2.10m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WM Centre for Constructing Excellence 2</td>
<td>University of Wolverhampton</td>
<td>P1</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>£1.37m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Country GOLD (Growth Opportunities: Local Delivery)</td>
<td>Wolverhampton City Council</td>
<td>P2</td>
<td>LEP</td>
<td>£985k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Country Local Broadband Plan</td>
<td>Wolverhampton City Council</td>
<td>P2</td>
<td>LEP</td>
<td>£250k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Country Pathway to Enterprise</td>
<td>Wolverhampton City Council</td>
<td>P2</td>
<td>LEP</td>
<td>£302k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Business Loans – Black Country (Project + extension)</td>
<td>Black Country Reinvestment Trust</td>
<td>P2</td>
<td>LEP</td>
<td>£3.01m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investing in the City Region</td>
<td>Marketing Birmingham</td>
<td>P3</td>
<td>LEP (B’ham &amp; Black Country)</td>
<td>£10.68m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Country Business Property Investment Programme</td>
<td>Walsall MBC</td>
<td>P3</td>
<td>LEP</td>
<td>£420k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castle Hill Vision</td>
<td>Dudley Metropolitan Council</td>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>£4.93m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dudley Canal Tunnel and Limestone Mines – The Portal Project</td>
<td>Dudley Canal Trust</td>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>£997k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dudley Town Centre Public Realm and Ambassador Project</td>
<td>Dudley Metropolitan Council</td>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>£3.35m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dudley Townscape Heritage Initiative</td>
<td>Dudley Metropolitan Council</td>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>£93k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Black Country SUD Package Management</td>
<td>Walsall MBC</td>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>£170k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Black Country SUD Package Management</td>
<td>Sandwell MBC</td>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>£99k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandwell Employment Network</td>
<td>Sandwell MBC</td>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>£393k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walsall Multi-agency one stop shop</td>
<td>Steps to Work (Walsall)</td>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>£926k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bromwich Town Centre Public Realm Programme</td>
<td>Sandwell MBC</td>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>£3.25m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolverhampton Neighbourhood Employment and Skills Service</td>
<td>Wolverhampton City Council</td>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>£1.07m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Country ERDF Team</td>
<td>Walsall MBC</td>
<td>P5</td>
<td>LEP</td>
<td>£205k</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DCLG, Beneficiaries under the West Midlands 2007-13 ERDF programme, Updated January 2015.
The Black Country Technical Assistance Programme

Project Rationale – Strategic Context and Project Need

2.7 A Black Country technical assistance ERDF project was originally funded to support delivery of the two Priority 3 packages across the North and South of the Black Country. When the Package Management projects were terminated, the Local Authorities lost staff capacity with relevant knowledge and expertise in providing technical support to potential and existing projects.

2.8 This loss as well as the closure of Advantage West Midlands left a significant ERDF expertise gap in the Black Country. The technical assistance project was developed to help in meeting that need, supporting a new team with the ERDF expertise to support local project developers and deliverers with applications and compliant delivery of ERDF projects.

Aims and Objectives

2.9 To meet the need described above, the main aims and objectives of the project were to:
• support grant applicants and recipients in developing and delivering compliant projects
• provide advice to grant applicants to ensure they understood the complex ERDF regulations
• provide advice and support to applicants and recipients on the cross cutting themes
• promote cooperation, networking and the learning and sharing of good practice.

Resources Input

2.10 As shown in Table 2.2, the BCTA Project was matched 1:1 with public funding. The total amount requested from ERDF was £172,079 reduced from an original request of £185,250 due to a delayed project start date. The public match funding was made up of equal contribution from the four Black Country Local Authorities with no private match funding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ERDF</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Contribution Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capital</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue</td>
<td>£172,079</td>
<td>£172,079</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>£344,158</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>£172,079</td>
<td>£172,079</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>£344,158</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.11 The ERDF funding was intended to be spent only on salaries and associated costs (NI, Pension, eligible expenses) with no capital costs and no overheads expenditure.

2.12 The project proposed the creation of a small team of 2 people and a team leader as well as assistance drawn from the Black Country Consortium when specialist skill input was required. These requirements were set out as follows:
Table 2.3 Staff Requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>FTEs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>External Funding Team Lead</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERDF Project Manager</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Development Officer</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claims and Monitoring Officer</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.55</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.13 These costs altered over the course of the programme, and latest figures are shown below in the project extension section.

**Delivery Activities / Roles**

2.14 The project set out to deliver three main strands of activity:

- A series of capacity building workshops aimed to share knowledge and promote good practice, working with existing and prospective ERDF project deliverers
- One-to-one support and guidance to project deliverers - the project also aimed to be a first point of contact for ERDF activity in the region, for DCLG as well as the projects themselves
- Audit and Compliance support – providing support to projects through pre Project Engagement Visit (PEV) meeting and health checks to assist projects in preparing for audits and ensuring all documentation was in order in line with ERDF regulations.

2.15 It was originally envisaged that the team would also support project development and bid writing, however due to delays in project approval, few new projects were being developed by the time this project commenced, and so this delivery strand was reduced.

**Outputs and Results**

2.16 The original output targets for the project are shown in the table below.

Table 2.4 Targets for the Black Country Technical Assistance Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establish two networks</td>
<td>The project aimed to establish a Black Country Sub Regional Group network and a Strategic Group to help facilitate the movement towards the next programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop 2 capacity building initiatives</td>
<td>Capacity building initiatives aimed to be a mixture between promoting good practice, working with existing projects and building capacity for the next programme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.17 Note, that output targets changed over the course of the programme, and latest figures are shown below in the project extension section.

**Project Extension**

2.18 The project requested a number of changes during the programme to meet the changing demands from project deliverers and new applicants. One of the changes involved a request for an additional £40,397 ERDF funding to support a significant expansion in outputs and a 6 month extension to the project from July to December 2015.

2.19 At the end of 2014 there was an underspend which, due to being on course to exceed targets, the project decided should be offered up and utilised by other projects. The changes brought the current figure, as of May 2015, to £391,116. The resulting output targets were updated as follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Target</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establish two networks</td>
<td>This target has remained the same with emphasis on strengthening the existing networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop 12 capacity building initiatives</td>
<td>A significant number of new workshops, conferences and other initiatives were proposed as the project had already exceeded the target in the original application.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carry out two research studies</td>
<td>The project proposed a number of studies to be carried out to identify learning points and good practice going forward.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Black Country ERDF Investment: Performance and Good Practice

3.1 This section sets out an overview of Black Country performance in drawing down and utilising ERDF funding under the 2007-13 programme. It covers:

- Overall investment and output achievement across the West Midlands and, where possible, breaking this down to a Black Country level.
- Drawing out lessons from a number of case studies of projects delivered in the Black Country and/or led by Black Country based partners.
- Summarising feedback from Black Country project managers and deliverers regarding the key challenges faced in designing and delivering projects, and the additional support that they identify as being important to enhance this under the 2014-20 programme.

Programme Investment in the Black Country

3.2 The latest full data on overall programme progress comes from the latest Programme Monitoring Committee papers from February 2015, which highlights that by this stage:

- Approximately €393m of ERDF funding (98% of the total) had been allocated
- Approximately €280m (70% of the total) had been claimed.

3.3 It is not possible to clearly break these figures down to sub-regional level in order to calculate the value of ERDF allocation to the Black Country, as many of the projects are delivered cross-regionally. However, we have attempted to make a broad estimate of this below:

- Based on the local projects listed in Table 2.1, it is estimated that the Black Country secured around €30.7m¹ (8% of the total programme) in allocations to projects specifically delivered in the Black Country (this includes 50% of the Invest Birmingham & Black Country project). These were primarily within Priority 3 (€25.0m) and Priority 2 (€5.4m).
- The majority of cross-regional projects sat under Priorities 1 and 2 of the Operational Programme. In each case we have broadly estimated the likely share which the Black Country might have secured:
  - Based on a headline review of funded projects, it is assumed that the large majority (90%) of Priority 1 projects offered support to businesses from across the full region. For those led by organisations based outside the Black Country, it is assumed that Black Country businesses secured 10% share of all project support provided.² For projects led by organisations in the Black Country (all of which relate to the University of Wolverhampton), it is assumed that Black Country businesses secured 25% of all project support provided. These figures compare with the population share of the Black Country which is approximately 20% of the West

¹ Note, this figure and subsequent figures are presented in Euros for ease of comparison to ERDF programme totals, and have been calculated using an exchange rate of £1 : €1.19.

² Note, this figure is a cautious assumption based on the findings of a single regional Priority 1 project evaluation available, showing Black Country businesses making up only 5% of all regional beneficiaries for that project, however also reflects anecdotal findings experienced by the evaluators, that proximity of businesses to the delivery body influences geographical take-up rates.
Midlands overall population. On this basis it is estimated that the Black Country may have secured around €12.9m from region-wide Priority 1 projects.

- Based on a headline review of funded projects, it is assumed that around 60% of Priority 2 projects offered support to businesses from across the full region. As above, it is assumed that for those projects led by organisations based outside the Black Country, local businesses secured just 10% of all project support provided, but those led by organisations within the Black Country (again this just relates to the University of Wolverhampton) secured 25% of all project support provided. On this basis it is estimated that the Black Country may have secured around €9.5m from region-wide Priority 2 projects.

3.4 Drawing together these estimates for local and regional ERDF funding, this suggests a total of around €53m ERDF funding may have been captured in the Black Country through the 2007-13 fund, equivalent to approximately 13% of the total programme value. This compares with the population share of the Black Country which is approximately 20% of the West Midlands overall population.

3.5 At priority axis level, these estimates suggest that compared with its population share:
- The Black Country performed relatively well in drawing down funds under Priority 3, securing around 21% of the total Priority 3 funding
- The Black Country under-performed in drawing down funds under Priorities 1 and 2, possibly securing in the region of 10-11% of total West Midlands funding under each of these priority axes.

3.6 Overall this suggests that the Black Country may have slightly under-performed in the proportion of funding secured from the available 2007-13 West Midlands programme. It is important to note, however, that these estimates are based on limited information available at the sub-regional level, and should only be taken as indicative estimates.

Slippage Against Spend Profiles

3.7 Data from both the latest PMC papers, and local technical assistance team highlight that a large proportion of projects have faced significant challenges of slippage, with common challenges including lower than expected project take-up and delays in receiving invoices and processing payments in order for ERDF claims to be made.

3.8 This has caused challenges in the ability of the programme to meet N+2 targets, and increased the risk of funding being withdrawn from projects. Realistic spend profiling is a clearly identified need, and potentially an area of support required by delivery partners in designing and planning projects under the 2014-20 programme.

Output and Result Achievement in the Black Country

3.9 As above, data on output and result achievement is provided at the regional level, with the latest data available from the PMC meeting of February 2015. This is broken down by priority axes, however is not available at a sub-regional level.

3.10 Based on the spend estimates above however, we have estimated in the table below, outputs and results achieved in the Black Country based on the assumed proportion of spend from each priority axis in the Black Country.
Table 3.1 Summary of Output and Result Achievement for the West Midlands (Actual data) and the Black Country (Regeneris Estimates)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>West Midlands</th>
<th>Black Country (Estimated)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outputs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Businesses assisted to improve performance</td>
<td>16,579</td>
<td>1,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Businesses engaged in new collaborations</td>
<td>2,675</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Businesses assisted that are SMEs</td>
<td>14,638</td>
<td>1,540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Businesses assisted that are social enterprises</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public and private investment leverage (£m)</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People assisted to get a job</td>
<td>15,593</td>
<td>2,980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People assisted to start a business</td>
<td>11,229</td>
<td>1,130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brownfield land reclaimed and/or redeveloped</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New or upgraded floorspace</td>
<td>32,914</td>
<td>6,790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sq. mt of premises upgraded to BREEAM</td>
<td>7,221</td>
<td>1,470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Results</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross jobs created</td>
<td>13,381</td>
<td>1,480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New businesses created and attracted to the region</td>
<td>1,896</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduates placed in SMEs</td>
<td>1,152</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross jobs safeguarded</td>
<td>11,663</td>
<td>1,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CO2 reduction per project type</td>
<td>709,982</td>
<td>81,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.11 On the basis of these estimates, the 2007-13 ERDF Programme investment to date is expected to have delivered the following outputs and results in the Black Country:

- Support to 2,000 businesses
- 1,500 new jobs created
- 1,200 jobs safeguarded
- 200 new businesses created or attracted to the region
- 80,000 tonnes of annual carbon emissions reduced.

**Good Practice Projects in the Black Country**

3.12 The section below sets out a number of case studies, drawing out good practice and lessons learned from a number of projects delivered in the Black Country and/or led by Black Country based partners under the 2007-13 programme.

3.13 The selected projects were highlighted by study consultees as demonstrating aspects of good practice from which lessons could be learned, and comprise the following:

- Knowledge Transfer Partnerships / KEEN, highlighting the ability of Black Country partners to lead successful region wide projects, and added value that this can bring
- Investing in the City Region, highlighting the potential value of cross LEP working, with the Black Country LEP collaborating with the Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP
- The Portal, highlighting good practice in delivery against the sustainable development CCT
- Supporting Employment and Enterprise Development, highlighting good practice in delivery against the equality and diversity CCT
Wolverhampton Neighbourhood Employment and Skills Service, highlighting good practice in delivery against the equality and diversity CCT.

Table 3.2 Case Study: Knowledge Transfer Partnerships / Knowledge Exchange Enterprise Network (KEEN)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lead Delivery Body</th>
<th>University of Wolverhampton</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Organisations</td>
<td>Universities of Birmingham, Birmingham City, Staffordshire, Keele, Coventry, Warwick, Worcester and Harper Adams, University College of Food and Newman College.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority Axis</td>
<td>PA1: Promoting Innovation and R&amp;D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Value</td>
<td>£15.7m region-wide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERDF Value</td>
<td>£7.9m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The project started out as a region-wide initiative to boost the number of Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs) in the West Midlands, however was adjusted in 2010 as a result of funding withdrawal by Advantage West Midlands and the Technology Strategy Board, to become KEEN – Knowledge Exchange Enterprise Network (effectively run as shorter KTP projects).

Both models involved a graduate placement into a business to work on a specific business development or innovation task, with the graduate working for the business on the project, in collaboration with an academic at a research institution.

The University of Wolverhampton was invited by Advantage West Midlands to lead the KTP project on behalf of the region. Other universities similarly took the lead in other areas of work, including Aston leading on innovation vouchers and Coventry on innovation networks. The project was designed collaboratively with other areas, on the basis of what each university could commit to delivering.

A central management team at Wolverhampton was established to support all partners in project delivery, and tools were developed to support cross-partner delivery, including an online portal for allocating business enquiries to the most appropriate delivery partner.

The project is a good example of the benefit of cross-area collaborative working in an ERDF project, with some of the key benefits of this approach here being:

- **Access to knowledge base across LEP areas** – through an online portal, businesses from the Black Country could access support from the most suitable academic from across the 11 participating West Midlands research institutions. Having access to this breadth of expertise strengthened the quality of outcomes delivered by the project.

- **Reducing costs** – with one organisation leading bid development and contract negotiation, and offering a single regional team to support the other partners with delivery, significant savings were made compared with having 11 different institutions compiling bids and recreating this management team.

- **Simplification of enterprise support** – the wider regional approach offered greater clarity and simplicity for businesses, wherever they were based in the West Midlands.
Table 3.3 Case Study: Investing in the City Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lead Delivery Body</th>
<th>Marketing Birmingham</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Organisations</td>
<td>The Association of Black Country Authorities, Black Country Consortium, Solihull MBC, Walsall MBC, Sandwell MBC, Birmingham International Airport, DanceXchange and Southside BID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority Axis</td>
<td>P3: Achieving Sustainable Urban Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Value</td>
<td>£21.5m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERDF Value</td>
<td>£10.7 m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Investing in the City Region programme has run since 2011 and is a large and varied programme of activities with a diverse set of objectives delivered through four main strands of activity:

- **Invest**: focused on raising perceptions of the Birmingham City Region as a location for business, attracting inward investment and associated jobs;
- **Visit**: focused on increasing the number of visits to and visitor spend in the City Region. This includes leisure and business visitors from both domestic and international markets;
- **Meet**: focused on attracting major events to the City Region, including both conferences and leisure events, and thereby helping to support the ‘Visit’ strand;
- **Business support**: aimed at delivering value added support to SMEs in the City Region focused on priority sectors and companies. This strand is linked to the wider Growth Hub agenda in the City Region.

Birmingham, Black Country and Solihull have worked together through the programme on these interlinked workstreams in recognition that the economic footprint of Birmingham extends well beyond the city boundaries. The ERDF programme has enabled partners to focus on the collective strengths and opportunities as a whole through implementing a joint approach to marketing the City Region as a place to invest.

The ERDF grant is taken from the 2007-13 Operational Programme and is matched predominantly with Marketing Birmingham funding, in addition to various other key match funding sources from both the public and private sector.

The programme reports on four target areas:

- Businesses attracted (SMEs) – lifetime target of 50
- Jobs Created in P3 area – lifetime target of 500
- Businesses supported (SMEs) – lifetime target of 630
- Indirect jobs created – lifetime target of 8,000

A full evaluation of the Investing in the City Region Programme is currently underway and due to report in November 2015.

The collaborative approach pursued by the Black Country working within the Investing in the City Programme has been beneficial has it has enabled them to tap into partner expertise in areas such as FDI and attracting businesses to the area. The Invest strand, for example, helped the Black Country to map their assets, undertake general sector research to understand their strengths and unique selling points, which helped them to build the investment proposition. Marketing Birmingham identified that there are clear geographic advantages to working together because of the travel to work area and it enabled both parties to tap into a wider asset base and unlock a joint pipeline of opportunity. Working together with Marketing Birmingham has helped the Black Country to build their capacity in this area so they have been able to expand their activities.
Table 3.4 Case Study: The Portal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lead Delivery Body</th>
<th>Dudley Canal Trust</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Priority Axis</td>
<td>PA3: Achieving Sustainable Urban Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Value</td>
<td>£3.4m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERDF Value</td>
<td>£1.0m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The project aimed to redevelop a brownfield site between Wolverhampton and Birmingham and erect a visitor centre to increase visitor numbers to the Dudley Canal Tunnel & Limestone Mines heritage site. The project was started in March 2013 and aims to be completed in June 2015. As well as attracting more visitors to the site, one of the main aims was to build a more environmentally friendly and sustainable development that promotes low carbon transportation.

The project is a good example of a focus on ERDF’s key cross-cutting theme of Environmental Sustainability, ensuring that economic growth does not take place without action to tackle rising carbon emissions.

To achieve against this cross-cutting theme the project has aimed to:

- Adopt best practice in **sustainable construction techniques** and obtain an excellent or very good rating under the BREEAM assessment method for the visitor centre.
- Provide bike storage facilities and electric car charging points to **encourage low carbon transport** as well as monitoring the number of visitors by bike and public transport.
Table 3.5 Case Study: Supporting Employment & Enterprise Development (SEED)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lead Delivery Body</th>
<th>Access to Business</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Priority Axis</td>
<td>PA2: Business Growth and Enterprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Value</td>
<td>£0.5m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERDF Value</td>
<td>£0.25m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The SEED project was set up to help get local people into employment and self-employment as well as supporting existing new businesses in the Black Country. They have qualified employment advisors providing support and advice as well as workshops on a range of activities from social media to taxation and networking events.

The project is a good example of a focus on ERDF’s cross-cutting theme of Equality and Diversity, with this project having a specific focus on disadvantaged groups including:

- women
- ethnic minorities
- physically and sensorially impaired
- long-term unemployed.

The focus on disadvantaged groups aligns with the ERDF cross-cutting theme of Equal Opportunities. The project over performed on its original targets and was extended into 2015 as a result. Against a 3 year target of 350 people assisted, the project has assisted a total of 997 people. The proportions in terms of disadvantaged groups assisted were as follows:

- female – 50%
- ethnic minority – 50%
- physically or sensorially impaired – 20%
NESS is a consortium of eight neighbourhood centres set up to support areas of Wolverhampton where there are high levels of worklessness. The project was set up in Spring 2011 and is due to complete in December 2015. ERDF funding was used to recruit a team of advisors who, amongst other things:

- provide an initial contact point for residents
- conduct needs assessments
- draw up employment action plans
- guide residents towards employment.

Funding has also supported the physical extension of the Bilston Resource centre, allowing it to provide better services to residents.

So far almost 2,500 residents have been assisted by the project, with over 400 gaining employment. Worklessness is a major issue in Wolverhampton, with ERDF funding providing key support to help address this in the most deprived communities in the area.

This project is a good example of meeting the needs of the ERDF cross-cutting theme of Equal Opportunities through its focused work in the most deprived wards in the area.
Lessons from Project Delivery Bodies

3.14 This section draws on findings from consultations with ERDF project deliverers in the Black Country highlighting key challenges faced in bidding for and delivering projects, as well as areas where further support in the future would be beneficial.

3.15 Despite the challenges faced, the majority of consultees said they would apply for funding again if given the opportunity and that they would welcome help from the technical assistance team.

Key Challenges during Application

3.16 As many projects began before the set-up of the current TA team, many project deliverers struggled with aspects of the application stage, particularly smaller charitable organisations and other non-local authority bodies, finding the intensive resource requirement in making an application, and the delays and uncertainties difficult to manage.

3.17 The main point of contact at the application stage was the DCLG team, which most projects found to be helpful. The main challenges however included short timescales for providing information and the use of acronyms and assumption of prior ERDF knowledge. One consultee suggested that it may have been more efficient if an appendix or note was supplied with the application form to explain terms and sections in more detail to save having to contact the team for clarity on minor issues.

3.18 Several projects, even those with more experience also highlighted that it would be beneficial to have a critical friend reviewing and providing advice and comments on bids in development before submission.

3.19 At a more strategic level, it was highlighted that, had the team been in place, it would have been beneficial at application stage to have a Black Country resource able to engage more closely with prospective projects (particularly more strategic priority projects), to give thought to delivery methods, review good practice and help projects to develop proposals that design out problems recognised as potential pitfalls. It was highlighted that project difficulties eg eligibility issues and procurement problems are often identified too late and retrospectively addressed, when they could be designed out from the beginning, drawing on experience of what works and the challenges of ERDF project delivery.

Key Challenges during Delivery

3.20 Unsurprisingly given the length of time and variety of different activities, projects tended to experience more challenges at the delivery stage than the application stage. Although there were some challenges specific to projects, there were also a number of common themes that emerged from consultations. The key challenges identified were as follows:

- delays in payment of claims leading to cash flow issues for smaller bodies
- administrative burden of repurposing when there is slippage eg delays due to recruitment
- high levels of detail in project reporting required at all stages making expected timescales for response very challenging
- regulations often felt to be impractical and commercially restrictive at project delivery level
- procurement regulations seen as a particularly arduous and complex.

3.21 Assistance from the DCLG Team was very well received by consultees but many highlighted challenges in contacting the team, as they appeared to often be stretched.
3.22 All project delivery consultees that had engaged with the Technical Assistance team had a very positive experience and found them a useful source of support.

**Where Support was Most Needed**

3.23 Although TA support was welcomed, the recurrent gaps identified in the consultations were as follows:

- TA team in place from the outset of the programme to provide workshops and one-to-one support
- More guidance on procurement and state aid
- A reference for common terms and tasks
- Support specific to the third sector.
4. Technical Assistance Project: Delivery and Performance

4.1 This section sets out an overview of delivery and performance of the Black Country technical assistance project. It covers an assessment of:

- Performance against spend and output targets
- Project delivery achievements
- Management and governance arrangements
- Beneficiary satisfaction with both the workshops and one-to-one support provided by the project
- An analysis of lessons that can be learned from technical assistance projects in other areas, drawing on case studies from the Humber, Stoke and Staffordshire, and the East Midlands.

Performance against Spend Targets

4.2 Figure 4.1 shows actual quarterly spend (cumulative) against the profiled target spend level (note that the total project value has altered since the project outset, so this shows the latest total project value).

4.3 The lag in spending against profile primarily relates to delays in initially recruiting key members of the technical assistance team. Since the team has been in post however, spend has largely been at the rate originally anticipated.

![Figure 4.1 Cumulative Spend against Profile for the Black Country TA Partnership Project](image-url)

Source: Black Country Technical Assistance Partnership
Performance against Output Targets

4.4 Figure 4.2 sets out the three main output indicators for the technical assistance project, and the project’s achievements against its targets. As the chart shows, all three targets have already been met and/or exceeded.

4.5 Most notably, there has been significant overachievement against the number of capacity building initiatives held, reflecting the successes of the first round of capacity building workshops held, which led a further round of workshops taking place.

Figure 4.2 sets out the three main output indicators for the technical assistance project, and the project’s achievements against its targets. As the chart shows, all three targets have already been met and/or exceeded.

Figure 4.2 Output and Result Achievement of the Black Country Technical Assistance Partnership Project, against Targets

Source: Black Country Technical Assistance Partnership

Project Delivery

Project Design

4.6 There was a common view that a technical assistance programme was much needed in the Black Country. Consultees highlight that understanding of ERDF funding was quite low, and co-ordination of ERDF activity across the Black Country had been weak over the 2007-13 programme. Some highlighted that local authorities (locally and nationally) had lost people with ERDF expertise over the last programme period, as the role of TA changed - receding at the outset of the programme, before returning, to a degree, towards the end of the programme. This lack of expertise prior to the TA programme being established is also seen to have led to a reluctance to access European funding and a concern around the risk of clawback, which has put people off applying.

4.7 Overall consultees felt that the design of the project and the activities delivered were good, and should be retained in a future project. Because of the timing of the project, commencing relatively far in to the ERDF programme, some of the possible functions it might have delivered were not
feasible. A number of delivery strands that partners felt would have been valuable, had the team been in place, include:

- **bid-writing advice**, acting as an advisor and critical friend to support organisations in the area to develop bids
- **intensive bid development support** – targeting resources at working through any complexities faced in developing bids that are seen as strategically important for the Black Country
- **co-ordination to support bid development**, helping to bring partners together in producing joint bids, where relevant
- **LEP intelligence function** – maintaining an overview of bids coming forward across the Black Country and identifying gaps, reporting in to the LEP.

### Key Delivery Strands

#### Workshops

A series of 14 capacity building workshops have been held over an 8 month period from August 2014 to March 2015 as shown in Table 4.1 below, organised by the technical assistance team and led by an external contracted trainer from Kalliope Associates. The workshops covered a broad range of subject areas including project management, procurement, state aid, audits and monitoring, evaluation and project closure, and were held in locations across all four Black Country local authority areas. In total the workshops attracted around 80 attendees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ERDF Procurement</td>
<td>28 August 2014</td>
<td>ASAN The Workspace, Wolverhampton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERDF State Aid</td>
<td>28 August 2014</td>
<td>ASAN The Workspace, Wolverhampton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERDF Financial Management</td>
<td>04 September 2014</td>
<td>Dudley Kingswinford Rugby Club, Dudley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERDF Monitoring and Audits</td>
<td>16 September 2014</td>
<td>Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERDF Project Closure</td>
<td>24 September 2014</td>
<td>Walsall Deaf Centre, Walsall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERDF Procurement</td>
<td>30 September 2014</td>
<td>The Brambles Dudley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERDF State Aid</td>
<td>30 September 2014</td>
<td>The Brambles Dudley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERDF Monitoring and Audits</td>
<td>08 October 2014</td>
<td>Holiday Inn Sandwell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERDF Project Closure</td>
<td>14 October 2014</td>
<td>Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERDF Financial Management</td>
<td><img src="https://example.com/flag.png" alt="" /></td>
<td>ASAN The Workspace, Wolverhampton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERDF Project Management</td>
<td>05 December 2014</td>
<td>The Molineux, Wolverhampton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERDF Project Evaluations</td>
<td>11 December 2014</td>
<td>ASAN The Workspace, Wolverhampton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERDF Project Management</td>
<td>24 February 2015</td>
<td>Walsall Council House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERDF Project Closure</td>
<td>16 March 2015</td>
<td>ASAN The Workspace, Wolverhampton</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The series of workshops have been highlighted as one of the key benefits of the programme by most consultees, and have been highly rated by those who attended in terms of both quality and usefulness of the content on a day-to-day basis for many (outlined in further detail under beneficiary satisfaction below).
4.10 It is clear that they have helped to improve the understanding of direct project deliverers, but also wider stakeholders who may operate at the margins of existing projects and may be looking at leading project bids in the future.

4.11 Feedback suggests that people are now better informed about what ERDF can be used for, what the key issues and challenges are, and how they need to be addressed. This is important in helping to reduce fear and wariness about European funding, giving local stakeholders more confidence to engage with European funding opportunities.

One-to-One Support

4.12 The learning through workshops has been supplemented by one-to-one support for project deliverers, with the team able to spend time working face to face with projects eg helping them to set up systems and processes for project delivery in order to remain compliant, as well as providing regular support at the end of the telephone.

4.13 Local stakeholders highlighted the real value of having a local team offering one-to-one support, as this allows trust relationships with the TA team to develop, easy access to the team and ease of setting up meetings, and the benefit of the TA team having knowledge and understanding of the local context.

Pre-Project Engagement Visit (PEV) Meetings, and Health-checks

4.14 Linked with this one-to-one support, the project has successfully delivered pre-Project Engagement Visit (PEV) meetings, and project health-checks. In both cases these have involved working through all of the key systems and processes for project implementation and evidencing spend and outputs. These sessions with individual projects run through all of the aspects of project delivery that will be covered by audit requirements, and help to ensure that projects are doing everything that they need to in order to remain compliant and avoid the risk of any funding being clawed back in the future.

4.15 At the outset, some local projects highlighted concerns that this appeared to be adding an extra layer of checks and audits, however the majority now view this as a helpful intervention, intended to assist and support them, and appreciate the support. From a DCLG perspective, this is similarly seen as a very beneficial intervention, helping to save them and the audit teams work at later stages.

Management and Governance

Governance and Management Structure

4.16 The technical assistance team primarily comprises:

- 0.5 post External Funding Team Lead (the other half of the post is separately funded and supports development of the 2014-20 programme)
- One full time ERDF Project Manager
- One full time Project Development Officer

4.17 There are two main reporting routes for the technical assistance team, providing the governance framework. These are:
• Line management - the technical assistance team report internally through Walsall Council’s line management structure for day-to-day management and human resource issues

• Reporting to Heads of Regeneration – the team report and take strategic direction from the Black Country Heads of Regeneration group, incorporating representatives from each of the four Black Country local authorities and the Black Country Consortium.

4.18 Stakeholders consulted broadly felt that the structure had worked effectively, and enabled the project to be delivered in a way which met the key needs of partners across the Black Country. The team currently in place were well valued by consultees and seen as highly capable.

**Relationship with DCLG and Positioning of the TA Team**

4.19 The relationship with DCLG was highlighted as a key element of the success of the technical assistance partnership. The move by DCLG to begin signposting local delivery partners to direct questions initially to the TA team, and to pass on monitoring roles for a set of Black Country projects gave a degree of kudos to the local team, enabling them to cement their role as local experts, and gain the trust of local partners.

4.20 Nevertheless, the relationship can be challenging. The TA team to some extent sits in the middle ground between DCLG & its audit team, and project deliverers; if operating successfully, its presence should provide significant benefits to the work of both.

4.21 For project deliverers however, who may see DCLG and auditors as a threat (eg bringing the risk of clawback), there can be mixed views about the TA team, and whether they represent an extension of the DCLG team, or a supportive local resource. The DCLG perspective is that they are an informed local team who aid smooth running of local projects, but not an extension of the DCLG team. For local project deliverers, the early wariness about the team has now mostly subsided, and most projects now similarly see the team as a supportive partner.

4.22 One lesson learned by the team is that their relationship with DCLG (notably that they are funded by and report to DCLG) needs to be communicated clearly to projects. As such, their assessment of issues and challenges with local projects may be shared with DCLG. There is a clearly a fine balance to be struck, and to ensure trusting relationships continue to be built with local partners, it is important to be transparent about this role.

**Location of the Team and Providing Support across all of the Black Country**

4.23 From the outset, the team has been keen to demonstrate that it is a Black Country wide project, and established its own branding and, recently, its own website, separate from that of the local authority. The team has engaged stakeholders across all four authority areas, but had greatest involvement with projects in Wolverhampton and Dudley (where there were most live projects).

4.24 While stakeholders felt that the project had operated successfully from the base in Walsall Council, most highlighted that other options should be considered for the delivery base in a future project, to ensure that support across the area is evenly spread, and strategic linkages to the LEP are maximised, given its increased role in managing ERDF funding in the 2014-20 programme. Possible options included:

• More peripatetic working, including increased use of hot-desking / home-working, to ensure a more regular presence in each of the four local authorities
• Having the team based within the Growth Hub at the Business Solutions Centre that operated across the Black Country (potentially still being employed by Walsall Council)

• Having the team based with (and possibly employed through) the Black Country Consortium, linking with the newly established programme office, providing synergy with the work of the programme office in oversight and monitoring of strategic projects across the Black Country (including projects funded by Local Growth Fund, City Deal and European funding).

Communications and Networks

4.25 The project has supported the establishment of two new networks:

• A strategy group, which is seen as having been fundamental to successful development of the 2014-20 European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF) strategy

• A practitioner group for those involved in ERDF project delivery, which there has been less appetite for – with project deliverers tending to be more interested in attending the training workshops instead of a more general practitioner meeting group. Some consultees however felt that going forward, it would be worth revisiting the value of a practitioner group meeting, perhaps every 6 months to share updates and good practice and enable networking and possible new collaborative projects to emerge.

Addressing Cross-Cutting Themes

4.26 As with all projects funded under the ERDF 2007-13 programme, the Black Country Technical Assistance project is required to address two cross-cutting themes (CCTs): equality & diversity and environmental sustainability, as part of project delivery. The BCTA project has responded to this need by:

• Incorporating information about CCTs and emphasising the importance of addressing these, through the delivery of capacity building workshops, project health checks, monitoring visits and publicity materials to help embed understanding of these themes.

• Checking on integration of CCTs into project delivery as part of the monitoring visit process.

• Carrying out presentations and workshops which reference and raise awareness of the importance of cross cutting themes amongst Black Country projects and key stakeholders.

4.27 Within day-to-day delivery, the project has:

• Operated under Walsall Council equality and diversity standards and in compliance with its Equality and Diversity Protocol (June 2013) which has been developed within the framework of existing legislation and relevant codes of practice. The main legal provisions are contained within the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998. The Corporate Equality Group (CEG) meets quarterly to monitor the Protocol, review progress and keep informed of changes in legislation, national and local initiatives.

• Taken steps to minimise its carbon footprint through internal green procedures requiring staff to minimise car journeys, vehicle share and make maximum use of public transport.
Beneficiary Satisfaction

Workshop Beneficiaries

Introduction

4.28 As part of our evaluation, we have taken into account feedback from attendees of the Capacity Building Workshops. The project team have collated feedback from attendees at the end of each session and Regeneris has carried out a survey to capture a more up to date picture of attendee satisfaction. These two forms of feedback have been brought together to provide an overall picture of both respondents’ short term feelings about the sessions and their views as they put into practice the knowledge gained.

Attendees

4.29 The BCTA feedback data reported a total of 81 attendees across all workshops, only a small proportion of which did not provide feedback. This feedback captured attendees’ opinions on how useful the workshop was and the delivery of the workshop.

4.30 The Regeneris survey was carried out to capture attendees’ feelings about the workshops themselves and whether they have been able to use any of the support and guidance in practice. Out of a total of 81 attendees, 69 email addresses were provided. The survey attracted 31 responses, representing a 45% response rate and 38% of the total number of attendees.

4.31 As a total of each workshop, there were 200 attendees, showing that on average each of the 81 individual attendees went along to around 2-3 out of the cycle of seven different workshops.

4.32 There was a good spread of responses from different types of organisation across Local Authorities, Voluntary or Community Sector Organisations and HEIs, with Private Business being the most underrepresented group due to the low number of attendees and Local Authorities being highest represented group in both the Regeneris survey and the BCTA feedback, which is unsurprising given the wider role that local authorities play in both supporting and leading projects.

Table 4.2 Respondents as a proportion of the total

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Attendees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Authority</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary or Community Sector</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University or Higher Education</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Business</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Regeneris Workshop Beneficiary Survey; BCTA Capacity Building Workshop Feedback
Quality of Workshops

4.33 Generally attendees found the overall quality of the workshops to be high with certain workshop topics gaining more positive feedback than others. Figure 4.4 shows how respondents rated the overall quality of the workshops by topic.

Figure 4.4 Overall Delivery of the Workshops

Source: BCTA Capacity Building Workshop Feedback; Note: no workshops were rated below Average

4.34 The BCTA feedback, was very positive with regards to how the workshops were delivered. Only one attendee scored the delivery less than excellent/good after attending the second State Aid workshop. This can be a very complex issue for some projects and some attendees suggested that a longer session would be useful. 97% of respondents from the Regeneris survey found that the content of the session and the overall quality of training was either good or excellent, echoing the results from the BCTA feedback. Figure 4.5 shows that all aspects of the workshop were very well received with the venues showing a slightly less positive response than the other aspects.
Impact of the Workshops

4.35 In most instances the majority of survey respondents felt they were able to apply the knowledge and understanding gained from the workshops on a regular basis. The Financial Management workshops had the highest proportion of respondents who felt they were able to apply the knowledge gained on a regular basis and Procurement Workshops had the lowest proportion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop Topic</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial Management</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring and Audits</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Management</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Evaluations</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Aid</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Closure</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procurement</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Regeneris Beneficiary Survey

4.36 The results from the BCTA Team feedback were significantly more positive than the survey, suggesting that respondents may have identified a need for more information when they actually started carrying out the tasks associated with the workshops.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did the workshop(s) enhance your understanding and awareness of:</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ERDF in General</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERDF Cross-Cutting Themes</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERDF Publicity Requirements</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.37 The vast majority of respondents reported enhanced awareness and understanding of ERDF in general with a large proportion of respondents also indicating that there was a good focus on
publicity requirements, and a corresponding improved awareness and understanding of these issues. The majority of people also highlighted they had improved awareness of cross-cutting themes, although a significant number suggested there had been little further learning about that aspect of the programme, indicating there may be a need for greater focus on this in the future.

Table 4.5 Do you feel that your project management, processes and procedures in relation to ERDF requirements has improved as a result of the workshop?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Authority</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary or Community Sector</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University or Higher Education</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Business or Other</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.38 The majority of respondents felt that their ERDF related project management, processes and procedures have improved as a result of the workshops. This is true of each type of organisation with HEIs showing a slightly lower proportion of positive responses than others.

4.39 The survey revealed that 87% of respondents have recommended or discussed key learning points with colleagues suggesting that many of the respondents were attending on behalf of a wider team that may have benefited from the support.

Table 4.6 As a result of the workshops, do you expect to feel more confident in bidding for European funding in the future?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Far more confident</th>
<th>Slightly more confident</th>
<th>No change</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Authority</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary or Community Sector</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University or Higher Education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Business</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.40 Respondents generally felt more confident about bidding for European funding in the future, although only 23% felt far more confident. This is possibly more of an indication of the uncertainties around the next round of funding than it is of the quality of the workshops themselves, and may highlight a need for bid development workshops in the future.

4.41 Local Authorities felt the least confident in bidding for European funding in the future as a result of the workshops with 33% of Local Authorities reporting no change. This compares to 25% of HEIs and 22% of Voluntary and Community sector respondents.

4.42 The respondents reported using the knowledge and experience gained in a number of different ways. The following are specific examples of how the experience has been used in day to day tasks:

- designing tenders for project evaluations
- putting an exit strategy in place
- recording state aid
- managing procurement
- organising publicity.
Future Focus

4.43 There were a number of suggestions made by respondents on support or services that the BCTA team could offer in the future that would be particularly useful to project deliverers in supporting compliant delivery of projects. Recurrent themes from respondents to the survey and the feedback received by the BCTA have been summarised below:

- Information on the 2014-2020 programme
- Workshops available at the start of the programme
- Project management approaches
- Separate session specific to the Third Sector
- Longer State Aid workshop
- Ongoing refreshers and updates

Beneficiaries of One-to-One Support

4.44 The Regeneris survey of beneficiaries also asked workshop attendees whether they had also benefitted from one to one support through the technical assistance programme. The feedback is summarised in the chart below, with the number of respondents receiving each type of support listed in brackets. These figures should be treated with caution however, given the low number of respondents in each case.

4.45 The feedback suggests that support given to projects on a one-to-one basis was generally very well received. Many of the projects felt that the support was key to successful delivery and that without the support they would have struggled to meet targets and requirements.

![Figure 4.6 Additional Support Received from the BCTA](image)

Source: Regeneris Beneficiary Survey

4.46 Around half of the respondents to the survey received additional one-to-one support from the BCTA team outside the workshops attended. The feedback across the board is broadly very positive, with the Face-to-Face Meetings standing out as particularly useful across a larger number of respondents.
Experience from Elsewhere

4.47 To help in benchmarking the Black Country technical assistance partnership and identify opportunities to learn from good practice elsewhere, the study has consulted with a number of case study projects funded by technical assistance money in other parts of England. Key good practice and lessons learned are summarised in the sections below, with the individual case studies set out in more detail in the boxes.

Delivery Model and Location of the Team

4.48 In the Humber and Stoke & Staffordshire case studies, both operate a more dispersed model than the Black Country TA team, with individuals based in each authority across the LEP area, which has the advantage that each partner can more easily recognise the benefits they receive from the project, although may lose some of the efficiencies gained from having a single core team.

4.49 If the Black Country retains a core team, then addressing the team location – either increased use of hot-desking across different organisations, or having the team based in an organisation with a cross Black Country remit could be another option.

Type of Support Provided

4.50 Drawing on the wide range of activities delivered by technical assistance funds in the three case studies reviewed, the Black Country TA partnership could consider incorporating the following roles in any future programme:

- **Pre-bidding advice** – workshops or one-to-one discussion with prospective bidding organisations to ensure they have a clear understanding about what ESIF is for, and the challenges that come with delivering ESIF projects.

- **Bid-writing critical friend inputs** – reviewing local organisations’ project bids, offering advice, support and critical challenge. This should not only strengthen the quality of bids, but also reduce delays in approval and contracting, as compliance issues are addressed from the outset.

- **Support for strategic and complex bids** – providing capacity to support the development of complex strategic bids that the LEP is keen to bring forward, bringing together partners and overcoming compliance challenges.

- **Strategic co-ordination of bids across the area** – maintaining an overview of bids from Black Country partners, joining bidders together where sensible to make a single larger

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**Case Study: Humber TA Partnership**

The Humber TA partnership has run since 2008, although with increased funding of around £1.4m in its second phase (2012-15).

The project supports a core team of 1 full time and 2 part time posts within the East Riding of Yorkshire Council (ERYC), as well as funding for parts of posts in other local authority, university and voluntary sector organisations across the Humber.

The team operates a hub and spoke model supporting ERDF expertise across several organisations, including each of the four local authorities, as well as a core team of three staff within ERYC able to lead more proactive work, eg helping to overcome key challenges for strategically important, complex bids.

Key activities delivered have included information dissemination, bidding support, and advice & guidance on compliance for existing projects.
Project Continuation

4.51 A key lesson highlighted from the case studies was around the importance of project continuation, in order to maintain the momentum that has been built. The Black Country TA Partnership has quickly become well established and provided valuable support to Black Country partners, but is widely seen to have come too late in the ERDF programme cycle to have had as great an impact as it could have. In many ways however, it has laid a strong foundation for the 2014-20 programme, and if continued, it is felt that it could add even greater value from the outset of the next programme.

Local ESIF Expertise

4.52 A final key roles and area of value highlighted by case study consultees was the importance of the TA partners in maintaining and sharing the latest understanding of ESIF rules and regulations. Ongoing communication channels with DCLG are recognised as critical to ensure that the messages given by the TA team to local partners are consistent with the messages coming from the EC and DCLG.

Case Study: Stoke & Staffordshire TA Partnership

The project in Stoke & Staffordshire largely operates as two separate teams in the respective authorities, with 2.5 FTE posts at the city council and 1.5 FTE posts at the county council, reflecting the match funding each organisation has provided.

Both teams primarily support local authority led projects and are highly focused on ensuring project compliance – a response to issues faced in the last European funding round, involving clawback of funds.

The project has significantly improved assurance processes and helped to build trusting relationships with DCLG with respect to confidence in compliant delivery.

Key areas of advice / support and issues arising in project mock-audits and visits include: eligibility clarifications, procurement, definition of outputs and state aid solutions.

Case Study: East Midlands Councils TA Project

East Midlands Councils secured ERDF technical assistance funding to run a specific project identifying opportunities for collaboration across LEP areas in the East Midlands.

The project was led by East Midlands Councils and involved identification of key cross-LEP themes and development and delivery of a number of sector-focused consultation events designed to bring partners together, explore project and collaborative opportunities, and identify next steps in taking potential projects forward.

This activity has led to closer working and a number of larger strategic projects being explored to potentially be taken forward in the 2014-20 round of funding.
5. **ERDF 2014-20 Programme**

Details on how technical assistance might be used in the 2014-20 European Structural and Investment Fund Programme have now been set out through the recent technical assistance call for proposals from DCLG (issued March 2015). This has a number of implications for a potential successor programme to the current Black Country technical assistance partnership project, as outlined below.

### 2014-20 Technical Assistance Funding

5.1 The draft ERDF operational programme outlines that technical assistance funding for 2014-20 comprises 4% of the overall programme value. Of this, LEPs have been informed that up to 2% is being made available for external applicants to bid for. The technical assistance call for proposals from DCLG suggests that up to £60m in total will be available in this round for technical assistance for ERDF and ESF combined.

5.2 In contrast to the last European funding round, the new programme has also seen European Social Funding (ESF) provisionally allocated at a LEP level, with LEPs having a similar management role with ESF, as with ERDF. As such, technical assistance funding will also be potentially available from ESF funding as well, requiring the same broad assistance roles in the Black Country, however with potentially a greater need for information sharing and capacity building, as local partners may be less aware of and used to ESF funding and the opportunities it presents.

5.3 The current technical assistance call for proposals document highlights that Technical Assistance funding is available to specifically support the administration and delivery of European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund Operational Programmes, ensuring that the activities which fall within the scope of these Programmes are managed, monitored and evaluated in line with the Common Provision Regulation, European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund regulations and the European Commission’s delegated and implementing regulations.

### Activities that can be Supported in 2014-20

5.4 The call for proposals sets out a list of eligible activities, suggesting that support can only be provided up to the stage of application (ie not enabling support post-approval). The list of suggested eligible activities includes:

- **advisory support to project Applicants** on an organisational or sector led basis, to promote the design and development of compliant projects during the outline application stage. This can, relate to part funding promotional material, resources and activities and the salary costs of individual(s) where added value can be demonstrated
- **continued advisory support** for projects which have passed the outline application stage and are moving to the full application
- **start-up costs for Financial Instruments**
- **feasibility work** which looks at the viability of activities across a particular thematic and/or geographical area – in exceptional circumstances only
- **support for Civil Society networks** to support participation of voluntary, community and social enterprise sector in the programme
- **preparatory support for Local Action Groups** for Community Led Local Development
• **raising awareness and communicating programme and project activities** through in-person network exchanges, newsletters, case studies other means of communication and across Local Enterprise Partnership area boundaries

• **promoting cooperation, networking and exchange of best practice** which could include sharing of best practice between Local Enterprise Partnership areas as well as other European Union funding programmes

• **use of promotional events** such as seminars, conferences and road shows to publicise bidding rounds, showcase European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund achievements and disseminate best practice
6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Black Country ERDF Programme 2007-13

The Black Country may have punched slightly below its weight in drawing down ERDF funding over the 2007-13 programme

6.1 The Black Country comprises around 20% of the total population of the West Midlands, however based on our headline estimates, may have received only around 10-15% of the value of the regional ERDF funding pot. Particular weaknesses faced have included:

- A general lack of awareness and knowledge about the programme, and in some cases wariness amongst Black Country partners in bidding for funding, given programme complexity and risks of clawback
- Weaknesses in quality of some project bids, prior to the presence of the technical assistance team
- Limited strategic push from the LEP to bring forward strategic priority bids to address specific challenges in the Black Country
- Limited level of available match funding to enable bids to be brought forward from the Black Country.

There were nevertheless positive outcomes and several projects highlighting good practice

6.2 On the basis of the estimates that the Black Country secured around 10-15% of the 2007-13 ERDF funding available across the West Midlands, this would suggest that in the Black Country, the programme supported around 2,000 businesses, created around 1,500 new jobs, safeguarded around 1,200 jobs and created or attracted to the region around 200 businesses.

6.3 The portfolio of Black Country supported projects also includes several project from which lessons can be learnt, including:

- **Good examples of cross-LEP working**, generating efficiency savings and higher quality outcomes than would otherwise have been achieved. These include region-wide projects led by Black Country partners, such as the knowledge transfer partnerships scheme led by the University of Wolverhampton, and the Invest Birmingham and Black Country scheme. Cross-LEP projects are likely to be critical in the 2014-20 round of funding, particularly in innovation and knowledge transfer projects where access to specialist knowledge (eg within Universities) needs to draw from beyond the Black Country, and also in SME competitiveness interventions, which can benefit from efficiencies of delivering across a wider area.

- **Good examples of projects responding well to the challenges of meeting the programmes cross cutting themes**, including proactive responses to the sustainable development theme by Dudley Canal Trust’s Portal project, and the targeted work in response to the equality and diversity theme through Access to Business’ Supporting Employment and Enterprise Development scheme. The knowledge gained through these projects will remain as good
practice experience in the Black Country and should be drawn on in learning lessons for the next programme period.

Projects faced key challenges in delivery and a knowledgeable support team in the Black Country was found to be highly valuable

6.4 Prior to the establishment of the technical assistance team, project deliverers highlighted a number of key challenges faced, which they struggled to find support in overcoming. Challenges highlighted by deliverers through this study were project specific, but common problem areas faced included lack of clarity about eligibility criteria, difficulty understanding complex procurement requirements, uncertainty about recording and storing data and submitting claims, and in many cases, confusion around the language of ERDF.

6.5 In this respect, the presence of knowledgeable support team in this area, which the technical assistance partnership has provided in recent years, has been a critical area of support for local project deliverers. As well as a trusted advisory team for project deliverers, the presence of a support team is recognised as critical in ensuring well designed bids go forward and successful projects are delivered in a compliant way.

Black Country Technical Assistance Partnership Project

The project was well received, its performance has been strong and it is highly valued locally

6.6 Stakeholders across the Black Country consulted in this study have highlighted the positive impact the TA team has had and recognise the significant value it brings to the Black Country supporting the deployment of European funding.

6.7 Key delivery strands, notably the capacity building workshops are identified as having played an important role in increasing understanding, awareness and confidence in applying for and utilising European funding, and both project deliverers and DCLG representatives have noted the value of the local team in supporting compliant project delivery in the Black Country through one-to-one support.

6.8 In particular, the presence of a locally based team to provide this one-to-one project delivery support has been highlighted, given a) the opportunity for trust relationships with project deliverers to develop, b) easy access for project deliverers to the team and ease of setting up meetings, and c) the benefit of the TA team having knowledge and understanding of the local context.

6.9 The project has also already met or exceeded its key output targets, and has currently underspent against its profile.

The project was needed earlier and could have delivered more

6.10 One of the most frequent comments from the study has been that the project was needed and should have been funded from an earlier stage. While the support provided has been highly valued, it is noted by many that had the project been provided from an early stage, many of the project delivery challenges could have been designed out earlier and further functions could have been delivered.

6.11 Drawing on activities highlighted locally and delivered by TA funding elsewhere in England, the following provides a list of some of the key potential roles that the TA Partnership might have usefully delivered (and could look to deliver in the 2014-20 funding round):
• **Pre-bidding advice** – workshops or one-to-one discussion with prospective bidding organisations to ensure they have a clear understanding about what ESIF is for, and the challenges that come with delivering ESIF projects.

• **Bid-writing critical friend inputs** – reviewing local organisations’ project bids, offering advice, support and critical challenge.

• **Support for strategic and complex bids** – providing capacity to support the development of complex strategic bids that the LEP is keen to bring forward.

**Strategic co-ordination of bids across the area** – maintaining an overview of bids from Black Country partners, joining bidders together where sensible to make a single larger project, and ensuring strong coverage of projects coming forward across all thematic objectives.

• **Ongoing programme of workshops** – providing advice and guidance to partners directly delivering projects and wider stakeholders.

• **Pre PEV sessions and project health-checks** – beginning at the outset of projects to ensure systems and processes are all in place and compliant.

The relationship with DCLG and local partners is challenging and critical to get right

6.12 The TA team to some extent sits in the middle ground between DCLG & its audit team, and project deliverers; if operating successfully, its presence should provide significant benefits to the work of both. The role of the technical assistance team should be as a critical friend to local partners and project deliverers, and this role has now largely been cemented by the local TA team.

6.13 One lesson learned by the team is that their relationship with DCLG (notably that they are funded by and report to DCLG) needs to be communicated clearly to projects. As such, their assessment of issues and challenges with local projects may be shared with DCLG. There is a clearly a fine balance to be struck, and to ensure trusting relationships continue to be built with local partners, it is important to be transparent about this role.

6.14 Part of the success of the Black Country TA team has come from a strong relationship with DCLG, with the latter having confidence to refer project deliverers to the local TA team as a first point of call for advice and enquiries. This is a critical component in future projects. Building upon this, it will also be important for DCLG to keep the local TA team up to date with any developments in the programme and guidance, to ensure the TA team are recognised as fully credible and able to offer the best possible advice and guidance.

Views about the delivery model vary, and this would be worthy of review for any continuation project

6.15 The analysis of this project alongside benchmarks from other parts of England highlight a number of delivery models and approaches to deployment of technical assistance support. In the Black Country, while overall delivery has been viewed positively by most partners, it has been identified by several stakeholders that it would be preferable for the team to have a more Black Country wide presence than their current Walsall base offers.

6.16 There are risks and benefits associated with the various possible models discussed by partners, and these are summarised in the table below.
Table 6.1 Summary of Possible Delivery Models for the Black Country Technical Assistance Partnership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Delivery Model Options</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Risks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Status Quo – Team based within one local authority</td>
<td>• Structure already in place and operating well</td>
<td>• Other areas may feel they don’t secure an equal share of the resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Straightforward line management if based within one local authority</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Team employed by local authority but operating peripatetically, with home-working / hot-desk options across the Black Country</td>
<td>• Limited disruption to current structure</td>
<td>• Less efficient way of working if a lot of weekly travelling across the LEP area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Greater visibility and accessibility of the team across the Black Country</td>
<td>• More difficult line management of the team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Team employed by local authority but based at the Business Solutions Centre</td>
<td>• Team positioned alongside other business support provision, leading to positive cross-referrals and new opportunities for marketing the project to businesses</td>
<td>• More difficult line management of the team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Neutral base to provide support across the Black Country</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Team employed by and based at the LEP, alongside the Programme Office</td>
<td>• Team positioned alongside strategic direction and oversight of funding streams in the programme office</td>
<td>• Possibly more limited European funding expertise within BCC to line manage a TA team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Neutral base to provide support across the Black Country</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Move to dispersed team model, with an officer in each authority</td>
<td>• All funding partners are clear on the benefit they receive from funding provided</td>
<td>• Less efficient way of working and loss of day-to-day knowledge sharing between team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Strong accessibility of the team with an individual in each area</td>
<td>• Likely to become more of a reactive function to local partner issues than a strategically directed proactive force driving use of European funds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Any continuation project will be guided by the requirements of the 2014-20 programme, but there is a case to be made for TA to also deliver post-approval support more locally

6.17 The current technical assistance call for proposals for 2014-20 funding focuses only on support up to the application stage, suggesting that during delivery phase, and support required by projects would be delivered through DCLG.

6.18 The findings from this study, and the experience drawn out from case studies in other LEP areas has suggested however that the presence of a local technical assistance support team to aid compliant delivery of projects has been highly beneficial to deliverers and DCLG, and there is a case to be made for LEP-level support to be continued at this stage of the process.
Recommendations

1) The Black Country needs to learn lessons from both positive and negative aspects of its performance under the 2007-13 ERDF programme. These should include the following:

- **Proactive project development** – maintaining an overview of projects coming forward and ensuring new project development takes place led by suitable partners, tackling gaps in key intervention areas

- **Working positively with neighbouring LEPs** (and LEPs further afield as appropriate) to develop larger scale cross-LEP projects, where there are key benefits in doing so eg access to wider knowledge assets or efficiencies of scale.

- **Draw on local knowledge and good practice** – capturing good practice from existing projects, and feeding this learning and experience into the development of new projects being developed under the 2014-20 round of funding.

2) Technical assistance should play a significant role in the 2014-20 European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF) plan for the Black Country, with partners submitting a bid under the current call for proposals, comprising the following key functions:

- **Pre-bidding advice** – workshops or one-to-one discussion with prospective bidding organisations to ensure they have a clear understanding about what ESIF is for, and the challenges that come with delivering ESIF projects.

- **Bid-writing critical friend inputs** – reviewing local organisations’ project bids, offering advice, support and critical challenge. This should not only strengthen the quality of bids, but also reduce delays in approval and contracting, as compliance issues are addressed from the outset. This should also draw on an understanding of good practice and lessons learned from the 2007-13 programme.

- **Support for strategic and complex bids** – providing capacity to support the development of complex strategic bids that the LEP is keen to bring forward, bringing together partners and overcoming compliance challenges.

- **Strategic co-ordination of bids across the area** – maintaining an overview of bids from Black Country partners, joining bidders together where sensible to make a single larger project, and ensuring strong coverage of projects coming forward across all thematic objectives.

- **Ongoing programme of workshops** – providing advice and guidance to partners directly delivering projects and those operating at the margins of projects, to ensure clear understanding of rules and issues to be aware of across all stakeholders supporting ERDF project delivery. As there will be regular new projects coming through, an ongoing cycle of workshops across key topics would be valuable.

3) Black Country partners should seek to ensure continuity of the current technical assistance partnership in the Black Country which has become a well-established and trusted team. Continuity and building on progress to date will be important in maximising the benefits from the 2014-20 ESIF programme.

4) Any TA continuation project must work closely with the DCLG team and be clear on the relationship and roles and responsibilities. The TA programme over recent years gained
kudos from the responsibility and trust it gained from DCLG. To maintain credibility, it must retain important roles as a first point of contact for Black Country partners, and be kept up-to-date with ESIF developments by the DCLG team.

5) The model for delivery of the technical assistance partnership should be reviewed, considering the pros and cons of different approaches outlined above in deciding the most appropriate model to use in moving forward under the 2014-20 programme.

6) While respecting the guidance set out in the call for proposals, the LEP should make representation to DCLG (potentially in collaboration with other LEPs in a similar position) to highlight the importance and benefits of establishing a technical assistance team to provide local support through the delivery phase as well as the application phase, highlighting the key benefits outlined above. In particular the following intervention area, supported under the current TA programme has been recognised as particularly valuable locally.

- **Pre PEV sessions and project health-checks** – beginning at the outset of projects to ensure systems and processes are all in place and compliant. If successfully completed from the start, it is anticipated that ongoing health-checks (eg every 6 months to a year) should be a lot more straightforward.
Appendix A - List of Consultees

A.1 The following people were consulted as part of the study. The Black Country Technical Assistance Team would like to thank all Black Country partners who have participated in the evaluation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zoey West</td>
<td>Walsall Council</td>
<td>BCTA Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick Alamanos</td>
<td>Walsall Council</td>
<td>BCTA Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaye Davies</td>
<td>Walsall Council</td>
<td>BCTA Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne Eastwood</td>
<td>Kalliopi Associates</td>
<td>Workshop Training Provider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Middleton</td>
<td>Black Country Consortium</td>
<td>Black Country Partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heather Clark</td>
<td>Wolverhampton City Council</td>
<td>Black Country Partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Lavender</td>
<td>Walsall Council</td>
<td>Black Country Partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheila Ray</td>
<td>Dudley Council</td>
<td>Black Country Partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Mountford</td>
<td>Sandwell Council</td>
<td>Black Country Partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pete Thomason</td>
<td>DCLG</td>
<td>ERDF Managing Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claire Watts</td>
<td>East Riding of Yorks Council</td>
<td>TA Partnership Case Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Connell</td>
<td>Stoke City Council</td>
<td>TA Partnership Case Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josie Kelly</td>
<td>Access to Business</td>
<td>Black Country ERDF Project Case Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ian Clements</td>
<td>Ruskin Mill Land Trust</td>
<td>Black Country ERDF Project Case Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick Morris</td>
<td>Dudley Canal Trust Trips Ltd</td>
<td>Black Country ERDF Project Case Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacqui Williams</td>
<td>Black Country Reinvestment Society</td>
<td>Black Country ERDF Project Case Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wouter Schuitemaker</td>
<td>Marketing Birmingham Limited</td>
<td>Black Country ERDF Project Case Study</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A.2 The Black Country Technical Assistance Partnership can be contacted at the Partnership website - [http://bcta.org.uk/](http://bcta.org.uk/) or using the contact details below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zoey West</td>
<td>External Funding Team Lead</td>
<td>01922 655998</td>
<td><a href="mailto:westz@walsall.gov.uk">westz@walsall.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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