

Creative Business Boost: Evaluation

1. Introduction

1.1 *Evaluation: Introduction, Context, Brief,*

Somerset County Council and its partners are in the second of a two year development project for the creative and cultural industries, delivered through Creative Business Boost (Boost), funded by Rural Renaissance, Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC), Somerset County Council (SCC) and Integria. A further component of the project (a virtual network which is being developed through an interactive web based software application called SWITCH) is being funded by Arts Council England (ACE), Integria and partners.

The Steering Group has commissioned David Powell Associates Ltd to provide an evaluation of the project broad internal appraisal and external assessment, and to look at the following matters:

- Project management (section 2 below)
- Appraisal of delivery and performance (section 3)
- Financial Management (section 4)

The Steering Group also wish the evaluation process to generate advice on future funding strategies and delivery options for Boost, and in particular in relation to bridging a funding gap between the end of the Rural Renaissance (SRRP) funding programme (March 2008) and the end of the contractual period (June 2008). This is referred to in section 4 and in Conclusions, section 5.

1.2. *Scope of the report*

There are several issues which affect the scope of this report, for noting at this stage.

- The Steering Group has issued a brief for evaluation with the project only partly complete: this is necessarily an interim report.
- Some of the outputs for our report need a more longitudinal approach than there is time for or is possible at this stage: the impact of the investment provided by SRRP and others into the businesses and practices which have taken part on the programmes will not be apparent yet.
- Some aspects of the evaluation require us to look at Integria Ltd as the company contracted to deliver the Boost project, whilst most of this study is reviewing the work of Boost team based in Taunton.

2. Project management

2.1 *Project description (taken from the brief)*

Boost is a pilot project providing bespoke business support and technical resources to creative and community enterprises in Somerset. Boost serves the whole of the county from its current base at the Brewhouse Theatre & Arts Centre in Taunton through outreach networking events and business surgeries. Business advice is given on a one-to-one basis providing specialist and

appropriate support to creative individuals at different levels of development. A technical advisor is available to support the use of resources which include video, film, sound & recording equipment and editing facilities, laptops and printers.

2.2 *Integria's management*

Boost has been set up and operated by Integria, a private partner agency specialising in support for creative industries in the UK. The organisation operates on a national basis and seeks to develop creative clusters across the UK. Currently it has initiatives in London (including Knowledge Boost, Business Boost and Creative North London), the East of England together with the South West.

The team of four in Taunton were recruited locally and include a project manager, a business advisor and a technical advisor. This Somerset team are directed and supported by Integria's management and technical teams. Given Boost's status as a project managed by Integria, it makes sense that the Boost team works to Integria's policy and operating environment.

As for Integria's management of the project via the Boost Project Coordinator (an Integria employee) both the Project Coordinator of Boost and Managing Director of Integria reported good lines of communication between each other with very frequent discussions and regular management meetings. On strategic management, sustainability and fundraising activity of the project, this is reported on in Section 4. We understand from Integria that strategic direction of the project sits with the company's Managing Director.

All staff is given a staff handbook on joining the organisation, which references among other headings: disciplinary procedures, sickness, leave, travel & subsistence. Integria's equal opportunities policy is made available to all staff, the employment section (which was provided to us) comprises: recruitment, selection and progression; advertising; training & development; positive action; retention; dismissals & redundancies; discipline; grievance. Other information provided to staff includes details of insurance cover.

We understand that the recruitment process and related policy context for the Project Coordinator's post (recruited twice in 2006) was agreed between Integria and the Steering Group. We have taken this to mean that this post and other Boost team members will therefore have been advertised and recruited within Integria's own employment policies and that these were consistent with Somerset's public appointment guidelines.

One of the benefits that Boost has is recourse to additional technical equipment and professionals from Integria. Indeed, Integria's decision to establish one its bases in the county itself, as a creative sector support and development SME active elsewhere in the UK, adds to the critical mass of Somerset's cultural and creative offer.

Within the information provided to us, notably the case studies and interviews we conducted, we found evidence that Boost made their technical facilities available to clients. Examples include business card development, training in design software, hiring out laptops (to Youth Music event). There is, as yet, no summary report of the scope and quantity of technical support provided by Boost.

Finally, we noted that the Boost project has had a developmental impact on its team. The Project Coordinator is completing her SFEDI accreditation with the support of the Managing Director. The Artist Technician has received in-house training and development, building her portfolio of skills and placing her in a stronger position to re-enter the marketplace once her contract with Boost ends. Indeed being part of the project has enabled her to establish her own business. In addition to the internship with the student from Arnhem Business School, Boost has hosted two voluntary staff posts, each of which received training in database administration and office skills. Boost has also developed a pool of clients willing to act as mentors or trainers for other clients. What this suggests to us is that Integria / Boost is investing in the professional development of its staff, and that opportunities to maximise personnel resources were taken up.

2.3 Funders' partnership collaboration

This project had its origins in work initiated by SCC which included research into the CCI sector (Economic Impact of Creative Industries in Somerset, Mercer 2004-5) and early consideration by Integria for the County of the evidence of need for specialist business support, and the potential for a Creative Industries Development Agency (CIDA). The CIDA project was one of the objects of the recently completed Cultural pathfinder project. SCC procured the provider through a full EU invitation to tender and a steering group was set up to manage the procurement and project. Integria was selected from a field of two, and Creative Business Boost was launched in Taunton Deane at the Brewhouse in July 2006, Sedgemoor at Bridgwater Arts Centre in September, West Somerset in October and South Somerset and Mendip in November 2006.

The project is funded as follows, with SCC acting as the accountable body for the project. As noted throughout, this relates to the Boost project delivery 2006-08. The costs and outputs relating to this partnered funding budget are reported on below.

Somerset Rural Renaissance Programme	Capital	57,000
Somerset Rural Renaissance Programme	Revenue	93,000
Taunton Deane Borough Council	Revenue	45,000
Somerset County Council	Revenue	38,400
Arts Council England SW	Revenue	60,000
Total cash budget via SCC		293,400
Integria	Revenue	12,000
Total		305,400

We understand from SCC and Integria that all of the promised income from the project has been committed, and has been or is in the process of being drawn down. There are no difficulties reported by SCC in payment of sponsors/funders contributions. Where there are difficulties in the Funding Partners' collaboration, we understand that these relate to defining, recording and reporting outputs, reported on below.

The project sponsors proposed to deliver target outputs to Rural Renaissance, as part of the original funding agreement. The Somerset Rural Renaissance Programme (SRRP) supports large scale projects to support the local economy, creating and safeguarding jobs, creating new businesses, providing advice and technical support to existing businesses, and providing skills training. Funding under SRRP is targeted at the rural parts of the county, i.e. not Taunton, Bridgwater or Yeovil. Therefore the outputs recording through the SRRP returns do not include any of the main urban areas in the county.

These outputs are reported quarterly to SWRDA via Boost's returns to SCC, via the Steering Group. A summary of the targets against is tabled below. Boost's performance against target is assessed in Section 3 and 4. The performance against targets on a quarterly basis is set out in Section 3.4 below.

	Project Target
Outputs (Rural Renaissance Project Defined)	Number
1. Jobs Created (direct) – number	20
2. Employment Support - people assisted to get a job	60
3. Business Creation - created & demonstrating growth after 12 months	30
4. Business Support - businesses assisted to improve performance	120
4.a Businesses Assisted - engaged in new knowledge base collaborations	100
6. People assisted in their skills development	300
6.b Adults in the workforce achieving Level 2 or equivalent, or more	20

Table 1: Boost Targets

2.4 Steering Group

Creative Business Boost is project managed by Somerset County Council and Taunton Deane Borough Council, and reports quarterly to a steering group with representation from the following organisations Somerset Arts Officers Group, Somerset Arts Promoters, Arts Council England, Business Link, Somerset College of Arts and Technology, Bridgwater College.

At the Steering Group meeting June 2006, it was agreed that the “the main purpose of the Steering Group was to ensure that Integria delivered everything agreed under the terms of the contract (e.g.; Financial Management, monitoring,

recruitment of staff, management of resources and equipment, promotion, etc.) and to consider sustainability beyond the two year period of the contract.”

In summarising this prehistory of Boost, we need to refer to very significant challenges and changes which confronted all of Somerset’s local authorities in this period. Some key issues which contributed to the difficult operating and political context within which Boost is being delivered include:

- County arts office post restructured, and new management arrangements subsequently brought in covering arts, economic development and regeneration
- Changes within arts and creative industry responsibilities, expertise and resources in most Somerset Districts
- Review of delivery of Somerset Cultural pathfinder programme (including creative industry development and delivery) by DPA ending March 2007.
- Development by SCC, the Districts, ACE and others of more integrated and focussed working arrangements to support cultural enterprise and creative business development in the county.

One continuing theme reported to us, and for the Steering Group to reflect on, is the difficulties resulting from a project supported by economic development funding, and which Integra describes as “firmly in economic development thinking”, being driven by a funding partnership and Steering Group which is predominantly weighted around arts and cultural practice. SCC has been making steady progress over the last three years in clarifying its own intentions towards improved support and leadership for the cultural and creative sectors, but this is still work in progress. However, the benefits of this are not in place in time to assist Integra in securing the future of Boost.

We were made aware of the feeling amongst some Steering Group members that the lack of creative industries strategic thinking at regional and County level – particularly in relation to support for micro enterprises – further compromised Boost’s chances of easily finding the support needed for its continuation.

It is unclear the degree to which the Steering Group thought that it was monitoring activity, keeping an eye on an untested relationship with a new, unfamiliar commercial delivery partner, or championing the future adoption of the project. This uncertainty, shared by Integra and the Steering Group, may explain why commitment to sustaining the project beyond the SRRP funded stage has not been able to be secured, despite numbers of discussions at Steering Group, and continued efforts from Integra, working with SCC and TDBC in particular, to secure funding through a number of unsuccessful funding bids.

While we found examples of individual members of the Steering Group working hard to provide Boost with strategic guidance and ideas for development (for example, signposting to individuals or initiatives), we were also aware that not all members were willing or felt mandated to champion the project.

2.5 Communication & knowledge exchange

According to our discussions with the Boost team, there was no budget for marketing Boost and with the exception of the launch events, no written marketing strategy. The intention, we were informed, was to identify 300 SMEs/individuals and 50 enabling organisations and approach them to join the project. These 350 contacts would be identified through the Steering Group members, plus other district arts officers. The strategy was put aside because of the number of early sign ups to the project. As a result of the initial success of the project in attracting a core number of contacts, any additional marketing activity was minimal. Consequently, it is very difficult to find any reference to Boost on the Internet (none of the County or Districts promote the project and we did not find reference on a selection of websites – ArtsMatrix, Creative Enterprise Gateway, Arts Council England South West, Business Link South West).

Thus, Boost chose to build its client base largely through referrals from its strategic partners, local and district council arts officer and then by word of mouth. This strategy was adopted in order to meet the SRRP targets for the project, but the team also resolved not to turn anyone away, despite realising some targets at an early stage. It is important to note that the risk of this approach was that Boost might only have made contact with those already well networked with the strategic agencies in the region. However, as the table below attests, at least a quarter of those for whom referral data exists came to the project via word of mouth (a named individual or relationship) and not just through the Boost project partners.

Consequently, Boost have a client list that they are able to support (albeit with some difficulty in the later stages of the project), the majority of whom came to the project through word of mouth. Only one person in the database indicated they had found the project through their independent research. Of the 175 people that indicated how they had heard about Boost, just over a quarter indicated that an individual had signposted them to Boost, 17% had been recruited through Press or PR (mainly the launch events), 13% either directly by the CBB team and 13% through organisations (mainly cultural organisations).

The following table summarises the data provided to us by Boost. Where possible types of referral were collated into single categories, however, please note that some agencies and organisations may have originally been referred by partners at launch events or on other occasions. In addition, please note that referral data was only available for 175 clients within the Boost database, which means we were not able to assess the referral rates from each of the District Councils and other Steering Group partners.

Summary referral	Number	%
Artlife	3	2%

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Business partner (e.g. Business Link)	4	2%
CBB	22	13%
Education	1	1%
Individual	44	25%
Mendip District Council	1	1%
New Deal	19	11%
Organisation	22	13%
Press & PR	29	17%
Somerset County Council	2	1%
South Somerset District Council	3	2%
SPAEDA	14	8%
Taunton Deane BC	11	6%

Base: 175

Table 2: Referrals to Boost

Given the delay in the launch of the SWITCH website (discussed below); there was only scant reference to the facility on Boost's website in December 2007, although a launch is planned in February 2008. We would expect to see a marked increase in the amount of activity for this aspect of the Boost project in January and February in order for the team to realise their financial expectations for the facility.

There was modest planned activity in terms of press and PR, however, as the project grew the CBB team reported a raft of activities.

The launch events took place between October and November 2006 and used a mix of partnership mailing lists, local media and radio (in the case of West Somerset).

Date	District	Locations	Sign ups
12.10.06	Sedgemoor	Cheddar, Nether Stowey, Bridgwater	5
24.10.06	West Somerset	Crowcombe, Dulverton, Minehead	18
09.11.06	South Somerset	Ilminster, Somerton, Shave Farm	12
15.11.06	Mendip	Frome, Street	18

Table 3: Boost district launch events

The CBB Manager was also asked to speak on BBC Somerset Sound, and editorial appeared in several local papers advertising the launch events.

Boost was either invited to set up events or grew partnerships for training and events in several other locations:

Jan 07	Blackdown Hills launch event (South Somerset)
	Business Link Women in Enterprise event at SCAT
	CBB presentation to Deane Adult Day Centre
Mar 07	Somerset Rural Youth Project training session on Adobe software
	Attended Hot House launch.
	Attended Mendips Business Exchange event.
	CBB networking evening and intro to SWITCH, Chapel Gallery, Wiveliscombe.
	CBB hosted JUMPS meetings and Youth Music's passport of music website training.
Apr 07	West Somerset launch of JUMPS
	Attended the SPAEDA artists surgery day
Jun 07	Music Industry Seminar with Richard Rogers at the Albemarle Centre, Taunton
	Small group sessions run by Richard Rogers at the Albemarle Centre, Taunton
Nov 07	Richard Rogers had individual, one-to-one sessions with clients
	CBB delivered a one-day business review to an arts organisation
	Arts Compass training event
	Attended Open Doors event at the Brewhouse, Taunton
Dec 07	Attended Battle of the Bands evening
	Film and Media event at the Engine Room, Bridgwater

Table 4: Boost event attendance

Boost also participated, attended or spoke at a range of networking events and meetings including: Somerset Design Enterprise Network, EQUATA (various activities), SPAEDA, Jumps, AandB South West, ArtsMatrix, CID, Creative Industries Reference Forum, Somerset Creative Business Forum, HE and FE institutions and other creative industry meetings in Somerset.

Between April and November 2007, there were 14 separate promotional activities reported to us comprising:

07.04.07	JUMPS PR
11.05.07	Routes into Music
13.06.07	SWITCH PR
29.06.07	Yeovil Networking PR
26.07.07	Bridgwater music seminar
20.08.07	Rural Renaissance PR
24.08.07	Westcountry Galleries
05.09.07	Victoria Hobbs

17.09.07	Tina Spratt
25.09.07	Taunton music seminar
24.10.07	Philip Ledbury
02.11.07	Cattle market PR
06.11.07	Creative Business Exchange
27.11.07	NLDC PR

Table 5: Boost Press and PR activity

The preceding tables evidence a substantial amount of strategic activity, mixed with promotional events and some media coverage. Given the lack of marketing budget and the fact that the Boost manager also delivers support direct to clients, this illustrates a degree of energy and commitment to the project.

Further comment on communication is provided in the discussion on evaluation and monitoring activity (the client and web surveys).

However, even in the absence of a marketing budget, we would advise the development of a strategy to ensure that these opportunities are targeted and appropriate to the future growth of Boost. The breadth of contacts and organic growth of partnerships, is admirable in one sense, but also may have dissipated Boost's impact in the short term. We would recommend that a budget be earmarked for the future for marketing, to be used initially to build strategic relationships and increase funding support. In later stages it could be used to push the income-generating aspects of the project and in support of outreach activities.

In addition to business support, Boost also provides their clients with the possibility of hiring equipment and discounted printing rates. It was reported to us that this element of Boost's service might have been better promoted both by Boost and by partners on the Steering Group. Additional take up in these areas of the project's resources would not have a huge impact on staff time and could further the impact of the project on creative businesses in the locality.

2.6 Partnership & relationships

Two Memorandums of Understanding were referred to in the minutes of the July 2006 steering group. One between Boost and ArtsMatrix (which was finalised at this meeting) and the other noting that one would be drawn up between Boost and the Key Strategic Organisations (KSOs) of the local and district councils in Somerset. The latter did not materialise as it was felt by the Steering Group not to be necessary (although this decision was not minuted).

The relationship with ArtsMatrix seems to have been a fruitful one, with Boost attending meeting a meeting on ArtsMatrix's behalf and referrals occurring between the two agencies.

Conversely, the relationship with the KSOs seems not to have been as successful, albeit with notable exceptions. The minutes to the Steering Group record a lack of communication between Boost and Somerset Arts Partnership (SAP), which was resolved with the promise of better contact in the future. The main issue of contention seems to have been that Boost was perceived to have been working with clients that SAP felt were more suited to their activities, rather than creative industry business development. Inevitably, there is cross over as clients are attracted to free advice and so will seek out such opportunities regardless of the boundaries agencies put around them. Moreover, the subsidised nature of Boost's support was felt to undercut the support of some of SAP's members.

The minutes to the Steering Group show that the Boost team had not set out with the intention of taking away clients from SAP members and they were keen to point out that they sign-post clients to SAP members as appropriate (see also comments under marketing, above). An additional issue emerged with Somerset Art Week (SAW) who reported through their Steering Group representative that they were concerned that the SWITCH website would be in competition with their own, dissipating subscriptions and the public's attention and thereby threatening their members' incomes. A meeting was promised with SAW in order to allay fears.

In the early stages of Boost, a paper was appended to the SRRP bid that articulated an aspiration for Boost to operate from 15 regional locations, some of which were Key Strategic Organisations (KSOs) of the local and district authorities. These relationships did not materialise across the board, although the Boost team reported to us that they had made several attempts to set up initiatives in partnership with the KSOs. It was minuted that all KSOs would be provided with a small payment in return for use of their facilities to host launch events or subsequent sessions at their venues. With the exception of launch events, the model Boost has taken forward is to operate either from its offices at the Brewhouse or through meetings at clients' homes or places of work.

However, other relationships have developed over time, led by clients' take up of Boost services. Examples include EQUATA (South West Disability Arts Development Agency) and SPAEDA (Somerset Partnerships Arts Education Development Agency). In the case of disabled clients it is interesting to note that the relationships that Boost established with this group of people brought a new client base to their partner, EQUATA. In addition, the relationship with New Deal has led to just over 10% of referred clients to Boost.

In addition, Boost is beginning to broker relationships between clients using their in-depth knowledge to make appropriate recommendations. This last point has only been substantiated verbally, but the Boost team would be able to pull out examples from their database should the Steering Group be interested in quantifying this type of activity.

The partnerships the Boost team have established have led to some fruitful relationships, especially with EQUATA, SPAEDA and New Deal. The most obvious outcomes of these relationships is the referral rates of clients to Boost, a desire to work together with Boost in the future to serve these partners' clients' needs and, in the case, of New Deal to meet the SRRP outputs. The absence of a productive relationship with SAP members is notable and perhaps evidence of the historic disjuncture in the county between the creative and culture industries. In our research, it was reported to us that the current funding climate, might have contributed to KSOs' anxiety about the Boost project. However, once understanding about the target audience and outcomes required from Boost was made evident to the KSOs, through meetings with the Boost team and via the SAP representative on the Steering Group, a degree of acceptance about the role of Boost was achieved.

A greater degree of explanation at the start of the project to the KSOs and possibly the development of a Memorandum of Understanding may have achieved a political solution sooner. The low profile of the project in terms of its press and PR, may also have contributed to the lack of understanding and anxiety about the Boost project.

2.7 Monitoring, recording & evaluation

Our requests for information about the project were responded to quickly illustrating that systems for recording project information are certainly in place. We found the Steering Group minutes and appended project reports useful in terms of reporting activity for each quarter.

The Boost database holds data from the client start up interviews, plus notes on every contact or follow up meetings. The quantitative data enabled us to assess the current profile of the client base, business type, referrals, and advice taken up. The detail in the notes section is less easy to report on because it is qualitative and relies to an extent on the intimate knowledge of the Boost team. Boost has provided updates on their activity to the Steering Group and has included case study examples of support that illustrate the bespoke nature of the advice sought (see Appendix 1).

Boost has conducted two pieces of market research:

- SWITCH marketing research and
- a client survey.

The **SWITCH marketing research** was conducted through an internship that Integria regularly host with students from Arnhem Business School (Netherlands). Findings from the research questionnaire (sent to 150 organisations with 70 returns), was that 93% were interested in finding out more about the facility. Subsequent promotional activity on SWITCH is outlined under 3.5 below.

The **client survey findings** were reported to the Steering Group in October 2007, with 34 returned questionnaires (which on the basis of their client base in October are about a 10% return rate). 10% is a reasonable return rate, but may not be entirely representative of Boost's client list. From a methodological point of view it might be worth providing incentives in the future for returning similar surveys in order to bolster response rates. Looking at the questionnaire itself, we would suggest that a future survey reduced the number of open questions where possible in order to speed up analysis (for example, listing events, workshops or courses Boost provided). There may be ways of developing the questionnaire in order to maximise findings in support of the SRRP outputs.

In the future it would be useful to survey potential groups of clients through targeted non-user research, in order for the team to maximise their resources and to bolster partnerships. Further, it may be possible to piggy-back Boost's offer in other agencies' research activity.

A more strategic approach to marketing could help to define how future market research activity could be structured. There is also scope to try and capture the benefit of the Boost model for advice and support, given the time offered to each person and the willingness of the team to travel to people's places of employment or homes. Evidencing that it happens is not enough, there needs to be a clear articulation of the value of this to the individuals concerned and this may something to pick up in the summative evaluation.

Boost's monitoring and reporting has been regular and appears to have sufficient scope from an operational point of view. In their reflective approach to reporting to the Steering Group they seem to be working to a loose form of formative evaluation and certainly changes to the way Boost has been delivered suggests a responsive approach to feedback and the experience of the project. A useful example of this reflective practice is in the SWITCH training offered, which led to a decision to wait for a more user friendly interface and a review of the best way to train people with different computer acumen.

3. Delivery: problems & achievements, and appraisal

The following section summarises how Boost was implemented between July 2006 and October 2007 (with some reference to the end of 2007, where data allowed).

In both the Steering Group minutes and in our conversations with Boost we noted that there had been some confusion in relation to the SRRP outputs. We were not tasked with uncovering the reasons for this confusion, but rather report it here for context. The consequence of the confusion is that the quarterly reports evidence a change the way data was recorded.

3.1 Creative Business Boost project leadership

Beginning with the SRRP outputs, Boost have reported regularly to Somerset County Council and have acted on advice given in order to meet the project outputs.

Confusion over the definitions of some of the outputs means that some targets are less advanced than others. An example of this is output 6b which requires Boost to support a number of adults to NVQ level 2, or equivalent or higher. Once it became clear that Boost would need to find training opportunities and those that needed the training (the majority of Boost's clients have achieved these criteria before joining their mailing list), the Boost manager established a partnership to achieve this output.

3.2 Quality

The client survey findings attest to the fact that the majority of respondents were happy with the service offered by Boost. Full details of the survey can be found in Boost's analysis of responses (available direct from Boost).

The type of service available to clients is 1:2:1 support that is structured to an individual's needs. Each client is taken through an interview at the start of their contact with Boost, which lasts between 2 and 3 hours. A plan for advice and support is then agreed with each person and up to 30 hours are given, averaging at 15 hours per person.

Around half of Boost's clients came to their office in Taunton and half were met in their own homes, business premises or at events. Initially Boost tried to group people together in order to minimise travel for its team. Following feedback from clients, this approach was changed in March 2007 so that clients that wanted to meet outside the Taunton office were offered dates nearer to when they wanted to meet the team, but relying on Boost to do a lot more travelling.

The benefit of this approach has been that people living in rural areas, that had access requirements (the Boost office is not accessible for disabled people), or who wanted the team to experience their work first hand, had the benefit of

someone coming to them rather than having to travel themselves. In addition for some types of technical support, it made sense for Boost to travel to the place where the technology was in order to provide the best service. Where a particular expert consultant was brought in to deliver advice, Boost reported that people were willing to travel to Taunton to make the best of such opportunities.

The bespoke nature of the service is incredibly labour intensive, but from a client's perspective demonstrates a commitment and genuine interest in their business. However, the large amount of travel required uses up a considerable amount of time and given that the team reported they were over stretched to meet demand, leads us to wonder if this was the best methodology to adopt in all cases. There is an additional issue to consider and that is of staff burnout should travel increase further, placing greater demands on the teams time to meet targets.

The Boost team also felt restricted in the kind of group support they could offer, as they had agreed not to provide training to groups under the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding with ArtsMatrix. Where training is being entered into to meet the SRRP output for NVQ attainment, Boost has had to work in partnership not only to find suitable clients, but also deliver training. Further, there are opportunities to form partnerships with or signpost clients to free support from agencies not traditionally approached by the cultural industries – for example, Inland Revenue or Business Link.

3.3 Relevance of Boost's service to clients

The bespoke nature of the advice and support offered to Boost's clients means that it is difficult to analyse how relevant each person found their experience of the project. However, findings from the client survey (which had a base of 35 respondents) indicate that the support was in the majority of cases classed as in the more positive categories of 5 point value continuums – that is Very Good or Good as opposed to Satisfactory, Poor or Very Poor. Such positive responses were given in response to questions about both consultant professionalism and knowledge.

Insofar as Boost was targeted at particular groups, it is again difficult to comment on the degree of success Boost had in reaching these people. While the SRRP bid identified women, BAME-led, disability-led and rural projects, no specific numbers were given in the bid against which we could measure success. However, there were clearly partnerships and activities that targeted these groups (for example, EQUATA, attendance at two women in business networking meetings) and the SRRP report shows rural take up of services because it only contains data for those individuals that were based outside the major urban conurbations in Somerset (i.e. outside central Taunton, Yeovil and Bridgwater).

Boost do not have an outreach strategy and we would recommend that one be designed in the future to make sure that they articulate more clearly what they

are seeking to achieve in terms of number of people from these groups; that they have thought about and resolved barriers to taking up their services and that they have genuinely built relationships with gatekeepers to their target groups. As we have outlined above, there is strong evidence that they are reaching specific groups and have taken steps to reach them, but without targets it is difficult to comment on the degree of success they have achieved.

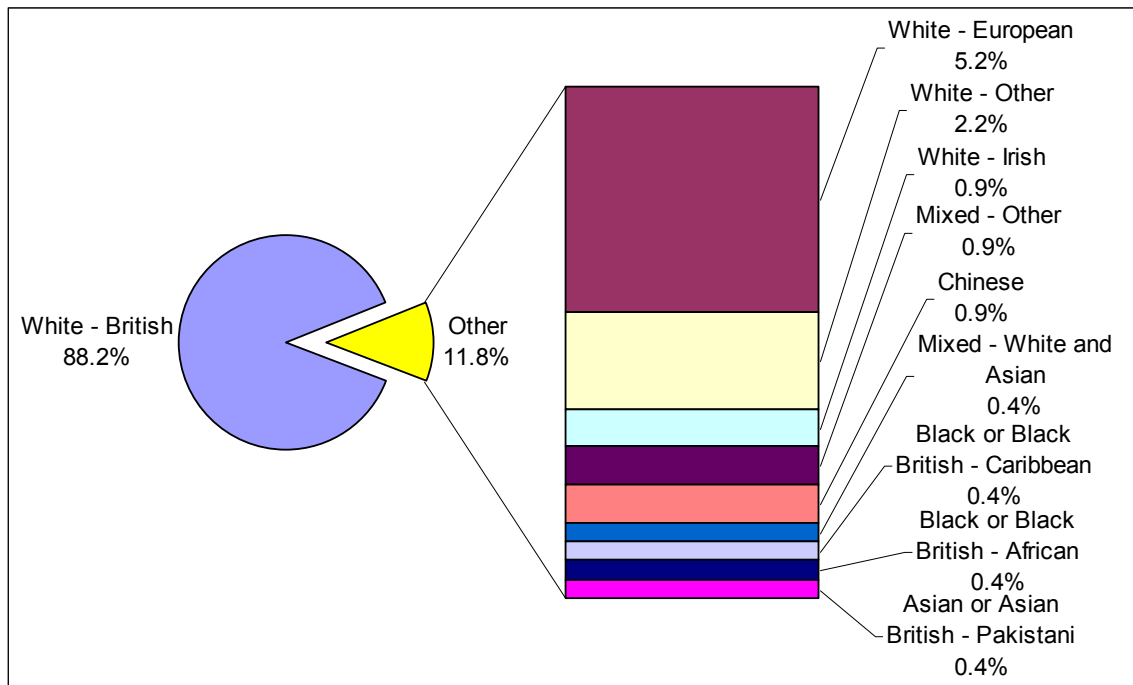
Client demography

From Boost's client database of 435 individuals it is possible to identify the following client profile.

Of the 314 people that indicated their gender, 60% were women and 40% men.

All 435 clients indicated if whether or not they considered themselves to have a disability. 7% or 28 individuals identified as disabled.

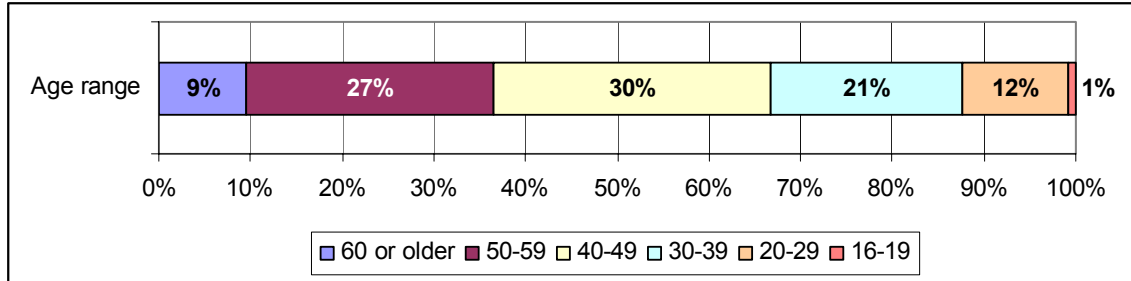
Only 229 people or 53% of those on the database were prepared to indicate their ethnic background. The profile of those that did provide this information was just over 88% as White British, with a further 8.3% indicating another white background. The remaining 3.5% or eight people indicated backgrounds other than white.



Base: 229

Figure 1: Ethnic background of Boost's clients

The majority of Boost's clients were aged between 30 and 59, the largest percentage of people aged between 40 and 49.



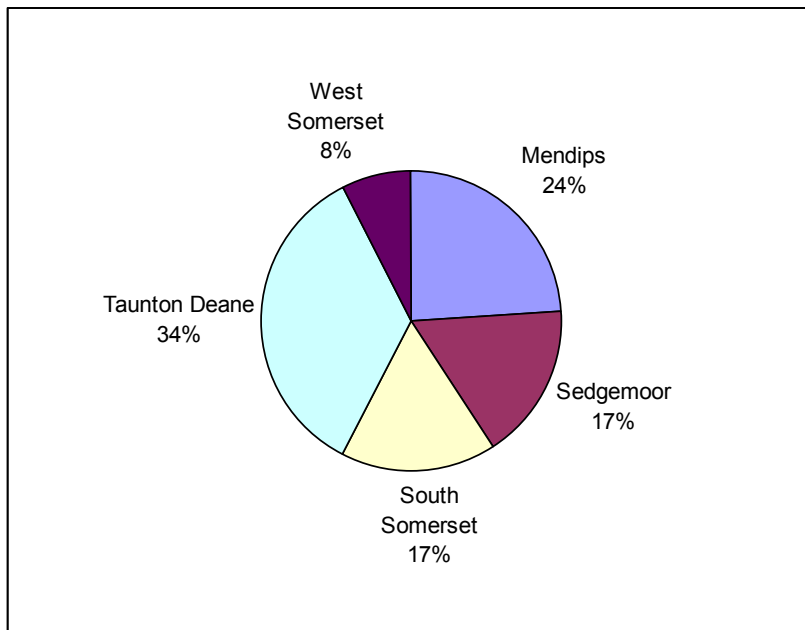
Base: 265

Figure 2: Age of Boost's clients

We note here that there were differing levels of data for each of the equalities monitoring categories, suggesting that the organisation may wish to present the necessity for monitoring more strongly. This is not just about funder bureaucracy it is about ensuring that their service is truly accessible to all and about Integria / Boost being able to take action should it find particular groups are not being served. National and regional statistics for employment and demography will help the organisation to set targets for future activity.

Regional spread

The regional spread of clients showed that people in West Somerset were less likely to take up Boost's services than those from other districts. Taunton Deane was the best served area overall, but only accounts for a third of all clients.



Base: 343

Figure 3: Regional spread of Boost's clients

While we do not have a statistical breakdown of creative industry workers by sub-region against which to compare the spread of Boost's clients, Boost/Integria felt

that we should consider the spread in view of the population of the region, plus the financial contribution of Taunton Deane Borough Council. We provide mid-2006 population estimates for interest.

Mendip	108,300	21%
Sedgemoor	111,000	21%
South Somerset	156,700	30%
Taunton Deane	107,400	21%
West Somerset	35,300	7%

Table 6: Mid-2006 population estimates, ONS

Type of business

In terms of the creative industries represented by Boost's clients, there is data available for 284 clients (or 88% of the total database). One of the categories was called "making contact" which does not provide enough detail for analysis of industry type and accounts for a fifth of clients. The next highest categories were in the visual arts and music. It is notable that Boost has worked with 31 individuals classing their work as community arts, traditionally a non-income generating group.

Summary client category	Number	%
Making contact	77	20%
Visual Arts	73	19%
Music	50	13%
Community arts	31	8%
Crafts	28	7%
Design	24	6%
Audio visual	18	5%
Education, training, consultancy	16	4%
Literature & publishing	13	3%
Promoters	13	3%
Dance	9	2%
Theatre	8	2%
Computing, multimedia	7	2%
Start ups (unspecified)	7	2%
Fashion & Textile design	5	1%
Catering	3	1%
Commercial (retail)	1	0%
Event services	1	0%

Base: 384

Table 7: Boost client type according to industry

Some industries are not represented in the clientele: advertising or architecture. This may be related to the methodology employed by Boost for capturing clients and more strategic marketing might attract clients from these industries in the future (for example a partnership with the RIBA, regional universities with Architecture schools, targeting new businesses registered at Companies House).

However, in the less clear categories in the database – “Making contact”, “Start ups” it may be that the missing or less well served industries could be found, should it be possible to review the database in the future.

Full data is available to track which clients considered themselves as start ups or “expansions”. Of the 435 clients, 31% (or 135 clients) described themselves as start ups and 34% (or 147 clients) as expansions.

43% of clients required “business support”; the other 57% was unspecified, except for 1 person hiring a desk.

The gaps in the Boost database make it difficult to come to firm conclusions about the type of clients or type of support offered. We would recommend that some time be given to plugging the gaps in order to illustrate the full extent of the work undertaken by the team.

3.4 Project Outputs (SRRP)

Boost has the following targets against these SRRP output headings:

1. Jobs Created (direct) - number	20
2. Employment Support -No. of people assisted to get a job	60
3. Businesses Creation - No. created & demonstrating growth after 12 months	30
4. Business Support - No. of businesses assisted to improve performance	120
4.a Businesses Assisted - No. engaged in new Knowledge base collaborations	100
6. No. of people assisted in their skills development	300
6.b No. of adults in the workforce achieving Level 2 or equivalent, or more	20

Table 8: Boost SRRP targets

As we stated at the beginning of this section, there appears to have been some inconsistency in how data was reported to SRRP. The Quarterly reports show that at the end of 2006/07 Boost were asked to revise how they calculated some of the outputs. They were not asked to make retrospective corrections to earlier reports and so the cumulative totals that we present here are at odds with those provided in the Q2 2007/08. All data relates to SRRP areas (that is not the urban areas of Taunton, Bridgwater or Yeovil). Boost has not been asked to provide urban area engagement against the SRRP targets.

The following table gives the data submitted by Boost in their SRRP quarterly reports.

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	Target	Q1 0607	Q2 0607	Q3 0607	Q4 0607	Q1 0708	Q2 0708	Total
1. Jobs Created (direct) - number	20		1	2		1	18	22
2. Employment Support -No. of people assisted to get a job	60				20	5	10	35
3. Businesses Creation - No. created & demonstrating growth after 12 months	30			2				2 ¹
4. Business Support - No. of businesses assisted to improve performance	120		12	132	127	13		284 ²
4.a Businesses Assisted - No. engaged in new Knowledge base collaborations	100							0
6. No. of people assisted in their skills development	300			20	51		4	75 ³
6.b No. of adults in the workforce achieving Level 2 or equivalent, or more	20							0

Table 9: Boost SRRP outputs, 2006/07 to first half of 2007/08

Jobs Created (direct) – number

The target was exceeded by the middle of 2007/08. In addition, Boost were able to report that of these 22 individual jobs, two were for people self-defining as from an ethnic minority and 4 were for people from 'other' minority groups (unspecified in the paperwork).

Employment Support -No. of people assisted to get a job

Data indicates a fairly steady increase in numbers over the period. Boost's partnership with New Deal and others is likely to enable the team to meet this output.

SRRP will require Boost to present the actual number of jobs created as a result of their interventions in the final evaluation (see SRRP evaluation guidance). The outputs in the quarterly reports refer to the number of people assisted rather than the number of jobs created.

Businesses Creation - No. created & demonstrating growth after 12 months

There is a discrepancy here in the figures reported because of the change in advice to SRRP awardees at the beginning of 2007/08. The paper trail and our interviews attest to the fact that this has been a heavily contested output. It is

¹ Figures different to Q2 0708 (gives cumulative total as '0') due to clarification of definitions.

² Figures different to Q2 0708 (gives cumulative total as '329') due to clarification of definitions.

³ Figures different to Q2 0708 (gives cumulative total as '102'), not clear at this stage why there is a discrepancy.

likely that the data will be collected retrospectively as Boost need to indicate their longer term impact on their clients.

Business Support - No. of businesses assisted to improve performance

Boost have exceeded this target considerably and to date have more than doubled the output.

SRRP will require Boost to explore the types of improvement in performances businesses experienced as a result of contact with the project. The SRRP team do not expect Boost to conduct an audit of all those helped under this heading, suggesting rather that case studies would be an appropriate way forward.

To date Boost has conducted a case study analysis of those businesses it has supported in terms of their likely ability to pay for Boost's services in the future. These case studies are split into 4 levels:

- Level 1 – clients who would not be in a position to pay any/full price for services
- Level 2 – clients whose business is just starting to develop
- Level 3 – those developing their business
- Level 4 – those who were already moving their business forward and could perhaps have paid for Boost service

The outcome of this analysis was the realisation that the majority of Boost's clients fall into the first three levels of categorisation, indicating that it is unlikely that these clients will be able to pay for services.

Other case study examples were regularly provided to the steering group within Boost's reports for each meeting. The length of these case studies varied from a couple of sentences to half a page of A4. These outline the types of advice offered by the Boost team and some early indications of impact. Some case studies are reproduced in Appendix 1.

The Boost database contains more in depth information about each client, distilling the findings from the 2 hour start up meeting the team have with each client. Each subsequent contact with clients is recorded in the database and the team note any feedback they receive in terms of development.

Businesses Assisted - No. engaged in new Knowledge base collaborations

Due to the delay in the launch of SWITCH, Boost has not been able to start meeting this output. However, they intend to launch SWITCH at the end of February 2008 and their final quarterly report for 2007/08 is likely to evidence achievements against this target.

No. of people assisted in their skills development

There was some misunderstanding between Boost and the Steering Group about whether Boost should provide training opportunities for groups of individuals

beyond the 1:2:1 advice they routinely provide. Consequently, when it became clear that Boost should find ways of delivering training the team have sought partnerships to enable them to meet this output.

No. of adults in the workforce achieving Level 2 or equivalent, or more

The Boost team reported to us that their clients typically have qualifications in excess of the threshold given for this output. Consequently they have brokered partnerships to enable them to both find individuals in need of Level 2 qualifications. The partnerships came on stream towards the end of 2007 and it is likely that the final quarterly reports will evidence progress for these outputs.

In the preceding discussion it should be noted that Boost's interventions occur over a period of time and so they will have contact with individuals on a number of occasions. The SRRP reporting precludes the team from double counting individuals and so the figures do not illustrate the full extent of their support to date. It would be useful for the Boost team to quantify the number of contacts that their clients have made in order to illustrate both the length of relationship that they typically have with their clients and the total number of interventions they have made both within and without the SRRP regions. However, we note that collecting such information retrospectively may not be possible.

As we stated at the outset of this section we noted that there has been confusion in terms of the exact meanings of SRRP outputs. In response to the first draft of this report, SRRP provided us with details of how they have sought to provide leadership in this respect. While they accept that communication has at times been "slow" between the RDA and Rural Renaissance teams, they stressed that procedures and support were in place for projects funded under SRRP.

Our role here is not to apportion blame, but to note that confusion had occurred and that this impacted on the Boost team's ability to make progress in some areas of their work. However, it was made clear to us that Boost responded proactively once clarity was achieved and the partnerships that have developed attest to their commitment to meeting their funding requirements.

3.5 SWITCH

The company that developed SWITCH went into liquidation in January 2007 and its assets and intellectual property rights were acquired by Tribal shortly afterwards. Boost has been involved in protracted negotiations in order to secure the SWITCH product at the rate for clients (£10 per annum) they had initially agreed. This was achieved at the end of 2007 and the project is ready to launch on 28 February 2007.

Tribal have developed the original SWITCH proposition and the facility will now include a powerful main portal (SWITCH), up to 10 sub portals offering micro network facilities within which it will be possible to host private team zones. It is hoped that the team zones will provide an additional income stream for Boost,

being available to rent for collaborative working. The front face of SWITCH has also been revised following feedback from the early training sessions.

Throughout this uncertain period Boost has continued to build interest in SWITCH and a steering group has been working with the team in this respect.⁴ In 2006, they provided training and have reviewed their methodology in the light of feedback and observations of these sessions. They have established genuine interest in SWITCH with their strategic partners: EQUATA, SPAEDA, Somerset Arts Week, West County Galleries, Community Council for Somerset and the county's arts officers. These partners will be in the first wave of the facility's sign ups early in the New Year; afterwards in 2008 the opportunity will be promoted to individuals (although in the absence of a marketing strategy we cannot comment on the methodology proposed).

Boost has identified the opportunity to link SWITCH to county websites and the tourism sector. Boost also has aspirations for the facility to be taken up by neighbouring counties.

In the original conception of the Boost project, SWITCH was presented as the sustainable element of the project beyond the end of the current funding agreements (March 2008). The delay in its launch has meant that it was not possible for us to comment on its usefulness to creative industry businesses, nor on how embedded the facility had become. Some of the Steering Group voiced their frustration with the delay, albeit with the caveat that they appreciated the efforts made by Boost to ameliorate a difficult situation.

3.6 Summary

At this interim stage it appears to us that Boost is on track to meet its SRRP outputs. There are places where procedures for monitoring might be tightened up, or a more strategic approach to target groups and industry types might be adopted, but at this stage of the project and with an uncertain future ahead it would be unreasonable to expect such changes in the project's processes in its current incarnation.

We have been informed that the next SRRP report (due in January 2008) will provide some significant outputs. This and the final quarterly report for 2007/08 will provide the evidence necessary for the final evaluation exercise.

As we stated above it is difficult to evaluate the success of the project in meeting key groups in the absence of 'SMART' targets. However, there are clear signs

⁴ Kevin Redpath (consultant ex Connecting Somerset), Caroline Corfe (Taunton Deane Arts Officer), Catherine Beedell (Somerset Arts & Disability Officer), Jules Bushell (Recording studio owner and Musician), Beccy Swaine (representing Somerset Arts Week and Artlife in W Somerset), Phil Shepherd (Engine Room and Somerset Film)

that the project is meeting the needs of women in the creative industries, given the higher percentage of women served by the project thus far. The partnership with EQUATA seems also to be ensuring that the project continues to deliver for disabled people and the team's willingness to travel to people's place of work means that they are able to respond to the access requirements of this group of clients.

The longer term impact (consequences) of Boost's interventions may not be realisable until much later in 2008 or, indeed, 2009. Should the project continue, it would be invaluable to sustain contact with people that the project has supported to date in order to provide funders and strategic agencies with an articulation of the value of the methodology of support and advice adopted. This learning could then be shared with neighbouring initiatives and in the planning of further interventions to grow the creative industries in Somerset. Future planning should incorporate a budget to enable this tracking to take place.

4. Financial management

4.1 Financial management & record keeping

Regular reporting on financial matters takes place between the Boost project Coordinator and the SCC project accounting officer, who reports onward to the Steering Group and SRRP. The documentary record for this project appears to consist, most usefully for this exercise, and future formal evaluation for SRRP and any audit purposes of:

- Budgets as set out in SRRP proposal
- Quarterly budget and performance reports by SCC to Steering Group
- Monthly/quarterly invoicing by Integria for Boost related expenditure
- Quarterly claim and progress report (from SCC to SRRP)

This exercise is neither a financial audit nor the final formal project evaluation between SCC and SRRP. Given those limitations, and of time etc, the documentation appears to be in place and to demonstrate that the project has been managed within the committed funds, i.e. within budget. Integria have reported both to us, and we understand to Steering Group, that the project is under-funded, which is evidenced, we suggest, by:

- Rapid take up of services, reaching capacity at an early stage of the project (more funding would have allowed more beneficiaries)
- Lack of success at finding additional funds for this phase of the Boost project, (leading to an inability to expand or extend over time the services offered)
- Inability to procure more adequate premises, which may have constrained some uses/dissuaded some users from making best use of the services offered.)

We note that there is no procurement strategy because, as reported to us, Boost has not needed to procure anything above £5,000. The only equipment they have purchased since start up was a projector which they got permission from the Steering Group to divert funds for. We have not looked at the spending of the original £42,000 capital budget.

4.2 GVA and leverage gained and value for investment

The brief asked for some assessment of the project performance on these items, which, given the constraints of the time allowed for the review, and the information available, are not possible to deliver at this stage.

Without a detailed interview of a robust sample of the 300+ users of the Boost services, and some careful investigation into the role of Boost in delivering particular, quantifiable advantages to each participant in the programme, it will not be possible to identify where Boost is adding gross value to individual businesses, or to the overall prosperity of the sector in Somerset or the Somerset or regional economy. It would be difficult to identify what the economic benefit or value to business might have been to the people that attended training and difficult too to define how attributable this might be to Boost.

At this stage, with additional time, it might have been able to comment on

- ways in which users perceive that their levels of competence, confidence and business performance have improved,
- NVQ outputs (as derived from the SRRP target) provide quantifiable benefits to individuals, businesses and the sector as a whole
- Evidence of some of the intangible outcomes of training – job satisfaction, confidence, organisation culture – management, quality, personnel, market position, reach into community

We would advise that to find out this in a more detailed way the Steering Group would need to need to invest in the process, be clear about purpose, come at it within an appropriate brief, mechanism, timescale and, potentially, pay clients for their feedback. A set of notes indicating some issues to be reflected in a summative research brief has been attached as Appendix 3.

4.3 Future sustainability

Boost, as defined by its participants this far, is either or both:

- A time limited project to enable public sector purchase of business support to the sector, or
- The pilot for a continuing public/private funding and delivery arrangement

The first of these was implicitly ruled out as a best position by the Steering Group's terms of reference, and makes little sense given the continued widespread interest within the county in supporting this area of business development and activity, and by Integra's determination to establish a base in the county from which to deliver programmes of benefit and support to the sector. However, there appears to be no short or medium term funding plan in place, leaving Integra and the Steering Group with increasingly little option but to curtail the project at its formal end date.

To date Boost / Integra have not devised a comprehensive exit strategy, detailing how the project might wind down should funding not be secured beyond the SRRP award. At the very least the project needs to formally alert its clients, possibly signposting them to other forms of support in the county in order to maintain the developmental momentum the project has initiated.

In relation to the second, the issues at hand are

- how best to draw the balance between public funding made available to offer well delivered, continually in demand support activities as between the councils, other public agencies, the private sector and self generated funds.
- How quickly Integra, SCC, TDBC and ACE can put in place funding to enable aspects of the service to continue to be available
- Whether there are elements which are self funding and how these might be promoted
- Whether Integra's wider ambitions can be supported in order to enable some aspects of the current service to be supported

Public funding for support activities

Boost has set the costs of access to its services and activities low (for example the SWITCH subscription) and the level of support offered (e.g. the 30 hours business support offer) high, both as a product of the SRRP and other funding, in order to encourage high levels of take up and adoption and also out of commitment to the sector. Sustaining this requires continued funding, or a much wider income base and higher levels of self generate funding.

A number of approaches taken to develop a model to sustain Boost after the current SRRP funding runs out in March 2008.

Self generated funds

Of its services and activities only SWITCH was destined to generate income and as the launch is 28 February 2008 we are not sure that the facility will lead to income within the lifetime of the project. In any event, if all 435 businesses and practitioners on Boost's books were to subscribe, this would only generate £4,350 in a full year. The Colin Mercer study in 2005 identified c800 "statistically visible businesses" and a further c 2,350 practitioners; from these figures there may be an additional 3,000 subscribers in the county. It is not clear to us what the sustainable level of activity and subscription level might be for SWITCH. Promoting the service beyond the county and increasing subscription and membership levels would generate a more sustainable project model by increasing the number of potential subscribers and the income they would bring in. This would be necessary given the lack of foreseeable support from Boost's current public and private sector supporters.

The Project Coordinator noted a small amount of income generated by external users of office resources, but, as with SWITCH, heavily subsidised and therefore both minimal and unlikely to grow.

We understand that only a small number (cited as 20-30) of the 300 businesses signed up by Boost might be currently or in the medium term in a position to pay commercial rates for the levels of business support they might want to buy from Boost. Further research might need to be done to provide more detail, and it would be interesting to ask all of Boost's clients how much they might be prepared to pay and for what as part of a further round of research. However, this would be most unlikely to change the overall numbers identified by Integria as likely to be able to pay.

Integria's wider aspirations.

In addition, Integria have approached Taunton Deane Borough Council with a proposal linked to Taunton Vision in order to develop a building (East Reach House) in the East Reach to provide space for a Creative Cluster in the town. However, we understand that the building is no longer available. This is part of what we understand may be Integria's longer term aspiration to establish a project base in Somerset, which would perhaps enable some level of

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subsidised/less than market cost service be provided, should Integria be able to establish a workspace/incubator project to build some critical mass into its local business model. However, assessment of the particulars of this or other Integria plans falls outside the remit of this study.

5. Conclusions

Responding both to the scope of the brief, and the desire from Steering Group members for some advice on next steps both in relation to the Boost project and in considering ways forward for the kinds of support needed by the micro-scale creative and cultural business sector across the county, we have drawn some conclusions on the following basis.

5.1 Establishment of the project, funding etc

The organisational and policy context within which Integria has been asked to establish Boost is complex and has not made it easy to convert a two year project to a sustained business support service. Boost has been one of the projects which has bridged a period in which the SCC, SWRDA and others have been determining how best to support the sector, and, step by step, putting strategies and programmes in place.

To the funders' credit, the SRRP funding and other partner contributions (SCC, TDBC, ACE, and Integria) to the project have been securely in place throughout. Whilst there was at one point some concern within the project about the definition and therefore deliverability of some of its outputs, we understand that this has been addressed between Boost and SRRP, and is not likely, retrospectively, to affect Boost's budget and outputs as reported to the Steering Group to date. This remains to be confirmed in the formal post project evaluation and audit reporting.

5.2 Monitoring Boost's performance

Boost appears to be well on the way to meeting the formal output targets set through the SRRP contract. These have been reported regularly and cumulatively to the Steering Group. We note that some of these targets – for example Output 4 Business Support – were able to be met by the end of the Year 1 Quarter 4. We note that with more promotion and more resources available it is likely that Boost would have pulled in even larger numbers of service users.

Some elements of the project, including SWITCH which Integria has had to retrieve from a complex set of circumstances surrounding the commercial carrier, are at an early stage, but appear to be in a position to deliver quickly and to be scalable beyond initial modest numbers or on a wider sub regional or regional basis.

In addition, there appears to be enough qualitative and quantitative evidence that shows that the businesses in contact with Boost value its services. Based on Boost's own soliciting of feedback via its user satisfaction surveys from the individuals and businesses it has advised, the feedback shows that many users feel very positive about the service they have received, and indicate that it adds some value to their practice and business prospects.

Within the scope and resources available for this review it has not been possible to identify where Boost is adding gross value to individual businesses, or to the overall prosperity of the sector in Somerset or the Somerset or regional economy. It would be difficult to identify what the economic benefit or value to business might have been to the people that attended training and difficult too to define how attributable this might be to Boost. We recognise the pressure there is to justify programmes of support and individual investment decisions via their economic impact.

However, without a detailed interview of a robust sample of the 300+ users of the Boost services, and some careful investigation into the role of Boost in delivering particular, quantifiable advantages to each participant in the programme, alongside better information than appears to be available about the performance of the sector in the county or regionally, this cannot be reported upon at this stage.

With additional time, it might have been able to comment on

- ways in which users perceive that their levels of competence, confidence and business performance have improved,
- NVQ outputs (as derived from the SRRP target) provide quantifiable benefits to individuals, businesses and the sector as a whole
- evidence of some of the intangible outcomes of training and assistance, including job satisfaction, confidence, organisation culture – management, quality, personnel, market position, reach into community

Some parts of this are discernable from Boost's own surveying and are reported above, but we would note that either the data to assess economic impact should have been built into the original design of the project, or additional resources for resorting and evaluating these built in at the outset.

We would advise that to find out this in a more detailed way the Steering Group would need to need to invest in the process, be clear about purpose, come at it within an appropriate brief, mechanism, timescale and, potentially, pay clients for their feedback, or at least build this into the contract for their support/assistance by the project. This could be built into the final end of project reporting and auditing process.

5.3 Management and Direction

Complex projects like Boost need robust political and management leadership to evolve from funded pilots towards hybrid mixed economy business models, particularly where the political, strategic and resource context is as changeable as the last few years in Somerset. We commented above (section 2.4 in particular) on some of the issues built into the governance arrangements for the project. We would observe that a strategic and management structure at county level would be able to identify and help deliver the particular requirements of the creative and cultural business sector within an agreed county wide economic

development and cultural strategies. The County is putting such arrangements in place. However, in the interim, Boost and other projects like it are subject to transitional arrangements and, inevitably, continued uncertainty which militates against moving easily from short-term, /pilot project status to sustainable arrangements.

5.4 Strategic contribution of Boost

In order properly to value the contribution of Boost to the creative and cultural economy in Somerset, SCC, TDBC and others need to identify how much emphasis they wish to place, supported by what resources, on micro-businesses, sole traders and new enterprises as opposed to businesses in more mature stages of development and/or committed to growth. Most of the activity we have reviewed is aimed at newer, smaller, aspirant businesses, rather than businesses in more mature stages of development and/or committed to growth. In part this is because of the intention and design of the programme, and in part because there are relatively many fewer such companies in Somerset.

This evaluation was not set up to review Boost in the context of other delivery options, in terms of other ways of investing the SRRP and other funding available, or in relation to value for investment compared to other interventions aimed at the same target group. It is not clear from the work undertaken by Integria for SCC Arts Development Team in 2004-5 what other options beyond CIDA we explored, and what the commissioning bodies expected from Boost's work set alongside (let alone aggregated with to provide an overall picture) service delivery by SCAT, JUMPS, Thrive (admittedly a later investment decision by ACE) or individual KSOs.

The intended and actual relationship between Boost and the KSOs and other local or sub-regional delivery bodies is one of the least clear aspects of the project to report on. It is not the evaluator's job to write a history of particular elements of the project, but we note that the relationship between Integria and some of the KSOs (and SAP, which brings KSOs and other arts and cultural partners together) appears not to have been wholly satisfactory to any of the parties involved either before or during the Boost project. On the other hand, it appears, through the process of this evaluation, that in some cases these relationships have been positive and productive.

We have reported (section 2.6 above for example) on some of the issues which arise from this. Lessons for all parties involved from this might include:

- Strategic clarity from the commissioning bodies/client group as to the place of a project such as Boost in the landscape of delivery
- Acceptance within the creative/cultural community in the county (and their public partners) of the role with incoming projects might play alongside, and adding value to, work being done by existing agencies

- Need for clarity in the setting out the scope of the project and its funding conditions in context of required, expected or desired partnerships with other agencies
- Positive leadership from all parties involved – Steering Group, KSOs, Boost and others – to identify early and put in place actions to minimise tensions, particularly where these might detract from positive achievement by the project in question.

Considerable effort has been expended on seeking funding to enable the project to continue after SRRP funding finishes in March 2008. As we understand, there is no obvious replacement funding for the project as it stands, either from SWRDA, SCC, TDBC or ACE SW. Alongside this, Integria has been working to secure its position in Somerset, as part of its development as an independent creative sector specialist with bases in different English regions..

The Steering Group and Integria will need to review what happens in legacy mode, if and when the project comes to an end of this phase of its activity, both in relation to the individuals and businesses assisted, and in relation to the future of SWITCH.

We have reported on the position with SWITCH in section 3.5 above. SCC and its partners should work closely with Integria and the SWITCH Steering Group to establish the basis on which this element of the project can both deliver its short term SRRP and ACE SW funded targets, and also develop a viable business model on a sub-regional or wider basis.

5.5 Summary

In conclusion, there are a number of next steps which the Steering Group should consider, to pick up some issues arising from the evaluation. This would enable some strategic value to have been derived from the Boost project, on top of the direct benefits attributable from the outputs of the project, and even if, as seems most likely, Boost will not be funded to continue as it stands. These include building on the lessons and achievements of the project to:

- support SCC's development of a strategic approach to the sector, both in the context of making a substantial contribution to the future prosperity of the county, and to help enrich and strengthen the ecology and culture of enterprise amongst Somerset's cultural and creative practitioners and businesses
- build into or alongside the final review and reporting on the project an economic impact appraisal of the project, in the context of other concurrent sector specific interventions, and to enable SCC and others to pull together key data about the performance of the sector in the county over the last 3 years.
- ensure that the practical legacy of the project, and, where possible the relationships with groups of users, is wound down sensitively, and held both

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- with Integria and within the new creative sector development capacity being put in place within SCC
- work with Integria and the SWITCH Steering Group to establish the basis on which SWITCH develop a viable business model on a sub-regional or wider basis

Appendix 1: Boost case studies

South Somerset

Sculpture

A client who knits sculptures with metal wool and semi precious beads. Her expectations for promoting and selling her work were within the local area. Boost helped her to develop her product to be marketed in an “upmarket bespoke manner nationally”. Moreover, Boost hopes to film a promotional DVD and to develop images for her marketing materials.

West Somerset

Writer

Boost are supporting a self-published writer (who has completed four books) to move beyond community publishers to national publishing houses. In addition, Boost is advising her on how to approach national television and film producers.

Artist educator

Boost is advising the client how to move from public subsidy to providing a sustainable income in the future. Through business planning Boost is helping this client to move forward commercially.

Mendips

Design

Client reuses old knitwear to create new designs. Boost is helping the client to develop her marketing and business planning. They are also advising her on broadening her client base to include London.

Taunton Deane

Graphic Design

This client is a start up business, looking for opportunities to network in order to build confidence. Boost is working on an action plan to help this individual network effectively.

Appendix 2: Selection of client feedback from the evaluation of service provision conducted by Boost in Autumn 2007.

Please add any comments you wish to make concerning Creative Business Boost or the services offered by arts and creative organisations in Somerset.

I think it is crucial to have an organization dedicated to supporting business development within the creative industries. I would like to see [that] BOOST have increased resources and support in recognition of the work it is doing- i.e. specialist staff, accessible offices and workshop space, more county-wide support and recognition from arts organizations.

Just continued support to signpost artists and provide 1:1 business and marketing support - Tracy has been a fantastic support.

Su's help with the recording the CD's has been brilliant. What I'm really in need of now is someone who will take a quick view of my submission letters, material and CD and offer some critical advice .Am I writing the right letters? Should I go for outrageous (funnier) or lighter poems with broader appeal. An opinion /perspective, occasional mentorship would be great.

Very accessible and helpful.

Excellent - a lot better than some arts organizations I won't mention. A real breath of fresh air and enthusiasm.

I believe the Creative Business Boost is a service needed by our communities but I wonder if people know you exist.

Generally speaking, I think what is on offer here is fantastic. Everyone I have met involved in Biz Boost is polite and positive. I can also appreciate that many people have needs and not all can be met. Please keep up the good work!

I have only had minimal contact with Creative Business Boost but have found the personnel very helpful and accommodating. I will continue to use Creative Business Boost and would recommend their services to others!

Potential marketing links. The staff was knowledgeable and competent in all relevant areas

It has given me an overview of my business, enabling me to identify shortfalls such as IT skills, which I am now addressing.

Just a quick thank you for coming over and giving us advice as well as helpful guidance from your own life experience. I found it very helpful. We will keep you posted about our progress.

Appendix 3: Summative evaluation of Boost

Summative evaluation of Boost

The following notes are intended as a starting point for the summative evaluation of Boost and assume that there will be a separate budget allocated to realise this work.

Boost objectives

The following objectives were extrapolated from Boost's SRRP application

- Create a tangible and significant virtual and physical CI cluster
- Improve the infrastructure for CI specialist support
- Provide access to expensive CI technical resources
- Provide advice and training in their use
- Create new businesses
- Create and protect jobs

Boost summative evaluation objectives

Building on these objectives and those expressed to us by other stakeholders, we have devised the following objectives for the summative evaluation. This assumes that Boost will continue to assess customer satisfaction through their annual survey and that the quality of what Boost offer is not the primary focus of the summative exercise.

1. Assess the management and administration of Boost
Short piece of work, noting the exit strategy and activities from January 2008
2. Analyse Boost's outputs according to three types of service – (a) professional advice and support, (b) equipment hire and discounted reprographics and (c) SWITCH
Analysis to go beyond SRRP outputs, also urban areas
3. Analyse the social and economic impact of Boost on CI businesses – to take account of changes to individual and their businesses.
The bulk of the evaluative activity will occur under this objective. Types of business to include profit and non-profit making (social enterprises). Economic impact to look at change to productivity, market, plus public funds levered to social enterprises. Social impact to look at individual confidence, networking. Other impacts to include development of strategic business tools.

Optional objective

4. Comparative analysis of other CI development models in order to recommend future shape of Boost.

Outline methodology

The methodology will be dependent on the budget allocated for the summative evaluation.

- Objective 1: conducted through interviews with Boost & steering group
- Objective 2: assessment of SRRP reports, Boost database
- Objective 3: various options here, but a survey would yield the most comprehensive response (incentives would need to be in place given the low return rates for Boost's annual survey). Case studies would also be helpful here.
- Objective 4: desk research, structured interviews.

Budget

The following estimates the number of consultant days needed to deliver the above objectives.

- Objective 1: 2 days
 - Objective 2: 2 days (plus 1-2 days commitment from Boost)
 - Objective 3: Survey 20 days (including administrative days), allow budget for incentives (vouchers). 12 days for 10 case studies.
 - Objective 4: 5 days (analysis of 4 similar projects in depth)
- Reporting 7 days