

# Building Resilience Programme 2017-19 Evaluation

Executive summary



school for  
social  
entrepreneurs



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## About the programme

The Building Resilience programme supported leaders of 24 cultural sector organisations across England to build organisational resilience through diversity and entrepreneurship.

It was funded by Arts Council England and led by the School for Social Entrepreneurs (SSE). The eighteen-month programme commenced October 2017, and each participant received:



**Six two/three-day facilitated Learning Blocks**, each of which included a day-long facilitated Action Learning Set (ALS) as well as workshops, guest speakers and expert witnesses; each block was based upon a high-level theme (Personal Resilience; Creativity, Entrepreneurship and Innovation; Social Impact; Business Modelling; Leadership, Management and Staffing; and Customer Led Approach).



**Four days of one-to-one consultancy support**



**£5,000 grant to support** the development of their skills in building organisational resilience. The programme design was fully informed by SSE's Theory of Change in relation to the development of social sector leaders, which seeks to increase business skills, emotional resourcefulness, networks and social impact.



## Impact

90%

of participants stated that their participation in the programme has made them feel more confident in developing and launching new products/services (and 70% actively intend to do so).

3/4

found that the programme has had a positive impact on their ability to generate additional revenue (earned and from other sources) and from a wider range of sources.

100%

stated that the programme has helped them to widen and strengthen their peer support network.

3/5

are now more confident that they have an increased knowledge and understanding of how diversity can increase their organisation's resilience and sustainability.

100%

of participants agreed that the programme helped them to become more resilient as a leader of their organisations.

All but one participants stated that the programme has helped them to become more resilient as leaders of their organisations. One perhaps counter-intuitive positive impact is that participants acknowledged that it is okay to ask for help from others (strategic, management and operational) and that this itself demonstrates positive leadership skills. Rather than trying to do too much themselves and "hide" any lack of knowledge; by incorporating others' ideas, perspectives and skills this can help to transform challenging situations. The imparting of knowledge across organisations has helped to increase organisational - as well as personal - resilience.



Action Learning Sets have had the most impact on participants, with 86% of respondents citing this part of the programme as having a major impact on them and their organisation.



Two-thirds of participants identified the grant funding as having a major impact on them and their businesses.

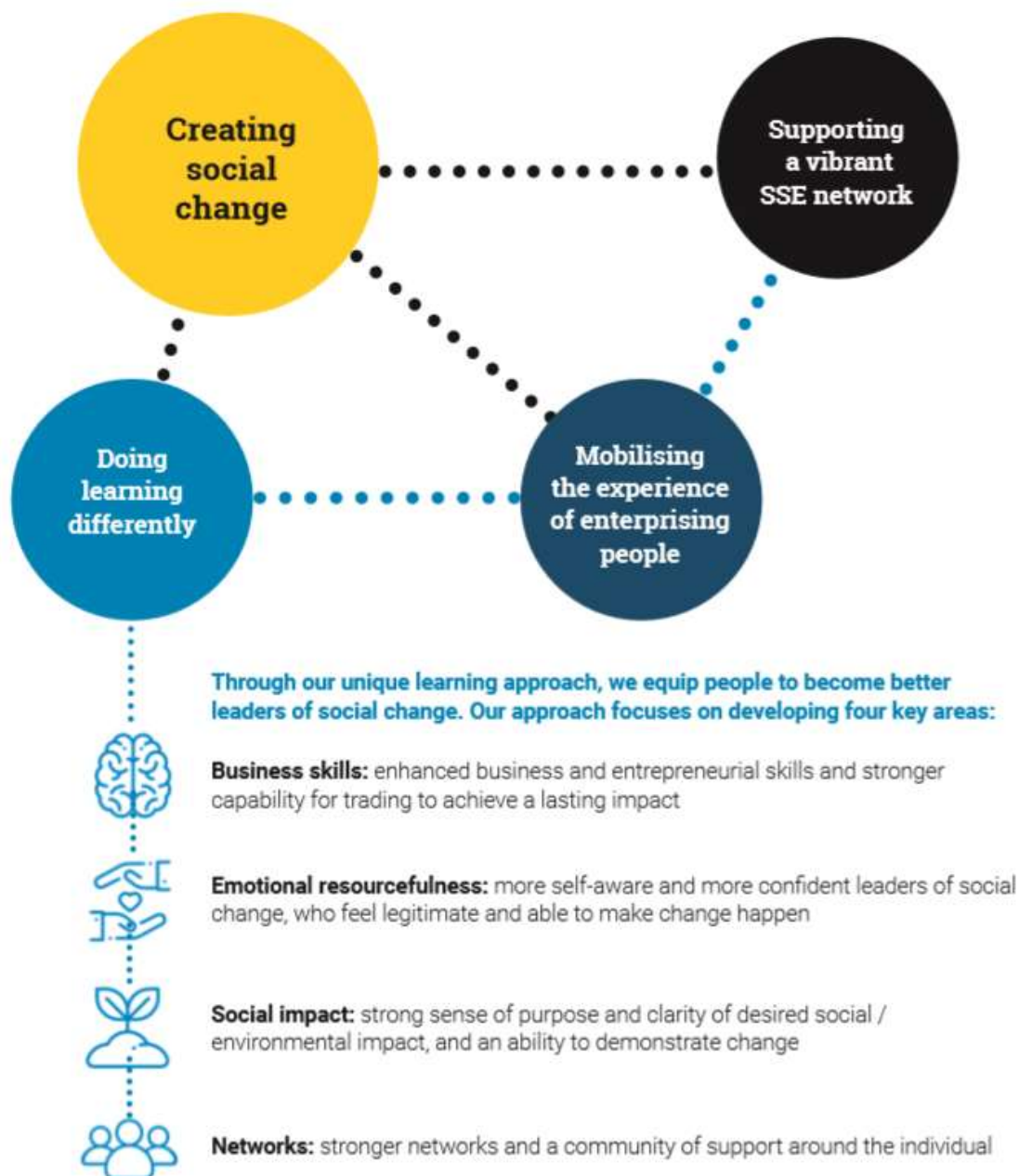


Some 60% of participants stated that the one-to-one consultancy and the informal peer networking has had a major impact on them and their organisation.

## From external evaluator, Innovas

The programme has had very positive impacts on participants. The largest impacts have been in how connected participants are with leaders of other organisations. This reflects the great emphasis the programme has placed on peer working and networking. The programme has also impacted upon participants' personal resilience and the ability to take calculated risks, along with their confidence in their ability to identify and seize new opportunities and to manage diversity across their organisations.

The programme has also boosted skills in relation to new product/service development, structure and governance, financial management and active listening (a key value added from the Action Learning Sets) and business planning. Participants also reported heightened levels of self-awareness.



## Case study

### Kate Hartoch, Circus City

Kate Hartoch is Director at Circus City, a biennial festival of circus in Bristol that runs for three to four weeks in October. Circus City aims to bring exciting and innovative international performances to the city, to showcase work by Bristol and UK artists and to support the UK circus touring circuit. She came on the programme to learn about how to develop Circus City further, for advice and support on becoming incorporated and to gain skills (from peers and experts) to build a more resilient festival/ organisation.



Kate is very confident that the programme has helped her to develop her approach and ability to run a successful festival, the next of which is later this year. She found the Action Learning Sets to be of great help in demystifying many issues related to management. She was able to talk through things honestly with peers, which has improved her level of confidence and leadership. The group continues to meet and to support each other.

Sharing her views with senior leaders from other arts organisations has made her more confident in working at management level and to become more comfortable with sharing ideas and collaborating. She is now open to working in a more entrepreneurial way and feels more confident about putting new ideas into practice, managing difficult situations and approaching new opportunities with a more business minded approach.

The one-to-one consultancy has also been of great help to Kate. Going into the course she already had a very clear idea that she wanted Circus City to become an incorporated organisation, and the assistance provided by the consultant helped her to achieve this goal. The consultancy support and Action Learning Set discussions have help Kate to apply the learning from the programme to appoint a new Board. The expert witness statements in relation to entrepreneurialism enabled Kate to see the different ways of working and income generation that are possible, which should help to reduce reliance on grants. She is now looking more actively at developing partnering and thinking in a business-like way.

“This programme came at a very useful time for our un-constituted organisation as it supported us successfully applying to be a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. The consultancy was used for the board formation process and for experienced practical support with the reply to the Charity Commission.”

## Conclusions

### Leadership

The programme had recognised that to thrive and adapt to change, cultural sector organisations require support to ensure that leadership and workforce are sufficiently diverse and appropriately skilled, and organisations can access diverse markets. The programme has been successful in attracting high quality senior leaders, who are willing to be challenged (and to challenge others) and are receptive to new approaches to the running of their organisations.

### Networking

Action Learning Sets and peer networking are highly valued by participants, as this has provided them with the opportunity to work in depth with their peers, learning from different people's experiences. Participants have welcomed the encouragement they have received through the programme to challenge the "business as usual" approach to running their organisations.

### Confidence

The overriding impression is that the programme has greatly increased participants' confidence on a range of issues pertaining to their job, including: willingness to test and implement new ideas and to take calculated risks; to seek out new sources of income; to identify and seize new opportunities, including developing new products/services; to manage diversity across their organisations; to be more assertive in dealing with staff, volunteers and Board Member; to delegate where appropriate; to share ideas with other and to listen to feedback; and to network with others.

### Resilience

The programme has helped participants' resilience, giving them the determination to see through the changes necessary to drive growth in their organisations and to remain positive about the challenges that change inevitably brings.

**"I am leading with more confidence. I am able to prioritise my own work-life balance. I am more confident in exploring challenges and new partnerships."**



## Recommendations

### Explore the potential for major commercial arts companies to co-fund, co-design and co-deliver a successor programme

Promoting industry-led programmes which leverage private sector funding is one potential way of overcoming the often stop-start nature of programmes funded by government or non-departmental bodies. This could include potential co-funding and co-design of a successor programme by major commercial world class arts companies, contributing to the programme through direct and in-kind support, with the remainder of funding coming from SSE and/or ACE and participant organisations (so the programme is part-subsidised, rather than wholly subsidised). In-kind contributions made by commercial partners would include designing the programme, taking part in marketing and communication events, delivering key activities (such as masterclasses from leading industry figures, workshops addressing the key issues facing participants, shadowing opportunities for observational learning site visits, and ongoing mentoring from experienced managers from the commercial partners, providing coaching and support), quality assurance, evaluation and governance. Participant rates would be subsidised on a sliding scale depending on the size of the organisation to ensure that the programme was accessible to smaller organisations.

### Align programme objectives with those of the ACE Transformative Leadership Fund

The UK Industrial Strategy highlighted the importance of productivity in relation to economic competitiveness and living standards. An accompanying Call for Evidence demonstrated the importance of adopting existing technology (such as accountancy, CRM or HR software, cloud computing or payment systems) and modern business practices (such as leadership and management capabilities or developing an innovation culture) in determining productivity levels among small and medium-sized businesses. This same principle also applies to charities and social enterprises. With ACE investing £6 million in a new Transformative Leadership Fund to support leadership development across museums, libraries and arts, an enhanced focus on leadership would enable SSE to access this funding, as well as leadership and productivity-themed funds relating to the UK Industrial Strategy (e.g. Business Basics Fund). A greater emphasis on technology adoption would also enable SSE (and in turn arts organisations) to contribute towards addressing the four Grand Challenges set out in the UK Industrial Strategy (Artificial Intelligence and Data; Ageing Society, Clean Growth and Future of Mobility), and increase potential to draw down related funds such as the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund, which has a specific focus on the Grand Challenges.

“I have found that the most relevant learning for me has been my personal confidence and resilience. It’s enabled me to be able to move forward in my role, feel able to question things I don’t agree with and progress personally as well as professionally.”



## Continue to track participants beyond the programme funding period to evaluate ongoing impact

Whilst many participants are putting in place new processes and introducing new ways of working, real tangible impacts (in relation to financial performance and effectiveness in supporting beneficiaries) may not become apparent until well after the programme finishes. Any successor programme should build in during its design a long-term plan to track participants and their organisations and to evaluate impact in the medium term. This will include measuring the impact of doing things differently and generating added value, the application of learning in innovation and enterprise and the sustainability of impacts shown through diversification of income streams, over a one, three- and five-year period. This should be carried out at the level of the individual (i.e. participant leadership development), organisation (i.e. growth and diversification of income streams) and community (i.e. value added service offer to beneficiary communities). SSE have already committed to further evaluation in line with the above principles at the six- and twelve-month period beyond the end of the programme.

“The programme has catapulted me into a different perception of myself: I now recognise all the ups and downs of my journey as valid, relevant, learning experiences rather than focusing on the 'highlights' and disguising the 'failures'. This has given me more confidence and more trust in my abilities.”

