

Business Collaboration Network

Equality Impact Assessment - Initial Screening

A. Identify objectives and outcomes

1. Name of the service being assessed

Business Collaboration Network as a component of the Convergence Programme, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly,

2a. What is the aim, objective or purpose of the policy, legislation or service and who will benefit from it?

The aim of the service is to design and implement a programme that will achieve the overall aim of supporting collaboration amongst high growth businesses in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

2b. What are the intended outcomes?

Overall outcomes are increased and accelerated growth for local companies achieved through collaboration

Specific outcomes for those companies, and therefore the objectives of the programme, will be for them to:

- **Find new and better suppliers, distributors and customers**
- **Develop more compelling product and service offerings**
- **Scale up fast to access National and International markets**
- **De-risk new ideas and processes - make more profit, faster**
- **Improve management skills and business planning**
- **Maximise sales and marketing resources and budgets**
- **Knowledge exchange for every aspect of business**
- **Gain affordable and best in class R&D and tech development**
- **Co-invest in new back-office and specialist staff**

The team will monitor progress towards these outcomes on a monthly basis, and deliver three-monthly reports to the funders

The outcomes support and complement other policies and objectives within the Convergence Programme

The service directly complements the Government's BSSP strategies for mainstream business support, and the Regional Economic Strategy for the South West.

Additionally, we will target and monitor under represented, disadvantaged and minority groups such as disabled people, ethnic minorities, women and older and younger people. We will capture data across these groups for the number of persons assisted in joining the Business Collaboration Network and then proceeding to undertake collaborative projects.

We will also take action to ensure that the proportion of any programme committee and sub committee members who are from under represented,

disadvantaged and minority groups reflects at least the proportion of these groups evidenced in the local community.

3. Responsibility for this service:

lies with YTKO Ltd, the contract holder, working to the contract terms and conditions as defined by the budget holder, SWRDA.

4. The key stakeholders in relation to the service are:

Business Link South West

The outcomes are in line with their strategy and deliverables.

The full stakeholder community includes all businesses and business support groups and networks that are likely to be relevant/interested. Those interested specifically in equality and diversity issues can be included as consultees.

B. Analyse existing evidence and collect further data

5. Data used to determine the need and market for this service:

include the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) Evidence Base, South West Regional Observatory, and ONS (Office of National Statistics).

We understand that the six strands of equality were taken into account in the early development of the over-arching Convergence Programme, and further work took place to develop the final Programme. This involved:

- Consulting all stakeholders as part of the full consultation process on the Draft Operational Programme;
- Undertaking the Equality Impact Screening Process; and
- Dependent upon the results of the Screening Process, undertaking a full Impact Assessment,
- Amending the Operational Programme to take account of the results.

The results of the initial Screening Process identified that the Convergence Programme was unlikely to have any negative effects in terms of key groups, but that specific actions were needed to ensure equality of opportunity and ensure participation by key groups. These actions are detailed in the final section of this assessment, the Action Plan.

The other Convergence programmes will be contacted and data sets and data types will be assessed and compared for relevance and scope for race, disability, and gender issue reporting and monitoring, and for resultant actions specific to those issues.

6. Are there gaps in information which require further research or consultation, or that may require additional information to be collected as part of the monitoring and review process?

In this new programme additional data will be captured by the programme managers to include:

No. of collaborations entered into by companies owned or managed

- by women

- from an ethnic minority
- by people with a disability
 - to indicate involvement in the business and mainstream community
- by age of entrepreneur /owner/manager
 - specifically to monitor those from young – under 25 - and older - over-50 – cohorts

We will also capture data for showing the retention of younger entrepreneurs within the sub-region

Additionally, the age of all mentors and advisers to the programme over the age of 50, and specifically those that are retired, will be collected

Updates and reports on the programme can be disseminated and commented upon by stakeholders and other groups in the region interested in equality and diversity to ensure that the impacts are fully understood.

C. Assess the impact of the service

7. Is there any evidence that different groups of people have different participation rates for the service?

Our experience in the East of England shows that there is a likelihood that women and ethnic minorities are less likely, as a proportion of the total population of business owners or managers, to engage with a network and with network activities.

Therefore, we will be encouraging through special outreach and embedded services within the programme the participation of under-represented groups. We will also consider the formation of Special Interest Groups (SIGs) supported through the Network infrastructure to target and increase the participation of , for example, women and the over 50's, in the mainstream activities . However, to minimise duplication of effort, these SIGs would only be formed and managed if no existing group or network exists to accommodate their needs.

8. Are there barriers that might inhibit access to the benefits of the service?

Barriers are attitudinal and physical:

Attitudinal: We will demonstrate through effective and inclusive dissemination that under represented, disadvantaged and minority groups will not only be welcome, but are actively encouraged to attend and to participate in the programme. This will be extended through to training of our customer-facing staff to offer and underline this approach.

Physical: There may be difficulties for disabled people to access venues where network activities are being held. We will specifically balance the need for local presence and activities against disabled access, and favour those venues where disabled access is available. Additionally, event management staff will be issued with checklists to follow as good practice for venue specifications.

Partially sighted and non-sighted have difficulty in accessing and benefitting from the online resources. Those without English language fluency will be disadvantaged in network events and in exploiting printed and online resources.

Our online presence will be developed to W3C standards, allowing the partially-sighted to increase font size on screen, and enabling those unsighted users to use 'text to speech' software to read aloud the online content.

9. Is there any evidence that different groups have or are likely to have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to the current or proposed service?

We see no specific issues for this service, but there may be some concerned with the measurement of success for the overall outcomes such as business growth and support. Our experience with running women's enterprise programmes shows gender differences in suggested business models and profit, and in approaches to future challenges. Therefore, there will need to be sensitivity over external mentoring or consultancy, and consideration given to 'non traditional' means of measuring success and growth.

Also, for funding for growth for small businesses, there may be religious reasons for not applying for loans or equity participation to gain funds for expansion.

Lastly, in creating clusters for collaboration, we will be aware of individual cluster partners' sensitivities over marketing to 'non'-green, military or specific international markets.

10. Is the service sensitive to the needs and cultures of different groups of people?

Yes, the team is aware of, and will be further trained in, equality sensitivities. The contract holders, YTKO, have considerable experience in working with women, BME, Over 50s, youth and disadvantaged and disabled groups, and will use this knowledge to inform the team, and evolve the programme.

11. Have previous consultations with relevant stakeholder groups, organisations or individuals indicated that services of this type create exclusion or hold specific challenges for them?

No, there is no evidence that programmes of this type have any inherent exclusivity.

12. Is there any evidence that this service could directly or indirectly discriminate against any group of people?

Indirectly, the programme could be considered to discriminate against those companies or individuals that show little or no potential for growth, but seek support from the programme to stabilise or reduce the reduction of sales. However, the joining parameters are clear and concise, and certainly do not exclude any by cause of their disadvantage.

13. Does the service result in positive impacts? For example, does it have a beneficial effect on a group of people or improve equal opportunities and/or relationships between different groups of people?

Our positive approach to including and encouraging the participation of under represented, disadvantaged and minority groups will result in positive impacts to these groups, not only through their participation but also from 'word-of-mouth' spreading awareness of the programme through their specific communities and networks

14. What measures can be taken to promote equality of opportunity by altering the service, or by working with others, for examples, partners? Is there any evidence of missed opportunities to promote equality of opportunity?

Partner co-marketing and co-working is embedded in the programme. Dissemination of the programme, its benefits and the results from the programme as it unfolds will demonstrate equality of opportunity by showing examples of under represented, disadvantaged and minority groups taking part in activities and reaping the rewards. Good communications with local women's, BME and other groups, for example, is integral to the programme management and reporting. Evaluation and monitoring gives us specific evidence of targets made, or missed, and informs the evolution of the programme to maximise equality of opportunity.

15. Is a full equality impact assessment required? NO

An initial Equality Impact Assessment screening has not suggested that it will lead to any inequality.

For race, disability and gender, any decisions made, actions taken or improvements made to the programme as it evolves will be reported to the funders, and, if requested, reported on the programme website.

Peter White

YTKO

23 February 2009

Equality and Diversity action plan

Action	Due Date
1. target and monitor under represented, disadvantaged and minority groups such as disabled people, ethnic minorities, women and older and younger people	From commencement of recruitment – Q2 2009
2. monitor progress towards agreed outcomes on a monthly basis, and deliver three-monthly reports to the funders	From Q3 2009
3. recruit programme committee and sub committee members ideally from under represented, disadvantaged and minority groups in the proportion of these groups evidenced in the local community.	At set-up – Q2 2009
4. include businesses and business support groups and networks interested specifically in equality and diversity issues as consultees in the stakeholder community	At set-up – Q2 2009
5. capture additional data to include number of network members and number of collaborations entered into by companies owned or managed by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • women • ethnic minorities • people with a disability • age of entrepreneur /owner/manager, specifically those from young – under 25 - and older - over-50 – cohorts 	From commencement of recruitment – Q2 2009
6. request comments on updates and reports on the programme by stakeholders and other groups in the region interested in equality and diversity to ensure that the impacts are fully understood	After stakeholder inclusion – point 4 above – From Q3 2009
7. plan and deliver special outreach and embedded services within the programme to maximise the participation of under-represented groups	Feeds into point 1 above - Prior to commencement of recruitment – Q2 2009
8. produce effective and inclusive dissemination materials to actively encourage under represented, disadvantaged and minority groups to attend and to participate in the programme.	Prior to commencement of recruitment – Q2 2009
9. train customer-facing staff to offer and underline an approach of equality and diversity	Prior to commencement of recruitment – Q2 2009
10. balance the need for local presence and activities	Prior to

against disabled access, and favour those venues where disabled access is available	commencement of events – Q2 2009
11. produce good practice checklists for event management staff equality and diversity	Feeds into point 9 above - Prior to commencement of recruitment – Q2 2009
12. develop online presence (website, newsletters, emails) to W3C standards, allowing the partially-sighted to increase font size on screen	At set-up – Q2 2009
13. enable unsighted users to use ‘text to speech’ software to read aloud online content	At set-up – Q2 2009
14. incorporate sensitivity about under represented, disadvantaged and minority groups with external mentoring or consultancy	Prior to commencement of mentor and advisor engagement – Q3 2009
15. give consideration to ‘non traditional’ means of measuring success and growth	As results become known - From Q3 2009
16. understand and accommodate religious reasons for not applying for loans or equity participation to gain funds for expansion	As results become known - From Q3 2009
17. realise potential sensitivities over marketing to ‘non’-green, military or specific international markets	As projects commence - From Q3 2009
18. prioritise communications with local women’s, BME and other groups, for example, on programme management and reporting	Prior to commencement of recruitment – Q2 2009
19. ensure comprehensive evaluation and monitoring is undertaken to document specific evidence of targets made, or missed, and inform the evolution of the programme to maximise equality of opportunity	As results become known - From Q3 2009
20. monitor and compare data types and data sets with other Convergence programmes at regular intervals to determine issues and resolution	As results become known - From Q3 2009
21. respect data protection requirements and data security at all times – embed into data capture and storage specifications	Prior to commencement of recruitment – Q2 2009

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