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University of Plymouth: eHealth Productivity and Innovation in Cornwall (EPIC2)

Summative Assessment Report

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Executive Summary

This is a summary of the evaluation of the University of Plymouth's eHealth Productivity and Innovation in Cornwall (EPIC2) project - referred to hereafter as EPIC or 'the Project'.

Background and Project Context

EPIC is working to grow the market for, and supply of new, innovative eHealth and social care products and services in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly (CIOS), closely aligned to the strategic context nationally and within the CIOS region. This second EPIC project aims to facilitate a substantive eHealth sector in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, by maximising innovation networks, sharing expertise and experience from the University and partner organisations, and providing sector-specific hands-on business support.

The evaluation research was conducted at two timepoints: Timepoint 1 (January 2022 to April 2022) and Timepoint 2 (October 2022 to April 2023). The report combines research from both timepoints to provide a summative reflection of progress against output targets and project objectives. The research methods employed for the summative assessment include in-depth interviews with stakeholders and SMEs, desk-based research and a review and analysis of monitoring data, and benchmarking research of similar initiatives.

Project Progress

The evaluation highlights both successes and a small number of areas in which the Project marginally underperformed. Notably, the project experienced an underspend at the time of submission of the penultimate claim, due to various contributing factors, including the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and slower-than-anticipated project initiation. However, efforts were made to mitigate this underspend by requesting a short extension and redirecting some Grant Challenge Funding. Despite this challenge, the project was able to achieve its objectives, outcomes, and outputs through effective resource allocation and adjustments to the target figures.

The EPIC team successfully delivered against the vast majority of its contracted output targets and has substantively overachieved against several output targets including new enterprises receiving support, employment increase in supported enterprises and enterprises supported to bring new products to market. The Project came close to achieving its contracted C1 and C2 (enterprises receiving support and enterprises receiving grants) targets, and it is likely that in the absence of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Project could have achieved all of the set targets.

Securing private sector investment (C6) proved to be more difficult, primarily due to delays in match defrayal filing by grant-funded SMEs. Despite this hurdle, assurances were given that the target would be met before the project closure.

Delivery and Management

Analysis of evidence regarding project delivery and management highlights numerous successes and a small number of areas for improvement. In-depth interviews with strategic stakeholders returned the unanimous opinion that the EPIC Project has been effectively delivered through strong management and governance, despite a slower start due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Effective collaborations and relationships have been established through the adoption of a 'one-team' approach and regular meetings. The EPIC team has built strong internal and external relationships, including seven international collaborations, promoting digital health and encouraging investment. A Memorandum of Understanding has been developed between the University of Plymouth and the Royal Cornwall Hospital, resulting in joint strategies for health-related research and education.

The project has also focused on creating a lasting legacy, with the establishment of the Centre for Health Technology (CHT), which aligns with EPIC's objectives and brings together digital health and technology expertise. The EPIC brand has been promoted through social media efforts, leading to increased awareness and following. The project's legacy is expected to continue through the CHT and the progress of supported businesses.

The Project also encountered challenges throughout the delivery period, particularly in relation to securing match funding, with uncertainties and retraction of involvement from Kernow Health. Staffing changes also posed challenges, with numerous movements throughout the Project delivery period.

Overall, the EPIC Project has demonstrated successful management and governance, fostering collaborations, promoting the CIOS region, addressing research gaps, and supporting SMEs in the eHealth sector. While challenges exist, strategic stakeholder perspectives provide valuable insights for potential actions and improvements.

Outcomes and Impact

In terms of core economic outcomes, EPIC has exceeded its target of creating or sustaining 13 jobs within supported enterprises. The project has supported the creation of 14.5 new FTE roles within supported enterprises. While not directly attributable to the Project, EPIC-supported companies in the South West have also experienced significant growth over the Project timeframe, with an increase of 195 employees and a turnover increase of over £6 million.

EPIC has supported the development of new products in the eHealth sector. The project has exceeded its target by supporting 8 businesses in bringing new products to market, these products span various categories, from system infrastructure to patient wellbeing. EPIC has facilitated strong connections and collaboration between academics, health providers, and SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) in the eHealth and social care ecosystem. Stakeholders have acknowledged the project's role in bringing different stakeholders together and promoting innovation through collaborative projects.

EPIC has made good progress against its objectives, including the development of the eHealth and social care market, increasing RD&I (research, development, and innovation) knowledge transfer activity and investment, and fostering links between enterprises and research centres.

EPIC's contributions have extended beyond its immediate impact, contributing to wider strategic plans within the University of Plymouth. The project has helped establish the Centre for Health Technology, attracted new appointments in Digital Health, contributed to the GOALD and ICONIC projects focused on health technology, and supported other applications for digital health initiatives and research.

Overall, EPIC has played a significant role in the University of Plymouth's strategic plans for health technology research and development. Its success has led to the creation of new initiatives, projects, and collaborations, as well as the attraction of new talent to the university.

Value for Money

The Value for Money section assesses EPIC's optimal use of resources to achieve desired outcomes, through the evaluation of the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the Project. Considering the comparatively low cost, high efficiency in project delivery, creation of high-value jobs and GVA, and substantial progress against strategic objectives, EPIC2 is determined to have offered good value for money.

Overall Conclusions

Overall, the Project has successfully delivered against the vast majority of contracted targets. The Project has supported economic growth within the eHealth sector, through the creation of jobs and increased GVA. EPIC has played a significant role in contributing to wider strategic plans within the University of Plymouth, including the Centre for Health Technology, where EPIC will have a lasting legacy. EPIC has promoted knowledge exchange and fostered a strong collaborative environment that will support the SMEs and their future growth.

1. Introduction and Background

Perspective Economics Limited has been commissioned by the University of Plymouth (UoP or 'the University) to conduct a longitudinal evaluation of the University's eHealth Productivity and Innovation in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly 2 project (EPIC or the 'Project').

1.1. Purpose of this report

This Summative Assessment Report (SAR) is the second of two reports that document the progress, outputs and outcomes of ERDF investment in the EPIC project. The contents of this report are aligned with ERDF summative assessment guidelines,[1] including analysis of net economic impact.

1.1.1. Summative assessment approach and methods

Evaluation research was conducted at two timepoints. Timepoint 1 ran from January 2022 to April 2022, and Timepoint 2 ran from October 2022 to April 2023. This report combines research from across both timepoints to provide a summative reflection of progress against output targets and project objectives.

Research undertaken to inform the summative assessment includes:

- An online SME survey administered directly to EPIC SMEs, and via social media channels in March 2022. A total of 20 responses were received.
- In-depth interviews with strategic local stakeholders spanning health and social care, industry and economic development (23 in-depth interviews conducted across the entire research period).
- In-depth interviews with SMEs supported by the Project (2 in-depth telephone interviews).
- Desk based review and analysis of monitoring data including registered company data and investment data accessed via a subscription data service.
- Benchmarking research regarding ERDF outputs (enterprises supported jobs created, research collaborations created etc.) among other similar initiatives (agreed with the EPIC team).

1.1.2. Questions and data sources

The summative assessment uses a range of secondary data, alongside primary qualitative and quantitative data gathered using the methods described above, to evidence progress against the project's stated objectives and outcomes. Data sources aligned to project objectives and associated research methods are presented in the Evaluation Framework at Appendix 2.

1 ESIF-GN-1-033 ERDF Summative Assessment Guidance v1; and ESIF-GN-1-034 ERDF Summative Assessment Guidance Appendices v1.

2. Project Context

This second eHealth Productivity and Innovation in Cornwall and Isles of Scilly project (EPIC) is an extension of an original EPIC project, which ran between March 2017 and April 2020. Building upon the user led approach developed in EPIC, the Project is collaborative and interdisciplinary, funded until June 2023 by a further grant of £4 million from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Southwest Academic Health Science Network (SW AHSN).

EPIC is driven by input from a large number of partners, organisations and individuals across the Southwest, including healthcare trusts, charities, social enterprises, patient groups, and students.

EPIC aims to facilitate a substantive eHealth sector in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, by maximising innovation networks, sharing expertise and experience from the University and partner organisations, and providing sector-specific hands-on business support.

The Project also seeks to nurture businesses located in CIOS by offering them the opportunity to apply to its £600k EPIC Challenge Fund.

The Project is funded under European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Priority Axis 1: Promoting Research & Innovation, and Investment Priority 1b: Promoting Business Investment Research & Innovation. It contributes to the following specific ERDF objectives:

- Objective 1.2: Increase investment in research and innovation by small and medium sized enterprises in sectors and technologies identified through smart specialisation (eHealth & social care wellbeing); and
- Objective 1.3: Increase the number of small and medium sized enterprises, engaged in knowledge exchange, collaborative and contract research and innovation with research institutions, public institutions or large enterprises, to help them bring new products and processes to market.

The EPIC project is aligned to ESIF Strategic Priorities 1 and 2.

ESIF Strategic Priority 1: Drive Growth in our region's economy through research, development and innovation investment to support our existing business base in integrating into the supply chains of key identified global markets where we can have significant competitive advantage.

ESIF Strategic Priority 2: To increase productivity and competitiveness in existing businesses and to encourage and support new enterprise in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

2.1. Intervention Logic

The intervention logic is framed in terms of demand for, and supply of innovative eHealth & social care products and services.

Increasing demand for new eHealth & social care products and services requires that the EPIC project increases awareness, acceptability, testing and ultimately demand for new eHealth & social care products among three key groups:

1) patient / service users, families and individual consumers;

2) health & social care providers and particularly GPs and local health trusts; and

3) local commissioners.

Research that generates evidence of efficacy plays an enabling role insofar as it will be the basis upon which the project influences the behaviour of patient / service users, health & social care providers and commissioners.

2.1.1. Stimulating supply of new eHealth and social care products and services

Increasing the supply of new eHealth & social care products requires that the EPIC project has an impact on changing cultures in the region. Specifically, it seeks to increase i) propensity to innovate; ii) investment in innovation; and iii) development and commercialisation of new eHealth & social care products and services among existing and new local eHealth & social care SMEs. Given these fundamentals of the intervention logic, the evaluation framework is structured to generate evidence in respect of the two high level demand and supply-side pillars.

Project context, rational and logic (inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes) are set out in the project's intervention logic model presented overleaf.

Figure 2.1 – EPIC Logic Model

Context:

- C&IoS eHealth & social care sector with significant growth potential;
- Demand-side: Sustainability requires users and providers to shift culture towards eHealth & social care;
- Supply-side: SMEs require support to de-risk research, development and innovation investment.

Market Failure:

- eHealth & social care has an enormous potential to improve healthcare cost, effectiveness, and quality of care. However, the market for eHealth is incomplete due to:
  - demand-side failures including lack of consumer confidence and / or information among both healthcare providers and healthcare users. Without consumer confidence, eHealth will fail to deliver, and worse, could provide a barrier to vulnerable consumers seeking the healthcare they need (CHF Australia); and
  - supply-side failures including high levels of risk and long lead-times to commercialisation and scale.

Rationale

Demand-side: Consumers subjective evaluation of the acceptability of eHealth is an understudied field. However, a recent study of 855 eHealth consumers (Kiovumaki, T., 2018) found significant barriers affecting behavioural intention to use eHealth products including effort expectancy, self-efficacy, and threat appraisal. This provides a strong rationale to sustain efforts on eHealth consumer behaviour change.

Supply-side: Both internal and eco-system factors are important in shaping SME innovation. Internal factors include skills (increasingly the value of technical skills is matched by networking / relational skills). EPIC seeks to facilitate skills matching and transfer to stimulate and accelerate innovation. Eco-system factors have a significant effect on the innovative success of SMEs - the scale of which depends on SMEs' ambition and capability to take advantage of available external resources. External enablers include purposive links between SMEs and partner organisations. Less is known about which eco-system characteristics are most important (Roper, ERC, 2013).

Objectives

To develop the digital health market place in C&IoS by identifying key challenges and using a broad partnership to identify and work with over 60 enterprises to drive innovative behaviours, growth and productivity, leading to 15 new products, processes and services by April
2020.

Increase investment in research and innovation by small and medium sized enterprises in sectors and technologies identified through smart specialisation (E-Health & Wellbeing / Digital Health)

Increase the # of small and medium sized enterprises engaged in knowledge exchange, collaborative and contract research and innovation with research institutions, public institutions or large enterprises in order to help them bring new products and processes to market

Project Inputs (May 2020 – Jun 2023)

Capital

- Equipment: £100k

Revenue (£4,047,471):

- Consultancy: £245,000
- Marketing: £59,000
- Salaries: £2,323,058
- Flat Rate Indirect Costs: £660,494
- Other: £759,919

Project Activities

- Business Support
- Challenge Fund
- Collaboration networks
- Webinars
- Events / conferences
- Demonstrator projects / test beds
- Student & Graduate Placements

Outputs

- C1 # of enterprises receiving support (84)
- C2 # of enterprises receiving grants (50)
- C4 # of enterprises receiving non-financial support (34)
- C5 # of new enterprises supported (10)
- C6 Private investment matching grants (£255k)
- C8 Employment increase in supported enterprises (13)
- C26 # of enterprises cooperating with research institutions (30)
- C28 # of enterprises supported to introduce new to market products (5)
- C29 # of enterprises supported to introduce new to firm products (11)

Project Outcomes

- Identification of genuine market opportunities to develop practitioner and patient led e-health business ideas and solutions
- Continued engagement of users, health care professionals and SME's in development of e-health product and services
- Strengthening awareness of value of e-health in delivery of health and social care by project stakeholders and participants

Intended Impacts:

- Self-perpetuating eHealth sector in CIoS
- Increased university business collaboration
- Commercially viable, revenue generating products
- Increased exports among local eHealth businesses
- Increased adoption and use of eHealth products
- Gross & Net Revenue, Business Births, GVA and Employment Impacts

EPIC

European Union
European Regional Development Fund

HM Government

PLYMOUTH

2.2. Strategic Context

The EPIC project is working to grow the market for, and supply of new, innovative eHealth and social care products and services in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. The project is aligned to the strategic context nationally and within the CIOS region, including:

2.2.1. National Policy Alignment

- Alignment with the NHS England's Long-Term Plan[2], which guarantees to offer every patient the new option of digital-first primary care, to assist with improving fast access to convenient primary care and further implementing digital health.
- Alignment with NHS Digital Annual Report 2021-2022[3], which recognises the need for a growth in the market for eHealth and social care, stating that digital and data technologies are crucial to the future of our health and care.

2.2.2.Regional Policy Alignment

- Alignment with CIOS LEP's response to Government's November 2017 Industrial Strategy White Paper, in which the LEP stresses the ambition to build on a legacy of innovation and to adopt a "test bed and innovative approach" that will unlock nationally significant opportunities. With respect to the area's role as a test bed, the CIOS region's rural geography and population demographic makes it an important contributor to the national evidence base regarding eHealth and social care products and services;
- Alignment to the CIOS Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) which specifies (based on the Southwest England and Southwest Wales Science & Innovation Audit) eHealth and social care innovation as a key regional strength;
- Obvious alignment to the area's Health and Wellbeing Strategy, as well as to CIOS LEP's employment and skills strategy, which sets out a vision for the area to *"have a healthy, skilled and productive workforce with access to rewarding jobs, clear progression pathways, and opportunities for all"*;
- Close alignment to Cornwall Trade and Investment's priorities which specifically include health technology as a focus for securing foreign direct investment[4];
- Southwest AHSN's 2021 5-Year Strategy sets out an ambition to improve health equity through the adoption and spread of innovative practice. SWAHSN aim to do this by promoting health innovation capability and practice across the health and care system through collaboration, practical support and knowledge sharing[5];
- Alignment with CIOS LEP's 10 opportunities Local Industrial Strategy which states the area has a 'world-class digital economy that supports innovation in the eHealth sector'. CIOS LEP is seeking to adopt a collaborative approach to helping pioneer leading-edge

2 https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/nhs-long-term-plan-version-1.2.pdf
3 https://digital.nhs.uk/about-nhs-digital/corporate-information-and-documents/nhs-digital-s-annual-reports-and-accounts/nhs-digital-annual-report-and-accounts-2021-22/annual-report-and-accounts
4 https://www.cornwallti.com/industries/health-technology/
5 https://www.swahsn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/SW-AHSN-Job-Pack-Programme-Director-Design.pdf

health and social care products and services in the UK, boosting the country's health system and offering market opportunities to healthtech businesses[6]; and

- Lastly, EPIC's aims and objectives are closely aligned with the CIOS Research, Development and Innovation Framework, which recognises the importance of eHealth and social care systems holding increasingly large datasets which assist with the clinical decision making, health service management and medical research[7].

2.3. Stated EPIC project objectives

EPIC's stated overarching objective, as set out in the original ERDF application form, is to; "build on the user led approach developed in the current EPIC project to take digital health in CIOS from a nascent market to one which is more developed, productive, accepted and embedded within the health and care sector, to drive economic growth and productivity."

Below this overarching objective, the project seeks to achieve the following sub-objectives:

1. Encouraging and facilitating a consumer led/end user led approach to identifying digital health needs.
2. Working with primary and social care as an initial focus to help articulate key challenges but extending to all aspects of health and social care.
3. Working with local SMEs to develop new solutions to issues and an understanding of market opportunities.
4. Delivering a cultural shift with the users and commissioners and other stakeholders in the eHealth and social care ecosystem to enable a long term change in the delivery of health and care systems.
5. Using the strengths of the University of Plymouth and its partners to support market development.

The majority of activity from EPIC1 was expected to contribute to EPIC2 with some exceptions driven by learning from the initial project. EPIC2 includes additional activities (denoted with '+' in the table below) based on a) the University's particular experience and expertise in supporting health and care robotics start-ups, b) involvement in this second phase of Kernow Health CIC, and c) increasing availability of university students and graduates with relevant skills to support eHealth and social care SMEs.

6 https://cioslep.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/4797_Cornwall-and-IOS-LEP_ISSUU_AW.pdf
7 https://issuu.com/cioslep/docs/cios_research_development_and_inno_d04c130123c9c2

Table 2.1 – EPIC2 Activity Strands against EPIC1 Activity Strands

EPIC 1 Activity Strand	EPIC 2 Activity Strand
User Led Collaborations	Developing the Market
Knowledge Exchange Roadshows	Developing the Market
Business Engagement	Business Engagement + New Start-Up Support
Challenge Fund	Challenge Fund
Demonstrator Projects	Demonstrator Projects & Behaviour Change + Kernow Health Test Bed
Culture Change	Culture Change & Ecosystem Building + Student & Graduate Placements
International Collaboration	Promoting C&IoS to the World

3. Project Progress

This section considers the progress in implementing EPIC activity to date, including progress against the Project's expenditure, activity and output targets. It highlights successes, but also outlines any areas of under-performance. Summative Assessment questions addressed in this section include:

- Has the project delivered what it expected to in terms of spend and outputs?
- What are the factors which explain performance?
- Has the project delivered against expected objectives and outcomes?

3.1. Progress against output targets

In line with ERDF assessment guidance, Table 3.1 below provides a summary of spend and output performance to the end of the Project.

Table 3.1 – Progress against outputs targets

Indicator	Targets		Performance at SAR			Final Performance		RAG
	Original	Adjusted	#	% of Target	RAG	#	% of Target	
Revenue Expenditure (£k)	4,097	4,047	1,118	28%		3,301	81%	
Investment attracted (£k)	50	100	48	49%				
C1: Enterprises receiving support	80	84	18	21%		77	92%	
C2: Enterprises receiving grants	50	50	12	24%		49	98%	
C4: Enterprises receiving non-financial support	30	34	12	35%		71	208%	
C5: New enterprises receiving support	10	10	3	30%		28	280%	
C6: Private sector investment (£k)	255	255	0	0%		130	51%	
C8: Employment increase in supported enterprises	13	13	0	0%		14.5	112%	

C26: Enterprises co-operating with research institutions	30	30	2	7%		44	147%
C28: Enterprises supported to bring new products to market	5	5	0	0%		8	160%
C29: Enterprises supported to bring new products to firm	11	11	0	0%		13	118%

In terms of revenue expenditure, the project did not reach their targeted spend, at c.£3.3m at project completion.

Project underspend was clearly explained in progress reports (PRs) submitted to DLUHC. The project requested a short extension to reduce the level of underspend and a small amount of Grant Challenge Funding underspend was diverted into another area of the programme to ensure that the objectives, outcomes and outputs of the programme were achieved. The underspend was largely a result of many contributing factors such as Covid-19, which resulted in a much slower start to the Project than anticipated, making it more difficult to meet the targeted spend. RAG rating: Amber

C1: Enterprises receiving 12 hours of support: At the interim assessment stage 21% of the total number of C1 outputs had been delivered, it is important to acknowledge the first six quarters of EPIC involved three lock-downs (between March 2020 and September 2021), making it more difficult to make progress against the C1 output. However, the Project made promising progress and the target was adjusted from 80 to 84, suggesting high expectations to exceed the initial target. At the end of the project, EPIC had achieved 92% (n=77) of its C1 target. RAG rating: Green

C2: Enterprises receiving grants: At the interim stage almost a quarter of the C2 target had been delivered, with 12 enterprises receiving grants. At project completion stage, the EPIC team had administered grant funding to 49 businesses, almost achieving the set target of 50 enterprises receiving grants. RAG rating: Green

C4: Enterprises receiving non-financial support: At the interim stage, almost 50% of the C4 target had been achieved. The target was adjusted upwards from 30 to 34 and the EPIC team have delivered non-financial support to 72. There has been a strong pipeline of SMEs engaged, as EPIC has more than doubled the target number of enterprises to be supported. RAG rating: Green

C5: New enterprises receiving support: At the interim stage, almost one third of the C5 target (n=10) had been achieved, with 3 new enterprises receiving support from EPIC. The EPIC team exceeded their target by more than 100%, providing non-financial support to 72 SMEs, through various forms of support, including workshops and mentoring support. The Project exceeded their initial target figure by almost three times, and at a rapid rate given their position at the interim stage. RAG rating: Green

C6: Private sector investment: The C6 target is the target that the EPIC team has struggled the most to meet. This has largely been a result of slow filing of match defrayal by grant funded SMEs, SW AHSN have assured the EPIC team that the target will be met before Project closure. Kernow Health CiC, an agreed strategic partner at the time of the EPIC2 application, also faced difficulties post-pandemic and was forced to realign its business, dropping all commitment to working with EPIC. RAG rating: Amber

C8: Employment increase in supported enterprises: At the interim stage, the EPIC team had not evidenced any employment increases in supported enterprises. However, the EPIC team has now reported an increase of (n=14.5) FTEs, the Project has overachieved against the initial C8 target (n=13). RAG rating: Green

C26: Enterprises co-operating with research institutions: At the interim stage, EPIC was not performing well against the C26 target, with only (n=3) enterprises co-operating with research institutions. Due to rigid Covid-19 restrictions in place, it was more difficult for collaborative activities to happen. Since then, the EPIC team has delivered 47% above the C26 target (n=30), with 44 enterprises co-operating with research institutions. RAG rating: Green

C28: Enterprises supported to bring new products to market: At the end of the project, 8 enterprises had been supported to bring new products to market, the EPIC team achieved almost double their set target (n=5). At the interim stage, the Project had supported no enterprises to bring new products to market, the team have therefore performed well by assisting new products to the market in the latter stages of the Project. RAG rating: Green

C29: Enterprises supported to bring new products to firm: Similar to the C28 target, at the interim stage the EPIC team reported that no enterprises had brought new products to firm. EPIC has since supported 13 enterprises to bring new products to firm, overachieving their set target by 18%. RAG raring: Green

4. Delivery & Management

This section provides a more qualitative analysis of the implementation of the project including delivery performance, governance and management. It considers the elements of project delivery that have gone well, as well as those where opportunities for improvement have been identified. Specifically, the following Summative Assessment questions are addressed:

- Was the project well managed and governed, and could delivery have been improved in any way?
- Did the project identifying and engaging with the right beneficiaries?
- Did the project deliver its intended activities, to a high standard?

4.1. Management & Governance

A series of in-depth interviews with strategic stakeholders, spanning backgrounds in economic development, academia, health and social care and knowledge exchange has indicated that the EPIC Project has been delivered successfully through strong management and governance. Review of EPIC progress reports at the interim assessment stage indicated; a slower start to the project, largely due to Covid-19 restrictions, including two national lockdowns. Despite this, by the end of the Project, the EPIC team have met the vast majority of their targets.

Review of Progress Claim Reports since the interim assessment stage returned the following key points:

Impactful collaborations and relationships: The adoption of a 'one-team' approach and implementation of regular meetings (every two weeks), has enabled more effective working across the Project team. The EPIC team has worked on building strong relationships both internally and externally within this time period, including engagement in seven international collaborations, aimed at promoting C&IOS and encouraging inward investment.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has also been developed between the University of Plymouth and the Royal Cornwall Hospital, set up to achieve shared aims, through undertaking measures such as supporting clinical academic collaborations and developing joint strategies for health-related research, health design and education, all of which has been heavily influenced by EPIC. In-depth interviews evidence EPIC's success in creating a positive networking environment through the promotion of collaborative activities.

Building a lasting legacy: The EPIC legacy has been a central focus for the EPIC team, partly to ensure a level of permanency for the benefits and outputs derived from EPIC, but also to continue the momentum for eHealth in CIOS. EPIC's legacy will be within the Centre for Health Technology (CHT), which was set up largely a result of EPIC. CHT is based in the University of Plymouth and brings together digital health and technology academic expertise aimed at transforming health and social care. The Centre works to enable innovative

healthcare solutions that reduce the pressure on services support healthy ageing and stimulate an economy of wellbeing, all of which align with EPIC's objectives.

EPIC's legacy will continue through the CHT through various forms including the CHT's website, which has assigned a section of their website to EPIC's achievements and activities. A number of people from the EPIC team are involved in the CHT and will continue to raise awareness of EPIC's work and raise the profile of the supported businesses.

As a result of EPIC, the UoP agreed to make six CHT research fellow permanent posts, of which all six posts are ex-EPIC. The success of EPIC also contributed to significant new investment in the CHT by UoP Faculty of Health with the appointment of two new academic posts, as well as replacements for two academics leaving.

The EPIC team have also been hosting various events and attending external events to maintain EPIC's positive profile and brand.

Efforts to grow the EPIC brand through the use of social media: The effort to grow the EPIC brand was recognised at the interim stage and ought to be mentioned in the final evaluation, as the efforts demonstrated in the Progress Reports cannot go unmissed. EPIC has a presence across numerous social media platforms and has a well-developed mailing list. Growth has been demonstrated in the PRs, especially on Twitter and LinkedIn, where the brand has grown its following.

A catalyst for future opportunities: EPIC has played a pivotal role in the establishment of the CHT at the University of Plymouth. It has facilitated two new digital health appointments at the UoP and served as a foundation for the Getting Older Active Lives Digitally[8] (GOALD) and Integrated Codesign of Novel technologies In Coastal communities[9] (ICONIC) projects. EPIC has been essential in two additional pending applications for digital health hubs in coastal and rural regions and the UKRI Hartree Hub and Spoke. Consultations with UoP stakeholders indicated that EPIC's impact on securing funding has been instrumental for the University's advancements in eHealth.

Challenges associated with securing match funding: Pre and post-interim, the Project faced uncertainties regarding match-funding from Kernow Health CIC (KH). In the January-March 2022 Progress Report, the EPIC team confirmed that as a result of Covid-19, KH had been forced to realign their business, resulting in KH stepping back from all EPIC-related commitments. The EPIC team followed the correct procedures and produced a Project Change Request addressing the retraction of KH's involvement.

South West Academic Health Science Network's (SW AHSN) involvement was limited in the initial stages of the project and appeared to remain an issue within this evaluation timeframe. At the end of December SW AHSN had not met their contracted value in relation to match funding.

8 The Getting Older Active Lives Digitally (GOALD) project uses intergenerational groups to examine how to design and deliver digital resources to provide and engage older people in structured activity programmes with the aim of improving their health and wellbeing.
9 The Intergenerational Codesign of Novel Technologies in Coastal Communities (ICONIC) is an interdisciplinary Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) funded project delivered by the Centre for Health Technology which aims to improve digital inclusion for both groups and help them to connect to their communities and digital activity.

Challenges associated with staffing changes: The Progress Reports demonstrate several staffing changes throughout the evaluation timeframe; however, regular team meetings ensured a good level of communication, and all team members were aware of the staff changes. Some concerns exist from both internal and external stakeholders in relation to the legacy of EPIC, due to the fear of being unable to retain staff as EPIC draws to a close. There is difficulty in retaining the researchers that have been involved with EPIC, the team are currently attempting to address this by offering permanent posts as opposed to project-based posts.

4.2. Strategic Stakeholder Perspectives // Successes

This section considers the perspectives of strategic stakeholders, spanning backgrounds in economic development, academia, health and social care and knowledge exchange, regarding the management and delivery of the EPIC project. It aims to assess both the successes and challenges encountered in relation to the project's delivery and management. Gathering insights from the in-depth interviews, provides a comprehensive understanding of the project's effectiveness and identifies areas for potential action.

4.2.1. Effective collaborations

EPIC has been successful in facilitating effective collaborations among businesses, health and care providers, community and patient groups, and academics. The offer of academic support has made a significant difference in bringing partners together for co-design/creation of projects, leading to a much better understanding of differing perspectives and new solutions. EPIC has been perceived as playing a crucial role in establishing and growing the eHealth market in CIOS, evidenced throughout in-depth interviews by accelerating collaboration, at great speed and raising e-health awareness.

EPIC has facilitated collaborations through various forms including workshops, seminars, and other events. EPIC is also viewed to have upskilled businesses and health providers, increasing their confidence to take forward e-health projects. Consultations with stakeholders spanning various backgrounds found the Project has effectively connected people between institutions, opened minds to the benefits of digital healthcare, and reduced barriers to networking and learning. The team has been described as approachable, accessible, and adaptable, providing a focus and stimulus for innovation through university networking and partnership working/collaboration on key projects.

"EPIC has made a difference in bringing partners together at greater speed and raising e-health awareness."

Health and Social Care Stakeholder

"EPIC has opened our minds to the concept and practical benefits/ opportunities of digital healthcare and bringing the health and academic sectors together. It has grabbed our attention and reduced barriers to networking and learning."

Health and Social Care Stakeholder

"There has been a very good EPIC team, who are professional, pragmatic, proactive and reliable. EPIC has supported the creation of new relationships which will be sustained going forward."

Economic Development Stakeholder

4.2.2.Promoting CIOS to the world

EPIC has promoted the CIOS region to the rest of the world as a potential investment destination, raising awareness of the emerging skills and expertise in digital health and what the region has to offer. The efforts have been evidenced in both progress reports and in-depth interviews with stakeholders.

At the time of the final progress report (January – March 2023), EPIC had engaged in six international collaborations. EPIC has been focussing on promoting the CIOS region to the rest of the world as a potential investment destination, raising awareness of the emerging skills and expertise in digital health that the region offers. The EPIC team held a webinar series in early 2021, entitled 'Meet the World' with guest speakers presenting from: Israel, UAE, Switzerland, Spain, Australia and Finland, the purpose of the webinar was to encourage SMEs to think beyond CIOS and to raise the overall awareness of EPIC.

The purpose of the online events was to inspire CIOS businesses, providing opportunities to explore and build knowledge from a host of successful eHealth and social care businesses across the globe. Since this, EPIC supported the attendance of a number of SMEs at the 'Slush' start-up event in Helsinki, Finland, where the SMEs are said to have made valuable connections with potential investors.

"There have been some good exporting benefits. An extra £1.5M has been invested in support for exporters and trade link work. Many new leads and enquiries from overseas have come through to Cornwall on e-health."

CIOS LEP Stakeholder

Internal stakeholders have identified potential companies that are interested in locating in CIOS, EPIC has facilitated webinars and video call meetings for interested companies, which have been considered useful for information sharing. A Nordic company, registered under the name 'VitaCam' has expanded in Cornwall as a result of EPIC's engagement and awareness raising.

"EPIC has helped develop links with Scandinavian companies, particularly in Norway. The supported SMEs have developed knowledge transfer and trading opportunities in Norway."

Economic Development Stakeholder

4.2.3.Addressing key research areas

Consultations with senior academics at the UoP suggested that EPIC has addressed gaps in areas of research, such as extending the agenda to the health inequalities of rural and coastal areas. Conducting research in these areas is expected to improve understanding of the underlying causes of health disparities and to enable targeted interventions and policies that

improve health outcomes for rural and coastal populations. Other benefits include the possibilities of supporting health and social care workers to build stronger partnerships, leading to more equitable and accessible health care in the area, including the innovative projects that EPIC supported SMEs have been involved in.

"EPIC is leading to new possibilities and developing new research including into the social determinants of health. It is allowing for genuine innovation which means some projects might fail and you learn from them."

Academic Stakeholder

"EPIC has aided place-based innovation, some of which was happening prior to the Project, but [EPIC] was important because it established digital health within the regional policy agenda."

Internal Stakeholder

Strategic stakeholders have stated that there is a notable variance in the appreciation of value derived by businesses from certain aspects of the Project between the first and second phases of EPIC. According to stakeholders, businesses had a much greater appreciation of the value of academic inputs, in EPIC2, whereas in EPIC1, businesses were more interested in the grant aspect of the Project.

4.2.4. Being SME-driven

Based on strategic stakeholder interviews, progress reports and output data, EPIC has demonstrated a SME driven approach.

Strategic stakeholders have emphasised the extent to which EPIC has supported SMEs in the eHealth sector to overcome challenges and enter new markets. Facilitated through business support beyond grants, the EPIC team has worked closely with SMEs to develop their ideas and provide access to specialist help from external organisations, such as Oxford Innovation and Deloitte.

Stakeholders have reported that EPIC has helped SMEs to develop their ideas further and overcome barriers to market entry. The EPIC team has supported SMEs in raising awareness of business opportunities, developing partnerships, and new relationships, through collaboration and knowledge exchange.

The project has also facilitated innovation and investment that may not have otherwise occurred. Additionally, EPIC has helped to bring businesses and health providers together through co-design and creation of projects, improving understanding of perspectives and promoting new solutions. Based on in-depth interviews and the output data, the EPIC project has been well-received and successful in supporting SMEs in the eHealth sector, with evidence indicating that it has been SME-driven and responsive to their needs.

"EPIC's support has helped improve SME survival in difficult economic circumstances, as well as the growth of some SMEs. [EPIC] has helped SMEs to evaluate and reshape products and services to better suit customer needs and expectations, whilst promoting innovation through networking and access to best practice."

Academic Stakeholder

4.2.5.Future opportunities and EPIC's legacy

From the outset, establishing a strong brand was a focus for the EPIC team, this was partly to ensure a legacy was in place as EPIC came to an end. Maintaining a legacy comes with uncertainties, however, EPIC's efforts have been evidenced through interviews and progress reports, outlining the various events held to build a strong brand and to leave a legacy.

Stakeholders have referred to the different funding opportunities that the University of Plymouth has secured, as a direct result of EPIC. CHT was set up predominantly as a result of EPIC and it is expected that EPIC's legacy will be in the CHT as it brings together a team with expertise across a range of technologies, breaking down the barriers to digital transformation in health and social care.

The final progress report demonstrates how the communications for EPIC's legacy messaging was distributed, the EPIC team paid an advertorial in a publication series, which included an article in several local magazines delivered by Royal Mail to a number of addresses within specific postcode areas, this included various magazines delivered to forty thousand homes across CIOS.

The article outlines some of EPIC's key achievements, a number of impact statements from businesses that have been supported by EPIC and what these businesses have achieved over the years, through the support of EPIC. The article emphasises that although EPIC is drawing to an end, the legacy of EPIC will continue through the progress of all of the supported businesses as well as the lasting legacy at the CHT.

4.3. Strategic stakeholder perspectives // Challenges

4.3.1. Match Funding and increased involvement

In the initial application, the EPIC team proposed that match funding would come from various sources, including Kernow Health, South West Academic Health Science Network and Cornwall Council. Based on progress reports and stakeholder interviews, it is evident that the EPIC team faced difficulties in securing matched funding.

Kernow Health was intended to also act as a major delivery partner, tasked with developing Cornwall as a testbed for eHealth innovation. KH had potential to be a valuable strategic partner, as it is the overarching organisation for GPs and has strong links to the Digital Transformation Board. However, KH's involvement in relation to both match funding and delivery, was under question for some time, EPIC received confirmation between January and March 2022, that as a result of Covid-19, KH had been forced to realign its business, and would no longer be involved in the Project.

Some stakeholders thought that there could have been increased involvement with some of the delivery partners, such as SW AHSN. Increased involvement with partners such as SW AHSN could increase the likelihood of future funding opportunities, which would support EPIC's legacy.

"Developing links with organisations such as SW AHSN could help to ensure EPIC's legacy."

Internal Stakeholder

"SW AHSN could and should have had more involvement with the Project"

Internal Stakeholders

Recommendation

Increased collaboration with strategic partners such as SW AHSN could derive the following benefits:

1. Access to a broader network: The SW AHSN has a large network of health and care providers, industry partners, and academic institutions. Collaboration could therefore help EPIC expand to expand its network and gain exposure to new opportunities.
2. Expertise sharing: The SW AHSN has a wealth of experience in healthcare innovation, adoption and spread of new technologies, and improving patient outcomes. Collaboration could provide EPIC with access to valuable expertise that could help inform future adoption of EPIC-supported technologies.
3. Funding opportunities: The SW AHSN has access to various funding opportunities, including grants and investment. Collaborating with them could help EPIC access these opportunities and secure future funding to support its work.
4. Alignment with strategic priorities: The SW AHSN has a clear focus on improving patient outcomes and accelerating innovation in healthcare. Collaborating with them could help EPIC align with these strategic priorities and ensure that their work is relevant and impactful in the wider healthcare ecosystem going forward.

4.3.2.Retaining staff and the future of EPIC

The EPIC project has faced and continues to face challenges related to the retention of staff. Internal stakeholders have expressed concerns in relation to the future of the work that has been derived from EPIC, in the absence of the EPIC team as many contracts are terminating at the end of the funding period.

Covid-19 impacted the ability to secure the 15 student placements, that were set as one of EPIC's outcomes. Stakeholders discussed how businesses were unreceptive to the offer of student placements, largely as a result of the pandemic. The Project team managed this by submitting a PCR form which stated that they would be unable to deliver against this target outcome. Uncertainty about future grant regimes has led to key staff leaving. The loss of skills and expertise is a concern, and there is a need to ensure continuity funding or appeal for permanent posts as opposed to project-based posts.

The progress reports documented various changes in staff throughout the evaluation period. However, the positions were filled, and regular team meetings ensured that the team were aware of staff changes, effective communications and a fast response to staff changes has no doubt enabled the Project team to deliver their set output targets. A project change request was also submitted in relation to the placement/internship positions.

"There will definitely be a gap in the absence of EPIC. A real concern is the loss of skills and expertise when the EPIC team is disbanded. Hopefully the University will create some posts to retain key staff who have been working on EPIC."

Internal Stakeholder

"Difficulty in retaining the researchers that have been involved with EPIC – currently attempting to address this by offering permanent posts as opposed to project-based posts."

Internal Stakeholder

4.3.3.Social Media Engagement

Platforms and Channels: EPIC has developed a presence on numerous platforms and channels including Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Email Programme, Website and YouTube. This engagement was crucial during the initial stages of EPIC, due to lack of face-to-face engagement as a result of Covid-19.

Purpose of EPIC's Social Media Campaign: In the initial stages of the Project, EPIC's social media was used to raise awareness of the Project and to attract interest and applicable SMEs. Throughout the Project, social media posts focussed on events, as well as storytelling and sharing the success of projects associated with EPIC's support. In the latter stages of the Project, the marketing team focussed on retention marketing which was tailored around communications for grant opportunities and case studies which portrayed EPIC-supported businesses success.

The EPIC team has evidenced efforts to build a strong brand and reputation through their social media campaign. The website has a blog feature which generated visits to the website, with 1.2k users by the end of March 2023. Throughout the claim period (January-March 2023), new content continued to be created and published with the plan of migrating all of EPIC's content to the University of Plymouth's website before May 2023, to ensure longevity of content and to have the best possible impact for the ecosystem.

Social Media Performance against Targets

Platform	Target	March 2023
Twitter	3,000	2,342 (78%)
LinkedIn	1,000	497 (50%)

The Project did not reach its targets for social media impressions, however, in Progress Reports this has been attributed to a significant period of inactivity in 2021, resulting in a lack of compelling content for their audience to interact with whilst focuses were elsewhere, such as recruitment.

4.4. Beneficiary Engagement

The EPIC logic model and subsequent Evaluation Framework identify key stakeholder groups on both the demand and supply side of the eHealth and social care market in CIOS. This section provides commentary on the state of engagement among core stakeholder categories, including:

Demand-side	Supply-side
Patient / service users	Local SMEs
Health & social care professionals (GPs, Trust representatives, care homes)	University Partners
	University Stakeholders
eHealth & social care commissioners	Regional economic development stakeholders
NHS England / NICE	Finance / investment organisations

4.4.1. Demand-side

Patient / Service user engagement

EPIC has been actively involved in patient and service user engagement throughout its various projects. One example is PEP Health, an EPIC supported SME which partnered with four GP test sites across Cornwall, enabling them to learn more about how patients share their thoughts about the experiences they have had with their GP. PE Health was able to collect over three thousand pieces of patient feedback, which was helpfully facilitated by EPIC.

EPIC has been proactive with the local community, having raised awareness of Patient Participation Groups (PPG), through their blog post. The EPIC team has encouraged local and regional patients to join a PPG to take an interest in the services provided and to help improve common understanding and help identify solutions to meet patients' needs. The Patients Association (previously a delivery partner in EPIC1), is an EPIC strategic partner and provides 'on the ground' patient engagement activity via an external consultant, in close collaboration with Healthwatch Cornwall.

EPIC has emphasised the importance of patient engagement and how it is crucial to success in innovation – this has been demonstrated through the organisation of events such as 'Co-design for success: Why patient involvement is crucial in innovation' which took place in February 2023, with 30 registered attendees, one of the larger events that was held in the final quarter.

EPIC also launched Industry Expert Mentoring, which was a mentoring grant scheme, eligible for SMEs and start-ups. The industry mentoring scheme covered key topic areas, one being 'Inclusive Patient Engagement'. The purpose of the mentoring scheme is to guide businesses in taking steps following their involvement with EPIC, by supporting their business to be successful without public sector assistance.

Overall, EPIC has recognised the importance of patient and service user engagement in the design and development of new technologies and services and has made efforts to involve patients and service users throughout the process.

Health and Social Care Professionals

EPIC has been involved in engagement with health and social care professionals through a series of workshops and events aimed at sharing information about the project's activities and results. These events have been attended by a range of stakeholders, including health and social care commissioners, who have been able to provide feedback on the project's outputs and offer suggestions for future directions.

EPIC has provided support to St Austell Healthcare, a GP practice in St Austell. The EPIC team worked with St Austell Healthcare in developing and improving their website, through an Accessibility Audit. EPIC developed an online consultation form called 'eConsult' which representatives from St Austell Healthcare has been said to have both deepened and broadened patient engagement for the health centre.

Health and Social Care stakeholders have stated in in-depth interviews that EPIC has been the catalyst for increasing the engagement with SMEs and improved patient engagement.

Commissioners

EPIC has been working closely with SW AHSN to identify opportunities for collaboration with local health and social care providers. This has included participation in the SW AHSN's Innovation Exchange programme, which brings together innovators and commissioners to explore ways of improving health and social care delivery through technology.

Cornwall Council was also named as a strategic partner, working collaboratively with the EPIC team to deliver digital innovation across the social care sector, including care homes. Cornwall Council also provided £50k match funding to the Project. A strategic partnership with Cornwall Council raises the profile of EPIC, generating greater awareness and visibility of EPIC's activities and achievements which could result in potential funding opportunities.

The EPIC team has held events which aim to educate and raise awareness and understanding of commissioning for SMEs For example, in January 2023 the team held an event titled, 'The road to commission: Navigating the ever-evolving NHS'. EPIC has also been collaborating with the Integrated Care Board (ICB), which is responsible for commissioning health and social care services in the region. EPIC's partnerships with Kernow Health would have been beneficial as they are responsible for planning and buying health services for the local region, however this was out of the EPIC team's control and the partnership fell through due to Covid-19 pressures that demanded a refocussing of KH's activities.

NHS England

EPIC has actively worked with a number of representatives from the NHS Trusts throughout the funding period, through the facilitation of events and the arrangement of meetings. In-depth interviews with NHS stakeholders have revealed the development of positive relationships between EPIC and the NHS.

"EPIC has been very helpful and effective at connecting our team to relevant specialists in the university and in partnership-building. The NHS can be insular and inward looking, so [EPIC] has helped improve external partnership-working and networking which promotes and facilitates innovation."

Health and Social Care Stakeholder

EPIC has acted as an important facilitator for prioritising digital health on the NHS agenda through constructive and productive conversations. EPIC was the basis of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which was formed between the University of Plymouth and the Royal Cornwall Hospital. The MoU was formed to achieve joint aims regarding, both the UoP and Royal Cornwall Hospital undertaking measures such as supporting clinical academic collaborations and developing joint strategies for health-related research, health design and education.

"[EPIC] has opened our minds to the concept and practical benefits, and opportunities of digital healthcare and bringing the health and academic sectors together. It has grabbed the NHS' attention and reduced barriers to networking and learning."

Health and Social Care Stakeholder

EPIC's partnership with SW AHSN is important in terms of engagement with the NHS as SW AHSN aims to accelerate the adoption and spread of innovation across the NHS in the South West, an influential collaborative relationship for EPIC to have adopted.

Challenges faced by SMEs trying to embed new products into the NHS are well documented, however, EPIC is helping with this as it has provided opportunities for supported SMEs to promote their eHealth products and services to the NHS.

"NHS Trusts are complex organisations with difficult procurement procedures. EPIC has helped to bring businesses and health providers together through co-design and creation of projects, where [EPIC] has developed a much better understanding of perspectives."

Internal Stakeholder

"EPIC has been able to better navigate a route through procurement within NHS Trusts, something few had been able to do before."

Economic Development Stakeholder

4.4.2.Supply Side

Local SMEs

Monitoring data indicates that the Project has engaged with a total of 110 businesses. Secondary company data (Bureau van Dijk) is available for 99 of those businesses. The vast majority of those businesses have been SMEs.

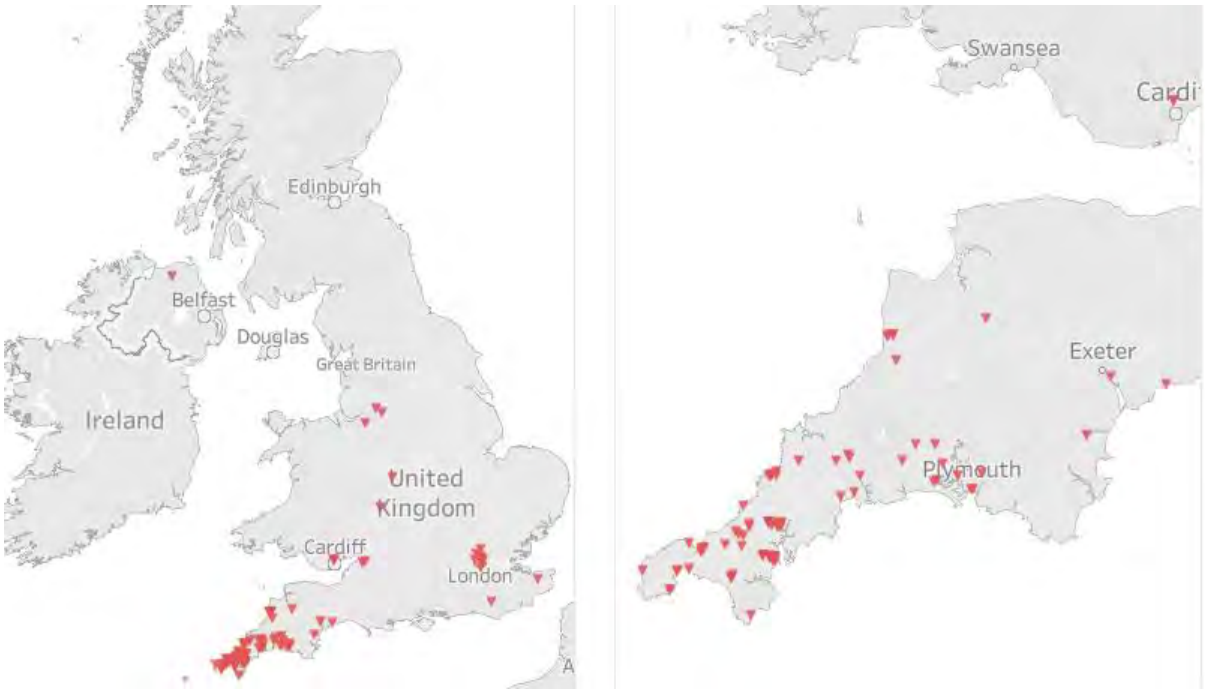
Internal monitoring data, secondary data and external stakeholder consultation all evidence the fact that EPIC has been genuinely SME-driven and has therefore effectively engaged with the regional SME population.

EPIC has also ensured that there has been implementation of activity aimed at preparing the supported SMEs for business after EPIC, such as the industry expert mentoring scheme. The purpose of this mentoring is to guide businesses in taking next steps following their involvement with EPIC. The Project has developed partnerships with organisations including Apollo Health Innovations, Stephens Scown and Purple Zest Ltd. to deliver quality support for EPIC supported businesses, from experts in the industry.

4.4.3.Company Profile

Figure 4.1 demonstrates the distribution of EPIC supported SMEs across the UK, indicating a strong concentration of businesses in the South West, as expected.

Figure 4.1 - EPIC Supported Businesses



Source: *Bureau van Dijk, Perspective Economics*

Regional Economic Development & Finance and Investment Stakeholders

Interviews with strategic stakeholders with backgrounds in economic development, and finance and investment all reported a good level of engagement with the EPIC project. Stakeholders emphasised how EPIC has promoted positive collaboration between their

organisations and the UoP through successful knowledge transfer, describing the joint working as being mutually beneficial. EPIC has raised the awareness of significant business opportunities (in relation to new hospital developments), which has provided vast opportunities for the supported SMEs. EPIC's engagement with economic development stakeholders helps enable the project to tap into funding opportunities and access a broader range of networks and resources.

EPIC has facilitated economic development organisations with the opportunity to raise awareness of major ongoing projects, for example, providing supported SMEs with a unique insight into projects that include technology-related business opportunities.

"Obviously, SMEs will focus on niche areas because of their size; EPIC has helped them spot possible business opportunities they wouldn't otherwise have been aware of and helped them to overcome barriers to market entry."

Economic Development Stakeholder

4.4.4.Delivering high quality activities

An online survey of businesses that had engaged with EPIC as of March 2022, suggested that EPIC was meeting appropriate levels of engagement across the range of activity it delivered, and that for the most part, EPIC activity was considered to be effective and deriving tangible impact for participants.

In the initial stages of EPIC, high quality activities were more difficult to facilitate due to Covid-19 restrictions. However, the EPIC team improvised and facilitate a series of webinars and online events between April 2020 - September 2021. Since this, EPIC has successfully delivered a number of in-person events using the EPICentre as well as attending various external events to maintain EPIC's high profile.

Table 4.1 demonstrates the increase in the number of events scheduled and conducted by the EPIC team in the latter stages of the Project period. The EPIC team planned and conducted more events in 2022, as Covid restrictions eased. The EPIC team also attended a number of events in the latter stages of Project delivery.

Table 4.1 - List of EPIC events and number of attendees

Claim Period	No. of EPIC held events	No. of Attendees
October – December 2021	2	135
January -March 2022	1	100
April – June 2022	5	30
July – September 2022	5	36
October – December 2022	5	66
January – March 2023	10	224

A number of events were planned from October 2021 – March 2023, however, due to the remaining presence of Covid-19, some events had to be cancelled. The 'Opportunities Cornwall Careers Event', which had 100 planned attendees was forced to be cancelled due to a Covid-19 spike.

Perspectives on the EPIC Project

"EPIC has supported a large number of small businesses in starting a project or product."

"The communications have been excellent and has been a crucial asset in reaching out into the health sector."

"EPIC was incredibly helpful in setting up GP engagement and wider healthcare engagement opportunities."

"Great support to our project, additional skills and expertise including legal and data analytics."

"EPIC provided very valuable help and information regarding the NHS/Hospital processes and requirements."

Source: Perspective Economics

5. Impact and Outcomes

The sub-sections below summarise evidence that provides an indication of EPIC's impact on the eHealth and social care ecosystem in CIOS. The section first addresses core ERDF economic outcomes – jobs, revenue generation and product development – before considering progress against the Project's original objectives, and a range of wider benefits.

5.1. Impact of EPIC activity

Respondents to the online survey returned positive opinions regarding the impact that EPIC has had on business activity, including:

- Seventy-three percent of respondents believe that as a result of EPIC their business has increased the amount of time and/or money they invest in eHealth and social care research and development or innovation.
- As with findings regarding effectiveness of EPIC activity, seventy-nine percent of respondents believed that the eHealth and social care market in Cornwall is better established and/or growing as a result of the EPIC Project.

5.1.1. Core economic outcomes

Employment & Revenue Growth

The EPIC team set a C8 target, aiming to create or sustain 13 jobs within supported enterprises. Internal monitoring data indicates that the Project has overachieved against this set target and has supported 14.5 employment increases in supported enterprises. Analysis of secondary data shows that over the duration of the Project (2020 – 2022), EPIC2-supported companies located in the South West have increased their employment base by a total of 195 people and have increased turnover by more than £6m. Some of the most significant increases in employment and / or turnover have been generated by companies like HI9 (AI chatbot), Healthwave Limited (health system transformation services) and My Health Pad (mindfulness application). While it is not appropriate to attribute these increases to EPIC2 activity, this secondary data on company performance adds weight to the assertion that the eHealth and social care ecosystem in CIOS is continuing to grow, and that EPIC2 is playing its part in that growth.

New product development

Monitoring data shows that EPIC has supported a total of 21 businesses to bring new products either to market or to the firm and has therefore overachieved against its original target (n=16). Figure 5.1 provides an overview of the description of eHealth products or services created, the main category of the product or service and the expected purchaser.

Figure 5.1 – Product Development, Survey Responses

Did your involvemnet with EPIC, result in your business creating a new eHealth product(s) or s..	How would you describe your main eHealth product or service?	Which of the following category does your main eHealth product or service fall under	When designing or ...	When designing or..	Who did/do you expect the purchaser to be?
Yes	AI Chatbot	Systems and infrastructure	Yes	No	Care home
	AI/ML algorith	Systems and infrastructure	Yes	Yes	Care home
	App	Communication and Management Platform	Yes	Yes	Police Forces
		Condition Management	Yes	Yes	Individual
	Diagnostic Tool	Systems and infrastructure	Yes	Yes	Fire Services
	Modification of an existing home system that enables daily data collection from elderly	Promoting wellness and tracking risk in elderly	Yes	Yes	Individual
	Online accessible dashboard	Patient experience	Yes	Yes	NHS Commissioner
	Service	Condition Management	Yes	Yes	Private companies
		Pathways	Yes	Yes	NHS Commissioner
		Patient Experience	Yes	No	Health Researchers/Plannesr& Policy Teams
		Systems and infrastructure	Yes	No	Hospital
		Wellbeing	Yes	Yes	NHS Commissioner
	Smart Speaker App	Condition Management	Yes	Yes	Charity Based
	VR experiences	Patient Wellness	No	Yes	Care home

Source: Perspective Economics

The survey conducted by the research team at the interim stage found that the products and services being created as a result of the SME's involvement with EPIC could be grouped into eight different categories, ranging from system infrastructure to patient wellbeing.

Case Study: Akara Robotics
Location: Cornwall
Employee count: 12
Hours of support secured: 130.5
Sector (SIC): Healthcare Technology Company

Akara is a healthcare innovation company with a mission to modernise public health using technology. Akara first engaged with EPIC in 2017 and received support through the organised workshops and through the Challenge Fund. In this second phase of EPIC, Akara has received over 130 hours of support.

The organisation acknowledged the pressures placed upon all health services from the pandemic and has designed disinfection robots to be used in clinical settings. Akara has developed two disinfection robots; one that cleans surfaces and another which cleans air. Both were the subject of a trial in 2022, in collaboration with EPIC (Dr Hannah Bradwell and Leonie Cooper), at the Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (RCHT) on the isolation and endoscopy ward.

EPIC's support has been instrumental in facilitating Akara's response to the pandemic. The project provided expertise, and a collaborative environment that allowed Akara to

accelerate the development process. EPIC has enabled Akara with relevant stakeholders, including healthcare institutions, and research expertise, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange.

5.1.2. Networking

Based on the in-depth interviews that have been conducted throughout the Project, and evidence contained within monitoring reports, EPIC2 has facilitated strong connections between the academics, the health providers and the SME community.

Strategic stakeholders were asked within in-depth interviews about the extent to which EPIC2 has led to increased collaboration between local businesses and research institutions and / or health & social care service providers. Commonly occurring themes are summarised by the quotations below, highlighting how EPIC has acted as a catalyst across various facets of the eHealth and social care ecosystem in CIOS, including but not limited to the strength of local eHealth and social care networks.

"EPIC has helped to bring businesses and health providers together through co-design and the creation of projects, which has created a much better understanding of perspectives. The offer of academic support makes the difference, through the creation of new thinking and new solutions."

Business Engagement Stakeholder

"EPIC has been very helpful and effective at connecting our team to relevant specialists in the university and in partnership-building. The NHS can be insular and inward looking so EPIC has helped improve external partnership-working and networking which promotes and facilitates innovation."

eHealth Sector Stakeholder

EPIC has both organised and attended events which has increased the profile of EPIC and created opportunities for SMEs, academics and commissioners to network.

"We think there have been some good links between academia, businesses and support organisations – from what we have seen at events and physical colocation at the Health and Wellbeing Innovation Centre – bit of a clustering. We strongly suspect there has been some good collaborations as a result of this."

Economic Development Stakeholder

5.2. Progress Against Objectives

Triangulation of quantitative and qualitative evidence gathered across the Summative Assessment timeframe suggests that EPIC2 has made good progress against its overarching objectives, and in doing so has made a substantive contribution to ERDF Investment Priority 1b – Promoting Business Investment in R&I. The bullet-points below provide a summary of supporting evidence.

EPIC2 Objective: Continued development of the nascent eHealth and social care market in CIOS. Output data suggests that EPIC2 has continued to develop the eHealth and social care market in CIOS, via grants and non-financial support for eHealth and social care SMEs, research collaboration between industry and academia, and the development of new products. Qualitative data gathered via strategic stakeholder interviews and the business survey adds weight to the evidence of progress against this overarching objective. Numerous EPIC2-supported businesses have emphasised the role that the Project has played in new product development and business growth, and strategic stakeholders have consistently identified EPIC2 as both a catalyst and bond in the regional eHealth and social care ecosystem. Further, secondary data on employment and revenue growth among EPIC2-supported businesses, while obviously not all attributable to EPIC2 activity, has shown substantive growth over the timeframe of the EPIC2 project.

EPIC2 Objective: Increase RD&I knowledge transfer activity and investment. Output data shows that EPIC2 has overachieved against output targets relating to RD&I knowledge transfer activity, including new academia-industry research collaborations (140%), new to market and new to firm products (160% and 118% of targets respectively). Business survey respondents have reported receiving support to develop a wide range of new products, from AI chatbots and Machine Learning algorithms, to diagnostic tools and virtual reality experiences. Seventy-three percent of respondents to the business survey believed that as a result of EPIC their business has increased the amount of time and/or money they invest in eHealth and social care RD&I. Further, EPIC2 has acted as the basis of several subsequent (successful) eHealth and social care-related research applications by the University of Plymouth, therefore helping to secure a pipeline of future investment in eHealth and social care RD&I activity.

EPIC2 Objective: Developing links and synergies between enterprises, research and development centres and the Higher Education Sector. Throughout both EPIC1 and EPIC2, strategic stakeholders across the region have highlighted the important role that EPIC has played in raising awareness of the potential of eHealth and social care, and in persistently bringing key stakeholders from across the ecosystem together in a variety of fora.

Taken together, evidence from output monitoring, the business survey, strategic stakeholder interviews and secondary data shows that EPIC2 has successfully contributed to EDRF Objectives 1.2 and 1.3 by increasing SME investment of time, energy and finance in RD&I activity, and by increasing the number of SMEs engaged in knowledge exchange, collaborative research and innovation with research institutions. In doing so, EPIC2 has also contributed to the additional ERDF programme objective of improving how SMEs commercialise research and how they collaborate with research institutions.

5.3. Contribution to wider strategic plans

EPIC has played a significant role in contributing to wider strategic plans within the University of Plymouth. Specific Below are some specific ways in which EPIC has contributed to these plans:

- Setting up the Centre for Health Technology (CHT): EPIC was the basis for the creation of CHT, which has brought together various departments across the University of Plymouth to develop and promote innovative health technologies. EPIC has played a central role in the development and success of CHT, which has in turn contributed to the University's wider strategic plans for health technology research and development.
- Attracting new appointments in Digital Health: EPIC played a key role in attracting new appointments in the Digital Health department, specifically Professors Edward Meinert and Shangming Zhou. These appointments were made possible in part due to the success of EPIC, which in turn has contributed to the growth and development of Digital Health research at the University.
- Contributing to the GOALD project: EPIC was central to the application for the ESRC-funded GOALD project, which is focused on developing new technologies to support healthy ageing. EPIC provided the foundations for this project, and members of the EPIC team have been working closely with the GOALD team to ensure its success.
- Leading to the ICONIC project: The success of EPIC and the GOALD project has led to the development of the ICONIC project, which is focused on developing innovative health technologies to improve patient outcomes. EPIC has played a central role in the application and development of this project, and members of the EPIC team will be working on the ICONIC project as well.
- Supporting other applications: EPIC has also been central to two other applications that are currently under consideration, including an application to become a digital health hub for coastal and rural regions and an application to the UKRI Hartree Hub and Spoke. These applications demonstrate the ongoing success and impact of EPIC, which continues to contribute to the University's wider strategic plans for research and innovation in health technology.

Overall, it is clear that EPIC has played a significant role in contributing to the University of Plymouth's wider strategic plans for health technology research and development. The success of EPIC has led to the creation of new initiatives and projects, as well as the attraction of new talent to the University. This University-level impact represents a key aspect of the EPIC legacy, providing a vibrant network and research activity upon which new academic staff can build.

6. Value for Money

Good value for money is the optimal use of resources to achieve the intended outcomes. Value for money assessments consider i) economy i.e. minimising inputs; ii) efficiency i.e. could more have been achieved with the same input; and iii) effectiveness i.e. were intended outcomes achieved, and could more have been achieved.[10] The sub-sections below use evidence presented throughout the SAR to consider each value for money component in turn.

6.1. Economy

Benchmarking EPIC2 with other similar ERDF-funded projects shows that the EPIC project delivered its C1 output target at comparatively low cost. Compared to four other similar projects, the EPIC2 cost-per-C1 ranks second lowest at c.£43k, within a range of between £23k and £76.5k (Table 6.1).

Table 6.1 – Cost Per C1 Benchmarks

Benchmarking	Priority Axi	Start date	End date	ERDF/ESF investme	C1 Target / Outp	Cost Per C1	Country	Type and focus of support
EPIC	1	01/05/2020	30/06/2023	£ 3,315,987.83	77	£43,064.78	England	065
Comparator 1	1	01/12/2019	31/07/2023	£ 3,402,543.00	60	£56,709.05	England	064
Comparator 2	1	01/03/2020	30/06/2023	£ 3,150,436.00	135	£23,336.56	England	064
Comparator 3	1	01/01/2019	30/06/2023	£ 3,556,181.00	47	£75,663.43	England	064
Comparator 4	1	01/01/2019	30/06/2023	£ 3,775,156.93	73	£51,714.48	England	064
				Median	75	£47,389.63		

Source: ESIF List of Beneficiaries January 2023[11]

6.2. Efficiency

The EPIC2 project overdelivered against 6 of its 9 output targets, despite significant disruption to project delivery caused by COVID-19. Consultation with internal stakeholders emphasised the significant effort that went into achieving these targets under very challenging circumstances. At the interim evaluation stage, between 60% and 100% of all output targets remained to be delivered. Strong final performance against output targets highlights the highly efficient nature of project delivery between interim and final evaluation stages. Lessons regarding the delivery processes and mechanisms employed between interim and final evaluation stages to achieve such efficient output generation should be taken into all future delivery processes.

10 National Audit Office – Assessing Value for Money, [https://www.nao.org.uk/successful-commissioning/general-principles/value-for-money/]
11 C1 output data obtained from desk-based research.

6.3. Effectiveness

The Summative Assessment has found considerable evidence to suggest that the EPIC2 Project has offered good value for money in terms of the effectiveness of its activity. The Project either mostly achieved (within 10%) or over-achieved against 8 of its 9 output targets, including the vast majority of high-value outputs such as C2 grant administration, C8 employment increase, C26 enterprise-research cooperation, and C28 / C29 new to market and new to firm products.

6.4. Employment, Salary & GVA Impacts

EPIC2 has supported the creation of 14.5 FTEs. Median salaries associated with EPIC-supported job creation are significantly above average regional salaries (by between £14k and £16k / 60% - 62%)[12]. It follows that the contribution made to GVA is also above that which might be expected based on the industrial profile of the region. According to most recent ONS estimates, GVA per filled job in CIOS is c.£41.4k, compared to estimated GVA per employee in EPIC supported roles of c.£50k[13].

Table 5.1 – Summary of Economic Impact

		Impact Area: [CIOS]	
Impact Indicator: Employment Unit = FTEs		Measure	Adjustment
	Gross Impact	14.5	-
	Deadweight / reference case	11	25%[14]
	Displacement /substitution	-	0%[15]
	Leakage	-	0%[16]
	Net Additional	11	75%
Impact Indicator: GVA Unit = £m	Gross	£0.7317	-
	Deadweight / reference case	£0.55	25%
	Displacement /substitution	-	-
	Leakage	-	-
	Net Additional	£0.55	75%

Source: EPIC2 Monitoring Data, ONS ASHE Gross Annual Pay by ITL Region

12 Analysis of median salaries among additional jobs within EPIC1 suggested that median salaries were c.£14k above the CIOS average (60%). Analysis of median salaries among additional jobs within EPIC2 were c.£18k above the CIOS average (75%). EPIC1 additional jobs salary = £36.6k on average. EPIC2 additional jobs salary = £42k on average. Median salaries in the South West in 2018 = £22,726. Median salaries in the South West in 2022 = £26,381.
13 Calculation uses median salaries within sectors most prevalent among EPIC2 activity plus a conservative 20% estimate of profits.
14 Proportion of additional jobs created attributed to EPIC by supported businesses = 75%. 25% adjustment therefore applied.
15 Displacement / substitution deemed to be negligible given the early stage of eHealth market development in CIOS, and the early stage at which EPIC is supporting SME R&D.
16 Leakage deemed to be negligible given that employment impacts are derived by businesses within CIOS..
17 Multiplies additional jobs by average estimated salary of additional jobs (£42,040) and adds 20% to reflect estimated profits based on ONS estimates of profitability within UK companies. Note that this is expected to be an underestimate because profitability among the more scientific / value adding companies supported by EPIC is likely to be higher.

6.5. Value for Money Conclusions

Overall, EPIC2 has been delivered at comparatively low cost, has demonstrated high levels of efficiency in the latter stages of the Project, has created comparatively high-value jobs and Gross Value Added, and has made substantive progress against all of its overarching strategic objectives (see Section 5). On that basis, the EPIC2 project is considered to have offered good value for money.

7. Conclusions

7.1. Project Sustainability

The EPIC team has considered sustainability and legacy throughout the Project's second phase. EPIC was the basis for the creation of the Centre for Health Technology, which has brought together various departments across the University of Plymouth to develop and promote innovative health technologies. EPIC has played a central role in the development and success of CHT, which has led to wider strategic plans for eHealth RD&I.

The EPIC team has also stated that although the Project has drawn to an end, EPIC's legacy will continue to thrive through the progress and development of the supported SMEs. EPIC held an end of Project closing event in March, which was well attended - the Project showcased various ventures and projects that had been supported by EPIC. The importance of a closing event in order to share activities and achievements, was hammered home in numerous in-depth interviews with stakeholders spanning different backgrounds, and this was taken on board by the EPIC team.

7.2. Future opportunities

EPIC has formed numerous strategic partnerships and collaborations with other organisations, eHealth commissioners and industry stakeholders. These partnerships will act as an important leverage for expertise, resources and networks to expand the reach of the Project's achievements. EPIC has promoted knowledge exchange and fostered a strong collaborative environment that will support the SMEs and their future growth.

South West Academic Health Science Network intends to promote the achievements of EPIC and to further support eHealth networks. There could be scope for future funding and support from the Integrated Care Boards.

In depth interviews with eHealth and health and social care stakeholders covered conversations surrounding the continuity of EPIC and what it has achieved. A stakeholder suggested that the NHS could be open to discussions, but that the NHS were currently undergoing cuts on their digital teams, and this could be more difficult. However, a notable impact of EPIC is how the Project has developed in-roads to the NHS, which is remarkable, given the NHS is renowned for being a difficult market to enter and therefore, the Project team should credit themselves on this achievement.

7.3. Progress against targets

The Project has successfully delivered against the vast majority of its contracted output targets, and has substantively overachieved against its C4, C5, C8, C26, C28 and C29. The Project came close to achieving its contracted C1 and C2 targets. It is likely that in the absence of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Project could have achieved against all of the set targets.

7.4. Management and delivery

The EPIC team has successfully facilitated effective collaborations among businesses, health providers, and academics, bringing them together for co-design and creation of projects. The project has played a crucial role in establishing and growing the eHealth market in the CIOS region, raising awareness and accelerating partnerships. EPIC has organised workshops, seminars, and events to increase networking opportunities and upskill businesses and health providers in e-health. Stakeholders have praised the project for reducing barriers to networking and learning, promoting innovation, and supporting the creation of sustainable relationships.

EPIC has also focused on promoting the CIOS region as a potential investment destination for digital health. Through international collaborations, webinars, and participation in events like 'Slush,' EPIC has showcased the region's skills and expertise, resulting in increased awareness and new leads for potential investments. The project has effectively connected businesses and health providers, fostering knowledge exchange and opening doors for collaboration and partnerships.

In terms of research, EPIC has addressed gaps in areas such as health inequalities in rural and coastal areas. By conducting research in these areas, EPIC has contributed to a better understanding of underlying causes and enabled targeted interventions to improve health outcomes. The project has promoted place-based innovation and established digital health on the policy agenda in the region.

EPIC has demonstrated a strong focus on supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the eHealth sector. Stakeholders have highlighted the project's success in helping SMEs overcome challenges, develop ideas, and enter new markets. The EPIC team has provided business support beyond grants, facilitating access to specialist help and promoting innovation through networking and knowledge exchange.

7.5. Value for Money

Overall, EPIC has been delivered at comparatively low cost, has demonstrated high levels of efficiency in the latter stages of the Project, has created comparatively high-value jobs and Gross Value Added, and has made substantive progress against all of its overarching strategic objectives. On that basis, the EPIC project is considered as having offered good value for money.

8. Appendix: Strategic Stakeholder Interview Guides

Strategic Stakeholder Topic Guide: General

To be pre-populated by interviewer prior to interview
Interviewee Name
Interviewee Role
Interviewee Contact
Interviewee Group
[Delete as Appropriate]

Perspective Economics has been commissioned by the University of Plymouth to deliver an evaluation of its eHealth & Social Care productivity and innovation in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly (EPIC) initiative.

Further to our e-mail, we're contacting you given your role as a *[insert consultee role]* with knowledge of the EPIC project. As part of the evaluation, we are gathering the views of strategic health, social care, economic development and innovation stakeholders stakeholders in the CIOS region to help understand the contribution that the EPIC project has made to date against a range of objectives.

As you may be aware, the EPIC project is soon coming to a close, so at this late stage of the evaluation we are focusing on evidencing the current and likely future impact that EPIC has had on the eHealth sector in the region.

The questions we're going to ask fall under two broad headings aligned to EPIC's overarching objectives - specifically:

a) The extent to which EPIC is increasing demand for eHealth & Social Care products and services by raising awareness and understanding among local patients / service users, health & social care providers and commissioners; and

b) The extent to which EPIC is helping to grow the local eHealth & Social Care business base through business support, grant funding, and research collaborations and wider networking activity.

The discussion shouldn't take more than a maximum of 30 minutes of your time. You may not feel that you are in a position to respond to all of the questions we ask. If there are questions

that you don't believe you have sufficient knowledge to answer please just say so and we can move on.

In line with market research guidelines anything you say will be treated in strictest confidence, nothing you say will be attributed to you or your organization. The comments you make will be combined with the views of approximately 20 other consultees and findings will be aggregated and reported anonymously in a report that will be sent to the EPIC project team at the University of Plymouth, who will then send it to the Department for Levelling Up Housing & Communities (DLUHC), and may subsequently choose to make it publicly available. We undertake all surveys in line with our legal obligations under the GDPR, as well as Market Research Society guidance. If at any time you no longer wish to participate within the evaluation, you can contact our team directly and we will withdraw any information provided.

[Confirm Consent to Participate]

READ BEFORE STARTING RECORDING: **Can we have your permission to audio record the interview?** ADD IF NECESSARY: The recording will be used to ensure that we transcribe details correctly, it will not be provided to anyone outside of the core research team (Perspective Economics) and will be destroyed as soon as we have completed the project.

READ AFTER STARTED RECORDING: All responses are confidential and anonymous. Nothing will be attributed to you or your organisation, and all findings will be presented anonymously unless we obtain written permission from you in advance to attribute a quotation to you. Participation is voluntary and you can change your mind at any time. **Can I confirm you are happy to take part on this basis?**

Section 1: About your own role, and your involvement with / understanding of EPIC2

1	Please tell me about your own role
	I[f previously interviewed - check that their role has not changed]
2	Can you briefly outline your understanding of the EPIC2 Project – what work it does, what it intends to achieve?
	[Ask if the interviewee has not been previously interviewed]
3	How have you been involved in the EPIC2 Project to date?

	[Ask all interviewees]

Section 2: About EPIC's contribution to increasing the demand for eHealth & Social Care products and services

4	To what extent, if at all, has the EPIC project increased the awareness of and / or propensity among local patients / service users to use electronic health products or services.
5	To what extent, if at all, has the EPIC project increased the likelihood that local health & social care commissioners will procure (or have procured) eHealth & Social Care products or services?
	[PROBE: make sure to understand how EPIC has contributed to any change].
6	To what extent, if at all, has the EPIC project increased the extent to which you (and other strategic stakeholders) network with other eHealth stakeholders (e.g. businesses, commissioners and health & social care providers)?

Section 3: About EPIC's contribution to increasing the supply of eHealth & Social Care products and services

4	To what extent has EPIC2 led to increased investment in innovation / R&D among commissioners, providers or businesses?

5	To what extent, has the EPIC project led to increased collaboration between local businesses and research institutions and / or health & social care service providers (e.g. the University, or local health Trusts, care homes etc.)?
	[PROBE: make sure to understand how EPIC has contributed to any change].
6	Based on our discussion, and your understanding of the EPIC project, to what extent do you agree the eHealth market in CIOS is better established / growing as a result of the EPIC project?
	Strongly Agree [ ] Agree [ ] Neither Agree nor Disagree [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ]
7	How, if at all, would the eHealth sector in CIOS be different now if EPIC hadn't existed? Would it be better off, worse off or no different?
	No different – the eHealth sector would have developed in exactly the same way in the absence of EPIC [ ] [Please provide reasons for this response] Somewhat different – the eHealth sector may not have developed as quickly, to the same extent, or in the same form had EPIC not existed [ ] [Please provide reasons for this response] Very different – the eHealth sector would definitely not have developed as quickly / to the same extent / in the same way had EPIC not existed [ ] [Please provide reasons for this response]
8	Is there anything that you feel EPIC has done particularly well to date, or aspects of the project that have worked particularly well?

9	What, if anything, could EPIC have done differently?
10	As the EPIC project draws to an end, how much of a gap do you believe will be left in the eHealth sector in CIOS?
11	What do you believe should be done ahead of the end of EPIC2, in order to maintain the legacy of EPIC2?
	Who (which organisation(s)) do you believe should take on eHealth sector development activity in future?

Strategic Stakeholder Topic Guide: Economic Development Stakeholders

To be pre-populated by interviewer prior to interview	
Interviewee Name	
Interviewee Role	
Interviewee Contact	
Interviewee Group [Delete as Appropriate]	Economic Development

Perspective Economics has been commissioned by the University of Plymouth to deliver an evaluation of its eHealth & Social Care productivity and innovation in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly (EPIC) initiative.

Further to our e-mail, we're contacting you given your role as a *[insert consultee role]* with knowledge of the EPIC project. As part of the evaluation, we are gathering the views of strategic health, social care, economic development and innovation stakeholders stakeholders in the CIOS region to help understand the contribution that the EPIC project has made to date against a range of objectives.

As you may be aware, the EPIC project is soon coming to a close, so at this late stage of the evaluation we are focusing on evidencing the current and likely future impact that EPIC has had on the eHealth sector in the region.

The questions we're going to ask fall under two broad headings aligned to EPIC's overarching objectives - specifically:

a) The extent to which EPIC is increasing demand for eHealth & Social Care products and services by raising awareness and understanding among local patients / service users, health & social care providers and commissioners; and

b) The extent to which EPIC is helping to grow the local eHealth & Social Care business base through business support, grant funding, and research collaborations and wider networking activity.

The discussion shouldn't take more than a maximum of 30 minutes of your time. You may not feel that you are in a position to respond to all of the questions we ask. If there are questions that you don't believe you have sufficient knowledge to answer please just say so and we can move on.

In line with market research guidelines anything you say will be treated in strictest confidence, nothing you say will be attributed to you or your organization. The comments you make will be combined with the views of approximately 20 other consultees and findings will be aggregated and reported anonymously in a report that will be sent to the EPIC project team at the University of Plymouth, who will then send it to the Department for Levelling Up Housing & Communities (DLUHC), and may subsequently choose to make it publicly available. We undertake all surveys in line with our legal obligations under the GDPR, as well as Market Research Society guidance. If at any time you no longer wish to participate within the evaluation, you can contact our team directly and we will withdraw any information provided.

[Confirm Consent to Participate]

READ BEFORE STARTING RECORDING: Can we have your permission to audio record the interview? ADD IF NECESSARY: The recording will be used to ensure that we transcribe details correctly, it will not be provided to anyone outside of the core research team (Perspective Economics) and will be destroyed as soon as we have completed the project.

READ AFTER STARTED RECORDING: All responses are confidential and anonymous. Nothing will be attributed to you or your organisation, and all findings will be presented anonymously unless we obtain written permission from you in advance to attribute a quotation to you. Participation is voluntary and you can change your mind at any time. Can I confirm you are happy to take part on this basis?

Section 1: About your own role, and your involvement with / understanding of EPIC

1	Please tell me about your own role
	If previously interviewed - check that their role has not changed
2	Can you briefly outline your understanding of the EPIC Project – what work it does, what it intends to achieve?
3	How have you been involved in the EPIC Project to date?

Section 2: About EPIC's contribution to the CIOS eHealth sector

4	What challenges do SMEs, particularly in the eHealth sector, in the region face (particularly access to finance).
5	How, if at all, has EPIC2 helped SMEs overcome these challenges in the CIOS region?
6	What support do you feel is required for start-ups and innovative SMEs in the region in the future?
7	Where do you expect public funding for SME growth and innovation to come from in future – in the absence of ERDF funding?
8	Based on our discussion, and your understanding of the EPIC project, to what extent, do you agree the eHealth market in CIOS is better established / growing as a result of the EPIC project?
	Strongly Agree [ ] Agree [ ] Neither Agree nor Disagree [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ]
9	How, if at all, would the eHealth sector in CIOS be different now if EPIC hadn't existed? Would it be better off, worse off or no different?
	No different – the eHealth sector would have developed in exactly the same way in the absence of EPIC [ ] [Please provide reasons for this response]

	Somewhat different – the eHealth sector may not have developed as quickly, to the same extent, or in the same form had EPIC not existed [ ] [Please provide reasons for this response] Very different – the eHealth sector would definitely not have developed as quickly / to the same extent / in the same way had EPIC not existed [ ] [Please provide reasons for this response]
10	Do you believe that EPIC has led to increased investment in eHealth innovation / R&D among local businesses?
	[PROBE: Make sure to understand reasons for this answer]
11	Have you experienced an increase in collaborations with local businesses and/ or research institute health providers due to EPIC?