ERS
Research & Consultancy

Intensive Industrial Innovation Programme Tees Valley (IIIP TV) Summative Assessment

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1. INTRODUCTION

About This Report

1.1 In February 2021, ERS was commissioned by Durham University to undertake a summative assessment of the *Intensive Industrial Innovation Programme Tees Valley* (IIIP-TV), a programme designed to support businesses with an intensive research project through the dedicated resource of a PhD student.

1.2 The programme is a collaboration between the University of Durham and Teesside University, funded by European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). This report focuses on the programme for the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) area. Additionally, separate funding supports an IIIP programme in the NELEP area, which has its own reporting.

1.3 In June 2021, ERS completed the first interim report which assessed the first Cohort in the programme. This second report undertook an identical assessment of the IIIP-TV Cohort 2 participants in January 2023. Durham University decided not to open applications for a Cohort 3. Cohort 1 and 2 had less applications than expected, consequently a third Cohort was considered but decided against due to the previously low uptake. As such, this summative report will present lifetime impacts for Cohorts 1 and 2.

1.4 This report provides an insight into project performance to provide:

- Evidence-based recommendations to enhance future implementation of the project.
- Reliable evidence of the efficiency, effectiveness, and value for money of activity to date.
- Insights into what interventions work, the reasons for this, and lessons for the future.

1.5 In short, the summative assessment will help to understand the difference the full programme has made in the local economy, and beneficiary groups. In addition, it will improve the effectiveness of measures in relation to economic growth in the future.

Evaluation Method

1.6 Our method included a detailed documentation and data review to understand the original aims and expectations; the evolution of the programme over time; strategic policy fit; and realisation of agreed project targets.

1.7 The following groups were consulted:

- Operational Staff across each partner institution were interviewed to develop an understanding of how the programme was managed and operated.
- Supported SMEs completed e-surveys to report their experiences in the programme and associated business outcomes, which garnered 3 responses.
- PhD students completed e-surveys to report on their experiences in the programme and their benefits of participation, which garnered 4 usable responses.
- Academics supervising the PhDs were also consulted to understand their perspective.

Given the low numbers of beneficiaries supported and the similarities across IIIP-TV , we view it appropriate to aggregate the IIIP-TV responses with IIIP-NE responses. But where possible and suitable we focused on the Tees Valley responses.

Report Structure

1.8 This report is structured to reflect the objectives of the research and key programme elements:

- Section 2 Project Context: Introduces the programme, the rationale for investment and the strategic fit with the regional policy framework.
- Section 3 Project Design and Delivery: Considers how the conception of IIIP worked in practice.
- Section 4 Management and Governance: Describes oversight on the IIIP programme as a whole and effectiveness of project management.
- Section 5 SME perspectives: Presents the views from supported SMEs of the difference IIIP made in their business alongside the associated impacts.
- Section 6 Research student and Academic perspectives: Presents the views on IIIP from PhD research students and academics on their participation and related benefits.
- Section 7 Project Expenditure and outputs: Highlights progress against contracted output targets and project expenditure.
- Section 8 Economic Impact: Expresses benefits in terms of additional jobs and GVA in the Tees Valley economy.
- Section 9 Key findings and recommendations: Summarises what worked well, as well as challenges across IIIP delivery, as well offering recommendations for similar interventions centred around PhD Research Students supporting innovation in SMEs.

2. PROJECT CONTEXT

Introduction

2.1 This section summarises the background to the IIIP-TV programme, the rationale for the investment and the strategic fit with wider regional policy priorities.

Project Background

2.2 The IIIP-TV programme is an intensive support programme for SMEs in the TVCA area. IIIP-TV directly connects SMEs from the identified priority sectors with the region's university research expertise, working actively with them to address their specific research issues. Programme delivery is focussed on research that will lead to the development of new products or processes to the business and to the market. It is anticipated the programme will deliver significant and sustainable growth to the local smart specialisation SMEs and will enable businesses to be at the forefront of new and emerging markets through the focussed research being undertaken.

2.3 The IIIP-TV programme commenced in October 2018 and was originally contracted to be delivered until September 2021; however, the programme was granted an extension to be delivered until the end of March 2023 and a financial extension was granted until the end of June 2023. The collaborating universities delivered the programme at the participating business premises, as well as utilising universities research facilities. Programme activity across the collaborating universities was coordinated by Durham University.

2.4 Company interventions involved a PhD researcher assigned to the SME with support from the academic department to ensure research and business needs were met. Support to each SME lasted a minimum of three years to allow for intensive and focussed research, resulting in usable evidence for product development and market testing. This was a more intensive alternative to the standard KTP service.

2.5 SMEs were offered support across several areas including:

- Support to develop their research problem into a fully worked up research proposition alongside university academic staff.
- Support to identify an appropriate specialist research student and academic support team via the universities established processes for engagement.
- 100% dedicated research student working to address the companies research needs across three years using both university and company resources to develop workable outcomes and solutions that can support new product / process development and business growth.
- Full project support from a dedicated project manager and individual support staff within the institutions.
- Ongoing engagement with the business development teams within the universities professional support services to offer complementary support to that offered via IIIP-TV.

2.6 The IIIP-TV programme was designed to address the gap in innovation support to SMEs, with shorter interventions already existing within universities. These interventions range from short-term placements and internships to formal Knowledge Transfer Partnerships[1].

2.7 The IIIP-TV programme therefore provided longer term support to SMEs with the understanding these research programmes often required longer than three years to reach completion.

2.8 Whilst the key objectives of the programme revolved around SME innovation and business growth, the project also intended to support long term job creation and graduate retention in the smart specialisation sectors of the Tees Valley.

Local Need

2.9 The IIIP-TV programme model aimed to deliver a clear impact on regional ambitions around innovation and business growth. The TVCA had articulated the ambition to make it an innovation hotspot in Europe and a test hub for the commercialisation of innovation. To support and address this ambition, the programme looked to specifically support activities that aided innovating enterprises and the commercialisation of research.

2.10 Historically, Tees Valley has been heavily reliant upon a small number of very large traditional industries (e.g., British Steel and ICI) and the public sector. Tees Valley also had significantly low rates of enterprise (61 per cent of the national average), and low levels of SME exports, innovation and commercialisation which lead to a lack of economic resilience.

2.11 The Tees Valley Economic Assessment (2015/16) identified a need for growth in the number of employees with higher level skills. There was an identified need to encourage and support graduates to remain in the Tees Valley region and take up graduate level roles in appropriate sectors, rather than displacing lower skilled workers. The IIIP-TV project additionally aimed to create high skilled jobs in the TVCA through the commercialisation of new research-intensive products and associated long term improvements in R&D investment by industry.

Market Failure

2.12 The programme directly addressed the market failures of imperfect information, scale economies and partial public goods. By providing highly qualified postgraduates to directly support the SME's R&D ambitions, the cost of developing in house R&D capability and/or working with a university to deliver this commercially. Business understanding of the benefits from a dedicated R&D resource to deliver new products and services within the business base were further enhanced. University expertise and facilities were opened to a new market which may have been unaware of the service offer, unable to purchase it from the private sector, and may not have been able to afford it commercially.

National Strategic Alignment

2.13 IIIP-TV strongly supports the Industrial Strategy, National Science and Innovation Strategy and the National Productivity Plan putting HE at the centre of the innovation ecosystem utilising existing resources

[1] Home - Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (ktp-uk.org)

and creating a programme of intensive innovation engagement with local business. Government policy at the time placed priority on knowledge exchange, demonstrated by the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF). The KEF aimed to increase efficiency and effectiveness in the use of public funding for knowledge exchange and to further a culture of continuous improvement in universities.

2.14 IIIP-TV made a meaningful contribution to the PA1 aim of improving how SMEs commercialise research and how they collaborate with research institutions. The programme further delivered against the specific objective to deliver a measurable increase in the number of SMEs engaged in knowledge exchange, collaborative and contract research, and innovation with the university sector.

2.15 The IIIP-TV also delivered against the following indicative actions:

- Support for the commercialisation of new products and business process and initiatives.
- Applied research programmes particularly targeted at sectors and technologies set out in 'Smart specialisation in England'.
- Innovation support programmes for product design and development and systems integration.
- Schemes providing practical, financial, and material support for the innovation process within businesses.
- Support to engage more businesses in knowledge transfer and innovation.

3. PROJECT DESIGN AND DELIVERY

Introduction

3.1 This section outlines the design and delivery of the IIIP-TV programme across the two cohorts. A review of the delivery covers elements such as recruitment, successful areas of delivery, challenges, and the impact of COVID-19 on delivery.

Project Design

3.2 The IIIP-TV programme focussed on supporting local SMEs within identified 'smart specialisation' sectors to address specific research issues, which could lead to the development of new products or business processes by leveraging academic support and research power and facilities from local universities. SMEs engaged in IIIP-TV were supported by a dedicated PhD research student throughout the duration of the project.

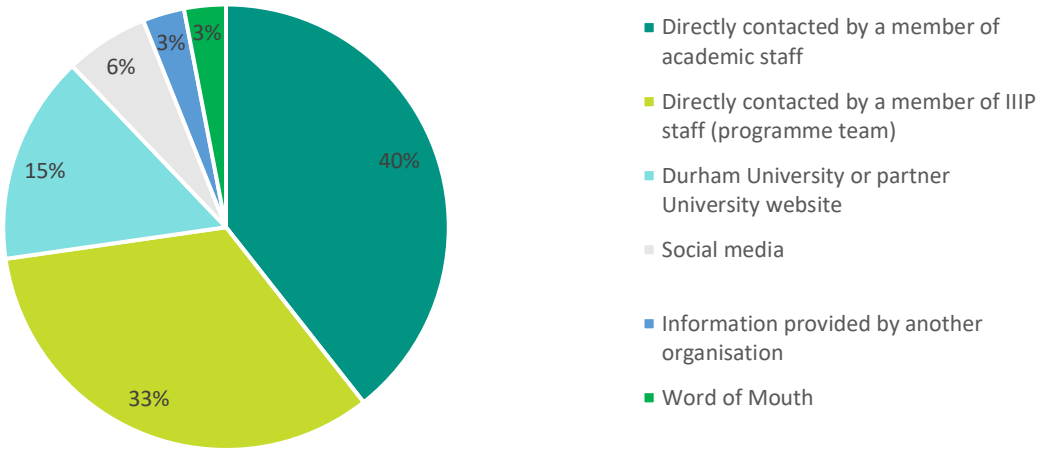
Recruitment of SMEs

3.3 The programme invited an initial wave of SME applications on 3rd May 2018 with a deadline of 4th June 2018, this formed Cohort 1. After a time, extension was granted by the funder, recruitment for a second phase of projects commenced in Quarter 1, 2019, forming Cohort 2. Prospective SMEs were required to go through a two-step application process which firstly included completion of an SME eligibility assessment form. This was assessed by the Research & Innovation Services team with the following eligibility criteria:

- Meet the EU definition of an SME.
- Be located within the Tees Valley Combined Authority geographical area (Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland, and Stockton-on-Tees local authority boundaries).
- Be active in one of the key sectors for the Tees Valley.
- Be financially stable.
- Not exceed State Aid limits as a result of participating in the programme.

3.4 Beneficiary SMEs were asked to identify how they were first made aware of IIIP. We only received three responses from Tees Valley participants, as such we have analysed responses from both IIIP-NE and IIIP-TV. The findings are presented in Figure 3.1 below.

Figure 3.1: How were you first made aware of IIIP? (n=33)



3.5 The most frequently mentioned response, by 40 per cent of e-survey respondents, was that they were directly contacted by a member of academic staff. The second most frequently cited response (33 per cent of respondents) were that they were directly contacted by a member of IIIP staff (programme team). The least cited source of IIIP awareness came from word of mouth and information provided by another organisation.

3.6 The three Tees Valley respondents indicated that they were directly contacted by a member of IIIP staff (two respondents), and one respondent indicated that they were made aware of IIIP by word of mouth.

3.7 Following confirmation of eligibility, the second stage of the application process involved SMEs submitting an Industrial PhD Research Proposal. To understand the effectiveness of this process we asked beneficiary SMEs 'To what extent do you agree with the statement "*The IIIP Application documents were simple and easy to complete*"'.

3.8 Across the NE and TV respondents, no respondents disagreed with this statement, but 22 per cent of respondents said they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. The three Tees Valley responses included one respondent agreeing with the statement and the other two respondents neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statements. However, across the board, there appears to be general agreement that the application documents were simple and easy to complete.

Recruitment of PhD Research Students

3.9 The process for recruiting PhD research students commenced once the SME had been accepted onto the programme and undertaken alongside the named academic. Responsibility for student recruitment was led by the relevant department where the academic was based, and all PhDs were advertised via *'FindAPhD.com'* or *'Jobs.ac.uk.'*

3.10 The primary concern across both cohorts was the late PhD application window, which was after the advertisement of other PhDs. Arguably better-quality candidates had already secured a place, leaving a depleted group of candidates for IIIP to draw from.

What Worked Well with Delivery

3.11 The key areas of success throughout IIIP, include the successful partnership working and engagement between industry and academia which has been praised by SMEs, academics, and operational staff alike. From an operational point of view, the 'hands off' approach was considered extremely valuable to academics who were left to manage the project as needed, ensuring maximum time to work on the project. Academics and PhD students have also cited their appreciation for the project extension allowing them to fully complete their work while students also receiving an extension to their stipend funding.

3.12 SMEs have benefited from having a dedicated postgraduate research student working on a tailored project for their business, increasing capacity as well as knowledge and skills. The relationship with a university partner was considered by SMEs to offer greater credibility whilst also benefitting from access to wider academic support and research facilities.

3.13 There was a difference between Cohort 1 and 2's views on what worked best with delivery. Cohort 2 made a significant point of the hands-off approach working well for them that was not an insight from Cohort 1. This may indicate that there was an active change in the approach of the programme team in Cohort 2 whilst retaining the successful elements of delivery from Cohort 1, namely close collaborative working.

3.14 A few quotes from stakeholders across both cohorts summarising the above are presented below:

'Hands off approach has worked exceptionally well; it has given us the freedom to get on with the job in hand.' **– Lead Academic**

'Communication is brief and focused - not too many [e]mails and not a high admin overhead. **– Beneficiary SME**

One of the best parts of the project has been the collaborative process on the admin side – being able to ask others questions, sharing successes – supporting each other across the different institutions.' **Operational Team Member**.'

As a partnership project with industry, it's worked exceptionally well. It has further strengthened the relationship with the University and industry, and it has given the students some really exceptional experience with working within a company and it has also given the company more business opportunity.' **– Lead Academic**

'The project has helped to strengthen relationships between the University management staff as well as the relationships between academics and local SMEs.' **– Operational Team Member**

'Weekly meeting with the student and academic staff has worked well.' **– Beneficiary SME**

Delivery Challenges

3.15 There were a few key challenges experienced throughout delivery, aside from those presented by COVID-19 which are detailed below. Cohort 2 respondents indicated that the ERDF SME eligibility rules caused SMEs to become ineligible for the IIIP programme after the project had commenced. This was mainly due to changes in the company size that results in the business no longer being classified as a Small to Medium Enterprise.

3.16 Both cohorts of beneficiary SMEs and academics felt that there were difficulties in aligning each other's expectations of the project and priorities.

3.17 Both Cohorts also noted the timescales for recruitment were considered restrictive in terms of appealing to a wider pool of PhD research students.

'When the ERDF rules (supporting SMEs only and a change of status perhaps following a buy over) mean they can't continue working with the SME.'– **Operational Team Member**

'During on-boarding process, set expectations to organisations without research experience about patient nature of research. Provide project management coaching and guidance to PhD student to best deliver Industrial PhD research since Industrial PhD is different to a normal PhD.' **– Beneficiary SME**

"The initial hiring process had very tight time schedules. A bit more time during the initial hiring process could have been useful." – **Beneficiary SME**

Impact of COVID-19 on Delivery

3.18 IIIP delivery was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which included three national lockdowns and Tier 3 restrictions in the Tees Valley region, interrupting progress and access to research facilities. Cohort 1 participants were impacted significantly by the Covid-19 pandemic. Research facilities and offices closing stopped PhD students from conducting the hands-on research elements of the project, and due to isolation issues common amongst the UK population during lockdowns, a number of PhD students experienced mental health issues, negatively impacting their work. As such, 73 per cent of surveyed Cohort 1 respondents stated that they experienced challenges during the delivery of IIIP due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

3.19 As a result of the pandemic, PhD research students across both Cohorts were invited to submit an extension request which was reviewed by a panel to ensure that expectations and the feasibility of outcomes within this timeframe could be achieved.

3.20 The process involved students submitting an extension request form which was agreed and authorised by their academic supervisor. This form was reviewed by an Extension Review Panel, who discussed whether the extension period applied for was in line with the negative aspects of lockdown and impact this had on the student research. The extension was intended to provide the PhD research students the time to catch up with research, delayed by Covid-19, whilst receiving their stipend.

3.21 PhD students generally agreed that the extension gave them enough time to complete their respective projects.

3.22 Beneficiary views on the impact of Covid-19 are listed below:

'Prevented access to university facilities, delayed project significantly as also impact on business' – **Beneficiary SME**

'It has reduced the amount of contact (direct and indirect) between the project participants (including between staff and student, I think), and made it more difficult for the student to present the work at conferences (a critical way to get peer review of the work)'. **– Beneficiary SME**

'Significantly reduced the ability to reach the community targeted by the research and our student also developed mental health issues due to prolonged isolation'. **– Beneficiary SME**

'The student has had mental health issues due to Covid 19 lockdown and the resulting isolation'. **– Beneficiary SME**

'We lost around three months for the lab work, but we have got an extension to cover all the time lost'. **– Beneficiary SME**

4. MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

Introduction

4.1 This section outlines the project management and governance arrangements that underpinned delivery, alongside the views of project beneficiaries on management of the project.

Project Management

4.2 Overall, day to day project management was the responsibility of the Project Manager with the oversight and support of the Head of Economic Development at Durham University. The dedicated Project Manager also received support in their role by two key operational team members, offering the governance and strategic input required to ensure the project delivered the anticipated results and impact in a fully compliant manner. This included support on ERDF compliance and revisions from the managing authority as well as support surrounding financial compliance.

4.3 An ERDF operational group met on a quarterly basis to align with the ERDF claims cycle, participants included funding specialists from each of the partner universities and was chaired by the Project Manager. The terms of reference for this group focussed on delivering the ESIF requirements of the project including record keeping, progress against targets and financial management. The meetings worked well, with all parties understanding their roles and responsibilities:

'All partners know what is going on' – **Operational Team Member**

'The quarterly Operational Group meetings have been necessary' **– Operational Team Member**

4.4 Additionally, at the project outset, an academic advisory group was initially due to take place. It was envisaged that this group would play a key role at the outset of the project overseeing the appropriate selection and prioritising of SMEs to be included in the programme. They would also have an ongoing role throughout the programme (meeting annually or more frequently if necessary) to review how well the research objectives of the SMEs were being met. The central administration team reviewed the input that was required from the academic advisory group and realised at post agreement that to proceed to PhD there was limited input required. Therefore, the governance structure was revised in agreement with Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (now the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities DLUHC) to reflect engagement in project selection with all ERDF management being undertaken by the funding specialists. Academics were involved in project reviews and project extension panels.

Governance Structure

4.5 There were several governance systems and structures in place to ensure effective management of IIIP. The quarterly operations meetings provided a platform for all partners, operational staff, and academic partners to review progress of IIIP as well as raise issues. These meetings were minuted, ensuring that all involved could reflect on discussions and key points raised throughout the meeting and help to shape future delivery.

4.6 An active risk register was maintained and discussed at quarterly operations meetings to highlight any key risks, update partners, and discuss risk mitigation processes. There was also a Collaborative Agreement in place which was signed by all partners. Each University also took advice from their own HR, Legal and Finance departments.

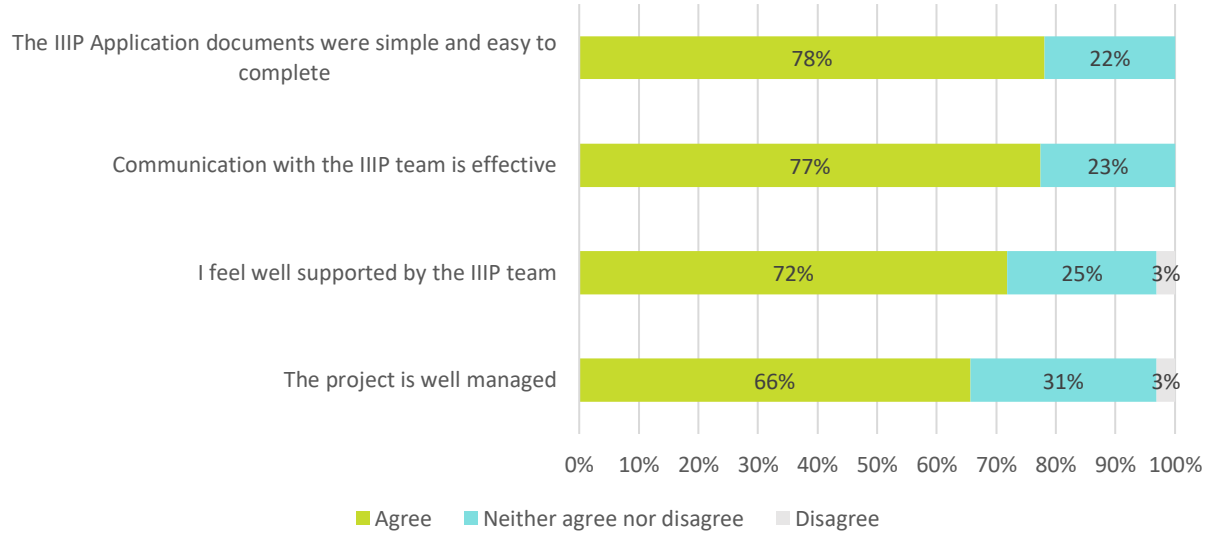
4.7 The project was fully compliant in accordance with the requirements of DLUHC, with the IIIP operational team recording project progress in quarterly summary reports as well as providing SME data on Summative Reports and tracking outputs via full monitoring information sheets. All revisions to the project via PCRs were logged to ensure project updates are traceable, contextualised and offer justification for changes.

4.8 Recruitment panel discussions were undertaken to ensure that IIIP projects satisfied eligibility criteria at each phase. Project panels were also established to discuss the extension of projects to justify the number of months of extension, considering the feasible impact of COVID-19 on each project.

Project Beneficiaries' Views on Management and Governance

4.9 Tees Valley and North East beneficiary SMEs across both cohorts were asked to identify whether they agreed with several statements relating to elements of project management and governance. The findings are presented in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: Beneficiaries views on Management and Governance (n=32)



4.10 Overall, beneficiaries felt that the project was well managed, with 66 per cent of respondents agreeing with this statement. Beneficiaries also felt that communication with the IIIP team was effective, a view expressed by 77 per cent of respondents. Additionally, beneficiaries felt well supported by the IIIP team (72 per cent).

4.11 The Tees Valley respondents were less agreeable to the statements. Out of the three respondents, one agreed with all the statements and the other two neither agreed nor disagreed with the statements,

potentially reflecting a different experience for IIIP-TV to IIIP-NE. The Tees Valley respondents provided comments on IIIP-TV's management and governance below:

'Communication and interface with university staff worked well.' **– Beneficiary SME**

'Weekly meeting with the student and academic staff has worked well.' **– Beneficiary SME**

5. SME PERSPECTIVE ON DELIVERY AND IMPACT

Introduction

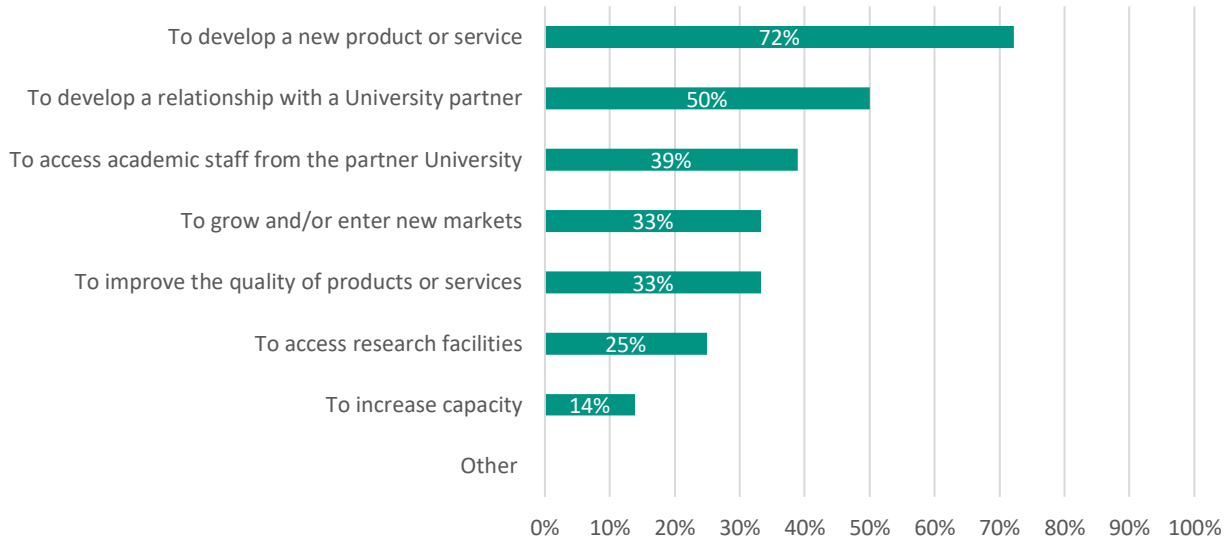
5.1 Two separate e-surveys were disseminated to the 44 supported SMEs in the Tees Valley and the North East area in March 2021 (Cohort 1) and August 2022 (Cohort 2). The two surveys in total yielded 31 responses representing a 70 per cent response rate. Across both surveys, there were only three responses from IIIP-TV sufficient for analysis. This section outlines the views of beneficiary SMEs on several elements of delivery, as well as the subsequent outcomes and impacts attributed to engagement with IIIP.

SME Motivations for Engagement

5.2 Figure 5.1 below highlights the initial motivations of SME beneficiaries from both the North East and Tees Valley for engaging with the IIIP programme. The most common responses were that beneficiary SMEs were hoping to develop new products or services (72 per cent of respondents), to develop a relationship with a university partner (50 per cent), to access academic staff from the partner universities (39 per cent). The least cited response was increasing capacity (14 per cent).

5.3 This would indicate that as expected, the overarching motivation to join IIIP was to innovate new products or services but using university services and resources as the best pursuit of this innovation goal.

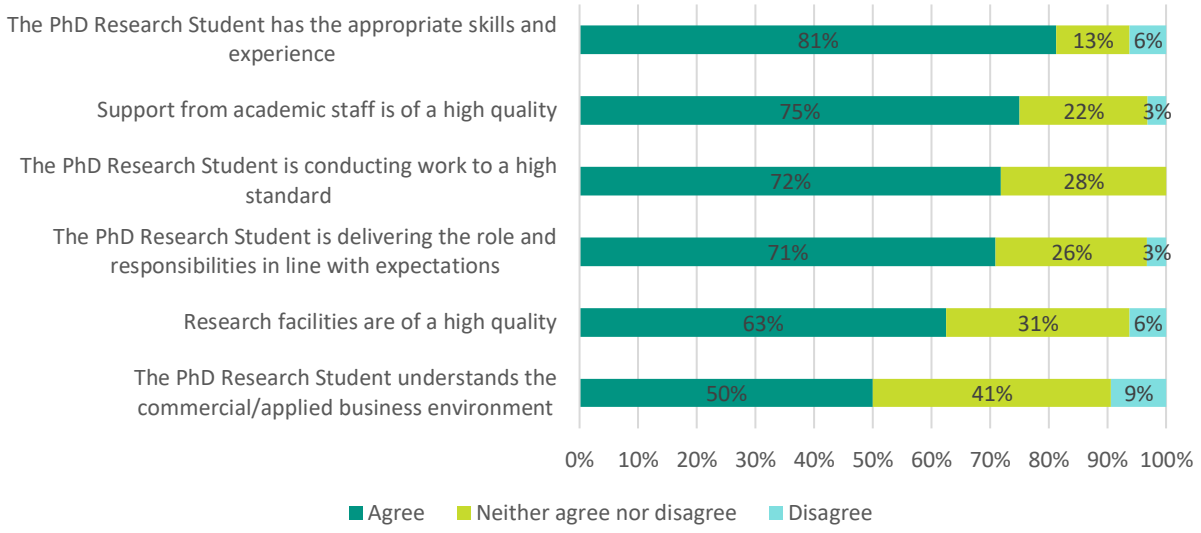
Figure 5.1: What were your motivations for taking part in IIIP? (n=31)



SMEs Experience of Working with PhD Research Students

5.4 SMEs were asked to identify whether they agreed with several statements relating to their experience of working with the PhD research students and the University (Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2: Experience of Working with IIIP (n=32)



5.5 The vast majority (81 per cent) of respondents felt that the PhD research students had appropriate skills and experience. Similarly, more than two-thirds of respondents agreed that PhD research students were conducting work to a high standard and delivering the role and responsibilities in line with expectations.

5.6 Three quarters (75 per cent) of respondents also thought that support from academic staff was of high quality.

5.7 Generally, there was strong agreement that PhD students performed well in the scheme, reflecting well on both the marketing and recruitment of PhD students.

Challenges with Delivery

5.8 IIIP-TV SMEs were asked if there were any challenges in delivery. Two of the three respondents said that they had experienced challenges with delivery. Perhaps unsurprisingly, both the SMEs who stated they faced challenges with delivery associated their challenge with the Covid-19 pandemic. One respondent simply cited "Covid" as their challenge whilst the other respondent specifically mentioned mental health issues of the PhD student due to isolation as a delivery challenge.

5.9 This does place question marks over the flexibility of the programme to respond to challenges such as Covid-19. However due to the in-person research and facility centred premise of the programme, there is very little that could have been done to alleviate the lockdown of labs associated with Covid-19.

5.10 Additionally, despite the mental health issues cited by students, the IIIP programme had the respective universities mental health provision in place. Each university has its own Counselling and Mental Health team as well as a 24 hour crisis line available. As such, it would be difficult to add many additional layers of support to a already full package of support available.

Value for Money for SMEs

5.11 IIIP-TV SMEs were asked to identify whether they considered the cost of IIIP to represent good value for money for their business, 100 per cent of respondent beneficiary SMEs agreed that the cost of IIIP was a worthwhile investment, representing good value for money. A comment left by an IIIP-TV SME respondent is outlined below:

'Enabled us to verify validity of original design and investigate new processes.' – **Beneficiary SME**

Main Impacts

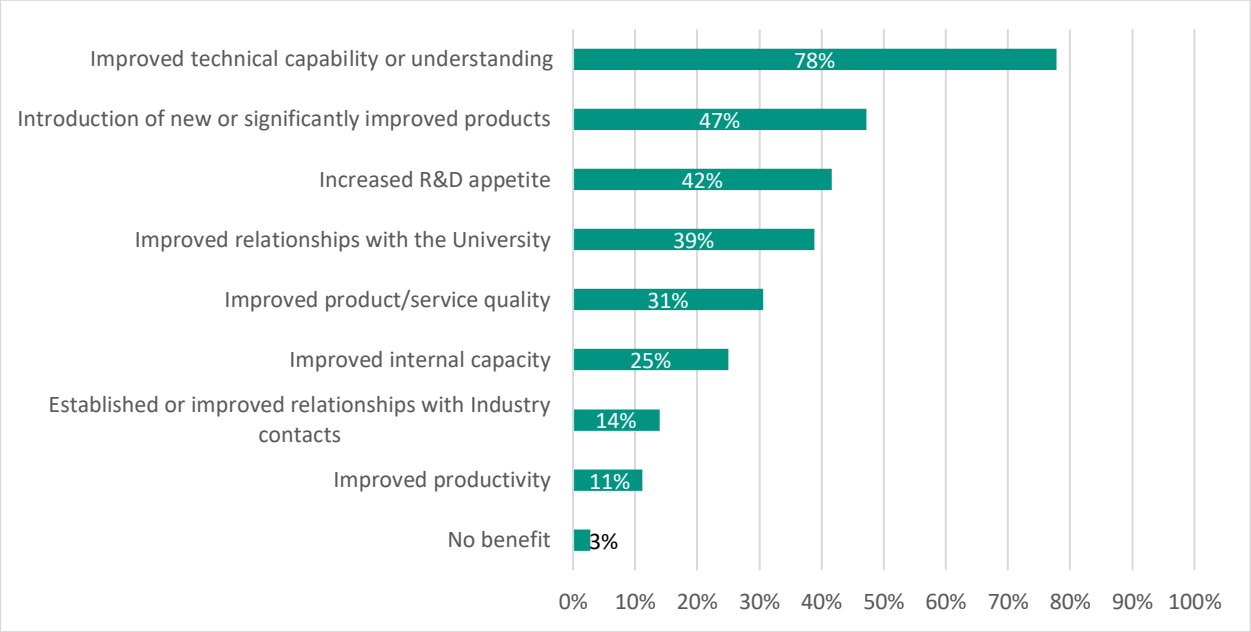
5.12 IIIP-NE and IIIP-TV beneficiary SMEs were asked to identify the main impacts at this stage resulting from their involvement in the IIIP programme. For most SMEs it is still too early to comment on tangible impacts in terms of product development but there have been several impacts arising from their engagement with IIIP, more likely to follow as research project outputs come to fruition.

5.13 Impacts included:

- PhD research student's specialist skills that would otherwise be difficult to recruit
- Technology Readiness Level 4
- Number of published scientific papers
- Resources and skill sets that the SME would not otherwise have.

5.14 Beneficiary SMEs were asked to identify which business performance outcomes they have achieved or expect to achieve because of IIIP support. Figure 5.3 highlights the performance outcomes anticipated by IIIP supported beneficiaries.

Figure 5.3: What business performance outcomes do you expect to achieve because of the IIIP support? (n=30)



5.15 In total, 78 per cent have improved their technical capability or understanding because of the support. Roughly half (47 per cent) of beneficiary SMEs expect to introduce new or significantly improved products, and 42 per cent of beneficiaries expect to increase R&D appetite because of IIIP support.

5.16 This illustrates the schemes' ability to disseminate knowledge and learning throughout the supported SMEs. However, there is a notable difference between Figure 5.1 and 5.3 in differing motivations and outcomes.

5.17 Almost three-quarters (72 per cent) of SMEs joined the scheme with the intention of developing a new product or service, but only 47 per cent of respondents reported introduction of a new or significantly improved product. This 25 per cent variance is concerning as SMEs may not have received the outcomes expected from the scheme.

5.18 However, there can be two potential explanations for this gap. Firstly, there is typically a time lapse between R&D and delivery of a new product or service. As such, the R&D conducted during the IIIP programme may produce a new product or service much later. Secondly, academics interviewed were keen to explain that projects were 'all or nothing' in that they pursue a research idea with the intention of seeing whether the idea is viable. Consequently, if it is unviable, which in many cases is in no small part down to luck, there is no new products or services delivered. As such, the failure to deliver new products or services to the expectation of SMEs initial motivations is not necessarily in a failure of the programme itself.

Recommendations

5.19 IIIP-TV and IIIP-NE Beneficiary SMEs were also asked to make recommendations based on their experience of IIIP on how the offer could be improved. No IIIP-TV SMEs provided a response to this question, however several respondents from the IIIP-NE SMEs provided responses. Some of the recommendations suggested by beneficiaries have been compiled below:

"During on-boarding process, set expectations to organisations without research experience about patient nature of research. Provide project management coaching and guidance to PhD student to best deliver Industrial PhD research since Industrial PhD is different to a normal PhD. Additional made funding available to the Industrial sponsor would enable a sponsor-owned budget to enhance Industrial research." – **Beneficiary SME**

"Focus more on the research and less on writing papers and helping academic staff carrying out their teaching duties." – **Beneficiary SME**

"The initial hiring process had very tight time schedule. A bit more time during the initial hiring process could have been useful." – **Beneficiary SME**

5.20 There appears to be two key themes that are drawn out from the recommendations of respondent SMEs. Across both cohorts, SMEs wanted closer relationships with the universities and less focus on writing and publishing papers but focus on delivering tangible research outputs for the SME.

6. PHD RESEARCH STUDENTS' AND ACADEMICS' PERSPECTIVE ON DELIVERY AND IMPACT

Introduction

6.1 This section of the report highlights the views on the effectiveness of delivery, outcomes and impacts achieved from the perspective of PhD research students and academics involved with IIIP.

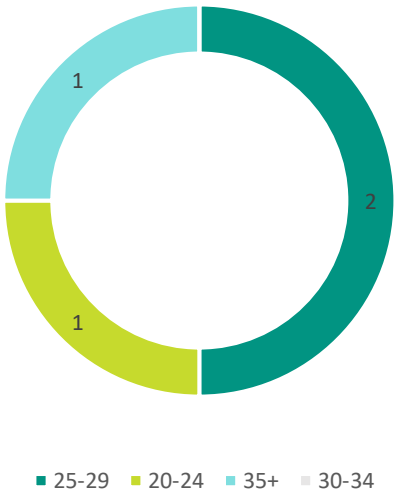
Respondent Background

6.2 ERS developed a PhD research student e-survey which aimed to capture the views of postgraduate research students central to delivering the research projects alongside beneficiary SMEs. This was disseminated via the IIIP operational team. In total, 35 PhD research students involved with IIIP completed the e-survey, 5 from IIIP-TV and 30 from IIIP-NE. However, 4 PhD research student IIIP-TV respondents answered the e-survey with 1 more answering just one of the e-survey questions. As such, response rates vary per question.

6.3 IIIP-TV survey respondents were from a range of departments including computer science (2 respondents) mechanical engineering (1 respondents) and chemistry (1 respondent).

6.4 In terms of gender balance, 3 IIIP-TV respondents were male and one respondent was female (n=4). Respondents were aged between 23 and 36, with 2 respondents aged between 25-29, 1 respondent aged 35+, and 1 respondent aged 20-24. this is illustrated in Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1: What is your age? (n=4)



6.5 Respondents were from two ethnic backgrounds (n=4), 3 respondents were "White British", and 1 respondent was "Asian/ Asian British".

Project Experience

6.6 All IIIP-TV PhD research students reported feeling well-supported by the host business within their role (n=4), PhD students cited the host business understanding of the PhD student's purpose in research rather than profit, and full access to resources as some of the key support characteristics.

6.7 In terms of the support provided by their PhD supervisor throughout the project, all IIIP-TV respondents felt well supported by their supervisor (n=4).

6.8 Respondents were also asked about the main benefits of their research project to the host employer, a variety of responses were received including benefits relating to new products, novel techniques, relationship with universities, and unique discoveries. The quotes below provide an insight into some of the perceived benefits to host employers from the two Tees Valley PhD research student respondents:

"Strong relations with a soon-to-be qualified researcher, and their department/university (should they wish to capitalise on it)." - **PhD research student**

"Whilst the work is still in progress, we are seeking to develop new synthetic methodology for accessing highly expensive materials in a more efficient manner. This will benefit the company financially." **– PhD research student**

6.9 The survey further found evidence that respondents feel the research project is providing them with valuable commercial/industrial experience (n=4), 75 per cent of IIIP-TV respondents agreed with this statement. Explanations provided by the IIIP-TV respondents in support of this included:

"Yes, this project has given me ample opportunity to develop my practical skills and has proved to be helpful in providing me with vast industrial experience." **– PhD research student**

"I have had opportunities to work in industry which has equipped me with new laboratory skills as well as given me a better understanding of what it's like to work in an industrial setting." – **PhD research student**

COVID-19 Impact

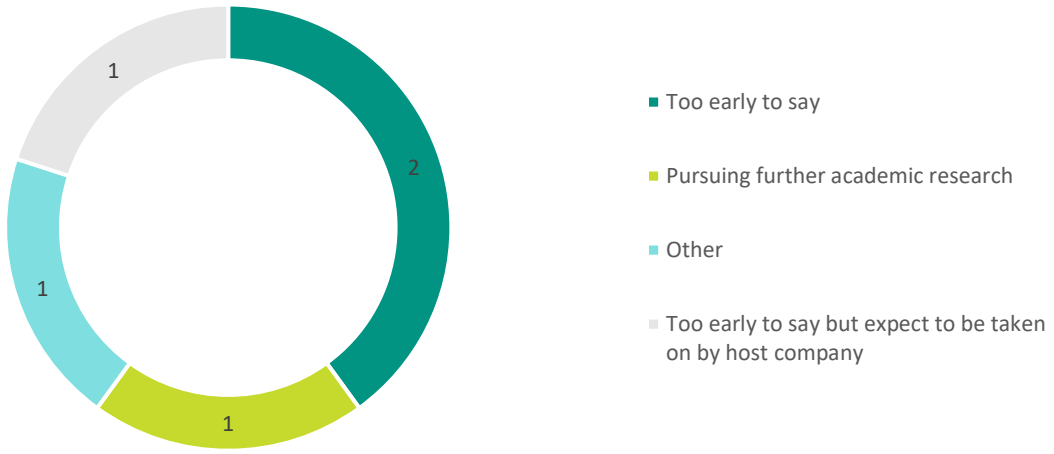
6.10 To understand the impact of COVID-19 on research projects, the survey asked respondents about operating during the pandemic and areas that could have been improved. In common with the rest of the North East IIIP programme, the IIIP-TV respondents reported that lab closures halted the programme, mental health issues stemming from isolation and the lack of access to SME sites also halted the programme.

6.11 Areas for improvement cited by PhD research students included support on coping with isolation during the lockdown period.

Future Plans

6.12 IIIP-TV PhD research students were asked about their next intentions at the time of the survey. Figure 6.2 below shows the responses.

Figure 6.2: Intentions Post-IIIP (n=7)



6.13 This question received the greatest number of responses from the e-survey with five responses from PhD research students. For two respondents, it was too early for them to say, whilst an additional one respondent felt it was too early to say but are expecting to be taken on by the host company. Similarly, another respondent intends to pursue further academic research. The one respondent who stated that they had an "other" intention, said they expected to setup a company. This shows a good proportion of PhD research students going into productive outcomes, either remaining in academia, setting up their own business, or hoping to be taken on by their host SME.

6.14 To understand the retention of skills with the region, PhD research students were asked about the likelihood of remaining within the Tees Valley region because of the IIIP research opportunity (n=4). Three IIIP-TV respondents intend to stay in the region whilst one respondent stated it was too early to say.

6.15 The survey further asked respondents how COVID-19 had affected their career prospects/goals (n=4). Respondents have mixed views on this issue, with some stating that Covid-19 has had an impact on future career prospects whilst others were unsure at this stage. A sample of views from IIIP-TV PhD research students are collected below:

"Our PhDs have been delayed and extended. My cohort's accomplishments during this period will likely be compared to the accomplishments of other non-COVID cohorts. We may appear less productive/talented by contrast, and our PhDs may be seen to be of lesser quality." – **PhD research student**

"Covid-19 pandemic affected my career prospects badly. Nowadays job prospects are worse, payments and innovative research are reduced and lost nearly one year of time due to Covid 19 pandemic." – **PhD research student**

"I'm not completely sure yet as I haven't started applying for positions as I will be getting an extension to my project." - **PhD research student**

Academics Views on IIIP

6.16 The views of academics as part of the IIIP-TV summative assessment are based on consultations with several lead academics from across three of the TV partner Universities. The consensus is that academics hold IIIP in high regard, with a mutually beneficial offer through facilitating industry-academia collaboration. The relationships and networks developed between SMEs, academic leads and research students has been cited as a key success of the programme. The exposure of PhD research students in working on an industry issue in a commercial environment is considered by academics to offer useful experience that links to the research student's employment prospects in addition to the academic expertise developed through the PhD programme. Finally, academics have cited the hands-off approach of the IIIP programme as a significant success allowing them and the students to maximise their time spent on the research project.

Recommendations

6.17 Respondents provided several recommendations and improvements to the IIIP programme, based on their experience. Suggestions from IIIP-TV included more organised events between all interested parties and financial support for incurred costs because of the pandemic.

6.18 Wider recommendations from the IIIP-NE PhD research students also include more social events and greater opportunities to meet other IIIP students; clarity of expectations from SMEs to ensure alignment with academics and PhD students; improved information at the start of the programme to better understand what the programme entails (e.g., welcome pack) and minimum mandatory hours to work at industrial partner's premises.

6.19 Recommendations from IIIP-TV PhD research students include:

'More organised events between different IIIP cohorts and between researchers from different universities taking part in the same program. More of a community feel.' **– PhD research student**

'The price to host company seems reasonable considering what they get access to (whether or not all host companies would take advantage of this is their choice). I suggest this model is good.' – **PhD research student**

'Be as transparent as is reasonably possible with all parties how this scheme is most effective when prioritising research.' – **PhD research student**

7. PROJECT EXPENDITURE AND OUTPUTS

Project Budget and Expenditure

7.1 Table 7.1 below outlines the project expenditure against the budget profile.

Table 7.1: Project Expenditure at Q4 2022

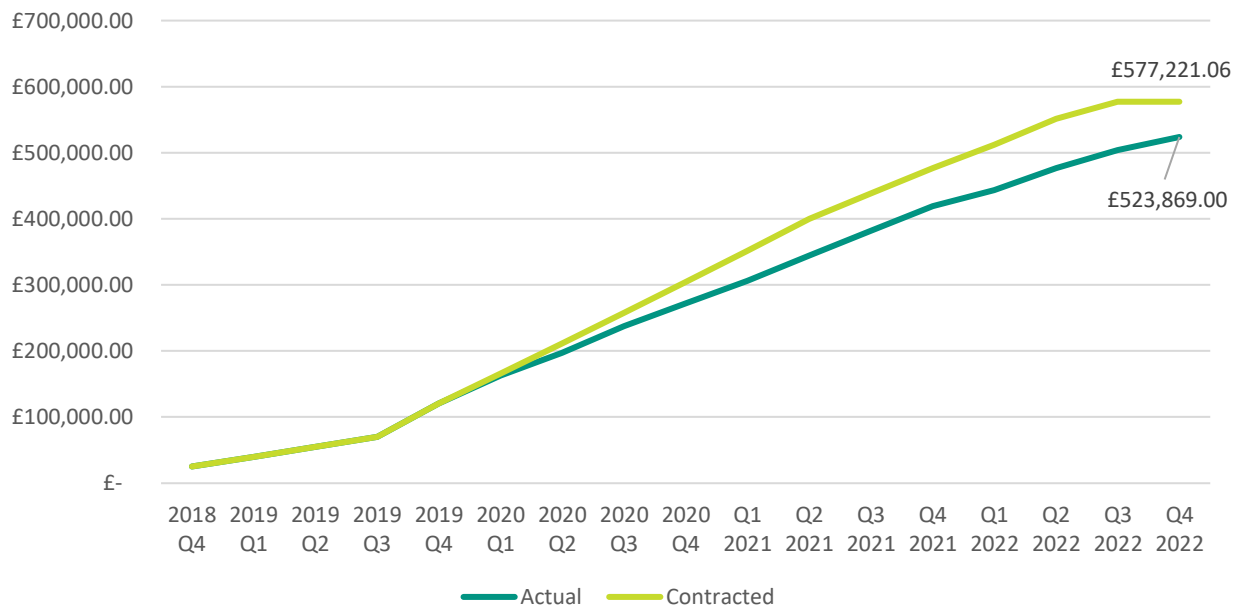
	Original Budget Allocation (£)	Contracted expenditure to Q4 2022 (£)	Actual Expenditure Q4 2022 (£)	Spend against profile %
ERDF revenue	£346,342.00	£346,334.44	£314,323.00	90.76%
Public Match	£230,888.00	£230,889.62	£209,546.00	90.76%
Total	£577,230.00	£577,224.06	£523,869.00	90.76%

7.2 Project extensions were granted to PhD students as outlined in section 3.19 which continued their stipend. With no additional funding granted to cover the extensions, it was thought that there would be the potential for a slight overspend. But this would only have been the case if students all used their full extension period. This was not the case with some students finishing their research early. Ss table 7.1 illustrates, the project had underspent by £53,355 by Q4 2022.

7.3 Although, there is an underspend, it is expected that the underspend will reduce by the end of the project with further expenses still defrayed in 2023.

7.4 A full breakdown of the spend across the project's lifetime is provided in Figure 7.1

Figure 7.1: Breakdown of costs over the IIIP-TV lifetime



Output Targets

7.5 Table 7.2 above outlines achievement against the contracted ERDF output targets.

Table 7.2: Project Outputs			
Indicator	**Overall target**	**Actual to Q4 2022**	**Outputs achieved**
C1: No. of enterprises receiving support	7	7	100.0%
C4: No. enterprises receiving non-financial support	7	7	100.0%
C8: Employment increase in supported enterprises	6	0	0.00%
C26: No. enterprises cooperating with research entities	7	7	100.0%
C28: No. enterprises supported to introduce new to the market products	6	2	33.3%
C29: No. enterprises supported to introduce new to the firm products	6	1	16.7%

7.6 The IIIP-TV programme has satisfied those targets relating to numbers of businesses participating. These target indicators include C1 (No. of enterprises receiving support), C4 (no. of enterprises receiving non-financial support) and C26 (no. of enterprises co-operating with research entities).

7.7 However, IIIP-TV has failed to achieve those targets concerned with business improvements. In terms of innovation support targets C28 and C29, IIIP-TV has underdelivered. As cited in section 5.18, the 'all or nothing' nature of the research tasks, the time-lags associated with research outcomes and the lack of access to lab space due to Covid-19 restrictions provide some justification for why targets may not have achieved in the innovation elements of the output targets.

7.8 Additionally, there have been no increases in employment in supported enterprises as illustrated by the under delivery of output target C28. However, the programme team, PhD and SME respondents all indicate the significant impact of Covid on their ability to deliver business growth. Again, this may provide some justification for the lack of employment increase in supported enterprises.

8. ECONOMIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Introduction and Method

8.1 This section estimates the economic impact of IIIP-TV in terms of lifetime impacts for both Cohorts 1 and 2. The economic impact assessment covers only economic impacts relating to beneficiary SMEs in terms of turnover growth.

8.2 Economic impacts associated with business improvements in beneficiary SMEs are expressed in net increases in Gross Value Added (GVA). As per government guidance, both gross and net impacts have been calculated. To calculate net impacts, each factor of additionality[2] is considered. To assess additionality, the ERS e-surveys incorporated questions to elicit estimations of economic additionality, for deadweight this was done by asking beneficiaries "if [turnover/employment] increased, what percentage of this increase would you attribute to support from IIIP?" Other questions covered leakage and displacement effects, specifically the home location of their staff and locations of competitors.

8.3 Economic impact data was provided by one beneficiary Tees Valley SMEs relating to turnover impact. Due to the small sample size, we have utilised average impacts from the combined estimates of the North East and Tees Valley beneficiary SMEs, to provide estimates of the economic impacts for the remaining SMEs.

Gross Change in Turnover and Employment

8.4 The first step of the impact assessment is to identify average growth in turnover across the beneficiary SMEs since they received the project's support. The single Tees Valley respondent reports a reduction in turnover of £150,000. However, across the North East, the average increase in turnover was £230,000. This gross change in turnover does not consider how much of that change is attributable to the support of the IIIP project. This is considered using the concept of additionality.

Additionality

8.5 Table 8.1 below summarises the findings of the e-survey in relation to each of the factors of additionality. This table also shows additionality estimates from HCA guidance[3] and Dept BEIS Research[4]. These authoritative secondary sources provide a means to compare the results of the survey response and sense check our findings.

8.6 The HCA and BIS reports are both 'meta-analyses' i.e., drawing on many studies to report typical values, as well as indicating the range of higher or lower estimates.

	Table 8.1 Factors of Additionality: Source Beneficiary E-surveys		
Additionality Factor	**NE + TV SME surveys**	**'Ready Reckoners' Additionality Guide (2014)**	**BIS Additionality Research (2009)**

[2] Impact arising from an intervention is 'additional' if it would not have occurred in the absence of the intervention.
[3] HCA (2014) Additionality Guide, Fourth Edition
[4] BIS (2009) Research to Improve the Assessment of Additionality.

Deadweight – Turnover	95%	Above High (75%)	Mean, Regional, Business development & competitiveness: 45.5%
Displacement	11%	29.3%	Mean, Regional, Business development & competitiveness: 25.0%
Leakage	29%	Below Medium (25%)	Mean, Regional, Business development & competitiveness: 11.5%

8.7 Our estimate of deadweight for the North East IIIP impacts associated with IIIP impacts on turnover, is valued at 95 per cent, which is more than double BIS additionality research average estimates for business support programmes. This would imply that turnover increases have a low level of attribution to IIIP. This would imply the SME participants do not view the programme as particularly economically beneficial to them and think it has much less impact than other business support programmes as judged against national averages. In fact, eight SME respondents said that IIIP was not attributable to their turnover increase.

8.8 Our value for displacement is based on the proportion of sales and competitors located in the North East LEP and Tees Valley areas, due to our combination of IIIP-NE and IIIP-TV responses. These two measures generate a low level of displacement of 11 per cent, which is less than the ready reckoner and BIS additionality research. This would indicate that turnover had not displaced potential increases in turnover from other local businesses.

8.9 Leakage of impacts from the project are just above what might be expected, at 29 per cent. This is obtained from assessing the proportion of employees living in the North East LEP and Tees Valley area. This suggests that most of the turnover impacts are retained in the Tees Valley area.

8.10 As well as the additionality factors described above, it is also important to consider multiplier effects, which capture the indirect and induced impacts in the economy. The multiplier used in this analysis is taken from HCA Additionality Guidance (2014) which suggests a multiplier of 1.51 at a regional level for 'Business Development and Competitiveness' interventions.

Net Additional Impacts

8.11 The factors of additionality described above are applied to gross change in employment and turnover, to calculate the net additional impact. The findings from the survey sample are extrapolated to the total number of businesses assisted to date and translated into GVA, seven businesses, as highlighted by monitoring data. These figures are summarised in Table 8.2.

Table 8.2: Net Economic Impact– those assisted to Q4 2022	
Turnover and GVA	**£**
Net Additional Turnover per Business (TV + NE)	£14,315.26

Net Additional Turnover Impact (extrapolated to 7 business assists)	£100,206.80
Net Additional GVA Increase per Business (TV + NE)	£7,258.37
Net Additional GVA (extrapolated to 7 business assists)	£50,808.62

8.12 The impact assessment indicates that the project, with respect to beneficiary SMEs, has created £51,000 in net additional GVA. Like most assessments of economic impact, the quantified impact estimates are based on the perceptions of the businesses surveyed and are therefore indicative.

8.13 However, we also note that these statistics are skewed by one North East IIIP business who increased turnover by over £1m.

Future Economic Impacts

8.14 The economic impacts reported above cover those observed already throughout the duration of the IIIP. It should be noted that economic impacts associated with business interventions, particularly those with R&D aims, can often take some time to be realised and persist beyond the project lifetime. However, we are unable to accurately forecast these impacts currently with no appropriate methodology identified.

9. VALUE FOR MONEY ASSESSMENT

9.1 In this section, we analyse the efficiency of the programme. This involves assessing the cost per output in the efficiency element and the cost per outcome in the effectiveness section.

Efficiency

9.2 To measure the efficiency of IIIP-TV, unit costs for individual outputs are calculated based on the total project expenditure to date and the number of outputs achieved. These are then benchmarked against the mean performance of similar national programmes.

9.3 As can be seen in Table 9.1, the unit cost for the number of enterprises receiving support (C1) is £75k. This is double the mean unit cost from national meta-analysis of £34,000, indicating that IIIP-TV lacks efficiency with respect to its achievement of C1 outputs. It should be noted that in the national benchmarking research, C1 unit costs are aggregated as a single mean unit cost.

9.4 Similarly, the unit cost performance for the number of new enterprises receiving non-financial support (C4) is also above the national analyses mean of £34,000.

9.5 However, in terms of output C26, the number of enterprises co-operating with research entities, the IIIP-TV programme performs well against national benchmarks. IIIP-TV's C26 unit cost is £19k under the national benchmark.

9.6 Additionally, a core output to the objective of the scheme is to support innovation with the final aim of delivering new products to the firm/market. Although the IIIP-TV programme appears to lack efficiency in the pursuit of these objectives, (output C28 unit costs are three times the average found by Regeneris and output C29 is five times the average), for the reasons laid out in section 5.18, there is likely to be a significant time lag on the delivery of products to the firm or market and a significant impact from Covid. As such, we would treat this finding with caution.

Table 9.1: Unit costs of programme expenditure against other benchmarks

Output	Outputs achieved to date	Unit costs	Regeneris National Research[5]
C1: No. of enterprises receiving support	7	£74,838.43	£34,000
C4: No. enterprises receiving non-financial support	7	£74,838.43	£34,000
C8: Employment increase in supported enterprises	0	-	£71,000

[5] http://www.nwueu.ac.uk/NWUEU/PDFs/Regeneris%20Consulting%20-%20ERDF%20Output%20Note%20FINAL%20Version%2018%2012%2013.pdf . England ERDF Programme 2014-20: Output Unit Costs and Definitions report, Regeneris (2013). The mean unit cost for C1 outputs is based on 623 studies. The mean unit cost for C5 outputs is based on 24 studies.

C26: No. enterprises cooperating with research entities	7	£74,838.43	£93,000
C28: No. enterprises supported to introduce new to the market products	2	£261,934.50	£94,000
C29: No. enterprises supported to introduce new to the firm products	1	£523,869.00	£94,000

Effectiveness

9.7 To provide a proxy for effectiveness, the 'Cost per £ of GVA' is calculated and presented in Table 9.2. This in turn demonstrates the Return on Investment (ROI).

9.8 To reflect the full impact of the scheme, we assume that economic impact will persist for three years in line with BIS Additionality Guidance[6]. As such, we assume that turnover will continue to grow across three years after the scheme at the same rate as the impacts cited during the projects lifetime.

Table 9.2: Cost per ROI metrics

Impact metric	ROI
£203,234 created in net additional GVA	£1 in GVA created for every £2.58 spent

9.9 GVA creation has been less well supported by the scheme which has in turn generated a low GVA return on investment. Additionally, there have been no FTEs created by the scheme.

9.10 Given the strongly cited impact of Covid and the 'all or nothing' nature of research, there was a strong likelihood that there was going to be a low GVA return on investment. The difficulty in trading presented by Covid-19 and the impact of leaving the EU were likely to have adverse impacts on this scheme.

[6] HCA Policy Covers (publishing.service.gov.uk) – Additionality Guidance, Fourth Edition 2014, Homes & Communities Agency, 2014

10. KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

10.1 This section summarises the key findings of this summative report and presents recommendations based on evidence from monitoring information, surveys and consultations with beneficiaries and key stakeholders.

Project Design and Approach

10.2 The project was designed in response to the demands of the Tees Valley region, underpinned by local policy and economic strategy. Overall, the design of the project is considered an effective approach to delivering the intended support, offering mutual benefits for SMEs, PhD research students, academics, and University partners. The access to SMEs of a dedicated PhD research student working on a specific commercial research project was deemed to be highly effective, increasing internal capacity and skills. The ability to leverage wider academic support and research facilities from the University also presented benefits to the SMEs.

10.3 The recruitment timescales were believed to be too late in the academic year, this meant that there was a much smaller talent pool of prospective PhD research students to select from. It was indicated by most lead academics that recruitment activity should ideally take place earlier in the academic year, rather than coinciding with finals in April.

10.4 However, for both Cohorts, this can be put down to late authorisation of the funding in April 2018 for Cohort 1 and April 2019 for Cohort 2. Additionally, to try and combat this issue for Cohort 2, academics and SMEs were informed of 'probable' funding from February/March 2019 onwards. The IIIP programme accepted 'expressions of interest' from SMEs interested in the scheme enabling quickly progress to applications once the funding was authorised.

Project Management and Governance

10.5 The IIIP Project is well managed. SMEs responses indicated improvements in the project management from an already positive Cohort 1 response. There is a clear designation of roles, alongside appreciation of the roles and activity of others. Partners from across the Universities are well engaged. But academics are still grateful for the breathing space for them to get on with their research tasks. Quarterly operational meetings provide a platform for collaborative working and an opportunity to review progress as well as highlight challenges and shared learning. All university leads interviewed have also commented that the lead university, Durham University have managed the project well, The Project Team are held in high regard by staff from across the University.

10.6 Although, wider IIIP-NE SMEs hold the IIIP Operational team in high esteem, IIIP-TV were less agreeable with comparatively little praise for the IIIP operational team.

10.7 The governance arrangements in place for the project are appropriate for a project of this scale.

Project Delivery

10.8 Covid-19 presented significant and unavoidable consequences for the project. The research-intensive nature of the programme required access to research facilities and high-end equipment. But the lab closures associated with the Covid-19 lockdowns halted this critical component of the programme.

10.9 The Covid-19 setback is somewhat reflected in the outcomes. SMEs overwhelming motivation for applying to the IIIP programme was to develop new products or services. However, when assessing the outcomes, there was a negative variance from the motivations. This could be put down to several factors including the lack of access to research facilities halting progress, the time lag associated with R&D translating into tangible product innovation outcomes and the 'all or nothing' nature of highly complex product innovation.

10.10 Despite this, SMEs were generally happy with the performance of PhD students and their suitability for the programme.

10.11 The main criticism provided by SMEs in terms of delivery was that there was too much focus on writing and publishing research papers rather than conducting the tangible research critical for the SMEs. In addition, they wished for closer relationships with the respective partners.

10.12 PhD research students were also generally supportive of the programme. IIIP-TV respondents felt well supported by their academic supervisors and host SMEs. As such, the scheme has delivered valuable commercial experience for PhD research students. This can be used in their next stages, whether that be in academia or starting up their own businesses.

Outcomes and Impacts

10.13 The support from IIIP has led to impacts for beneficiary SMEs, which include:

- Bringing products closer to commercialisation.
- The output of research publications.
- Increased collaboration and networking with the University partner and other institutions.
- Access to resources, guidance, and personnel that the SME would previously have been deficient of

10.14 Further tangible impacts such as new products to market and increased employment and turnover are likely to be realised down the line. We envisage these will be captured and reported at the final evaluation stage.

10.15 Outcomes and impacts for PhD research students has primarily been relevant industry experience that has given practical experience.

Expenditure and Output Achievement

10.16 Given the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the project has done well to deliver a proportion of the target outputs. The extension process across IIIP-TV can be cited as a key reason for not diverting too far from targeted outputs and contracted spend.

Economic Impact Assessment

10.17 The impact assessment indicates that the project, with respect to beneficiary SMEs, has created net additional GVA impact of £51,000 over the project lifetime, but £203,000 over three years following the project. Additionally, there have been no FTEs created by the scheme. However, most notably there is a low attribution of economic outcomes to the IIIP project, indicating that SMEs do not view that IIIP programme as impactful.

Value for Money

10.18 The value for money assessment initially reveals that the IIIP-TV scheme has been expensive in comparison to national business support programmes. However, the level of support provided by IIIP-TV is significantly higher than other more standard business support programmes, with up to three year and a half-years of support from a PhD student embedded within a firm. Additionally, due to the issues associated with R&D and Covid-19, innovation outcomes also came at a high cost.

Recommendations

- The recruitment period for PhD research students could be brought forward, earlier in the academic year to ensure the best possible talent pool. Many postgraduate students with ambitions to pursue a PhD have secured postgraduate places prior to January. Although this was due to late authorisation of the funding, there must be an emphasis in future to open application windows early.
- Early engagement between SMEs, prospective PhD student and academic supervisor to ensure that expectations are aligned, and capabilities are understood.
- Facilitating more and varied events to connect IIIP PhD research students across the partnership of universities rather than the individual host. These events could exclusively host the PhD research students across Cohorts and institutions to share their experience of the project and foster networking. This could include more informal social events that PhD students inferred were the preference.
- Introducing greater commercial value criteria to project approvals to ensure turnover, and consequently GVA, creation is central to the selection of SMEs and projects to facilitate.