

Slips

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The £3.6M Sheffield Innovation Programme - Continuation (SIP2) is a project led by Sheffield Hallam University in partnership with The University of Sheffield and South Yorkshire Growth Hub. It has aims of helping SMEs in the Sheffield City Region to increase GVA, productivity and growth, to invest in more Research & Innovation, to engage in more collaborative research, and to develop new products and services.
- The programme offers the following services:
 - Intensive assists involving specialist academic expertise and access to university facilities
 - Workshops
 - Events
- The final assessment of the SIP2 was conducted between May and June 2023 based on a combination of evaluation tools with inputs and analysis from official contracts and claims, survey responses from 37 project beneficiaries and counterfactuals, phone interviews with beneficiaries and wider stakeholders, a Management and delivery Team workshop.
- Over three-quarters of companies that benefited from SIP2 (78.6%) are micro-companies with fewer than 9 FTE employees.
- 37 SMEs responded to the beneficiary survey. This equates to a 23% response rate.
- 80% of beneficiaries indicated that their expectations were met or exceeded with the service they received from SIP2.
- The services found most useful are the academic expertise, 1.2.1 bespoke mentoring support and access to research facilities.
- Concrete impacts reported by beneficiaries include: 45.95% of companies reported an increase in revenue, 27.03% of companies reported a productivity improvement, 18.92% of companies reported a sustainability improvement, 29.73% of companies reported an increase in robustness .
- 75.67% of SMEs reported making progress towards bringing to market a new-to-firm product or service as a result of SIP2 intervention with an increase in TRL of + 2.79.
- 35% of beneficiary survey respondents created at least one job and 40% safeguarded at least one job. In total, 20 new jobs were created across 13 companies and 33 jobs were safeguarded across 15 beneficiary survey respondents.
- 50% of companies reported to be badly or very badly affected by the pandemic also about 20% reported some positive impact of COVID too, mainly on efficiency gains, recruitment and move to digitalisation of processes.

- 41.7% of companies reported to be badly or very badly affected by BREXIT.
- 72.9% of companies reported to be badly or very badly affected by the energy crisis.
- The top 2 most effective sources of referrals into the SIP2 programme are Sheffield Hallam University itself (51.7%) and the South Yorkshire Growth Hub (37.9%).
- One out of the six project targets will be met or exceeded. Two targets will be met above 95% attainment. One target will reach at least 85% and one target above 70%. Only C8 will fall significantly short.
- The value for money was particularly good with every £1 invested in delivering this project, £12.81 was created.
- For the remaining duration of the implementation of the project, the SIP2 Team needs to focus on getting all the evidence required to complete the final programme claim.
- The main themes of interest mentioned by the beneficiaries for future activities are: more technical support, academic expertise, grant funding, product and packaging design, marketing/web design and social media, mentoring and networking opportunities.

EPM provides the following recommendations for the legacy of the project:

- Find alternative sources of funding post ERDF to carry on offering the innovation support for the benefit of the City Sheffield businesses.
- Plan some further marketing activities promoting case studies, videos, podcasts etc. to disseminate the success and results of SIP2 more widely in order to attract further funding.
- Consider a legacy programme that can offer grant funding to businesses as well as bespoke innovation support and the access to advanced specialist equipment.
- Consider design for future support that balances targets with the in-depth support needs of participating businesses to avoid chasing numbers and providing deeper support to deliver greater impacts on the businesses.
- Explore replicating or widening the reach of the programme through a wider range of universities and geographies, given the specialised nature of the support offered.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Sheffield Innovation Programme - Continuation (SIP2) is a 3-year project led by Sheffield Hallam University and delivered in partnership with the University of Sheffield and South Yorkshire Growth Hub (part of South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority). The project started on 01/10/2019, following on from the original SIP project, and it has an end date of 30/06/2023. Total project costs are £3.6 million, with approximately 60% funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) under Priority Axis 1. The remaining circa 40% is funded by Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield Hallam University Higher Education Innovation Fund, The University of Sheffield, The University of Sheffield Higher Education Innovation Fund and South Yorkshire Growth Hub. The Growth Hub was not part of the original SIP programme but brought important market access capabilities to SIP2.

SIP2 is a continuation of a regional initiative to deliver innovation support to SMEs in the Sheffield City Region. It provides access to academic expertise and university facilities with bespoke research (intensive assists), workshops and events with the aims of helping local SMEs to increase in GVA, productivity and growth, to invest in more Research & Innovation, to engage in more collaborative research, and to develop new products and services. The support is available to eligible businesses in the Sheffield City Region and the districts of Bassetlaw, Bolsover, Chesterfield, Derbyshire Dales & North East Derbyshire. There have been 2 project change requests (PCRs) granted thus far: one to delay the project start date by a month and the second to extend the project duration by 9 months with a commensurate increase in project targets. Both PCRs were approved in 2019.

There is a mandatory requirement to conduct an evaluation or “summative assessment” of all European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)-funded projects during their penultimate quarter. The purpose of the summative assessment is to evaluate : 1. Project Context, 2. Project Progress, 3. Project Delivery and Management, 4. Project Outcomes and Impact, 5. Project value for money and 6. Conclusions and lessons learnt. The assessment also aims to identify best practices and make recommendations for enhancing the legacy of the project.

All the summative assessments of ERDF-funded projects will feed into the national evaluation of the ERDF programme carried out by the Managing Authority DLUHC, and have contributed to the shaping of the new UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSP) that has recently been published as part of the Levelling Up Agenda.

EPM consultancy was selected to conduct the SIP2 summative assessments. This report presents EPM's assessment methodology, results and conclusions, and is fully concordant with DLUHC (previously DCLG/MHCLG) guidance on ERDF-funded summative assessments (ESIF-GN-1-033 and ESIF-GN-1-034).

2. SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

Diagram 1 summarises the methodology used to conduct the SIP2 assessment.

Diagram 1: Methodology



This methodology was conducted in three major stages:

STAGE 1 - DESIGN AND PLAN THE SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

- Inception Meeting**
 EPM consultants met with the SIP2 ERDF management team during an online inception meeting on 15 February 2023 to agree the objectives, quality control, roles and responsibilities and programme of work.
- Documentation familiarisation**
 The consultants familiarised themselves with the Application Form, Grant Funding Agreement, Logic Model, Project Change Request documents, Claims Forms and client relationship management and monitoring system used by the management and delivery team.

STAGE 2 - DATA COLLECTION FOR SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

- Designing of questionnaires and 'Aide Memoires'**
 EPM consultants prepared two sets of electronic questionnaires using Google Surveys software: one for SME beneficiaries (beneficiaries are companies who registered for and received SIP2 services) and one for the counterfactuals, companies who were introduced to the project but did not take up any services or that registered for the project but subsequently withdrew.

The purpose of the questionnaires was to collect core data with which to assess attainment of project targets, beneficiary outcomes and impacts and beneficiary satisfaction with the project, and also to identify SME needs for further support. The

majority of the questions prompted a quantitative or multiple-choice answer to enable these assessments to be made in a rigorous way. These quantitative and multiple-choice questions were supplemented with a series of logic-driven questions that prompted qualitative answers that are tailored to the different types of beneficiaries. These qualitative answers enable us to interpret the quantitative answers, and provide quotes with which to emphasise key messages in this report.

'Aide Memoire' templates were prepared to support 1.2.1 phone interviews performed on a sample of SME beneficiaries, counterfactuals and with wider stakeholders. The purpose of the phone interviews is to check correct interpretation of the questionnaire answers, to make deeper enquiries about aspects of the project that generate interesting or unexpected questionnaire results, and to give the EPM consultants the contextual understanding to prepare this report in a rounded, engaging and relatable style (as opposed to dry, statistical style).

- **Questionnaires**

The questionnaires were sent electronically to the full list of 158 project beneficiaries and 53 counterfactuals. Emails bounced for 7 beneficiaries and for 0 counterfactuals. After a period of 7 weeks, 37 beneficiaries and 0 counterfactuals had responded to the survey.

- **Beneficiary and wider stakeholder 1.2.1 online interviews**

EPM consultants conducted xx online interviews with a sample of the beneficiaries and counterfactuals. They also conducted interviews with 6 wider stakeholders: Andrew Armstrong, SYMCA, Paul Johnson, Barnsley Council, Adrian Williamson, Chesterfield Borough Council, Natalie Fletcher, Business Sheffield, Tracy Viner, Sheffield Chamber, Rose Tran, Sheffield Technology Parks

- **Case studies**

From the initial responses to the questionnaire, xx beneficiaries were selected as case studies. These case study beneficiaries were identified as having had particularly great impact from participating in the SIP2. The EPM consultants had in-depth conversations with these beneficiaries to collect the qualitative and quantitative information with which to assess the impact of the project on their individual company.

- **Management and Delivery Team workshop**

On 12 June 2023, EPM consultants ran a 'Management and Delivery Team workshop' online. The aim of this workshop was to collect feedback on all aspects of project governance and management, team dynamics and complementarity with Sheffield Hallam University' other support programmes, and to hear the various project management and delivery team perspectives on the beneficiary survey and interview answers.

STAGE 3 - ANALYSIS AND REPORTING

For the project context assessment, the EPM Consultants will reflect on whether the consensus is that the project is meeting its objectives. To do this, Google Forms® was used to analyse the management team's beneficiary tracking data (e.g. company age, gender) as well as quantitative beneficiary survey responses relevant to assessing the project context. In

the case of qualitative data, the EPM consultants used three-stage Framework Analysis to analyse the qualitative information and insights gained through the surveys, interviews and workshop. This analysis method begins by identifying the themes for which qualitative data exists (Thematic analysis), then separating this by stakeholder type (Typologic analysis) to create a matrix of qualitative responses from which patterns of responses between the different stakeholder types become apparent (Explanatory analysis). This analysis was independently completed by the two consultants and differences in results were discussed until a consensus was reached, removing any potential researcher bias in analysing the qualitative data.

For the project progress analysis, the consultants used the latest project claims data to forecast attainment of the project targets by project end (number of enterprises receiving support, number of enterprises receiving non financial support, employment increase in supported enterprises, number of enterprises cooperating with research institutions, number of enterprises supported to introduce new-to-the-firm products and number of enterprises supported to introduce new to market products,).

For the project management and delivery assessment, the EPM consultants reviewed the project's approach to recruitment, communications and services delivery using the same data methods as described for the project context assessment above, namely Excel functions to analyse the relevant quantitative data and three-stage Framework Analysis of the qualitative data that helped to add context and interpretation of the quantitative data.

Finally, the EPM consultants amalgamate all the data and insights made in the process of conducting this summative assessment, including the gathering of best practice and lessons learnt, in order to make recommendations for how to maximise the legacy of this project.

2.1 Methodology challenges and Assessors' appraisal

EPM Consultants left the questionnaires open for 7 weeks throughout May/June 2023.

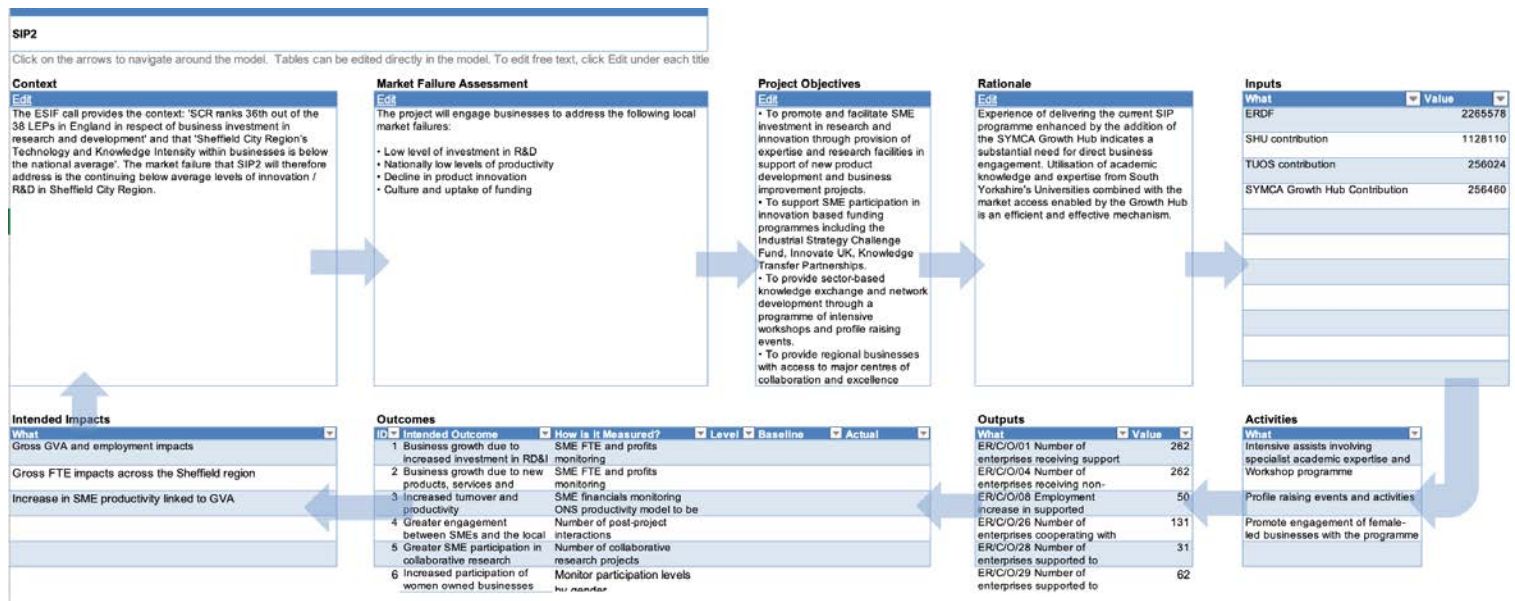
A sizable number (37) and percentage of project beneficiaries responded to the questionnaire: 23.41%. This is a good response rate and it is perfectly sufficient for the purposes of this summative assessment.

3. DATA

3.1 Logic model

Diagram 2 introduces the logic model for the SIP2.

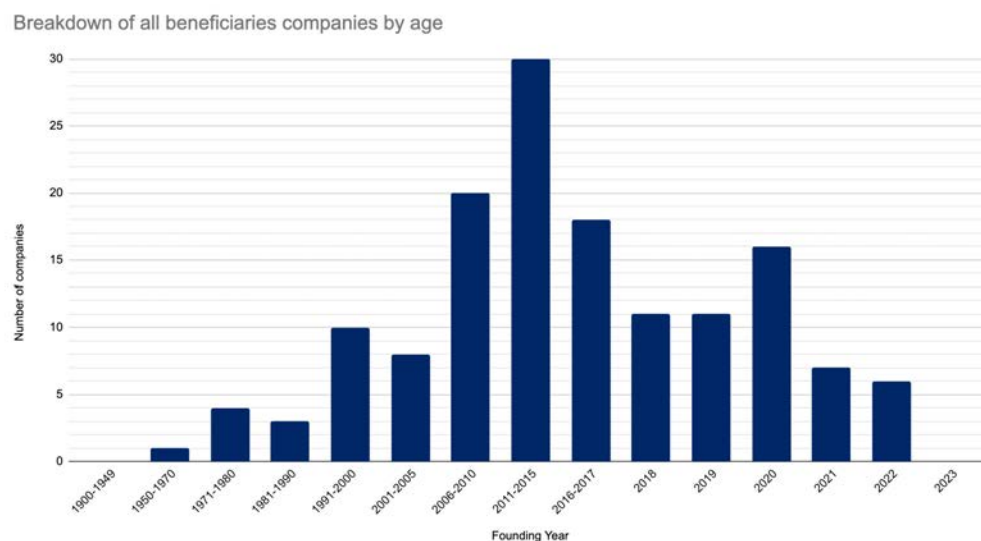
Diagram 2: Logic model



3.2 Beneficiary profile

Baseline data from 158 businesses, who have benefitted from the SIP2, were provided to the EPM team. The characteristics of this cohort are presented below.

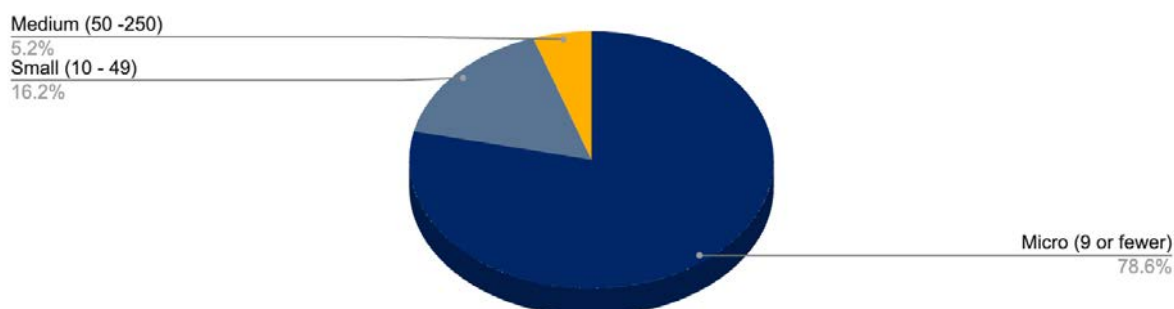
Figure 1: Breakdown of all beneficiary companies by age



The SIP2 beneficiary profile includes established companies and relatively recent ones. The large majority of SIP2 beneficiaries were founded between 2006-2017. The oldest being founded in 1968. The first dip in 2018-2019 could have been caused by the EU exit creating uncertainties in the employment marketplace. The second dip in 2021 can be seen as a direct impact of the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic.

Figure 2: Breakdown of all beneficiary companies by size

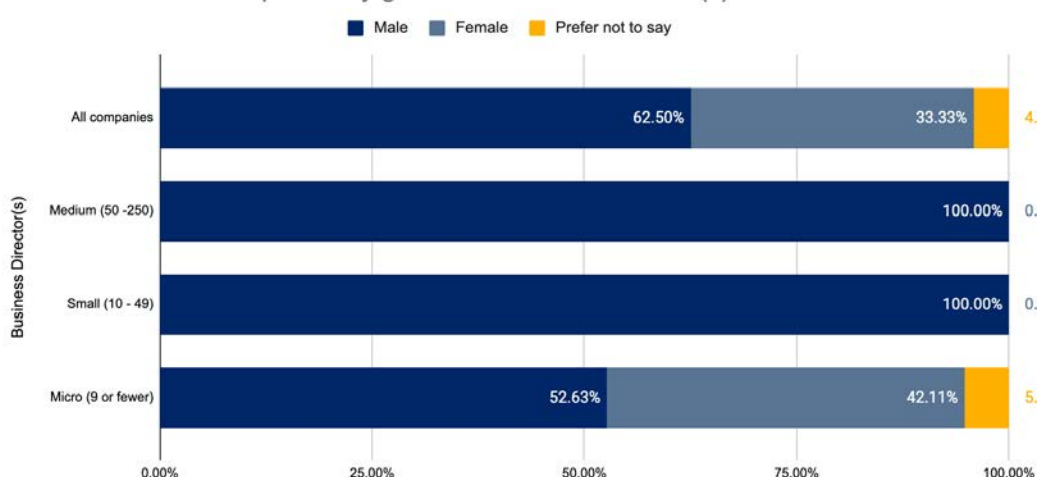
Breakdown of all companies by size



The majority of SIP2 beneficiaries (78.6%) have 9 or fewer employees, which means they are micro businesses. This is followed by 16.2% of SIP2 beneficiaries being small size companies with 10-49 employees and only 5.2% are medium size companies. ERDF funded projects tend to focus on supporting micro and small companies like SIP2.

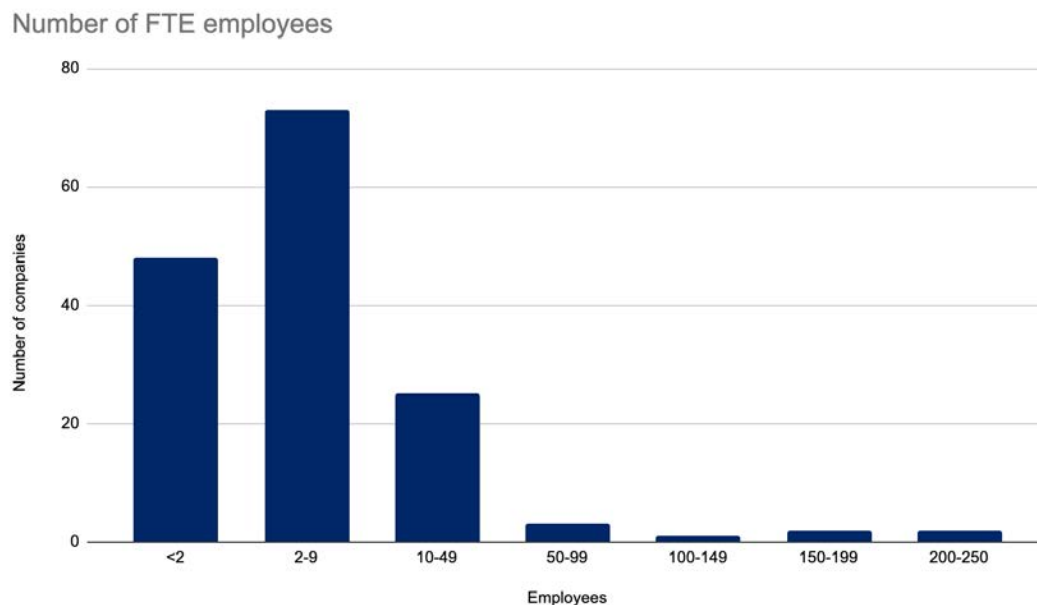
Figure 3: Breakdown of all companies by gender of business director(s)

Breakdown of all companies by gender of business director(s)



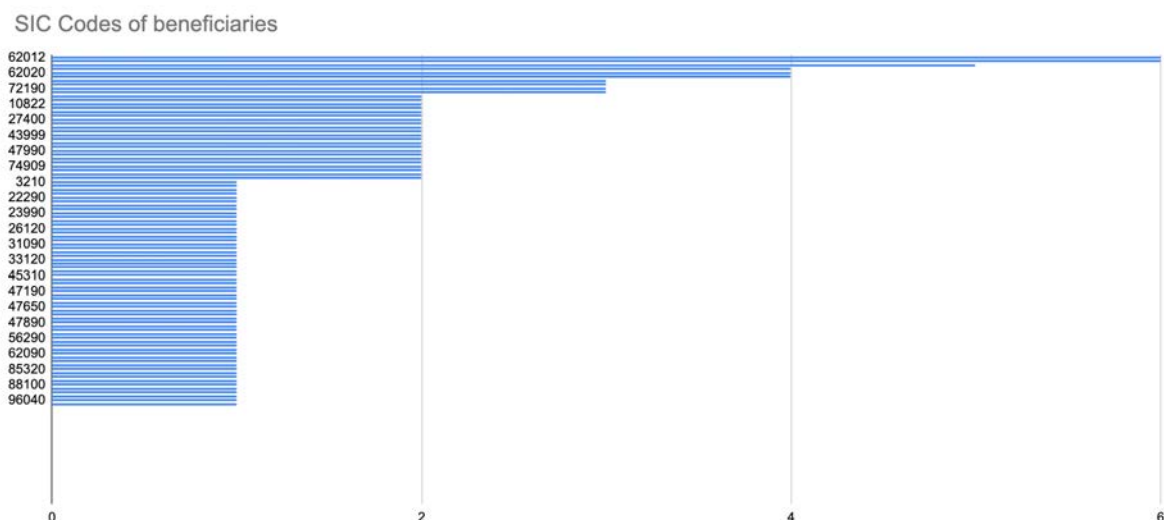
62.50% of the beneficiary companies are male-led. Only 33.33% of the beneficiaries are women-led businesses. All small and medium sized businesses supported by SIP2 are male-led. This is very much aligned with the national average as according to the 2021 Small Business Statistics report published by the UK Government's Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, women accounted for 34% of all business owners in the UK in 2020.

Figure 4: Breakdown of all beneficiary companies by number of employees



Breaking down company size to exact number of employees, it can be seen that SIP2 is attracting all sizes of companies in need of support but a majority of micro companies (less than 10 employees). Presumably some business owners are developing new ventures while still in employment.

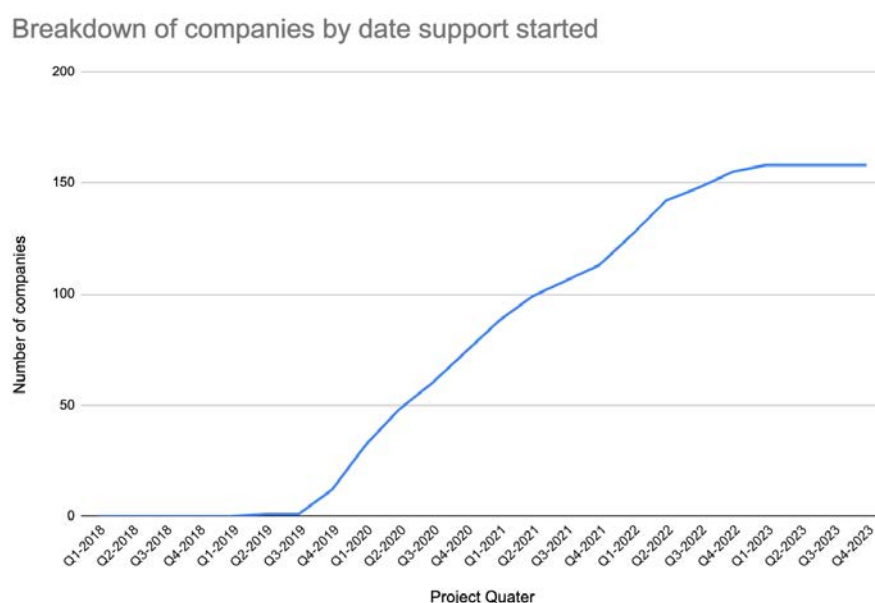
Figure 5: Beneficiaries' sector of industry by SIC code



The main sector of industry represented amongst the beneficiaries are:

- 1.63% from category "Business and domestic software development" (SIC code 62012)
- 1.63% from category "Other business support service activities" (SIC code 82990)
- 1.36% from category "Management consultancy activities other than financial management" (SIC code 70229)
- 1.09% from category "Manufacture of other fabricated metal products" (SIC code 25990)

Figure 6: Breakdown of all companies by date SIP2 support started

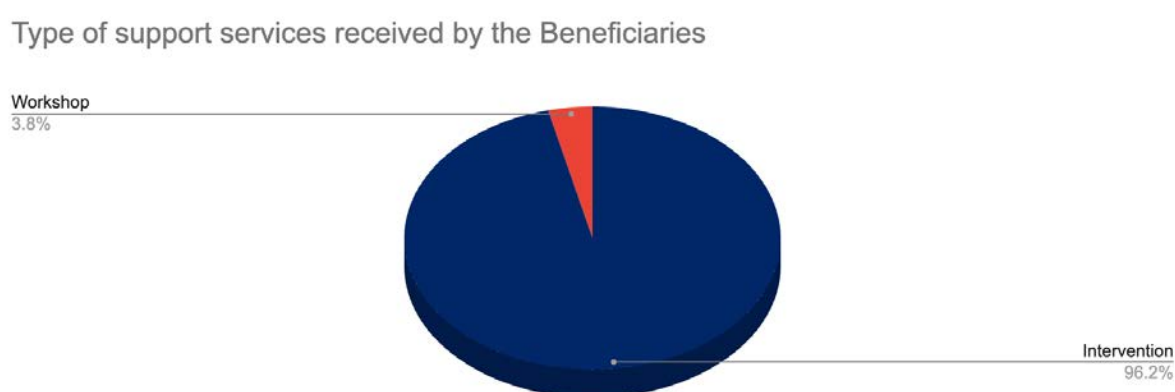


The recruitment of companies on SIP2 started in Q2-2019 with a steady increase as soon as the programme launched. There are slight dips in recruitment in 2021 around the peaks of the COVID-19 pandemic.

While the pandemic may have affected the management Team with reorganising the project delivery and moving the services online, the actual take up of the SIP2 services has remained pretty constant.

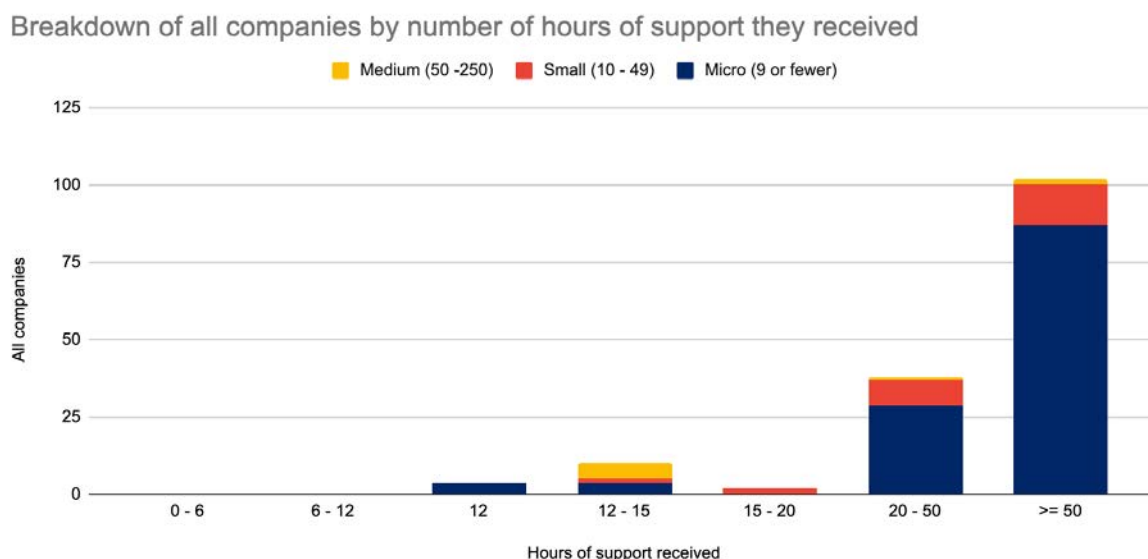
All 159 beneficiaries were recruited by Q4-2022.

Figure 7: Breakdown of all companies by type of support they received



A minority of beneficiaries benefitted from attending SIP2 workshops (3.8%) and the rest benefitted from full intervention support (96.2%).

Figure 8: Breakdown of all companies by number of hours of support they received



All companies have passed the minimum 12H threshold (C1).

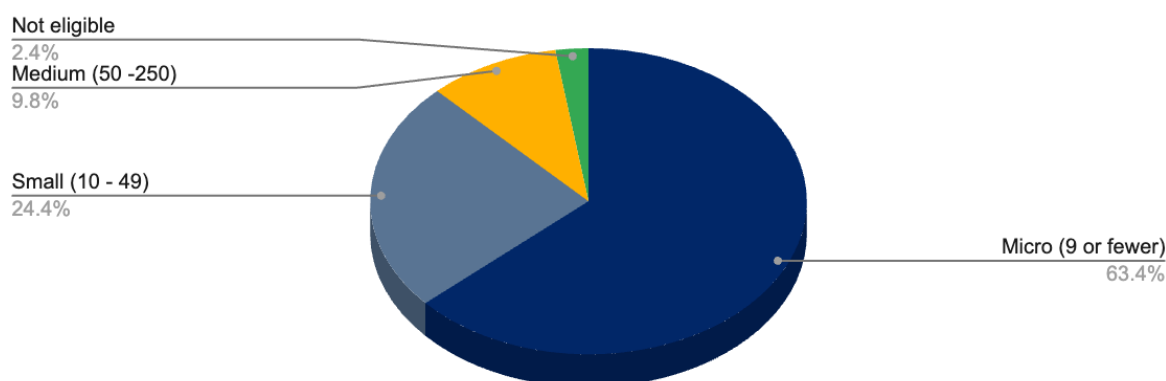
The vast majority of the SIP2 beneficiaries (65.18%) listed in the database received from the 50 hours of support, this illustrates that the SIP2 Team is going far beyond expectations to assist companies with their needs for support.

3.3 Counterfactuals profile

Baseline data from 53 counterfactuals businesses, who contacted the SIP2 Project Team but decided not to take up the services. The characteristics of this cohort are presented below.

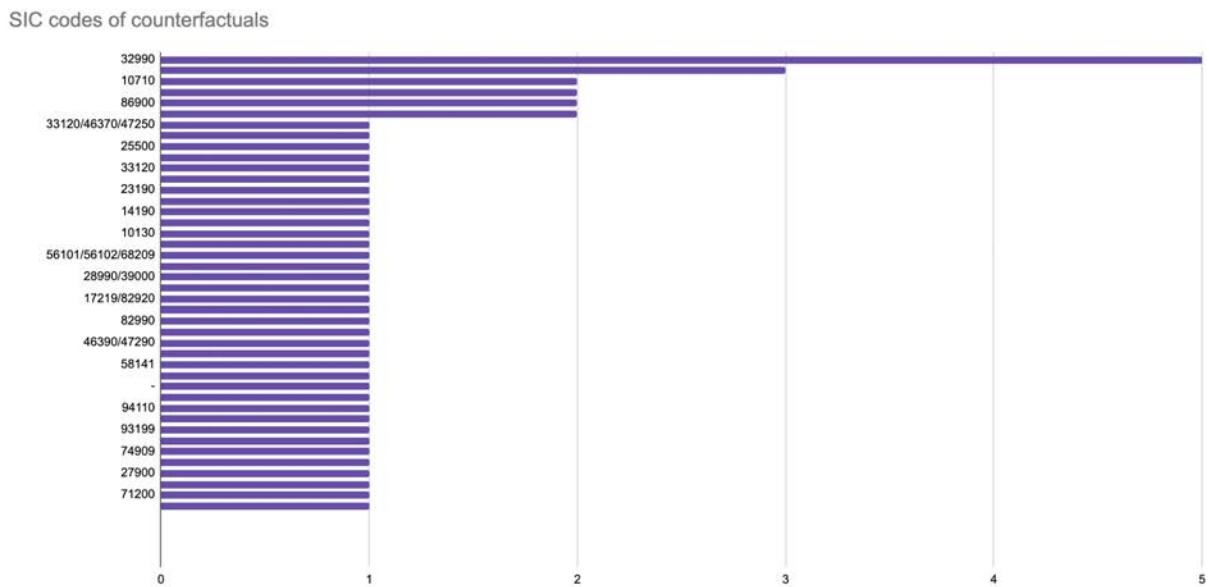
Figure 9: Breakdown of FTE employees in counterfactuals

Breakdown of counterfactuals by size



By comparing Figure 9 and Figure 2, the profiles of the beneficiaries and counterfactual companies have some similarities. The majority of companies that have approached SIP2 to enquiry about the services were micro companies but with the counterfactuals there were slightly more small sized companies in proportion to the total amount of companies when comparing to the data from the beneficiaries. Also 2.4% of companies reaching out to the SIP2 Management Team were not eligible to receive the service.

Figure 10: Counterfactuals' sector of industry by SIC code



The main sector of industry represented amongst the counterfactual are:

- 7.35% % from category “other manufacturing” (SIC code 32990)
- 4.41% from category “Management consultancy activities other than financial management” (SIC code 70229)
- 2.94% from category “Manufacture of other fabricated metal products” (SIC code 25990)

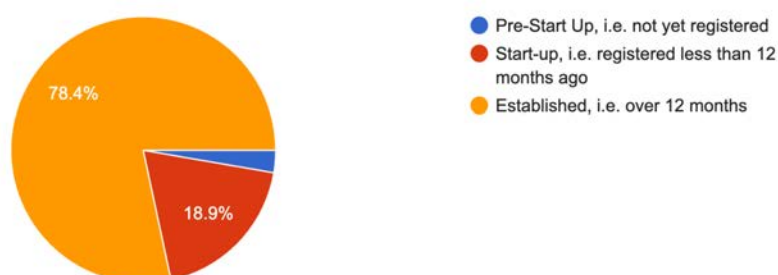
Again by contrasting Figure 5 and Figure 10, we note that the profiles of beneficiaries and counterfactuals are similar in terms of industry.

3.4 Feedback from beneficiaries who completed the survey

3.4.1 Characteristics of survey respondents

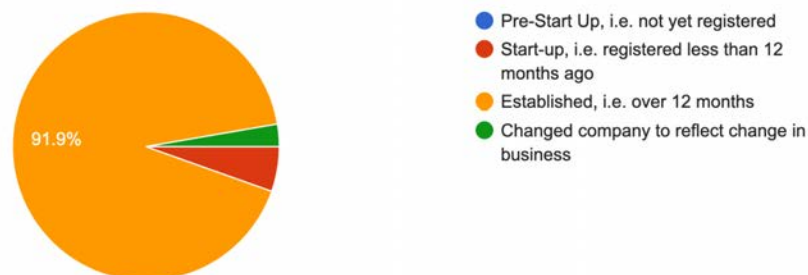
The survey remained open for 7 weeks and answers were collected from 37 beneficiaries (representing 23.42% of beneficiaries).

Figure 11: Company type of beneficiaries that completed the survey at first engagement with SIP2



78.4% of all beneficiary survey respondents classed themselves as an established company (over 12 months old) when they first engaged with the SIP2 programme. 18.9% were start-up companies . 2.7% were pre start-up companies. SIP2 has been predominantly supporting established companies.

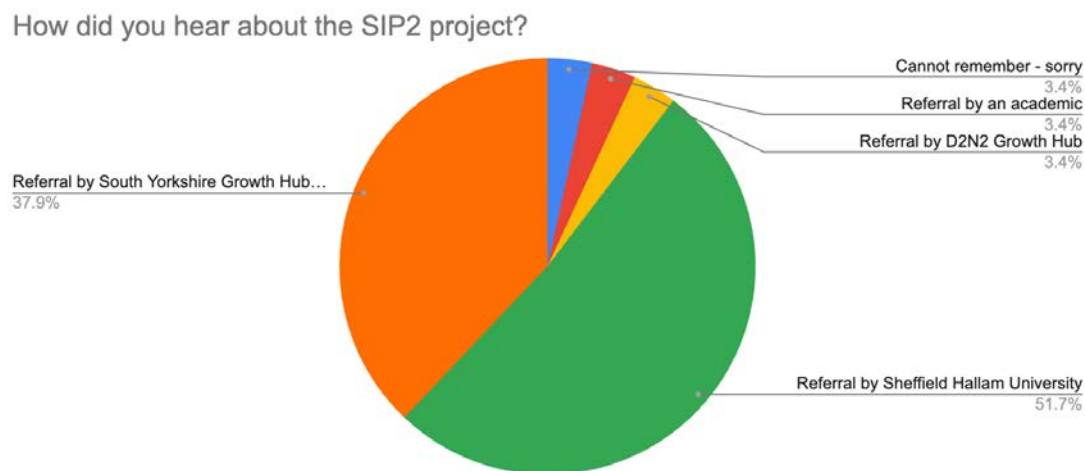
Figure 12: Current company type of beneficiaries that completed the survey



By comparing Figure 13 against Figure 12, it is possible to see that all pre-start up companies have now registered and more than half of the start-up companies have become established companies.

3.4.2 Main sources referrals

Figure 13: Main sources of referrals

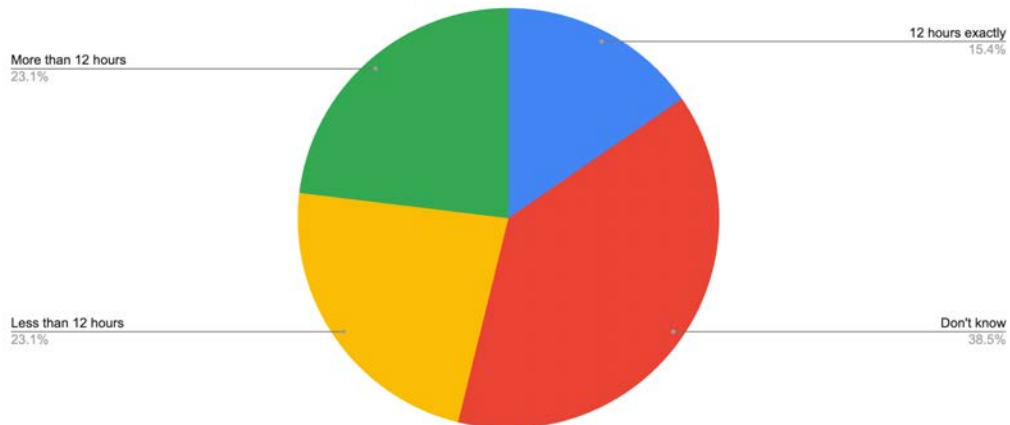


The biggest sources of referrals into the SIP2 programme came from Sheffield Hallam University itself with (51.7%) and then via the South Yorkshire Growth Hub (37.9%).

3.4.3 Hours of support

Figure 14: Perception of beneficiaries (closed, closing and currently actively enrolled SMEs) of the hours of support that they have received.

From memory, how many hours of SIP2 support have you received?

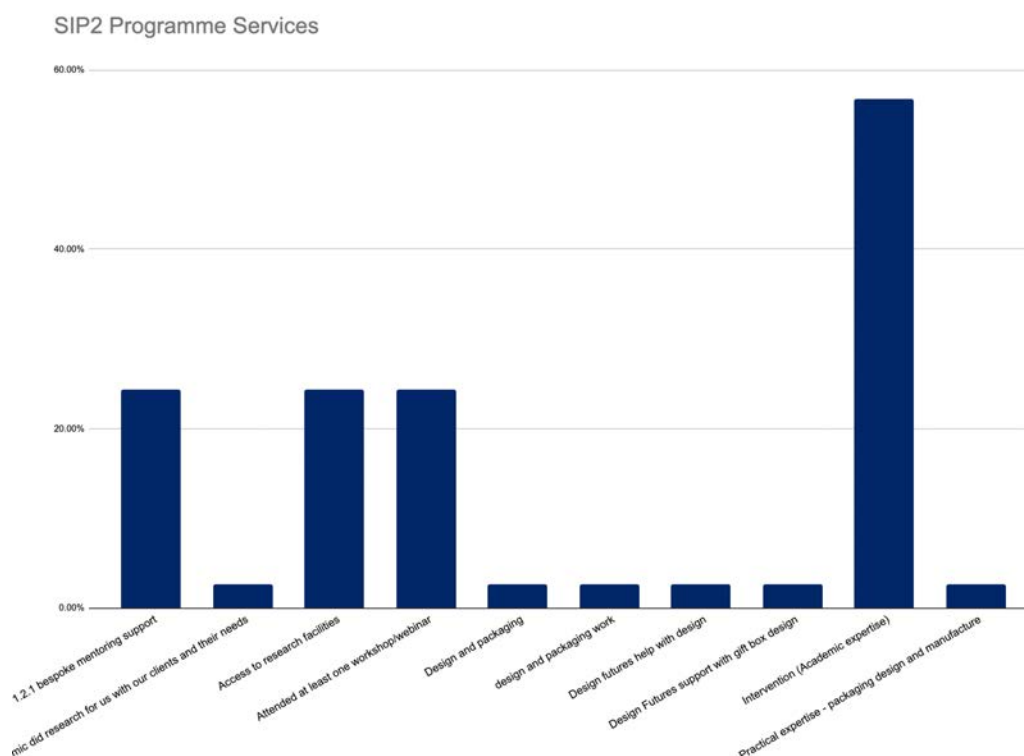


23.1% of beneficiary survey respondents perceived to have received more than 12 hours of support, whilst 38.5% of beneficiary survey respondents are unaware of how many hours of support they've received. There are still 23.1% of respondents which have received less than 12 hours therefore SIP2 has the potential to achieve more C1 if these can be completed in time by project end.

Finally, the SIP2 Team continues to support beneficiaries beyond the minimum 12H which is commendable.

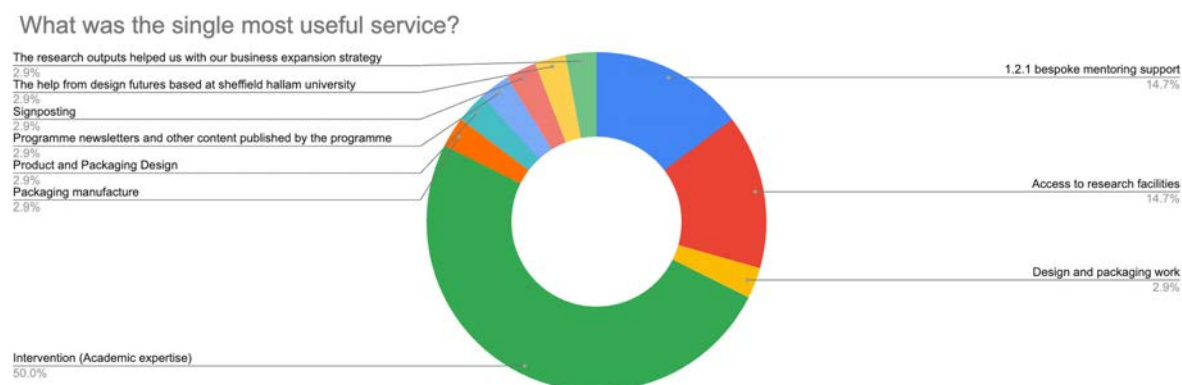
3.4.4 Support received

Figure 15: Range of support received by beneficiaries



The most popular type of support accessed through the SIP2 project is the academic expertise (56.8%), followed by workshop/webinar (24.3%), access to research facilities (24.3%), and 1.2.1 bespoke mentoring support also at (24.3%). This is then followed by signposts to other services (18.9%) and other types of specific support.

Figure 16: Single most useful services rated by beneficiaries

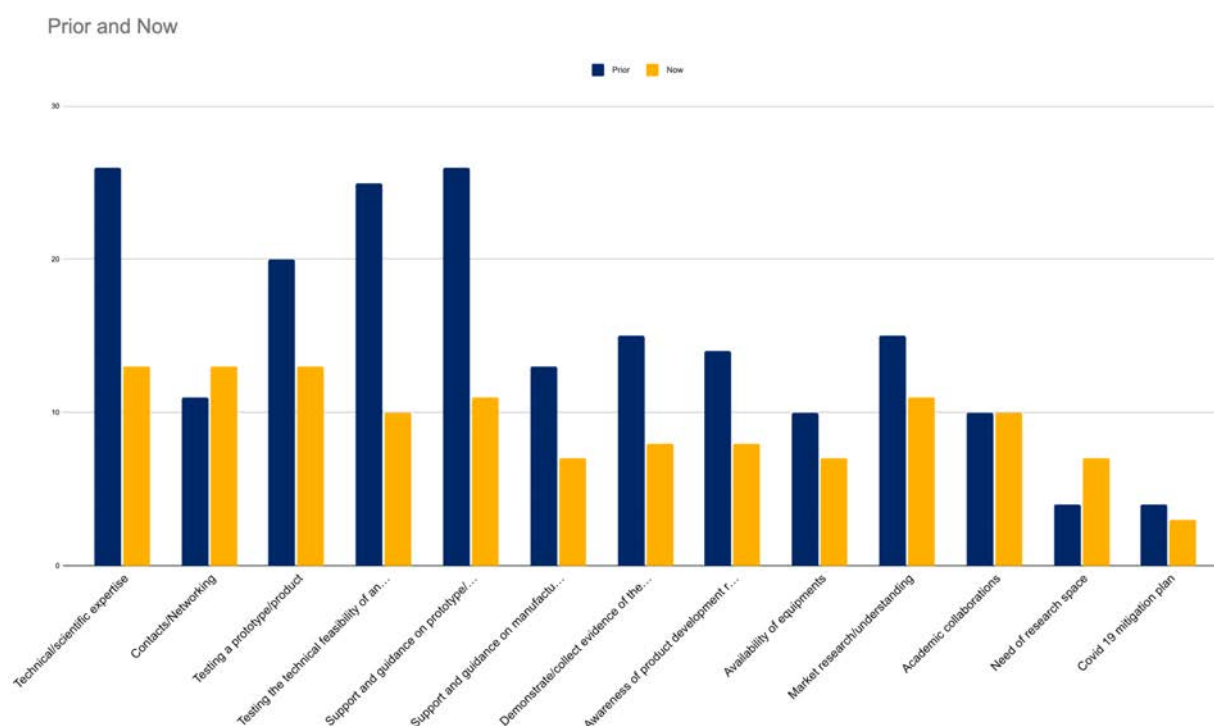


When survey respondents were prompted to select the one single most useful support to them, not surprising the academic expertise scored the highest at 50%.

Both 1.2.1 bespoke mentoring support and access to research facilities scored at 14.7%.

3.4.5 Barriers to innovation

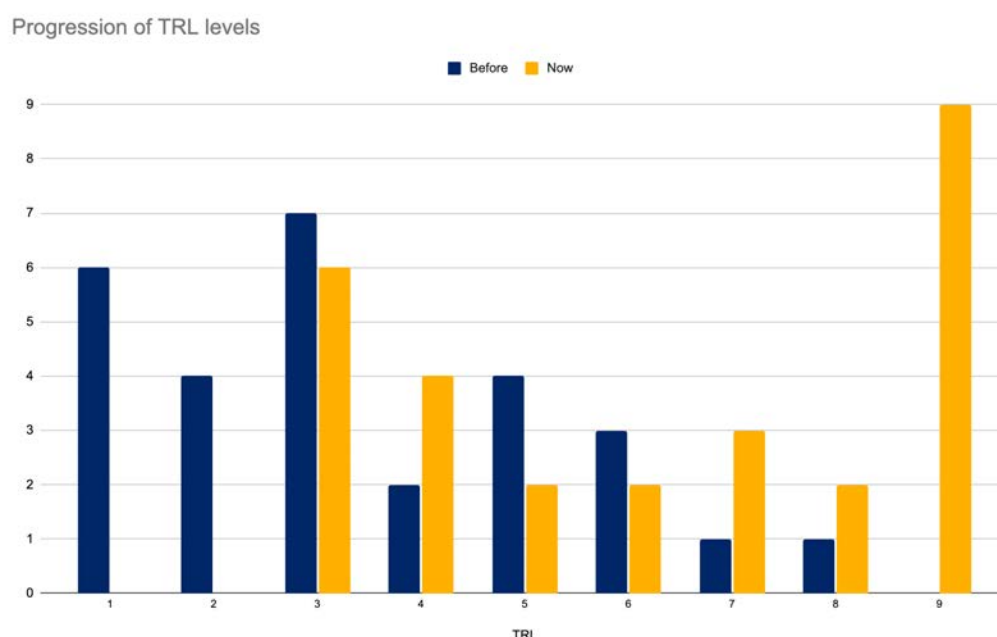
Figure 17: Comparison of beneficiary barriers to innovation prior to engaging with the programme and now



The top three most popular company needs prior to joining the programme were: 1) Technical/Scientific Expertise; 2) Support and guidance on prototype/product design and 3) Testing the technical feasibility of an idea/prototype. There is a significant decline seen in most barriers to innovation which is excellent. Some needs have increased following the SIP2 intervention on companies wanting to access research space and wishing for some further contacts/networking/introductions.

3.4.6 Product and service market readiness

Figure 18: Progression of TRL levels



75.67 % of survey respondents tried to bring new-to-market products or services. From those, 56.75% are new to the firm product or service.

The survey respondents reported that, on a scale of 1 to 9, their product/service was on average at 3.43 ± 2.01 close to market when they first engaged with SIP2. These same products/services are now 6.21 ± 2.45 closer to market.

The average increase of TRL across the survey respondents is **+2.79**.

This is a commendable jump in TRL and slightly higher than the average of ERDF projects recently assessed by the evaluators. In addition, a majority of survey respondents have now reached TRL level 9, which none of the respondents have claimed to have had when they had started.

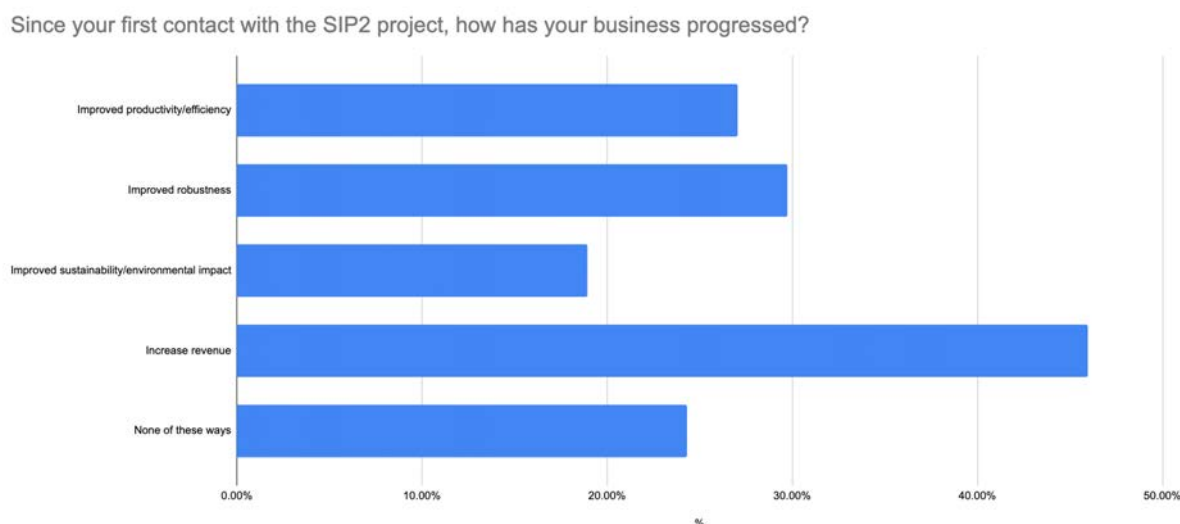
3.4.7 Jobs created and safeguarded

35% of survey respondents created new FTE jobs and 40% safeguarded FTE jobs.

Across all beneficiaries respondents, **20 new FTE jobs** have been created across 13 companies and **33 jobs safeguarded** across 15 companies.

3.4.8 Productivity

Figure 19: Impact of SIP2 on productivity



45.95% of survey respondents reported an increase in revenue. The assessors note this is a significant achievement compared to other ERDF projects.

29.73% of survey respondents reported improved robustness.

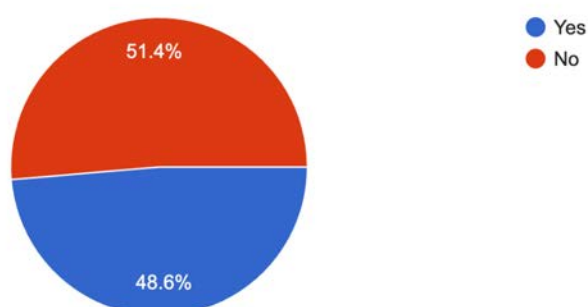
27.03 % of survey respondents reported an improvement in productivity.

24.32% of survey respondents reported that their business did not progress in any of the ways as listed.

18.92% of survey respondents reported an improved sustainability/environmental impact.

3.4.9 Cooperation with research institutions

Figure 20: Cooperation with academic institutions



A majority (51.4%) of survey respondents have started a cooperation with academic institutions including: Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield University or with Hull University.

3.4.9 Satisfaction and expectations

Figure 21: Specific expectations



The majority of beneficiaries (51.4%) entered the programme with expectations.

When prompted to explain their expectations while enrolling in SIP2, notable answers included:

"To increase our profile and gain more academic help in product development"

"We would get a clearer picture of clients needs"

"Access to an academic expert to work alongside business"

"To advise us on some principles of menu presentation, consumer psychology and staff knowledge"

"Enhancing knowledge and skills of business to improve wellness and productivity"

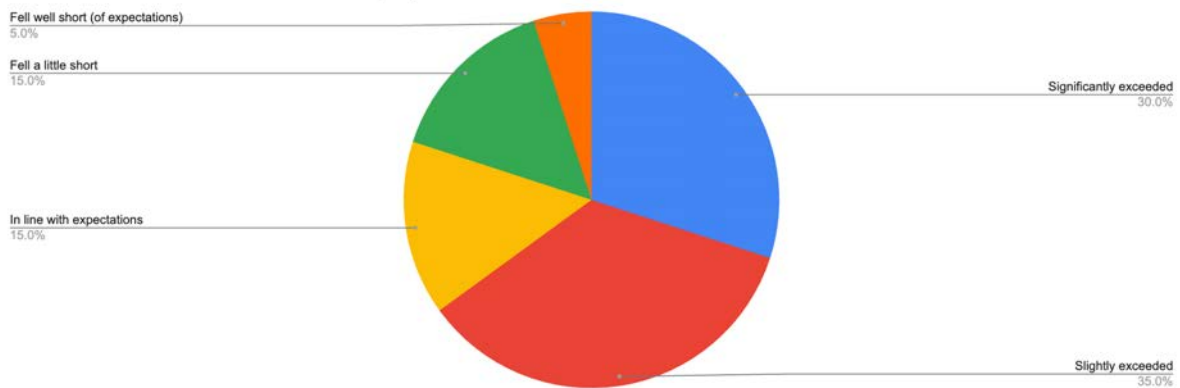
"To receive technical expertise"

"Characterisation and benchmarking of materials"

"Complete a product design"

Figure 22: Achievement of beneficiary expectations of the programme

Beneficiaries satisfaction with the SIP2 project



80% of survey respondents reported that their expectations were in line or exceeded with the service they received from SIP2. About a fifth (20%) of the respondents fell short of expectations.

When prompted to explain their level of satisfaction in the programme, notable answers included:

"We found out things that we otherwise would not!"

"It worked as promised. There were Labour issues due to the pandemic on their side but the PI managed to work by himself to cover up the shortfall and deliver. This was very well delivered."

"We were able to work closely with the academic and receive full support in our project"

"Considerable involvement of experts from SHU who were excellent!"

"I am very grateful for the support I have received. It has been really important to my business"

"Support and what I took away was incredible."

"We did exactly what we thought we could but the product was of a higher standard than we expected."

"The team listened to our requirements and gave us a solution that was beyond our expectations."

"We received excellent technical support."

Some suggestions for improvements:

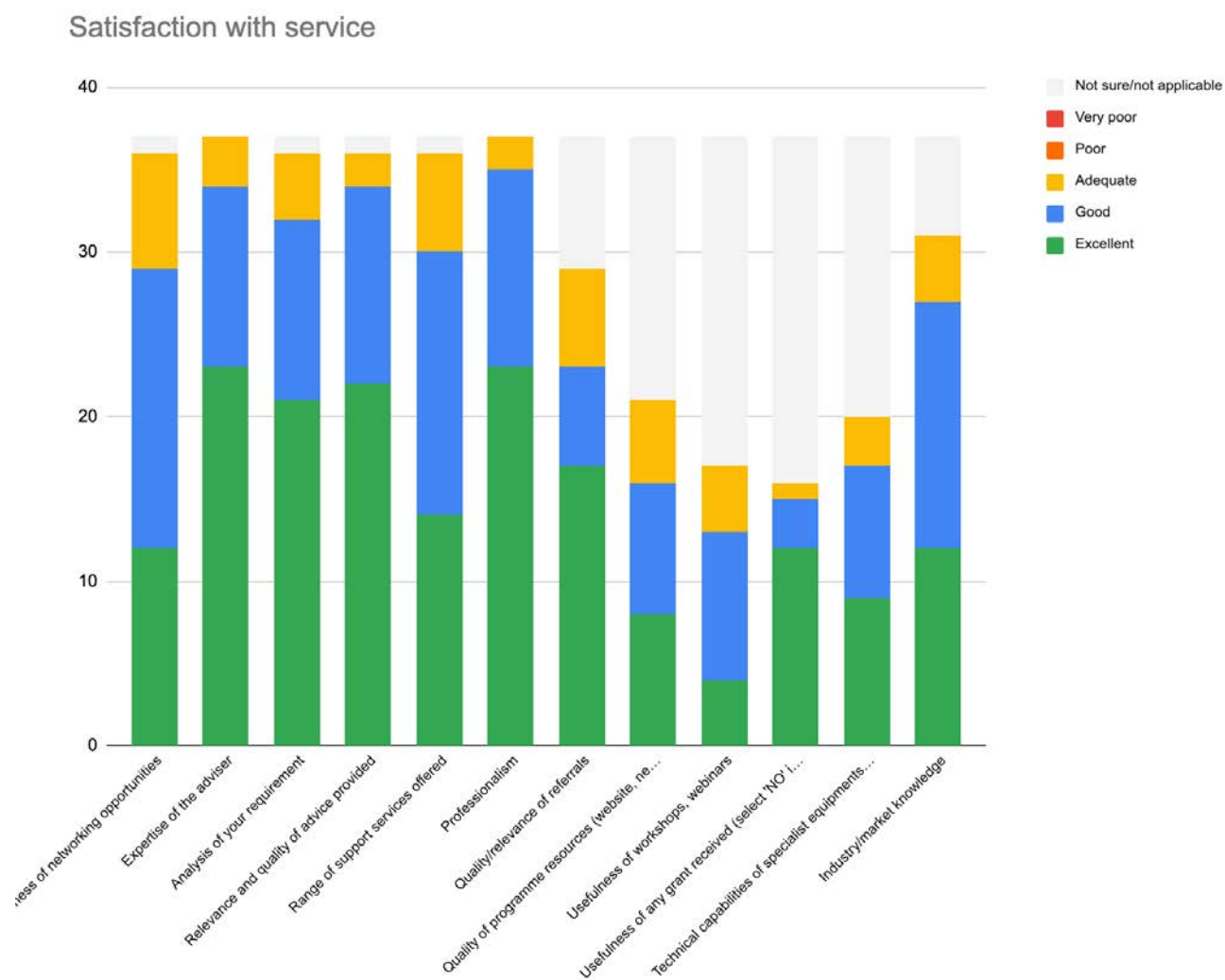
"The prototype is not 100% completed as we ran out of provided hours"

"Product currently only part designed"

"We felt that the focus was in the student not the business which is disappointing"

"Results were a little slow to arrive due to practical problems and a report summarising the results at the end of the work would have been helpful. However, results were discussed with university staff."

Figure 23: Beneficiary satisfaction with the quality of support received



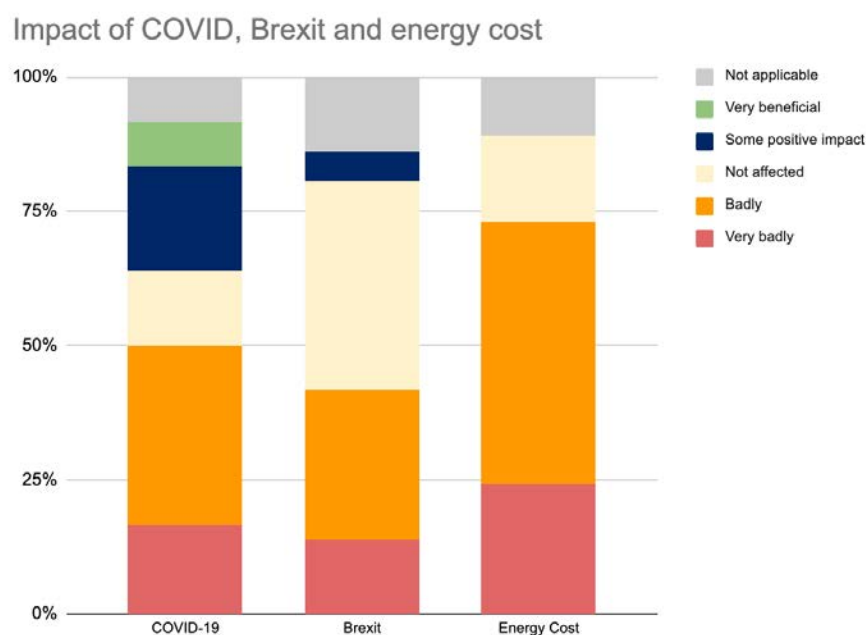
The aspects of SIP2 that survey respondents most frequently rated highly were the expertise of the adviser, the relevance and quality of advice posted, and professionalism.

Additionally, out of all the types of services none of the survey respondents rated any of the services poorly or very poor, which is another indicator of the satisfaction from beneficiaries.

Assessors note that the satisfaction rate is particularly good overall.

3.4.10 Impacts of COVID-19, BREXIT and energy crisis

Figure 24: Impacts of COVID-19 and BREXIT on SIP2



50% of companies reported to be badly or very badly affected by the pandemic but about a third also reported some very positive impacts of COVID mainly on a move to digitalisation of processes and increases in efficiency.

41.7% of companies reported to be badly or very badly affected by Brexit.

72.9% of companies reported to be badly or very badly affected by rising energy costs.

3.4.11 Future Directions and Themes

Beneficiary survey respondents requested support along the 4 following themes, which are aligned with their future business ambitions.

These themes are listed below from most frequently mentioned to least frequently mentioned:

- 1. Technical support**
- 2. Academic expertise and support**
- 3. Grant funding**
- 4. Product and packaging design**
- 5. Marketing/Web design & social media**
- 6. Mentoring and networking opportunities**

3.5 Case Studies

The following **xx** case studies illustrate some of the services delivered to companies through the SIP2.

Case Study- Placeholder

3.6 Feedback from Management and Delivery Team

The workshop with the project lead partner, Sheffield Hallam University, took place on 12th June 2023. In attendance were:

- Laura Talbot (Regional Partnerships Development Officer, The University of Sheffield. Interface between the businesses and academics)
- John Kirkby (Head of Design Futures Packaging Studio)
- Peter Hough (Project Support Officer, The University of Sheffield. Project Administration)
- Chris Sammon (Head of Materials and Research Engineering Institute at Sheffield Hallam University)
- Antony Davies (Client Relationship Manager, Sheffield Hallam University)
- Daniel Philliskirk (Project Coordinator, Sheffield Hallam University)
- Nick Hamilton (Support Engineer, Delivery Insight Group, Sheffield Hallam University)
- Rachel Scarfe (Project Administrator, Sheffield Hallam University)
- Alex Prince (Project Lead at Sheffield Hallam University)
- David Curtis (Principal research fellow in the Sports Engineering Research Group, Sheffield Hallam University)
- Joseph Beresford (South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority)
- Andrew Armstrong (South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority)
- Anthony Jones (Product Designer, Design Futures, Sheffield Hallam University)
- Ian Henderson (Senior Project Manager, Sheffield Hallam University)
- Lauren McConnell (Innovation Development Officer, Sheffield Hallam University)

1. To what extent does SIP2's rationale remain valid?

“Provide businesses with access to academic expertise, facilities and resources to develop new products and services; increase competitiveness, income and profitability through R&D collaborations”

The rationale has not significantly changed and remains very valid. The support does not always relate to or end up in a new product or service, so the reality is broader than the definition and the SIP2 Project has helped businesses to innovate in different ways by improving existing products and services. Helping these companies to overcome any problems or challenges they are facing. Therefore, the rationale is wider than the new product development.

At the time the project was designed, the business support landscape was disparate and the project was designed to complement and work with existing projects to provide better leads, publicity and awareness., integrating where relevant and generating synergy and leverage across projects.

2. What was the economic and policy context at the time SIP2 was designed?

The economic and policy context at the time SIP2 was designed was really different. This is because the economic and policy context pre-dated the pandemic and the departure from the EU. The Growth Hub and LEP Board were thinking about regional perspectives and joining up projects, however the political cycle has shifted, and the future is less about joining up. Within the team there were changes, there were three Directors in South Yorkshire Combined Authority (SYMCA) responsible for business, skills and investment support and a new Mayor.

3. What are the needs/market failures being met by SIP2? (e.g. companies accessing innovation, avoid “Valley of Death” between innovation and getting a product to market, encourage more student graduate placements etc.)

The programme is mostly helping smaller businesses with a lack of funding or less capital than larger businesses can commit to R&D to access support at the University in a form to which they may be able to commit.

The programme addresses the businesses that have never built relationships with academic institutions and universities. The programme addresses this issue by assisting businesses to build these relationships via a gentle introduction to companies working with universities. University access points are not always clear and the project is an easier introduction than more complex routes, such as KTPs. Businesses do not know what they do not know or what they need to innovate, while others are not sure why they may want to. The project has enabled greater awareness of wider business support solutions through the advisor network on the ground

4. How have project management, internal communication, data collection and recording, governance, administration and financial management been? How has it been liaising with DLUHC?

The original Project Manager left, but the project drew on previous experience and improved this. There were a few issues although overall the processes were fairly smooth and working with the University and Growth Hubs has been efficient with claim evidence provided on time. The 2022 On The Spot Verification (OTSV) visit identified a few issues.

The project built on its existing relationship with DLUHC and had good communications with the Managing Authority and the OTSV team.

Project administration has been good, although data collection and evidence for ERDF has been challenging with COVID and is time consuming. The admin team has done an excellent job in handling these challenges and moved to hybrid working and kept the delivery team informed of the changing requirements.

The initial setup of the project management processes to control and monitor deliverables and numbers was excellent.

In terms of program management from most of the management and delivery team this has been described as outstanding.

5. How effective have marketing, communicating and networking activities been for raising awareness of project activities and achievements?

Effectiveness of marketing was a mixed picture due to COVID lockdowns, which made it difficult to identify the correct messages to send out. Despite this the marketing has been reasonably effective. The programme had a mixture of types of marketing, communicating, and networking but was not able to do face-to-face marketing initially due to the lockdowns and pandemic.

In spite of all this the team believe they did a great job of effectively marketing and networking as they were able to deliver the message out there and minimise the damage from the lockdown related pause.

The team described this as very effective and well organised and when they did face-to-face marketing this was very effective in raising their profile and generating leads. Although, the downside to this was Covid put a pause to these and the virtual events did not prove to be as effective.

For a future project, the focus should be on reaching other businesses who do not think that this support is for them.

6. Are there any observations about the project being delivered out of the Sheffield City Region area with regional/national reach?

DLUHC limited the project to the Sheffield City Region. Nearly all the observations and projects were delivered within the regional area and if there were any enquiries from outside the area they were marginal, i.e. no farther than 20 - 30 miles away from their reach. As a deliverer the SIP2 team believe their package is unique to all of the UK but they were clear to work only within the regional area.

Some companies did express some frustration when it was explained that the project could not be delivered to them due to their locations, and the boundaries of the Sheffield City Region area.

Eligibility was checked, including location, to ensure that potential beneficiaries were “SIF-able”. The team would have liked the ability to work with businesses from further afield, and suggested that this could be done using a regional or national network of universities.

7. What are your reflections on the value of partner capabilities and infrastructure e.g. incubation facilities, links to wider ecosystem etc.

There are various examples of projects acting as a nice introduction to the capabilities and ecosystem for businesses which would not otherwise have engaged. Broader reflections in terms of the wider eco-systems reflect a lot of positivity. SIP2 developed the relationships with project partners whilst also maximising the networks that they have. The value of partner capabilities has blossomed post-COVID and there were a lot of cross referrals as relationships have grown, such as the Sheffield Technology Park.

One goal was always to help businesses link to the wider ecosystem, such as InnovateUK, KTN, etc., and this has been successful, as seen by the outcomes for individual clients.

Having both universities involved in the project has helped massively to deliver the tremendous quality of the outcomes.

8. Have you noticed any difference in services delivered to students vs early SMEs vs more established SMEs?

The project never intended to deliver to students and there were no student startups involved.

The scope of the project was to develop SMEs in general and there was not much of a difference between the services delivered to early SMEs and established SMEs. It was much more balanced. Nevertheless, mid-sized SMEs usually have a greater absorptive capacity and work more proactively with the project.

Although, it should be noted that the early SMEs are money led and need to maximise the immediate value of the innovation and funding, whereas more established SMEs can focus more on the skill set gap.

9. How did you address the horizontal and cross-cutting themes of ERDF (environmental/equal opportunities and diversity) in your delivery/implementation?

The programme has been reliant on the University's policies on EDI and it has been delivered within these policies. Not much information was picked up on themes such as diversity and equal opportunities within the claims and on forms, but there was no specific emphasis on this. However, the events and workshops tended to cover and address these themes in more depth.

10. How were procurement activities delivered?

Procurement activities did not play a great role in the project as there is no capital involved. The largest procurement activities were for events, however due to COVID they were not able to spend on these until the last 18 months of delivery. Other than events, there were procurements for the SUMmative Assessment, website delivery and marketing.

11. What are your observations related to the project targets and spend? Please comment on geographic spread, beneficiary profile, timings (staff availability), and future project delivery plans.

The team was able to engage with all parts of the region and the number of companies worked with in the region is as expected. Some intermediaries and contacts turned away as they are not part of the Sheffield region.

The projects were Sheffield heavy, given the population density compared to other areas, and the team wished they had a stronger presence in Doncaster, where it was harder to get out and about. There was less engagement in the D2N2 area, which left the City Region even if it remained part of the SIP2 project area, and after this move referrals dropped.

There were employment increases in supported enterprises and growth in businesses has been successful given the circumstances. However, some job increases cannot be counted due to the loss of employment due to COVID, meaning there is no net increase in employment even where the project has supported job creation. The project has tried to keep the deliverables above the threshold for a change. Their request for a PCR was rejected, but they have tried to keep to the PCR deliverables.

Overall, the team had done well in obtaining the outputs considering the challenges they had faced.

The Growth Hub is exceptionally pleased with the outputs, given the COVID pandemic.

12. What are your reflections on the partnership? How effective has partnership working been?

In terms of the reflections on partnerships the partnership working was really effective. The cross collaboration was a delight to see and in general the cross collaboration had worked really well, especially around information for claims.

The team noted that Local Authority staff churn has been high, but this has not had an impact.

13. How effective has beneficiary recruitment been? What and who have been the major referral channels? Have there been any non-target beneficiaries?

The beneficiary recruitment has been effective because there have been no non-target beneficiaries and only eligible SMEs based on the EU and ERDF guidelines have been recruited, thanks to the checks on eligibility at the engagement stage. This checking of eligibility was coupled with consideration as to whether there were academics who could support them.

The major referral channels have been the Growth Hub advisors and academics from Sheffield Hallam University, brought in beneficiaries from their own networks. The local authorities', business support teams through SYMCA, and incubation type networks, such as Enterprising Barnsley, Chesterfield and Doncaster, and even some professional services businesses have contributed to the recruitment of beneficiaries.

14. How are project activities perceived by beneficiaries? What are the criteria and procedures to ensure SIP2 focuses on the right beneficiaries?

The perception of the project activities by the beneficiaries is that these have been vital to them. They believe that they have received generally positive perceptions from the beneficiaries and it has been a success.

Stringent eligibility checks to ensure potential beneficiaries are "SIF-able" have ensured a focus on the right beneficiaries.

15. How has SIP2 benefited from and in turn benefitted Sheffield Hallam University's other projects (ScaleUp 360, etc.)?

SIP2 has benefitted from and in turn benefitted Sheffield Hallam University's other projects by allowing companies to be referred across the different projects, such as ScaleUp 360 and Digital Innovation 4 Growth.

As projects had different focuses, very few beneficiaries went through more than one and only did so when there was a clear reason to do that. Nevertheless, the projects raised awareness of each other.

There were other projects within SYMCA in a similar position to SIP2 as the other university projects, such as Made Smarter, Skills Bank, etc.

16. How is the project perceived by wider stakeholders? Has SIP2 benefitted from other projects delivered in the area? Has the project contributed/enhanced other initiatives in the area?

The perception received by wider stakeholders has been positive and there is demand for a legacy project, SIP3. The Business Recovery and Growth Board is expected to approve the need to fill a gap after SPI2 finishes and they want to continue the work.

Referral makers are very positive about the experiences of businesses they have referred to, else they wouldn't continue to refer businesses to the project. They see it as a good project and bringing value to the businesses and region as a result of referrals.

The SMEs want to know what is happening next and the perception is that there is a big gap in

provision approaching.

17. How has COVID-19 impacted the SIP2 team's internal operations? Have SIP2 services been adapted in response to COVID-19 restrictions and the new types of needs companies now have?

Before COVID, the SIP2 team had relied heavily on physical interactions in the form of face-to-face events and meetings and they had to change this process. For example, signing of forms had to be changed to digital platforms like Adobe Sign and Docusign. Workshops changed to virtual workshops, which was a significant adaptation due to the success of in person workshops and no in person events were held until the end of 2021 due to the COVID pandemic as the university also had policies in addition to the national policies at the time. This necessitated some profile raising work before workshops could recommence.

18. Has BREXIT impacted cooperation within the SIP2 project? What have been the mitigation plans?

In terms of BREXIT the SIP2 team are not aware of any impact that this has had in regards to their clients or beneficiaries. Beneficiaries mainly enquired about the effect of BREXIT on the SIP2 support being given.

19. Has the energy crisis impacted on the SIP2 project?

From the project delivery and management perspective there has not been much of an impact. However, many of the beneficiaries have mentioned that the issue is impacting on them and making their operations more challenging, but it has not impacted on working or engaging with the project. Overall, there is not a significant impact from the energy crisis on the SIP2 project.

20. How well is the delivery model working from sourcing companies to delivering business support services?

a) What has worked well overall? What have the successes been? Where is there transferable good practice?

Overall, there have not been many problems with the delivery model from sourcing companies to delivering the business support services. Reacting to the initial needs of the market the project delivery team members designed the model to have a lot more flexibility as originally the delivery model felt a bit rigid. The team felt that the services they provided worked well and there were successes despite the challenges that they had faced.

The process for stage gating any support that exceeded 10 days was effective in managing capacity with the project.

Internal project management systems helped delivery, with regular meetings with key stakeholders and the monthly Delivery Oversight Group, all of which enabled the project to track and monitor progress throughout the delivery.

b)What barriers and constraints do you feel the project has faced? How were they overcome? How well did this go?

A barrier and constraint the project had faced was the check in balance and accountability. There was no flexibility in the outputs or allowing them to react to the larger needs of the market. An example of this was if the delivery team wanted to give more resources to a beneficiary company they had to justify this. For future projects more flexibility should be designed in.

The process for providing and evidencing cash contributions (grants) is too difficult and therefore was not used in SIP2.

One issue was lack of academic time to support beneficiaries, but this was managed through the relationship with the beneficiary and by managing their expectations.

21. What are your recommendations for the legacy of the project?

The recommendations for the legacy of the project included a SIP3 to fill the gap from SIP2 and to provide the extra support the beneficiaries had wanted meaning the interactions with the clients would have more value. The focus thus being less on volume to maximise value creation and not contract targets, which drive ERDF projects given their link to the clawback methodology.

The program would be designed based on outcomes rather than outputs adapting to the needs of the beneficiaries coming through.

Different funding mechanisms and funding streams for the legacy of the project should lead to different administrative requirements and a less bureaucratic approach would be welcomed.

Raising the intervention rate from a point at which costs are not quite covered (research groups have income targets meaning that full cost recovery work could take precedence) would be useful to ensure an equal prioritisation of all businesses being supported. This is a practical reality, but it is not fair.

The legacy would include options to provide cash (grants) to beneficiaries, which SIP2 has not done because it is too painful a process. Similarly, businesses should have some skin in the game, through some type of formal commitment or contribution, perhaps through a mini-KTP or similar, but something more concrete than just time spent. This would help focus engagement, especially amongst larger SMEs, who could lose focus when other things came up.

3.7 Feedback from wider stakeholders

6 wider stakeholder interviews took place with:

- Andrew Armstrong, Development Manager (Special Projects), Made Smarter Programme Manager, SYMCA
- Paul Johnson, key Account Manager, Barnsley Council
- Adrian Williamson, Innovation Support Project Manager, Chesterfield Borough Council
- Natalie Fletcher, Operations Manager, Business Sheffield
- Tracy Viner, Executive Manager, Sheffield Chamber
- Rose Tran, Incubation Manager Sheffield Technology Parks

3.7.1 Cross-referrals

The South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority sits on the Board of the SIP2 project with regular checks on the quality aspects.

There are some good referrals to SIP2 while the conversion rate could be improved. SIP2 is part of the regional innovation support service with Business Growth Advisers referring to it when appropriate. There is a diverse range of companies in South Yorkshire.

There is a good dialogue with the Management Team and we support them with marketing. SHU is a very community focused university.

The Sheffield Chamber has multiple connections with SHU including to work together on the South Yorkshire sustainable programme. Sheffield Chamber also provided some good links through its members to traditional manufacturing companies for SIP2.

The Team of Advisors from Business Sheffield has been referring to SIP2. SIP2 has provided an easier route for businesses into the complex academic landscape. It is very valuable to have a project like this. SIP2 feeds into the innovation network that we want in the City of Sheffield.

The incubator at Sheffield Technology Parks is referring to SIP2.

3.7.2 Process

What has worked well?

The SIP2 Team is very responsive, receptive to support and has a good working relationship.

The communication was really good from the start with clear outputs and plenty of case studies available. The leadership was clear from the start. Events have been very well run and reaching out to everyone. The SIP2 programme has been really inclusive.

SIP2 has done well to bring SHU and University of Sheffield to work collaboratively together.

When the University was shut during the pandemic, it was difficult for the SIP2 project and the project had to 're-launch' post pandemic with some further marketing push.

When companies are seeking investment, the validation of products is a key part of that process and SIP2 has been able to help SMEs in that regard.

SIP2 has been instrumental in bringing closer together the academics and the business support providers.

All wider stakeholders would like to see the SIP2 programme continue post ERDF funding as it has been a great programme supporting advanced manufacturing, creating future jobs and helping grow the city.

What could be improved?

Having to work around the academic years as companies and entrepreneurs usually want a quick result.

In the case of a few companies, the project support started but then they could not go beyond the capability of the university. So if the university does not have the full capacity for a specific project, there is a need for managing the expectations of the beneficiary.

Plan some regular catch-up meetings with the main referral organisations e.g quarterly or monthly to give an update on the follow-up from the referrals. Plan some regular monitoring check points.

4 PROJECT CONTEXT, RELEVANCE AND CONSISTENCY

- **What was the project seeking to do?**

SIP2 is a regional support programme building on the success of the original SIP1 project in the Sheffield City region.

The programme provides access to academic expertise and university facilities with bespoke project research to support SMEs with their innovation. The geographical eligible area for the SIP2 service is the Sheffield City region and the districts of Bassetlaw, Bolsover, Chesterfield, Derbyshire Dales & North East Derbyshire.

The support is in the form of bespoke research and innovation based consultancy, workshops and other events at no cost to the businesses.

The specific support that SIP was designed to provide includes:

- New product development and design
- Manufacturing process improvement
- Business improvement
- Integration of new technologies
- Improving quality
- Materials selection, analysis and quality management

SMEs with projects were typically offered up to 10 days worth of support but with the flexibility of additional time and expertise for some larger projects.

The programme had a target of engaging with 262 SMEs. The pandemic had an impact on SIP2 with some of the activities becoming unfeasible to deliver during the lockdown (e.g. those requiring access to specialist facilities and 2-day face-to-face workshops) and all activities being shifted online; the Project Team wanted to revise its targets through PCR in June 2022 but it was not approved because of the short remaining period of delivery before project closure.

After the pandemic, SIP2 has been operating on an hybrid model with some in-person and online interactions with beneficiaries.

- **What was the economic and policy context at the time that the project was designed?**

At the time the project was designed, the economic and policy context was completely different. The COVID pandemic and rising energy prices had not occurred and the terms of the UK departure from the European Union had not been agreed.

The SIP2 objectives were aligned with:

- ESIF strategy for Sheffield City Region- setting out the requirement for activities and projects to create jobs and businesses, increase productivity, move the economy up the value chain, and increase employment levels.
- Science and Innovation Audit (2016) - highlighting the strong demand in the northern corridor to maintain UK productivity, and clearly identifying the principal digital technologies e.g. IIoT, Additive Manufacturing etc. as the key drivers for promoting productivity.
- UK Government Industrial Strategy (2017) - to boost productivity by backing businesses to create good jobs and increase the earning power of people throughout the UK with investment in skills, industries and infrastructure

- **What were the specific market failures that the project was seeking to address? Was there a strong rationale for the project?**

The project was seeking to improve the efficiency and productivity of SMEs in engaging in collaborative research to develop new products and services.

It turned out that the project was perfectly timed with the impact of Brexit, Covid-19 and energy crisis on the supply chains. Most SMEs had to rethink how to implement new systems, new processes to adapt and change operations and supply chains especially. SIP2 has been able to provide support to SMEs at a time they most needed the advice and innovation support.

- **Was it appropriately designed to achieve its objectives? Was the delivery model appropriate?**

The range of services on offer with the academic expertise, workshop/webinars, access to research facilities, 1.2.1 bespoke mentoring, Design Future support and industry knowledge were all deemed excellent or good by beneficiaries.

The delivery model was appropriate while some specific adjustments had to be made for handling the impact of Covid.

- **Were the targets set for the project SIP2 realistic and achievable?**

SIP2 will fall short on five out of six targets. The original targets were not realistic in the context of a worldwide pandemic.

- **How did the context change as the project was delivered and did this exert any particular pressures on project delivery?**

SIP2 had to face BREXIT and the COVID-19 pandemic during its implementation as well as the recent economic crisis with the Ukrainian war. The project adapted well its delivery mechanisms through Covid with online webinars/seminars and the digitalisation of processes. The Management Team switched to online activities relatively quickly as it did not show much on the engagement chart from beneficiaries. Ref: figure 6.

- **Bearing in mind any changes in context or weaknesses in the project design / logic model, can the project reasonably be expected to perform well against its targets?**

SIP2 forecasts that it is on track to achieve or exceed one out of six targets. Two targets will be almost met above 95% attainment, one target will reach at least 85% and one target at least 70%

Only with one target C8, there could be significant underperformance.

The SIP2 project had ambitious targets given the wider economic challenges that the project faced with Brexit, COVID and the recent energy crisis. Those targets were then revised after PCR. This has led businesses to either wait and hold off on implementing their plans for new technologies or to explore new technologies in search of cheaper and more efficient approaches. This has been a double edged sword for the project. However, overall the project appears to be delivering reasonably well against its targets.

The SIP2 project has been an enabler of new employment and jobs safeguarded at the time of BREXIT and COVID-19. The survey identified that 20 FTE jobs have been created across 13 companies and 33 FTE jobs safeguarded across 15 companies, showing that the project has supported the growth and survival of its target businesses.

5 PROJECT PROGRESS

Table 1 presents the current and expected project-end attainment of the ERDF Priority Axis 1 indicator targets for SIP2. These figures have been gathered from the latest SIP2 claim document and projected with due consideration to the beneficiary survey responses, management team workshop discussions and overall project context, as summarised in the

column titled 'Notes'. The targets are presented for transition and more developed areas combined.

Table 1: ERDF targets

Indicator	Original Targets	Revised targets (PCR submitted in June 2022 but not accepted)	Performance as of 31/03/2023		Projected performance at Project Closure		Notes
			Number	% of target	Number	% of target	
Revenue Expenditure	£3,623,451	£3,400,176	£2,749,307	75%	> £2.950m	>81%	The project will be about £670,000 under depending on how SMEs will be able to provide the relevant evidences on time or not before closure
C1 Number of enterprises receiving support	262	240	185	70%	>250	>95%	If these indicators continue at the steady rate, the targets will be 95% met by project end.
C4 Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support	262	240	185	70%	>250	>95%	The C4 target is calculated from C1.
C8 Employment increase in supported enterprises	50	43	12	24%	>14	>28%	Our survey revealed 20 FTE jobs created and another 33 FTE jobs safeguarded at the time of the evaluation, suggesting that these will help achieve the target depending on the evidence gathered from the beneficiaries.
C26 Number of enterprises cooperating with research institutions	131	120	145	111%	>184	>100%	The C26 target has already been achieved at the time of Q1 2023 claim.
C28 Number of enterprises supported to introduce new to market products	31	27	17	54%	>23	>74%	Our survey reveals that 75.67% of respondents have tried to bring new-to-market product of services, therefore SIP should reach at minimum 23
C29 Number of enterprises supported to introduce new to the firm products	62	55	43	69%	>55	>88%	Our survey reveals that 21 companies have tried to introduce new to the firm products

Overall achieved outputs by the project:



It is likely that only one of the sixth project targets will be met or exceeded.

Two of the targets will be met above 95% attainment, one target above 85% and one target about 70%.

C8 is likely to significantly fall short of the target.

Despite potentially failing short on C1, C4, C8, C28 and C29, the project will significantly exceed the C26 target.

A special mention must be made on this C26 indicator as it is notoriously difficult for relevant ERDF-funded projects to achieve this; it has almost always been severely underachieved by the projects that the assessors have evaluated recently, because of challenges in demonstrating the evidence required for this indicator. The process by which the SIP2 project achieved C26 outputs can be considered a best practice that others should learn from.

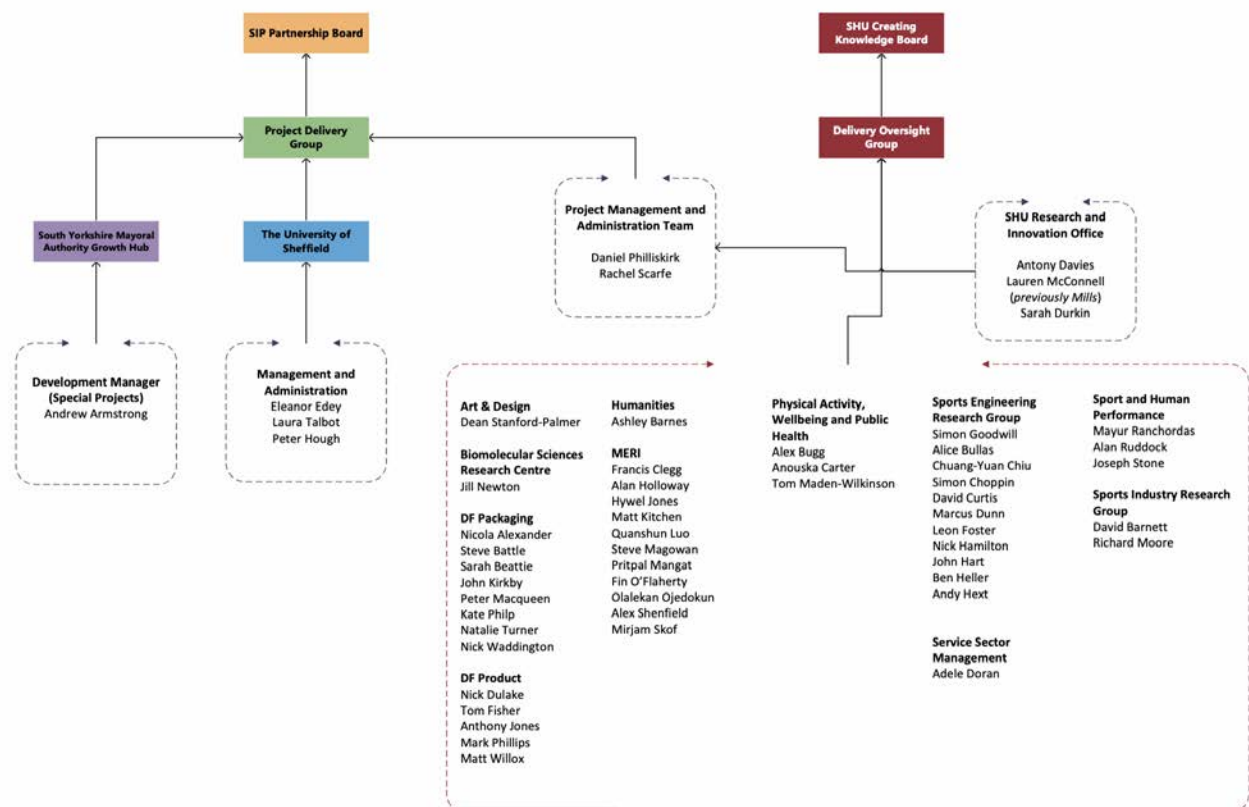
Note: If the request for PCR had been approved last year, the project would have achieved four out of six targets.

6 PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND DELIVERY

- **Was the project well managed? Were the right governance and management structures in place and did they operate in the way they were expected to?**

The diagram 3 presents the organogram for the SIP2 Management and Governance structure

Diagram 3: Organogram



Some changes to the organogram were made following the retirement of Ian Handerson with Chris Baker taking on some of the strategic aspects of the role and Daniel Philliskirk being responsible for the Project Management side.

All project staff across the three delivery partners agree that the project has been very well managed, including throughout the pandemic and the challenges that that raised for the programme. Many management and delivery processes have been carried over from SIP1. This means there is good efficiency in all the processes as they have been honed over a number of years. The frequency of governance meetings and delivery partner meetings has been good and the support that the lead partner has provided to the Growth Hub, which is less experienced in ERDF projects, is greatly appreciated. Sheffield Hallam University has been very prompt in answering partner enquiries. Overall, the partnership has worked very well and it has been the major asset in the project.

- **Has the project delivered its intended activities to a high standard?**

The high quality of SIP2 programme services delivered is evident from the fact that 80% of beneficiaries indicated that they were very satisfied or satisfied with the service. The programme service found the most useful are the academic expertise, 1.2.1 bespoke mentoring support and access to research facilities.

It is also commendable that the project had outreach the C26 target for collaboration with academic institutions at a time of both BREXIT and COVID-19.

Through delivery, the SIP2 programme created two new and additional innovation posts in the Growth Hub team tasked with increasing awareness of innovation opportunities amongst the region's SME population, enhancing collaboration and referrals between Growth Hub business

advisers and key innovation agencies, and generating a broader reach for the potential SME innovation pipeline. This new capability has helped to create a more connected and robust innovation pipeline into SIP2, making the most of the Growth Hub's access to a wide range of local SMEs and inspiring and channelling them into innovation, even if that previously was not a priority for these SMEs.

The process by which themes are selected for the project's workshops and events is working well, namely the Growth Hub identifies themes based on the needs and wishes articulated by the SMEs they are in contact with. Special attention is paid to themes that are topical or timely e.g. those relating to a recent technological advancement. Thus, some themes are highly specialised and relevant to small numbers of businesses operating in niche areas whereas other themes are more general and relevant to a broader audience. Similarly, some project events consume 12 hours of support whereas others take the form of shorter briefings or technical seminars aimed at raising the profile of a specialist theme, introducing a specific area of expertise and facilities available in the project, or presenting a specific opportunity for collaboration. The wide-ranging formats, themes and approaches to the project's workshops and events means the project is catering well for a wide range of SMEs.

- **Could delivery of the project have been improved in any way? How were project activities perceived by beneficiaries and other stakeholders?**

No beneficiaries were dissatisfied with their experience on SIP2. This is a testament to an exceptionally good service delivered by an experienced Management Team in support of a wide range of SMEs having very diverse needs and demands.

The assessors noted this is an outstanding achievement in comparison to other ERDF-like projects delivered through challenging economic times.

- **Did the project engage with and select the right beneficiaries? Were the right procedures and criteria in place to ensure the project focused on the right beneficiaries?**

The local region has been through a change in administrative boundaries during the implementation of SIP2, which has led to shifts in activity in some areas as now some areas fall inside the D2N2 area, even though they are still eligible for SIP2 support. This is because those areas can now be served by other universities and projects e.g. University of Nottingham. There is still some referral between these projects (where the referring organisation does not offer the services required by a specific SME), but there is more competition for SMEs in this crossover area now.

The challenge is always to find new businesses to whom to market the project services. This requires innovative approaches for finding these businesses, such as working with intermediary organisations. Activated SMEs are already aware of projects like these; it is tapping into the unaware businesses that is the challenge. SIP2 did well in working through intermediary organisations to reach out to a large pool of businesses including from new eligible areas adapting its marketing strategy.

- **How were procurement activities delivered?**

The project benefits from Hallam Sheffield University having well-established processes for running procurement activities. Only revenue funding procurement is associated with this project.

All contracts were procured in line with the requirements of the ESIF Procurement Law with any expenditure incurred over £2,500 and up to £24,999 subject to three written quotes or prices being obtained.

A formal tender process was undertaken for any expenditure between £25,000 and £164,176.

7 PROJECT HORIZONTAL THEMES

- **To what extent have the horizontal principles been integrated into and shaped delivery?**

7.1 Sustainability

Sustainability has been incorporated into Sheffield Innovation Programme since its inception.

The project Team has encouraged project work which has a sustainable focus and the following projects have been centred around sustainability.

- Talar Made Limited - Wanted a review of the structural packaging used to design out all unnecessary plastic to make their product range more sustainable. SHU's team of packaging designers produced initial concepts for a new range of sustainable packaging to replace the existing packaging, and supported the client to identify potential suppliers.
- Linouiiio Limited - Required a range of sustainable packaging solutions that would reflect the values of their products. The packaging needed to be as environmentally responsible as possible and present the products to the customer in a way that clearly communicated the sustainable stance of their brand. SHU's packaging team used their expertise to specify materials and construction methods that would offer the best sustainable solution at a viable purchase and production cost.
- Neg10 Limited - The overall aim of the SIP project was to assist Neg10 in its efforts to develop a tool that verifies companies' greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reporting to ensure data is comprehensive, robust and interoperable. The project required the production of a written report that compares three of the main frameworks currently used by UK based companies when calculating and reporting their GHG emissions, and to provide recommendations and suggestions to assist Neg10 in developing their own verification framework.
- Intelligent Facility Solutions Limited - As part of their sustainability commitment, IFS wanted to find ways they could give low-grade plastics a new purpose, including turning the plastic into a fine, compactable version that could be condensed to give rigidity and weight to new products or creating a viable secondary product. SHU undertook a project to classify plastic wastes into different hierarchies to determine which plastic recycling would take centre stage in the research. SHU then researched a range of plastic waste shredders, identifying operational specifications and manufacturers that could support the potential applications of the recycled plastic wastes.
- Abbeydale Brewery Limited - The client engaged SHU to develop a decision support system to assist the company's decision to replace the existing light commercial fleet with electric vehicles and determine a timeframe for replacement. SHU undertook a detailed analysis and produced a five-year replacement plan with a range of electric vehicle options.

- New World Era Energy Solutions Limited - The objective of the project was to develop a process to reduce the ash/silica contents in rice husk/biomass for sustainable alternative heat and power generation fuel applications in commercial heat and power generation plants. A technical report was delivered which provided guidance on future research to optimize the process and parameters.
- Candeo- To test the feasibility of using Royce equipment (Arc Melter) as a method to purify organic material towards pure carbon. To test whether common organic compounds in cremation ash, such as keratin, can be 'burnt out' leaving purified carbon for further processing
- Carbon Clean - The company specialise in carbon capture technology and have developed a low-cost technology to separate CO2 from industrial flue gases, natural and renewable gases. This research reproject aimed to carry out literature review on CO2 utilisation for new products (with great market potential), new transformation technologies (i.e. new processes), and new catalysts.
- Matrix Energy - To assess the supply chain visibility and reliance on the import of heat pumps, and to recommend and identify innovations needed for UK manufacture.
- Tribal Milk - Research to establish the environmental impact and consumer acceptance of packaging format alternatives.
- Concrete4change - A feasibility study to develop a proposal for new adsorbents for sequestration of CO2 into concrete.
- Goral & Sons - Study to identify potential recycling and/or reuse opportunities for the waste leather scraps that Goral Shoes produces.
- Mycelium Network - Feasibility study into the concept of carbon accounting as a service.
- Jepson & Co - Feasibility study for the application of circular economy principles to acrylic vehicle registration plates.

In addition to the projects above, a large proportion of the 63+ projects with SHU's Design Futures Packaging team have helped to introduce businesses to more sustainable packaging solutions and helped to reduce plastic.

Since October 2022 SHU has helped to arrange the South Yorkshire Sustainability Consortium events. These events have highlighted sustainability initiatives across South Yorkshire and we have raised the profile of SIP through these events.

Finally, the pandemic has been an acute instigator of more sustainable delivery of SIP2 management and operations with more activities being delivered online due to COVID 19.

Virtual delivery of programme services continues at a higher level than would have occurred without the pandemic, although some face-to-face activity has resumed now and this is having a positive impact on the project's ability to generate outputs.

7.2 Equal opportunities and diversity

SIP2 benefits from the strong strategy of Sheffield Hallam University and University of Sheffield for the horizontal principle of Equality, Diversity and Anti-Discrimination.

The global stage on which the two universities operate means they have the mechanisms in place to recruit talent from the global talent pool.

Because of this capability, the staff involved in SIP2, and particularly the academic staff, are ethnically very diverse.

At the time of the final evaluation, the programme services have been equally accessible to all SMEs.

A range of intervention work with businesses has focused on Equal Opportunities and Diversity;

Paper - A study exploring suspense in films from a Deaf perspective to co-produce knowledge with/for an under-researched and under-represented group.

Sheffield Social Enterprise Network - A study to understand the state, impact and potential of the social enterprise sector across Sheffield to create a coherent and comprehensive picture of the state of the sector, its value and reach, and the possibilities for its development.

Accessible Communications - To provide a summary report of the latest evidence and guidance for the use of touchscreen technology by people living with dementia and evaluate the latest Family Phone software using the AcTo Dementia review framework and share recommendations for improving accessibility.

United We Climb CIC - This project aimed to inform the development of innovative training materials for the client for use in focus groups with climbers from minoritised groups, in particular LGBTQ+, BAME communities and disabled people. A literature review was undertaken, and through the insights gained, a draft set of interview questions was compiled in preparation for use in the focus groups.

Greentop Community Circus Centre – This project sought to evidence the social, learning and health benefits of participation in circus activities, to engage hard to reach health and education targets, particularly in the least active young people.

The SIP2 events programme has integrated Equal opportunities and Diversity through various events:

- Intercultural Innovation Programme for SMEs - Cultural understanding and awareness are becoming essential skills for SMEs operating in a global environment so Sheffield Business School delivered a series of practitioner workshops through 3 four-hour interactive sessions. The workshops were aimed at those in operational or management roles who wish to boost their personal effectiveness and impact in international business ventures.
- Menopause in the Workplace - Each person experiences menopause differently – the physical symptoms are wide-ranging. The impact menopause has on organisations and the economy has been expounded. This 2-day workshop heard from a range of knowledgeable speakers, learning about recent cutting-edge research and discovering the best workplace practices to adopt to support employees through menopause.

8 PROJECT OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

Ideally, project impacts would be calculated by subtracting the impacts experienced by counterfactuals from those experienced by beneficiaries between the times that they start receiving SIP2 services and afterwards. However, as only 4 counterfactuals completed the survey, the economic deadweight component of the economic impact will instead be calculated by subtracting the percentage that beneficiaries attribute their impacts to factors other than SIP2.

The methodology employed for calculating the net Gross Value Added (GVA) impact of SIP2 is the following:

- A. The number of barriers to doing innovation/business that beneficiaries have overcome since joining SIP2, as reported by each beneficiary in their survey responses, was counted and multiplied by the percentage to which those same beneficiaries attribute overcoming those barriers to SIP2. In this way, the GVA deadweight of the reported reductions in number of barriers was subtracted from the gross direct effects. (Deadweight = the outcomes that would have occurred even if the SIP2 project had not taken place). The average number of barriers that survey respondents indicated had been overcome during their time on the project was 2.68. Once deadweight was removed, this became 2.29 barriers on average.
- B. The GVA gross direct effects were calculated by assigning an economic value to a beneficiary overcoming one barrier. This was done using the mean 3-year economic value of incremental product or service innovation calculated in “Innovation types and performance in growing UK SMEs” Oke et al. (2007), uplifted to 2023 figures (2% compounded annual inflation was assumed) and divided by 13, which is the number of barriers to innovation on which our survey focussed. Oke et al. report on a survey of UK SMEs in manufacturing, engineering, electronics, information technology and telecommunications industries – a very relevant study on which to base SIP2 economic analyses. The uplifted mean 3-year economic value of SIP2 helping a beneficiary to overcome a barrier was calculated to be £128,493.

The eligibility check carried out during registration of prospective beneficiaries ensured that none of the beneficiaries were outside of the target beneficiary group (SME based in the relevant UK eligible areas and seeking efficiency and productivity in logistics and supply chain operations). Hence, the GVA leakage of SIP2 outcomes to out-of-target beneficiaries is £0.

The evaluators could not find any instances of displacement arising from SIP2. For example, they could not find any instances of a business receiving free SIP2 services when they would otherwise have paid for them had project support not been available. Similarly, the assessors were reassured that the unique capabilities of SIP2 compared to other facilities meant that there was little possibility for this project to displace services offered at other facilities too. Therefore, we consider that the project has catalysed innovation that probably would not have taken place had the project not been available and we consider the GVA displacement to be £0.

As there were no criteria for beneficiaries and counterfactuals to meet in order to benefit from SIP2 services (e.g. they did not need to make a capital purchase or recruit a new employee in order to be eligible), the GVA substitution effects of the project is £0.

- C. The SIC codes of the beneficiaries were translated into Office for National Statistics Input-Output Analytical tables industries (updated data - April 2022) by matching the industry most closely related to each SIC code. The GVA multipliers for these industries were identified. For example, the GVA multiplier for “Business and domestic software development” is 1.567. This means that for every £1 increase in

GVA in that industry, there is 56.7p additionally created down the GVA supply chain (i.e. multiplier effects). These multiplier effects encompass both Type I multiplier effects (direct effects to the beneficiary companies, their employees and their supply chain companies and employees), as well as Type II multiplier effects (benefits resulting as a consequence of the Type I effects, e.g. increased disposable income of beneficiary and supply chain employees results in greater spending elsewhere in the economy).

- D. Finally, for each beneficiary who completed the survey, the number of barriers that they have overcome since joining SIP2 (bullet point A above) was multiplied by the 3-year economic value of overcoming one barrier for that same beneficiary (bullet point B above). Any instances of leakage, substitution or displacement relating to that beneficiary (bullet point C above) were subtracted from this amount. The resulting amount was then multiplied by the GVA multiplier (bullet point D above) to give the fully corrected 3-year GVA impact estimate for each beneficiary. These individual GVA impacts were then summed and extrapolated to estimate the fully corrected GVA impact for all 158 beneficiaries, i.e. it is assumed that the GVA benefits of SIP2 participation for all 158 beneficiaries is represented by the GVA benefits reported by the subset of beneficiaries who completed the survey.

As explained in bullet point E, the net impact is the following calculation:

Net impact = (Gross direct effects - Deadweight - Leakage - Displacement - Substitution) x Multiplier effects.

3-year net GVA impact = £30,972,660.50. This is a non-negligible GVA impact for the Sheffield City region. If we refer to 'Office for National Statistics (ONS), the GVA for South Yorkshire was approximately £19.3 billion in 2019.

The SIP2 project will have been one of the important steps taken to realise this GVA.

In the process of creating this GVA impact, employment impact was also created. This employment benefit was calculated as follows:

- F. The number of FTE jobs created or safeguarded in beneficiary companies since they joined SIP2, as reported by each beneficiary in their survey responses, was counted to give an estimate of employment gross direct effects. The employment deadweight was subtracted from this number by multiplying these same number of FTE jobs per beneficiary by the extent to which the beneficiaries attributed creation of these jobs to sources other than SIP2.
- G. Any employment displacement, substitution or leakage that occurred in the creation of jobs attributed to SIP2, as indicated by beneficiaries in their phone calls or surveys or by the SIP2 management and delivery team in the workshop discussions, were then also subtracted. These corrections were all deemed to be 0, for the same reasons as those described in bullet point C.
- H. The process described in bullet point D was repeated but this time to calculate employment multipliers for each beneficiary. For example, the employment multiplier

for the “Business and domestic software development” industry is 1.444. This means that for every 1 FTE increase in employment in that industry, there is 0.444 FTE additionally created down the employment supply chain.

- I. Finally, for each beneficiary who completed the survey, the deadweight was subtracted from the gross direct effects for each survey respondent (bullet point F). Any leakage, substitution and displacement (bullet point G) was subtracted from this amount. This amount was then multiplied by the employment multiplier effect (bullet point H) for each beneficiary. These amounts were then summed and extrapolated over all 158 beneficiaries to give the fully corrected employment impact.

Net employment impact = 199 FTE. This is a non-negligible employment impact for the Sheffield City Area.

The steps leading to calculation of net GVA impact and net employment impact for SIP2 are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Gross and Net Additional Impact for Employment and GVA (full project lifetime). All figures include Multiplier Effects as these are applied at the individual beneficiary level

Impacts		Measure	Adjustment
GVA (£)	Gross direct effects	£21.426m	-
	Minus Deadweight	£18.374m	14%
	Minus Displacement and Substitution	£18.374m	0%
	Minus Leakage	£18.374m	0%
	Net Additional	£30.971m	1.69 average Multiplier across beneficiaries
Employment (FTE)	Gross direct effects	409	-
	Minus Deadweight	121	70%
	Minus Displacement and Substitution	121	0%
	Minus Leakage	121	0%
	Net Additional	199	1.64 average Multiplier across all beneficiaries

The net economic impact is the sum of the GVA impact and economic employment impact. We assume the economic impact of the job creation outlined in Table 2 is £95,760 per job. This is the average 3-year salary for a technician in the Sheffield Region (Source UK Talent website, May 2023). Thus, the economic impact of the 199 jobs created with SIP2 help is £50,027m. Adding this to the GVA impact gives a **total net economic impact of £50,027m.**

In addition to the benefits of increased productivity and efficiency, new products, supply chains and competitiveness that this project has brought to the Sheffield City region, and the resulting GVA and employment impacts, other sources of Strategic Added Value that the project has created include:

- Maximising the value of the investment and time spent on the SIP2 project by transferring knowledge and skills to other in-house ERDF projects such as ScaleUp 360
- Strengthening the image of Sheffield Hallam University as a leading academic centre supporting innovation in SMEs across a wide range of sectors.

9 PROJECT VALUE FOR MONEY

Total funds to deliver the SIP2 project was £3,623,451. Balancing this total delivery cost against the 3-year net economic impact, we calculate the project value for money to be:

→ **Output/input unit cost: £12.81**

This means that for every £1 spent in delivering this project, £12.81 was created



The net economic impact was achieved with £2,174,070 cost to ERDF.

9.1 Benchmarking

Table 3 compares the value for money of SIP2 against comparable ERDF projects. The comparator projects were chosen either because they also had a business support element or grant available to companies and therefore offering a similar combination of services (access to grant and services).

Table 3: Benchmarking against comparable ERDF projects

Project name	Lead partner	Priority axis	Focus / sector	Total project value	Targets	Value for Money
SIP2	Sheffield Hallam University	1	SMEs innovation	£3.6m	C1x262 C4x262 C8x50 C26x131 C28x31 C29x62	£12.81
ISfB	OXlep	1	Engineering	£7.9m	C1 x 155 C2 x 29 C4 x 123 C5 x 13 C8 x 14 C25 x 3 C26 x 63 C28 x 11 C29 x 21 P12 x 368	£11.72
RADAR	AMRC NW / University of Sheffield	3d	Advanced Manufacturing	£3.86m	C1x200 C4x200 C5x25 C8x25 C29x32	£15.90
CIAMM	University of Birmingham	1	Quantum	£1.2m	C1 x 40 C4 x 40 C5 x 10 C8 x 5 C26 x 30 C26 x 5 C28 x 5 C29 x 10	£3.40
AMCASH	University of Birmingham	1	Advanced Manufacturing	£6m	C1 x 180 C4 x 180 C8 x 44 C26 x 141 C28 x 18 C29 x 95	£8.13
Manufacturing Growth Programme (PanLEP)	Economic Growth Solutions (West Midlands)	3c	Manufacturing SMEs	£10.5m	C1 x 2463 C2 x 2463 C5 x 141 C8 x 3566 C9 x 818 C6 x £9.6m	£6.78

ATETA	University of Birmingham	4f	Low Carbon	£4m	C1 x 100 C26 x 30 C29 x 20	£6.10
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Compared with comparable ERDF-funded projects, SIP2 represented a very good value for money: a return of investment of £12.81 per £1 invested. Given that the majority of this project was delivered during BREXIT and through the COVID-19 pandemic, this is a significant achievement.

10 CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNT

10.1 Conclusions

The SIP2 project has been able to capitalise on the Governance and processes in place for SIP1.

The strength of this project is in its ability to generate academic cooperation with SMEs and with the impressive number of C26 achieved by project end; and this, despite the COVID-19 pandemic and the few months where the universities were closed making the access to both academics and machinery/equipment difficult. However, the project adapted its services well, moving online first and then offering some hybrid intervention including some face to face and online interactions. The project has been able to engage with a wide range of sectors across the eligible area.

The delivery of SIP2 was particularly timely with the unplanned series of economic factors, helping companies to survive through challenging times, safeguarding and creating new jobs for the Sheffield area.

The Management Team worked hard to get a variety of referrals into the programme the SIP2 project has found its place amongst the innovation business support ecosystem of the area with good referral coming from the South Yorkshire Growth Hub.

The quality of the service being delivered is high with 80% of beneficiaries indicating that their expectations were very satisfied or satisfied with the service. This demonstrates a very professional Management Team.

The services found most useful were the academic expertise, 1.2.1 bespoke mentoring support and access to research facilities.

75.67% of companies reported making progress towards new-to-firm product or service with an increase in TRL of +2.79 and most companies reaching TRL level 9.

50% of the beneficiaries reported to have been badly or very badly affected by the pandemic but interestingly over a fifth have seen some positive impact from the pandemic, mainly on efficiency gain with the digitalisation of processes, many companies have changed their operations.

Over 40% of companies reported to be badly or very badly affected by BREXIT.

Over two third of companies reported to be badly or very badly affected by the Energy crisis.

One out of the six project targets will be met or exceeded. Two targets will be met above 95% attainment. One target will reach at least 85% and one target above 70%. Only C8 will fall significantly short.

The value for money was particularly good with every £1 invested in delivering this project, £12.81 was created.

For the remaining duration of the implementation of the project, the SIP2 Team needs to focus on getting all the evidence required to complete the final project claim.

The main themes of interest mentioned by the beneficiaries for future activities are: more technical support, academic expertise, grant funding, product and packaging design, marketing/web design and social media, mentoring and networking opportunities.

10.2 Lessons learnt

It is very valuable to have a project like SIP2 focussing on supporting innovation when a country is in need of revising/adjusting its export/import strategy through the disruption of supply chain through BREXIT, COVID-19 and energy crisis.

The effort involved to encourage academics to prioritise collaboration with industry and engage with industry projects like SIP2 generally should not be underestimated. It can take time for the value of collaborative working in projects like SIP2 to filter down from the project team to heads of departments to the academic staff themselves.

SIP2 has good complementarity offering with other ERDF projects delivered by the SHU such as with the ScaleUp 360 project. Referrals between projects allow a better offering to SMEs and great engagement in university cooperation.

The challenge is to tap into SMEs that are not already activated in business support or innovation as there is huge potential to transform these businesses compared with those that are already activated. Reaching unaware and unactivated businesses requires working through intermediary organisations.

SIP2 has been able to provide an easier access route into academics which is seen otherwise as a particularly complex landscape to navigate for both SMEs and support organisations.

10.3 Recommendations for legacy

- Find alternative sources of funding post ERDF to carry on offering the innovation support for the benefit of the City Sheffield businesses.
- Plan some further marketing activities promoting case studies, videos, podcasts etc. to disseminate the success and results of SIP2 more widely in order to attract further funding.
- Consider a legacy programme that can offer grant funding to businesses as well as bespoke innovation support and the access to advanced specialist equipment.
- Consider design for future support that balances targets with the in-depth support needs of participating businesses to avoid chasing numbers and providing deeper support to deliver greater impacts on the businesses.
- Explore replicating or widening the reach of the programme through a wider range of universities and geographies, given the specialised nature of the support offered.

11 GLOSSARY

ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
Managing Authority	DLUHC is the Managing Agent for ERDF Funding
DLUHC	Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
SMEs	Small and medium sized enterprises
Summative Assessment	Final evaluation of an ERDF project

12 TEAM CONSULTEES

Name	Role	Organisation
Andrew Armstrong	Development Manager	South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority
Joseph Beresford	Development Manager	South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority
David Curtis	Principal research fellow in the Sports Engineering Research Group	Sheffield Hallam University
Antony Davies	Client Relationship Manager,	Sheffield Hallam University
Natalie Fletcher	Operations Manager	Business Sheffield
Nick Hamilton	Support Engineer	Sheffield Hallam University
Ian Henderson	Senior Project Manager,	Sheffield Hallam University
Peter Hough	Project Support Officer	The University of Sheffield
Anthony Jones	Product Designer	Sheffield Hallam University
Paul Johnson	Key Account Manager	Barnsley Council
John Kirkby	Head of Design Futures	Packaging Studio
Lauren McConnell	Innovation Development Officer	Sheffield Hallam University
Paul Mitchell	Senior Programme Controls and Performance Manager	South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority

Alex Prince	Project Lead	Sheffield Hallam University
Daniel Philliskirk	Project Coordinator	Sheffield Hallam University
Rachel Scarfe	Project Administrator	Sheffield Hallam University
Laura Talbot	Regional Partnerships Development Officer	The University of Sheffield
Chris Sammon	Head of Materials and Research Engineering Institute	Sheffield Hallam University
Rose Tran	Incubation Manager	Sheffield Technology Parks
Tracy Viner	Executive Manager	Sheffield Chamber
Adrian Williamson	Innovation Support Project Manager	Chesterfield Borough Council

13 APPENDIX

Beneficiary Survey Responses

Aide Memoire notes from beneficiaries and wider Stakeholders