ICT Escalator
Summative Assessment Report

Version 3 Final

Date: 8th July 2019

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Report Contents

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Section 1 – Executive Summary

Under European Regional Development Fund guidance, all funded projects are required to submit a 'Summative Assessment' at the conclusion of the project. In order to comply with this requirement this report was commissioned, which seeks to establish the extent to which the University of Bedfordshire's ICT Escalator project has achieved its aims and objectives.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government specifies that summative assessments differ from a full evaluation as not all outputs may have occurred when the report is produced. They should consider;

- a review of project design
- evaluation of delivery performance including performance against targets
- process evaluation including approach to delivery and management
- economic impact evaluation including achievement of outcomes and impacts for beneficiaries and the local economy targeted
- economic evaluation focusing on value for money to the funders.

The specific aims of the University of Bedfordshire's ICT Escalator project can be seen in the Logic Model at Appendix C.

Method; in order to assess how well the project has adhered to the stated aims in the funding application, and achieved its objectives and target indicators, desk based analysis of project intelligence was carried out, and a survey distributed to each project client, and the results analysed. Feedback from client case studies developed by the project team, and post project evaluation forms were also analysed.

Findings; were considered relating to the financial management of the project and achievement of outputs, and from feedback from clients supported by the project.

Client Support;

Although the number of clients responding to the two survey stages of the ERDF project (post activity and during the summative assessment period) were perhaps lower than ideal, client clearly valued the support received through ICTE.

92% rated their action plans as having exceeded expectations and the individual benefits from the project (in increased turnover) were significant, although on a small sample.

 Client support activities also matched the intentions and aims of the overall project, with a variety of significant projects supported that created opportunities for growth.

The majority of questionnaire respondents (84%) were established SME's, suggesting that the focus of the project, and the marketing, were appropriate for the intended client group

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Finance and Project Management;

Initial issues with project management were resolved following an MHCLG visit.

A change request was submitted due to the withdrawal of the Open University from the project. Although the project value significantly reduced, outputs remained the same, offering improved value for money.

Finance claims remained behind schedule due to the wait of approval of the PCR (not received). This summative assessment has thus been based upon the most recently prepared claim (Q1 2019); not yet submitted. It can be assumed that project spend will be achieved to profile by the end of August 2019 based upon progress to date.

Outputs;

Good progress has been made to date towards the C1 target and it seems reasonable to assume that this target will be achieved, and possibly exceeded by the completion of the project.

Conclusion;

The ICT Escalator project is on course to achieve its financial and output goals by the 31st August 2019. Initial project management issues have been successfully addressed (reflected in the approved PCR). The University has put in place remedial actions to bring the project back on track despite the loss of the delivery partner, and has demonstrated robust systems and processes in place to successfully deliver the project.

Section 2 - Project Details

Description	Number
Project Name	University of Bedfordshire's ICT Escalator project
ERDF project number	31R15P00147
Fund	European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)
Priority Axis	Priority Axis 2
ERDF Contribution	£669,023
Match Funding	£739.456
Total project eligible cost	£1,408,479
Intervention rate	47.5%
Project start date	1 September 2016
Project completion date	31 August 2019

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Section 3 - Assessment Scope and Terms of Reference

In accordance with the objectives set out in the ERDF Full Application (and change request) the evaluation sought to establish:

- Whether the project objectives and focus as set out in the full application document are still relevant to the strategic context of the University of Bedfordshire's needs;
- The progress the project has made towards achieving its objectives as set out in the full application
- Progress towards achieving programme indicators (outputs and results) including examination of issues in relation to targets and deliverability
- Quality and effectiveness of project implementation and management including identification of weaknesses in systems/processes

The evaluation took account of the 'summative evaluation' logic chain for the project (see Appendix B). The final evaluation report will be presented as required to internal stakeholders.

Section 4 - Approach and Methodology

It was agreed that the approach to the project evaluation would be a simplified one, respecting the limited budget available. The evaluation would focus upon:

1. The achievement of project outcomes: did the project achieve its targets with regard to clients supported and outcomes achieved?
2. Were financial targets met?
3. Were changes to the project successfully implemented?
4. What learning could be taken from the project to inform and improve future projects and interventions with SME clients?

To prove the project outcomes were met and to support the logic theory (Appendix C), a data collection and analysis approach was utilised to evaluate the effectiveness of the project. The following was considered to assess the achievement of the intended project outcomes;

Evidence was gathered through desk analysis and relevant documentary evidence of activities and outcomes (publicity and marketing, events, claims and outcomes evidence) to assess financial performance of the programme, a review of programme outputs/results/performance and governance, and the effectiveness of marketing and communication activities. This was followed by an e-mailed questionnaire to all project clients and selective telephone follow up.

In summary the methodology adopted was;
- Inception meeting with the University of Bedfordshire to agree final project scope and reporting
- Initial study of project progress
- Study of relevant project evidence at the University office via table top review (claims evidence based upon completed claims rather than submitted, to give as comprehensive a picture as possible).
- Questionnaire responses analysis and telephone follow-up
- Further information supplied and analysed
- Interim report production
- Final report production
- Dissemination of report

Impact and benefit of the ERDF ICT Escalator Project

The overarching objectives of the project (reflected in the Logic Model) were to;

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- raise awareness of existing and new possibilities in ICT to every SME engaged by demonstrating the different models of ecommerce and how different sectors can use them
- increase the number of SME's making productive use of digital technologies
- supporting their capacity to grow in regional, national and international markets
- helping them to engage in innovation processes
- use digital technology with a purpose.

In order to assess the achievement of these objectives, all project applicants that have been clients of the project have been included in the process. A questionnaire was developed to provide the information needed to assess the impact of the project as perceived by the clients, and the information returned analysed for this report.

Lessons learned and how this can inform future activity

This report also highlights any lessons learned and provides a summary and suggested recommendations.

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Section 5 – Assessment of Project Delivery

5.1 Context

As set out in the ERDF Full Application, the University sought to support clients as follows (not all clients accessed all elements of support)

- Academic Support
- Action Planning
- Graduate Placement
- Financial Grant
- Additional support services
    - diagnosis of business needs
    - expert knowledge base consultancy developing new business models for SMEs
    - referral to other appropriate services (i.e. DIT/the Patent Box/TSB/HEI's)
    - IP protection and commercialisation advice
    - internships

The types of project that ICT Escalator was intended to support included upgrading infrastructure, servers, hardware, cabling and other ICT enabling equipment, and activities to improve digital utilisation in order to increase productivity. Projects delivered meet this intention well, respondents to the request from feedback represented projects including;

- Robotic process automation
- e-commerce adoption
- New web site build and adaption (multiple projects)
- ICT equipment purchase
- ICT support/advice
- CRM Assessment and Up-grades
- Marketing
- strategy support
- Sales and marketing planning
- Digital marketing

5.2 Communications and how did applicants learn about support available?

How did the respondent find out about ICT Escalator?	% of Clients	Notes
University direct marketing (e-mail)	40	
University event	10	
University social media	15	
Partner referral	25	SEMLEP Growth Hub (Velocity) and Wenta (Enterprise Agency) were most frequently referenced)
Word of mouth	10	
Totals	**100**	

The range of varied successful marketing methods utilised suggest that a full marketing strategy as deployed is necessary to attract a range of clients, although the Universities own direct methods were the most effective. A study of the less successful channels deployed could help develop future marketing initiatives and optimise the use of budgets. Clearly trusted regional partners are a valuable source of referrals.

5.3 Analysis of Clients Feedback

5.3.1 Action Plan surveys (sent to all clients upon completion of individual projects)

The first part of the assessment was to carry out an analysis of the post project surveys distributed by the University, followed by a study of the questionnaires distributed as part of the summative assessment process. In order to directly compare the questionnaire results, sent out as part of the summative assessment, with the client survey, client satisfaction responses have been grouped as;

Exceeded my expectations   (score 8-10)
Met my project expectations   (score 5-7)
Fell below my expectations   (score 1-4)

Analysis of the surveys found that;

- All clients were invited to complete a survey upon receiving their action plan
- Of 140 clients surveyed 60% completed and returned the survey (83 clients)
- 1% of respondents felt the support received fell below expectation, with 7% reporting that it met expectations
- Nearly 92% felt that the action plan exceeded expectations, a very high proportion of respondents.

Positive commentary received included;

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1. 'This was very new to us and our business. However it has worked very well and has given us a new insight and confidence' – *(HomeAid Community Care Service)*
2. 'I feel these programmes are great to help people like me in my business. Rachel was lovely and always had a great suggestions' – *(Loving Photos Moments)*
3. 'Great energy and atmosphere. Expert knowledge and information' - *(Nijota)*
4. 'It was wonderful to have a bird eye view of our organisation and a very perceptive report at the end of the process with a clear action plan. Inspired and looking forward to carrying it out' – *(Sinfonia Verdi)*
5. 'Some very Interesting Information. A good and thorough report' – *(TNH Enterprises)*

In addition to the positive feedback above, the University of Bedfordshire were able to generate 10 detailed and positive case studies from a wide range of clients, illustrating highly effective and varied University/SME collaborative projects.

5.3.2 Analysis of Questionnaires

In order to further evaluate the success of projects to date, questionnaires were sent out to client organisations as a direct part of the evaluation process.

A copy of the questionnaire is available. The level of response to the questionnaire was relatively low; probably due to the length of elapsed time after completion of project activity for some clients, and the nature of SME's, whereby once an initiative is complete other more recent issues take priority.

The survey included a number of questions relating to the type of support received and clients were asked to rate the support they received. The results are as follows:

Rating	% of Projects
Project did not proceed	15
Exceeded my expectations	42
Met my project expectations	25
Fell below my expectations	18
Totals	100%

Support received	% of Projects
Adviser support	100
Financial Grant	40
Graduate placement	15% (NB a further 15% plan to offer a graduate placement in the future)

Of the clients who returned the questionnaire, 15% were pre-starts, 25% were under 1 year old and the balance were established SME's

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Clients were also invited to add any relevant comments regarding the success or usefulness support received. Positive feedback included;

- 'would not have been able to make the significant investments needed without the grant'
- 'excellent support from the University team'

Some negative comments were also received which the University has followed up to understand more fully and address where possible;

- 'I need more help'
- 'it all just evaporated really. Probably my fault'

In addition, clients were asked (in addition to the target outcomes reported elsewhere) whether the project had helped contribute to a turnover increase and the amount of any increase that they could directly attribute to the project. 15% reported an identifiable increase in turnover, with a further 10% reporting an anticipated increase during their next two financial quarters.

The average attributable increase in turnover per client was £80,000.00. This figure is possibly artificially skewed by the small sample size, and not a fair reflection of the overall average across all projects supported.

5.4 Summary of Feedback

Commenting upon the survey and questionnaire analysis leads to the following conclusions;

- A significant majority of clients valued the action plan elements of the project highly
- Post client intervention, increased follow up activity should ensure a larger % of surveys would be returned and increase the quantity and value of feedback (60% received)
- Improved initial triage could reduce the amount of projects that do not proceed
- Regular follow up with clients would also;
  - enable project outcomes, not immediately realized, to be captured and reported
  - build an ongoing relationship between the client and the University
  - give opportunities for additional needs to be identified and met
  - enable the University to identify clients less than fully satisfied with the service received and respond appropriately
  - encourage more clients to assess the turnover (and profit/GVA) increase attributable to the project. The average figure reported in questionnaires returned is significant, but the survey sample was too small to enable this to

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be realistically extrapolated as an average across all participants. *If this simplistic methodology was applied to the total number for clients however, it would indicate that in excess of £10m of turnover increase could be attributed to the projects interventions.* Further evidence of this would be highly beneficial to the assessment for the project's success.

- o almost certainly increase the return of feedback to inform the summative assessment, giving enhanced intelligence to inform and improve future project, and other delivery, to SME clients
- The majority of questionnaire respondents (84%) were established SME's, suggesting that the focus of the project, and the marketing, were appropriate for the intended client group
- The considerable resource the University employed to develop case studies from successful projects has been well used. The resultant case studies have proven to be successful internally with academic staff and students (illustrating opportunities for projects) and as marketing materials to attract SME's into the University by demonstrating the range and variety of support services and collaborative opportunities available.

Section 6 - Project Financial Performance

6.1 Background

This section of the interim evaluation report offers an analysis of spend v spend profile up to the anticipated claim to be submitted for Q1 2019. At the time of writing submission of this claim was pending.

This analysis is therefore based on claims information submitted by the University, information contained in the Project Change Request (PCR) and completed claims prepared but not yet submitted.

It is clear that the project has undergone substantial changes since the submission of an ERDF Full Application. This is clearly illustrated by the project costs in the original Grant Funding Agreement (GFA), as compared to the current project costs submitted to the Managing Authority (Project Change Request - April 2019). It is noted that although the project value decreased significantly, target outputs remained the same (apart from P4 (see below)).

Substantive changes included the projects original delivery partner, the Open University, withdrawing from the project, substantially reducing the overall project value, and the removal of all P4 output targets due to most companies already achieving 30Mb broadband access, rendering this target meaningless. The withdrawal of the OU did create additional work to be done by the University of Bedfordshire and increased the use of their resources.

6.2 Claim to March 2019

Claims are submitted in line with spend categories agreed at the contracting stage. Each category has a spend profile. However, we have not examined spend by category for the purposes of the analysis below

Original Grant Funding Agreement Figures (Total)	Revised Project Costs (Total)	Profile Spend to end Q1 29019	Spend to end Q1 2019	%age of profile	%age of total spend
£2,718,269	£1,408,479	£965,542	£845,791	87.5%	60%

The delay in assessment of the submitted Project Claim request and anticipated new Grant Fundign Argument (promised by MHCLG), has resulted in a long backlog of unpaid claims and delays in being able to submit additional claims (the revised profiles in the PCR have been formally approved in late June 2019).

6.3 Compliance

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In May 2018 a compliance visit by MHCLG identified issues relating to the quality, level and detail of defrayal evidence provided by the University. A subsequent meeting in autumn 2018 clarified the required improvements to compliance, which were subsequently addressed, resulting in the reinstatement of claim payments.

The issue, whilst now resolved, did build in subsequent delays in claims submitted and payments made, which are now back on schedule. This also delayed the submission and (awaited) approval of the change request.

The University recognised the need for increased and improved internal resources applied the project, as some continuity from previous projects had been lost due to staff changes. The current (experienced) Project Manager has successfully brought the project back on track.

6.4   Conclusion

As any summative assessment has to be completed in advance of completion of the project, final performance can only be extrapolated from existing claims. From the evidence of spend up to the Q1 claim (to be submitted) it can be assumed that project spend will be achieved to profile by the end of August 2019. It should be noted that to date claims have only been paid up until Q1 2018, due to the extended period of waiting for a new Funding Agreement to reflect the revisions to the project in the PCR.

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Section 7 - Project Indicator Target Performance

7.1 Background

This section of the interim evaluation report offers an analysis of indicator versus indicator profile up to the end of March 2019. This analysis is based on claims submitted and those prepared by the University, but not yet submitted.

7.2 ERDF Project Targets and Profile

The indicator targets for the project originally, final project targets following the February 2018 PCR and progress to date are shown below.

Indicator Code	Output	Original Project Target	PCR (Final) Target	Claim to Q1 2019	%age of target achieved to date
C1	Number of Enterprises Receiving Support	150	150	139	93
C5	Number of New Enterprises Supported	65	65	25	38
C29	Number of Enterprises supported to introduce new to the firm products	84	84	20	25

7.3 ERDF Indicators not included

As indicated in 6.1, all P4 output targets were removed in the PCR due to most companies already achieving 30Mb broadband access, rendering this target meaningless.

7.4 Summary and Conclusion

Good progress has been made to date towards the C1 target and it seems reasonable to assume that this target will be achieved, and possibly exceeded by the completion of the project.

The original target for C5 seems unduly high, recognising the difficulty in engaging with start-up businesses, ensuring that they can provide evidence of being a new enterprise during the support period, and the stated aim of working with primarily established SME's. This target may have therefore been unrealistic; reflected in the anticipated final number of C5's (which appears likely to be below target).

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Further work seems necessary to capture outputs achieved in order to succeed on the C29 target, though it is likely that most, if not all, grant recipients will be able to provide evidence of C29 outputs.

Section 8 – Summary of Findings

The ICT Escalator project is on course to achieve its financial and output goals by the 31st August 2019. Initial project management issues have been successfully addressed (reflected in the approved PCR). The University has put in place remedial actions to bring the project back on track despite the loss of the delivery partner, and has demonstrated robust systems and processes in place to successfully deliver the project.

Learnings from the project include;

For the Managing Authority/SEMLEP;

Delivery partners, whilst useful for widening the geographic (and possibly sectoral) spread of the project and adding specialist expertise, can be valuable, but require significant management resource, and in this instance have been the main cause behind the Project Change Request. Other University partners are not necessarily as competent in running successful projects as UoB.

MHCLG response times will cause issues for cash flowing projects, and the ability to proceed as quickly as intended.

The strict timescales applied to projects do not allow budget to be spent on longitudinal follow up which, from client evidence, would provide greatly increased outputs over say the 12 months following project completion, attributable to the project (e.g. turnover increase, number of graduate placements).

Outputs (in this case the up-take of high speed broadband), can become meaningless due to external market changes (e.g. the removal of the P4 target as most SME's already have access to this broadband speed).

For the University

Post client intervention, increased follow up activity should ensure a larger % of surveys would be returned and increase the quantity and value of feedback (60% received)

Improved initial triage could reduce the amount of projects that do not proceed

Regular follow up with clients could;

- o enable project outcomes, not immediately realized, to be captured and reported
- o build an ongoing relationship between the client and the University
- o give opportunities for additional needs to be identified and met

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- o enable the University to identify clients less than fully satisfied with the service received and respond appropriately
- o encourage more clients to assess benefits directly attributable to the University's support
- o almost certainly increase the return of feedback to inform the summative assessment, giving enhanced intelligence to inform and improve future project, and other delivery, to SME clients

The considerable resource the University employed to develop case studies from successful projects has been well used. The resultant case studies have proven to be successful internally with academic staff and students (illustrating opportunities for projects) and as marketing materials to attract SME's into the University by demonstrating the range and variety of support services and collaborative opportunities available.

Of particular note is that one of the Case Studies developed has been used by Hertfordshire LEP, in their Local Industrail Strategy as an example of good practice, and that this client went on to a Knowledge Transfer Partnership project with the University of Bedfordshire.

General

Although outside the remit of this assessment – work carried out with other regional Universities would suggest that the University of Bedfordshire is significantly ahead of other HEI's, due to the availability of experienced personnel and highly developed processes to successfully manage projects of this kind.

The University has quickly responded to initial issues with the project and dealt with the withdrawal of the OU well, keeping the original targets intact.

Conclusion

The University's stance of ensuring that a single Director has oversight and in-depth knowledge of all large funded projects, has contributed to the success of ICT Escalator, as has the experienced project team and the application of proven processes.

The ICT Escalator project is on course to achieve its financial and output goals by the 31st August 2019. Achievement of the most important targets, and enhanced value for money, (as the reduced value of the project after the Change request did not result in correspondingly lower targets), look likely to be evidenced by the Financial Completion of the project.

Initial project management issues have been successfully addressed (reflected in the approved PCR). The University has put in place remedial actions to bring the project back on track despite the loss of the delivery partner, and has demonstrated robust systems and processes in place to successfully deliver the project.

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Appendix A – Summative Assessment Plan

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ERDF Summative Assessment Plan Form
ESIF-Form-1-012

Part 1 Project Summary

1.1 Applicant Details	
Applicant Organisation	University of Bedfordshire
Project Name	ICT Escalator – 31R15P00318
Programme Priority Axis	Priority Access 2: Enhancing Access To and Use and Quality of Information and Communications Technology
Name of ERDF Investment Priority	Technical Assistance
LEP Area (s) covered	South East Midlands
Total Project Value (£)	£2,718,269
Total ERDF sought (£)	£1,358,724

ESIF Category of Region	Less Developed	
	More Developed	X
	Transition	

1.2 Project Timetable	
Proposed Start Date	1 September 2016
Proposed Financial Completion Date	31 August 2019
Proposed Practical Completion Date	31 August 2019

1.3 Project Description (brief summary in max. 500 words)

"The main barriers to digital adoption are around attitude" (Lloyds, 2014) yet *"SMEs which make full use of the internet grow faster, export more, and create more jobs"* (HM Government (2013) Information Economy Strategy). This project changes attitudes by addressing awareness, capability, skills, and infrastructure and security concerns. ICT Escalator delivers much-needed and carefully designed specialist intervention to develop SMEs digital capability so that they can make

full use of the internet, build on existing business opportunities and create new innovative digital applications, platforms and services for business growth and smart specialisation.

ICT Escalator is not aimed just at ICT businesses; it aims to commercially develop all SMEs by helping them achieve income generation via online trade. The outputs, focused on the uptake of higher broadband speeds, will lead to an increase in jobs created and safeguarded, income generation and new infrastructure or platform development, new start-ups and further interaction with the regions knowledge base.

Using proven models of business engagement, the project builds on the achievements of recent regional projects such as UCMK's MK:Smart in Milton Keynes, the Knowledge Media Institute at The Open University and Innovation Bridge run by Central Bedfordshire Council and University of Bedfordshire. The area's knowledge base will transfer specialist capabilities and make available facilities and business support to SME's across the region to optimise their potential growth and benefit from high speed broadband and associated improved business models in a competitive global economy.

Clients need to engage in project activities at the level suited to their capabilities, (Digital Capability Programme 2015 evaluation) so the project has been designed to offer a range of interventions accordingly;

- Marketing to attract the widest engagement with SMEs but also with other disadvantaged groups such as women returners and rural businesses
- Creation of network via popup ICT demonstrator with self-assessment workshops
- Online materials and client workbooks to guide them through the journey and provide additional benefits outside the project
- Champions to demonstrate the potential of digital business and back office, and to represent the best of SEM at national and international exhibitions.
- Specialist triage to assess the potential benefits for a specific business with signposting to associated initiatives eg GoOnUk, CyberStreetwise, Velocity Growth Hub etc.
- Expert intervention to transfer knowledge, create roadmap and implement basic e-functions
- 30% grant funding for qualifying SMEs toward higher-order requirements such as specialist licensing, hardware or expert consultancy
- Provision of higher level interns to transfer capability to create more complex functions, platforms or integrate services
- Expert support at MK Data Hub and access to a specialist toolkit for the investigation, experimentation and development of new and innovative data-driven applications and services.

Part 2 Summative Assessment Plan

2.1 Statement of Objectives (max 500 words)

Please provide your objectives (i.e. a clear description of what you are hoping the project will achieve). Objectives should focus on describing what insights the summative assessment will seek to provide in respect of:
- The design of the project;
- How the project has performed against its targets;
- The nature of the project's outcomes and impacts and the value for money that has been achieved;
- The lessons which have emerged through the experience of delivering the project.

The project's objectives (as required by PA2b) are

- "*to increase the number of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises making productive use of digital technologies*",
- to introduce 84 new or significantly improved product platforms or processes within three years.
- to take companies who are not aware of how they could trade online to define and implement sensible, productive business models to suit them. This more complex requirement will reach **150** SMEs
- to increase entrepreneurship, particularly in areas with low levels of enterprise activity and amongst under-represented groups
- to increase the growth capacity of small and medium sized enterprises by inclusive use of Business experts alongside ICT expertise.

Aligned local objectives are:

- To increase investment in research and innovation by small and medium sized enterprises by supporting SMEs to engage with the wider regional knowledge base within 3 years;
- To provide a platform for SMEs for engagement and an introduction to the benefits of collaborating with a university and with Local Authorities, Police Trust Units and economic development agencies.
- To ensure that local businesses and communities can benefit from digital technological changes and market opportunities such as the high-speed broadband rollout programmes through demand stimulation and the exploitation of new and emerging digital technologies

2.2 Logic Model:

Have you completed the project logic model form and submitted it to us (see Appendix A of the summative assessment appendices)?	Yes ☑	No ☐

2.3 Approach, Methods and Tasks (max 500 words)

Referring back to the objectives of the summative assessment, please outline the methods that will be used to deliver the insights. The consideration of methods (see Appendix C of the summative assessment appendices) needs to encompass the progress, process and impact focused elements of the summative assessment.

Primary and Secondary evidence will be considered to establish if project outcomes were met, and to what extent. This will be gathered through-
1. Each quarter, the project will be internally evaluated by the project board, comprising representatives of the 11 SEMLEP area councils, business network leaders and the project director.
2. Desk-based analysis of the project tracker and relevant documentary evidence of activities and outcomes (publicity and marketing, events, claims and outcomes evidence).
3. This research will be followed by an e-mailed questionnaire to all TA recipients
4. In turn, this will be followed up by selective telephone interview.
5. A feedback event will be held in June 2019 to capture and showcase success stories.

The assessment will include the requirements to measure:

- The experiences of the SMEs
- The experiences of the delivery partners
- The benefits of the project in terms of impact of funded activities
- Take up rates of other services and programmes such as KTP
- The likelihood of SMEs going on to carry out further R&D or product or process development
- The likelihood of SMEs continuing to use universities to support their business growth
- The experience of the Strategic Partner Local Authorities, and quantification of the level of their interaction with SMEs from the project.
- The impact on the University services, benefits and lessons learnt
- University implementation post funding and potential commercialisation opportunities
- Key lessons learnt - analysis of risks and mitigations
- Comparisons to similar projects across the EU
- Conclusions and recommendations particularly with a view to future opportunities for the project.

2.4 Data and Monitoring (max 500 words)

Please briefly demonstrate that appropriate monitoring arrangements are in place to support strong and insightful summative assessment and confirm your commitment to collecting the minimum /

Process of data capture:

1. Triage will include a baseline capture of turnover/ employment rates/ aims/ environmental policy/ equality policy/ current online activity.
2. Project plans for each client will include a stated business objective
3. Output reports will include activity indicators for client signature
4. A library of case studies will be developed alongside the data to feed into a project evaluation on completion of the project.
5. Follow up documentation (asset tagging/ events/ evidence requirements for new products etc) will be completed by the team and collated centrally.
6. An internal report will be created for submission to the Small Business Charter Assessment
7. The external summative assessment will use each of these for desktop analysis before undertaking primary evidence capture

Previous national and regional projects have shown the need for a "baseline" when a company enters the programme. Each participating SME follows a process comprising of a number of steps at which data is captured. This data informs the capture of outputs and results in line with the running of other similar EU-funded economic development projects, with all requirements clearly set out in the documentation supplied to clients.

It is anticipated that some of the results would be realised after the activity stage and therefore the team will collect results up to 6 months from a client's completion of activity.

Additionally, it is thought that much of the data collection would happen virtually via the project website to make the client journey as simple as possible. However, it has been noted at an early stage that it has been difficult to capture reliable output evidence in this manner and instead SMEs will be visited to collect any outstanding data/evidence to ensure that the claiming of outputs is compliant.

2.5 Implementing the Summative Assessment (max 500 words)

An independent internal assessment will be undertaken at no cost to the project, as part of a planned submission to the Small Busines Charter.

An external assessment will be procured by invitation to tender as per the project application, a suitably qualified assessor will be appointed on the basis of a tender to be issued.
The contract value for the summative assessment has not been changed from the original costings. The appointment of the external consultant will be via a request for quotation.

It was noted that some consultants felt that the contract value was very much below market rate and would not consider providing a quotation for the carrying out the summative assessment. This feedback has been included in our Lessons Learned document that is shared across all of our ESIF projects.

The final report will be by end of July 2019.

The final report layout will mirror that of the Executive Summary Report template.

This will be based on the logic model and the evaluator guidance ESIF-GN-1034. This is reflected in the Invitation to Tender which is attached.

The methodology used to deliver the Summative Assessment will be;
- Inception meeting with University of Bedfordshire to agree final project scope and reporting
- Initial study of project tracker
- Study of relevant project evidence at University of Bedfordshire's office via table top review (claims evidence will be based upon re-filed claims (amended due to rounding error))
- Further information supplied and analysed
- Interim report production
- Final report production
- Dissemination of report

The consultant and University of Bedfordshire's Commercial Project Manager will communicate regularly to ensure that the project stays on track and to the required timeline.

2.6 Dissemination (max 500 words)

Please set out how you propose to disseminate and share the findings from the summative assessment.

The ICT Escalator Summative Assessment will initially be presented to members of the Innovation & Enterprise Service, following which it will be available on the ICT Escalator website. It will be available as a public searchable and downloadable document also accessed via the University of Bedfordshire's website.

Additionally, a copy of the report will be made available to SEMLEP ESIF Committee and to key strategic business partners.

I understand that, as a minimum, the full report needs to be shared with MHCLG and the summative assessment summary findings template (ref. ESIF-Form-1-014) must be freely available.	Yes ☑	No ☐

Signed as the agreed ICT Escalator Summative Assessment Plan;

By University of Bedfordshire;

Name: Nicholas Lancaster

Job Title: Director, Innovation & Enterprise

Signed:

Date:

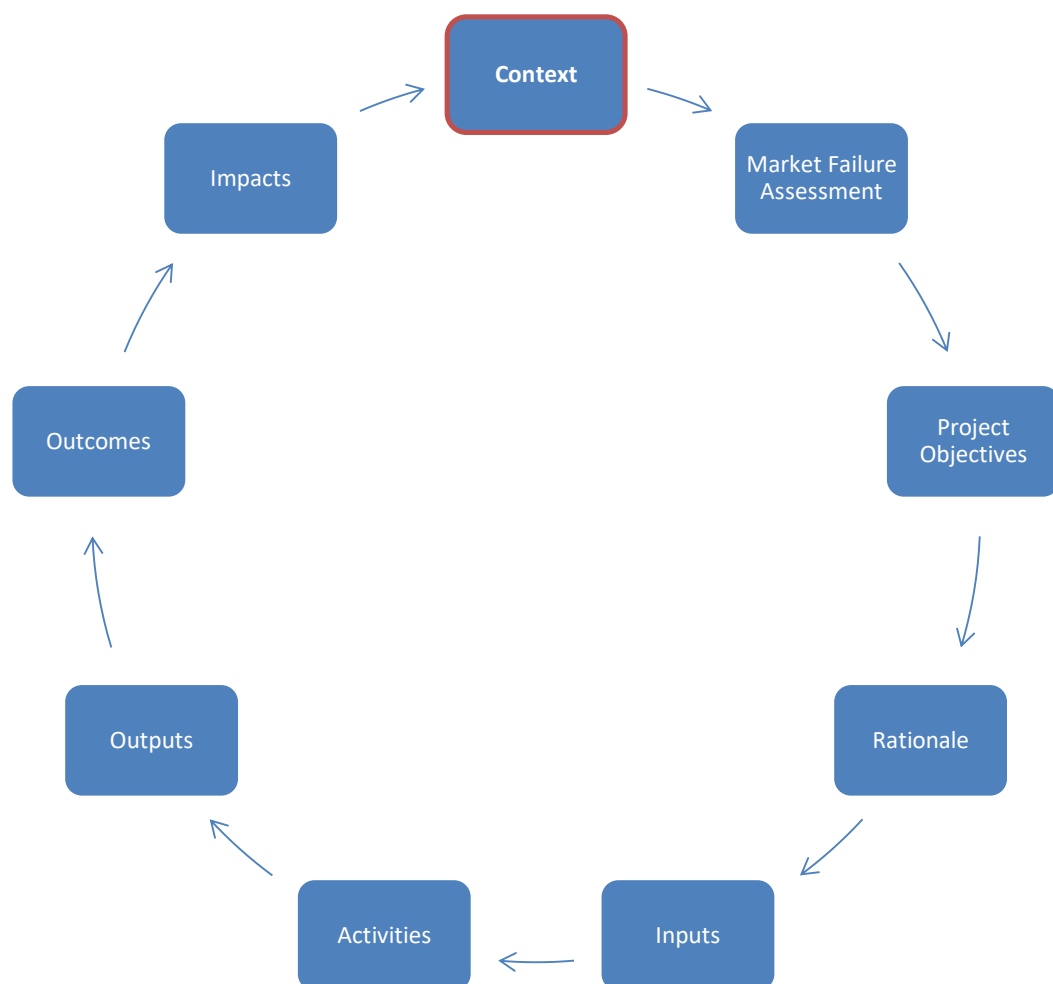By Deyton Bell Ltd. (consultants);

Name: Steve McAteer

Job Title: Director

Signed:

Date:

Appendix B – Logic Model

ERDF Summative Assessment Logic Model
ESIF-Form-011
Version 2 5th September 2016

Project

ICT Escalator

Click on the arrows to navigate around the model. Tables can be edited directly in the model. To edit free text, click Edit under each title

Context
Edit

Although British e-commerce offers such great opportunities for growth (16% last year), many companies in the UK have yet to take advantage. Just 33% of small to medium-sized companies have a digital presence and when we include voluntary, community and social enterprises (VCSEs) this figure rises to 50% - and only 14% sell their products online, yet research suggests that if UK SMEs fully adopted online technologies, they could increase annual turnover by £18.8 billion. Less than 50% of SMEs can accept online payments as they don't have a business model that supports it. 21% of Britain's population lack the basic digital skills and capabilities required to realise the benefits of the internet and SMEs struggle to keep up with emerging technologies such as mobile-enabled sales platforms and when we include exploit them. UK companies need to stay ahead of the game and capitalise on the rapid growth of mobile technology and social media to find new export customers (only 1/3 trade abroad), stats from UKTI reveal that companies which export see a 34 per cent increase in productivity within their first year of exporting, but many SMEs say they don't know where to start. Only 11 per cent of SMEs overall have e-commerce where customers can order and pay for goods or services directly from the website. ICT Escalator delivers much-needed and carefully designed specialist intervention to reduce the risk in developing

Market Failure Assessment
Edit

The market failure of digital engagement is a national one. Unlike large firms, SMEs tend to be far more reliant on their technology suppliers for input on IT strategy, but Application Service Providers often don't work out the business model the SME needs for e-commerce. SMEs are reluctant to buy in expert consultancy to address this, as the SME often lacks sufficient knowledge to hold the consultant to account. Over 60% of all businesses that do not have a website do not think that a website would help their trade, they think they have no goods or services that could be ordered online. Without ICT Escalator, SMEs and social enterprises may continue to have low expectations of how they can transform their business performance through online trade, losing the competitive edge to keep pace in an increasingly global trading economy. Low IT skills within the SME general staff create internal barriers to adoption, but SMEs find it difficult to recruit suitably skilled workers. Highly publicised cybercrime and associated fines for companies create fear of adoption. Open Source solutions are misunderstood as "open book" solutions, although they still require skilled implementation. Less digitally mature groups still don't understand the benefits of being online and therefore aren't as clear and as positive about how this can help their organisations to grow. Higher maturity groups have taken standardised offers (website, e-commerce) as far as they

Project Objectives
Edit

The project will raise awareness of current and new possibilities in ICT to every SME engaged by demonstrating the different models of ecommerce and how different sectors can use them. ICT Escalator will increase the number of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises making productive use of digital technologies, supporting their capacity to grow in regional, national and international markets and to engage in innovation processes so they use digital technology with a purpose. It aims to commercially develop all SMEs by helping them achieve income generation via online trade. It will enhance access to, and increase the use and quality of, ICT and Broadband provision for SME's by changing perceptions of cost/

Rationale
Edit

Face-to-face, paid-for and/or local support are the most effective ways to upgrade SME digital skills, with owners clearly preferring to use someone they perceive to be an 'expert' in the field. The central premise is a multi-level offer so it is relevant to companies of varying ability. The workshops, roadshows and online resources have been designed for maximum participation and open access, this feeds more potential clients into the project and overcomes the first hurdle, that the digital arena is particularly fast-moving, and that SMEs can struggle to keep up-to-speed with the latest developments. Roadshows and Networks automatically include a triage process regardless of whether the company then proceeds with the project allowing for signposting if needed which may otherwise not happen. The initial 3-5 day expert engagement is cost-zero to the company to overcome the lack of knowledge/ known cost barriers of engaging

Inputs

What	Value
ERDF funding	£1,358,724
Match Funding from University of Bedfordshire	£631,129
Match funding from Open University	£502,416
Private Sector Capital investment	£210,000
Private Sector Revenue Investment	£16,000
Recruitment of 1 Business Partnership Manager, 1 Project	inc above
Recruitment of 2 Big Data Developers	inc above
Recruitment of 1 Big Data Systems Officer	inc above
Recruitment of 1 Project Officer	inc above
MK Data Hub	8,000,000

Intended Impacts

What
More SMEs trading via online portals/ websites/ applications.
More people employed in the target companies to do digital work
Increase in revenue and profitability for beneficiary SMEs
Increased exports by beneficiary SMEs
Creation of new digital products and services centred in the SEMLEP area
Improved productivity in beneficiary SMEs
55 new companies started in the digital space, creating new jobs
Improved market resilience through improved ability to innovate

Outcomes

ID	Intended Outcome	How is it Measured?	Level	Baseline	Actual
1	Increased GVA	Turnover of business after 12 months and 24 months as	Business	Created as each SME is accepted	
2	New companies created	Company status recorded at Companies House	Project	0	
3	Increase in online trade in the region	Questionnaire - No of SMEs taking online payment/	Business	33%	
4	Increased exports from SEMLEP	Turnover of business allocated to exports - recorded by VAT	Business	Collection of VAT returns per	
5	SMEs with improved capacity through job creation	No of staff at outset, no of staff employed 12 months after	Project	Employment numbers	
6	Growth in SME's capacity to innovate	Questionnaire and signed training documents around new	Business	0	

Outputs

What	Value
150 Business Models/ Business Cases/ Market	
18 New products and services developed to TRL6	
55 new SMEs supported to start up in the digital space	
84 SMEs supported to introduce "new to the firm"	
100 Additional businesses taking up broadband with	
300 SMEs engaged at events, aware of new possibilities and	

Activities

What
Regional Roadshows
Regional Open Online Course/ resources
Regional Champions
Triage
Academic Consultancy
Digital Capability Grant

3 way partnership involving placement of programmer
Data Hungry Development

Logic Model Text Values

Values are stored in this table to facilitate later import into the IT system. Once you have recorded your value, use the link to see the text within the logic model

Name	Value	Return	Character Length
Context	Although British e-commerce offers such great opportunities for growth (16% last year), many companies in the UK have yet to take advantage. Just 33% of small to medium-sized companies have a digital presence and when we include voluntary, community and social enterprises (VCSEs) this figure rises to 50% - and only 14% sell their products online, yet research suggests that if UK SMEs fully adopted online technologies, they could increase annual turnover by £18.8 billion. Less than 50% of SMEs can accept online payments as they don't have a business model that supports it. 21% of Britain's population lack the basic digital skills and capabilities required to realise the benefits of the internet and SMEs struggle to keep up with emerging technologies such as mobile-enabled sales platforms and how to exploit them. UK companies need to stay ahead of the game and capitalise on the rapid growth of mobile technology and social media to find new export customers (only 1/3 trade abroad), stats from UKTI reveal that companies which export see a 34 per cent increase in productivity within their first year of exporting, but many SMEs say they don't know where to start. Only 11 per cent of SMEs overall have e-commerce where customers can order and pay for goods or services directly from the website. ICT Escalator delivers much-needed and carefully designed specialist intervention to reduce the risk in developing SMEs digital capability so that they can make full use of the internet for growth and export, build on existing business opportunities and create new innovative digital applications, platforms and services. The outputs, focused on the uptake of higher broadband speeds, will lead to an increase in jobs created and safeguarded, income generation and new infrastructure or platform development, new start-ups and further interaction with the region's knowledge base.	Return to Logic Model	1895
MarketFailure	The market failure of digital engagement is a national one. Unlike large firms, SMEs tend to be far more reliant on their technology supplie	Return to Logic Model	1895
ProjectObjectives	The project will raise awareness of current and new possibilities in ICT to every SME engaged by demonstrating the different models of ecommerce and how different sectors can use them. ICT Escalator will increase the number of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises making productive use of digital technologies, supporting their capacity to grow in regional, national and international markets and to engage in innovation processes so they use digital technology with a purpose. It aims to commercially develop all SMEs by helping them achieve income generation via online trade. It will enhance access to, and increase the use and quality of, ICT and Broadband provision for SME's by changing perceptions of cost/ security risk and overcoming a lack of technical understanding and/ or a lack of a clear business driver. It will create entirely new products and services which envelop the big-data and smart cities agendas.	Return to Logic Model	1895
Rationale	Face-to-face, paid-for and/or local support are the most effective ways to upgrade SME digital skills, with owners clearly preferring to use someone they perceive to be an 'expert' in the field. The central premise is a multi-level offer so it is relevant to companies of varying ability. The workshops, roadshows and online resources have been designed for maximum participation and open access, this feeds more potential clients into the project and overcomes the first hurdle, that the digital arena is particularly fast-moving, and that SMEs can struggle to keep up-to-speed with the latest developments. Roadshows and Networks automatically include a triage process regardless of whether the company then proceeds with the project allowing for signposting if needed which may otherwise not happen. The initial 3-5 day expert engagement is cost-zero to the company to overcome the lack of knowledge/ known cost barriers of engaging an agency/ perception that online trading is not a priority - these are given as reasons by up to 61% of SMEs for non-participation. The short-term placement of a graduate is designed to overcome the initial reluctance to hire an expert member of staff, which is a barrier to 40% of SMEs. The grant programme is relatively small, purely to provide the SME with help to elevate the other parts of the business infrastructure if required. The champion programme is designed to present the capability of the entire SEMLEP region to others, and also to attract new businesses into the network for cross-selling opportunities. The Data Hungry development aspect is designed for companies that already have some online trade or offer and that need to step up into the topmost level of ermerging technologies.	Return to Logic Model	1895