



## SUMMARY OF SURVEY WITH SUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS TO THE 2022/2023 CHALLENGE FUND AND CASE STUDIES OF 2022/2023 FUNDED PROJECTS



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In October 2022, the Department for Transport (DfT) launched the Generation Aviation campaign. This is a joint project between HM Government and industry that aims to raise the profile of aviation careers and remove barriers to access, so the sector can build a workforce fit for the future. As part of this, the Reach for the Sky (RFTS) Challenge Fund was designed to specifically focus on Aviation outreach work.

DfT commissioned Frontier Economics and SYSTRA Ltd. to undertake monitoring and evaluation activity of the RFTS Challenge Fund to develop the evidence base on outreach programmes in the aviation sector. This involves a survey of 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 applicants, three case studies of projects who received funding from the 2022/2023 Fund, and collation of monitoring data from projects who received funding from the 2023/2024 Fund.

This document provides a summary of findings from the survey of 2022/2023 Challenge Fund successful applicants and the three case studies of projects who received funding from the 2022/2023 Fund.

Thirteen projects applied for funding from the 2022/2023 Reach for the Sky (RFTS) Challenge Fund, and eleven applications were successful. The survey was sent to those who were successful. Funding of £700,000 was distributed to these projects, to be delivered during 2023.

The online survey was completed by eight of the 11 projects which received funding from the 2022/2023 Challenge Fund. It was distributed at the end of 2023 (the end of the funding period). Of the eight respondents, seven were charities, not-for-profit organisations or community interest companies, and one was a national sports body. The three case studies involved in-depth interviews with project staff to enhance understanding of what had been delivered by the projects, and their experiences of applying for and delivering their projects.

## 2. KEY FINDINGS FROM 2022/2023 SURVEY

### **Most survey respondents became aware of the Challenge Fund through DfT or CAA**

Respondents had been made aware of the 2022/2023 Challenge Fund through direct communication with either the DfT or the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), or with other networks/contacts. Half were satisfied with the way the Challenge Fund was promoted by DfT and the CAA, and the rest were either unsure, or said they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

### **Most respondents considered all elements of the application process to be clear**

The clarity of a number of different elements of the application process were explored with respondents including the: competition process, application form, payment schedule, amount of funding that would be provided, information and guidance, eligibility criteria and assessment criteria. Respondents' perception of clarity was broadly similar for each aspect. For each, over half were

satisfied, no more than one was dissatisfied, and the remainder were either unsure, or said they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

### **Over half of respondents were satisfied with the application process overall**

Satisfaction with the application process was highest when considering the amount of time applicants had to prepare their bid, and the time it took to allocate funding, with all but one feeling satisfied with these elements. Satisfaction was lowest when considering the time it took DfT/CAA to process applications and notify applicants about the outcomes, and the amount of time it took DfT/CAA to clarify questions about the competition, with only half of respondents indicating satisfaction with these elements.

### **Schools were the most frequently used recruitment partner**

Respondents used a variety of means to promote their project and to recruit participants. Social media, the internet, and colleges/universities were the most common channels for project promotion. Local interest groups and after-school activities were also used by about half the projects as a means of promotion. Schools were the most common channels for recruiting participants.

### **Most respondents were still completing project delivery at the time of the survey**

Seven respondents said that their projects were still being delivered, and one had completed delivery. Projects varied widely in terms of the activities delivered, the number of people engaged with, the types of people and age groups that were targeted, geographic coverage and delivery partners. Detailed project examples are provided in the case studies in Chapter 3.

### **Around half of respondents experienced barriers, including finding participants and timescale challenges**

Challenges relating to recruitment of staff, staffing more generally, equipment and technology, partners/collaborators/external people, safety and safeguarding requirements, finding suitable venues and budget were each faced by two or three of the eight respondents. No respondents reported having experienced challenges in collaborating with either DfT or the CAA in delivering their projects.

### **Respondents were happy to collect monitoring data, but some barriers were faced**

All respondents reported feeling confident about their organisation's ability to collect the required monitoring data for delivering their project, at the time they applied for funding. Overall, most reported being satisfied with the type of data they were required to collect for monitoring, the frequency of data collection and progress reporting, and their expected attendance at the quarterly monitoring meetings with the DfT and CAA (including the document completed for this). Most respondents viewed the requirements for collecting the data as clear during the application process, and only one thought it was unclear once they had received funding. However, time required to collect

data, participants being unwilling or unable to provide data, and children's age impacting on their ability to reflect were noted as barriers to producing monitoring data for at least half the projects that responded to the survey.

### **Data on activities delivered, demographics and impact were widely collected**

All respondents collected data on the number of distinct events delivered and the number of people they engaged with, and, where applicable, all collected information on the number of schools and educational institutions involved and number of visitors to online resources. Data on a wide range of participant demographics were collected by most respondents (although only two collected information relating to special education needs and/or disabilities), and almost all respondents collected information on participants' intention to explore aviation careers further, knowledge of aviation and awareness of aviation careers.

### **All projects wish to re-apply to future Challenge Funds and almost all anticipate continuation of their projects after funding ends**

Respondents were unanimous in reporting they are very likely to apply to future Challenge Funds, and most were very likely (and the remainder quite likely) to apply to other DfT and CAA competitions in the future. With regards to the future of their funded projects, all but one of the eight projects indicated that they were likely to continue delivering their project after the allocated RFTS funding comes to an end, five of whom indicated this was very likely.

### **Conclusion from the 2022/2023 survey**

Amongst the eight recipients of the 2022/2023 Reach for the Sky Challenge Fund who responded to the survey, there were generally good satisfaction levels with (or ambivalence towards) the promotion of the fund, the application process, and information provided on expectations relating to monitoring. Areas where satisfaction was not as high enable consideration of improvements for future Funds.

Fund recipients have shown variety in the types of activities delivered, the numbers and types of people engaged with, and approach to promoting projects and recruiting participants. They have been confident in their ability to collect monitoring data, and have collected a wide range of demographic and attitudinal data.

Some challenges with delivery were experienced, highlighting potential areas where support and advice may be beneficial for future Fund recipients, in particular relating to recruitment of participants and timescales, and to a lesser extent to staffing, equipment and technology, partners, safety and safeguarding, venues and budget.

Continuation of projects beyond the 2022/2023 Challenge Fund was considered likely by almost all current recipients, with high levels of intention to apply to future Challenge Funds and other DfT and CAA competitions in the future. This implies that the impact of the Challenge Fund on delivery of outreach work in the aviation sector is likely to reach beyond the Challenge Fund period itself.

### 3. CASE STUDIES

Three of the eight projects that responded to the survey of successful 2022/2023 Challenge Fund applicants were selected as case studies: Aerobility; Resilient Pilot, and World War 1 Aviation Heritage Trust (WW1 AHT).

These projects, described on the following pages, were selected to demonstrate some of the range and diversity of activities delivered, key successes and impacts, and lessons learned.

Interviews, each lasting about one hour, were conducted with members of the three case study project teams. The interviews provided an in-depth insight into the projects, exploring their responses to the online survey in greater depth, as well as additional areas of interest. The key focus was on experiences of applying for funding; designing their project; delivering their project, including key successes and barriers, and plans for future delivery.

Interviews with case studies were conducted in February and April 2024. Recall bias may have impacted findings relating to the 2022/2023 application process because (a) the RFTS Challenge Fund 2022/2023 competition took place a long time before the interview (between July and December 2022), and further, the application process for the 2023/2024 RFTS Challenge Fund had also more recently been completed by all 2022/2023 case studies. To mitigate against recall issues, the 2022/2023 application form was offered to be shared on screens during the interview to refresh memories where desired. In addition, interviewers prompted participants during the interviews that their responses should only relate to their experiences of applying for and delivering the projects that were funded through the 2022/2023 Challenge Fund.

### About Aerobility

Founded in 1993 and run by disabled aviators, for disabled people, Aerobility represents disabled aviators in the UK, and provides people with disabilities opportunities to fly.

In order to directly affect the aerospace industry, Aerobility was inspired by the RFTS objectives to design a charter for the wider aviation industry to:

- Engage positively with disability;
- Contribute towards the goal of ensuring everyone has equal access to employment, products and services in the aviation industry.

### Project objectives

Short term:

- Change perceptions of disability within organisations in the aviation sector;
- Convince organisations to recognise the talent disabled people have, and the benefits of hiring them;
- Start the debate and get organisations in the aviation sector to engage with disability.

Long term:

- Affect real positive change in terms of perceptions of disability and employment rates for disabled people;
- Create a community with different levels of support for organisations;
- Build an accreditation system.



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*“The idea we have is largely to help industry see the benefit of recruiting people with disabilities.”*

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### What was delivered?

- An Equal Skies Charter to increase disability engagement in the aviation industry was developed and disseminated– 14 organisations across aviation disciplines have signed up to it.
- An awareness-raising campaign was undertaken aimed at encouraging industry partners to sign the Charter, which included a strategic social media campaign to spark debate and engagement in the industry (200+ followers on LinkedIn).
- An online Resource Hub with research and other learning and development materials was created.
- A workshop for Charter members was delivered, as well as a conference aimed at raising awareness of disability employment within the aviation sector (attended by 25 different aviation organisations).
- A survey targeted at industry was distributed to measure engagement with disability inclusion pre- and post-engagement with Aerobility.

## Key successes and impacts

Working for over 30 years as a charity, Aerobility has observed a lack of engagement with disability in the aviation sector. To address this, they have used RFTS funding to develop their Equal Skies Charter and an associated research hub. These were developed to enable and encourage positive engagement about disability in the aviation sector, and to move towards a future where everyone has equal access to employment, products and services in the aviation industry.

By engaging with the industry about their Charter, through social media including LinkedIn, their website, and their conference, Aerobility has successfully increased awareness and industry buy-in relating to disability in the industry. They are proud to have achieved many Charter signatories and to have successfully delivered a full-day conference to discuss with industry how to increase the recruitment of disabled people into aviation employment.

Aerobility acknowledge that what they have achieved through RFTS funding could not have happened without them leveraging their existing relationships with industry and government. Benefitting from their three decades of operation and the networks they have established over that time, Aerobility were able to co-produce a charter that would motivate their target groups and correlate with policy priorities.

## Lessons learned

When conducting desk-based research to inform the design of their project, Aerobility perceived that the predominant approach to increasing diversity in aviation was marked by 'naming and shaming' organisations that have insufficient diversity. However, Aerobility's charter is more positively framed than other initiatives, aiming to motivate industry to strive for a more accessible future.

With their extensive experience as a disability charity, Aerobility were aware when designing their project that change doesn't happen overnight. According to Aerobility, attitudes about physical fitness and health as a requirement to work in aviation are pervasive and deeply rooted. They therefore designed their project acknowledging that affecting change in the aviation industry would have to be an incremental effort requiring patience and setting aside sufficient time to be able to see tangible results.

Whilst Aerobility had hoped to collect baseline accessibility data from across industry to enable measurement of success, they found that many industry organisations are hesitant to share employee disability monitoring data, potentially because they are concerned this will reflect negatively upon their organisation. They are hoping to have more success with encouraging organisations to collect and share this information in the future.



## Next steps

Aerobility are continuing to deliver their RFTS-funded programme, having had the funding period extended by another year. They are starting to see genuine engagement from industry, partially based on industry participation in their recent conference. To expand upon the Equal Skies Charter and its associated efforts, Aerobility are planning to develop an industry self-assessment toolkit, including self-assessment tools, building a support network for likeminded organisations, and appointing a Charter board.

*"[The RFTS Challenge Fund] is an opportunity to collaborate in a positive way with the industry to improve diversity."*



## About World War 1 Aviation Heritage Trust (WW1 AHT)

Established in 2014, WW1 AHT works to provide an enduring flying collection of World War 1 Allied and German Aeroplanes, their goal being to educate current and future generations as testimony to the aircrews of the Great War, their planes, and their sacrifice.

The purpose of their RFTS-funded project was to encourage and inform Year 5 and 6 pupils about careers in aviation, whilst helping them understand the origins of the flying machine and the prominence it took during WW 1.

## Project objectives

Short term:

- Entertain and engage pupils so they leave the activity with a positive feeling about aviation.

Long term:

- Motivate young people to pursue careers in aviation.
- Increase understanding of WW1.



## What was delivered?

- Visits to nearly 60 Essex schools where students were able to use WW1 AHT's Flight Simulator with a virtual reality game, learn about the simulator's designer, who was the RFC's first flying ace, and take part in a poetry writing workshop.
- More than 3,000 of these poems, written by pupils on seeded paper, will be dropped from a historical aircraft onto a WW1 battlefield in northern France in July 2024, in remembrance of WW1.
- More than 3,000 pupils have taken part in WW1 AHT's educational school visit.
- 137 schools applied for a WW1 AHT day visit. Schools in deprived areas were prioritised for the visits.

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*"For us, the reward is the reaction and response in the children".*

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### Key successes and impacts

WW1 AHT are proud of their RFTS-funded project, having elicited enthusiasm in aviation in a wide range of children. Their programme has been delivered to over 3,000 throughout Essex, and the organisation find that they have been successful in increasing pupils' knowledge of the aviation industry and WW1. The organisation find that the increased knowledge in pupils is evidenced in the poems they write, as these show they have reflected on what they have been taught. When designing their project, WW1 AHT had intended to target 50 schools, and they have now successfully delivered to nearly 60 schools.

By combining more traditional classroom teaching about WW1 and developments in aviation technology, with poetry writing and use of flight simulators, the WW1 AHT team have managed to engage children with a wide range of interests and abilities.

The RFTS Challenge Fund has enabled them to deliver their activities at no charge to schools. By engaging with a local gatekeeper from the Essex Head Teachers Association, they have also succeeded in targeting the delivery of their project to schools in diverse communities and deprived areas.

### Lessons learned

In delivering this project, WW1 AHT learned the importance of being agile and adaptable to individual school circumstances, as well as to last-minute changes. In order to deliver their programme in a way that suited the individual school, they tailored it to the needs of the school, and where necessary, shortened their programme from a full day to a half day to fit in with other priorities of the school.

WW1 AHT's team of volunteers were enthusiastic and committed, but nevertheless were geographically dispersed and needed to fit their volunteering around their paid work. A key learning for the organisation was that volunteers are a limited resource and need careful management to manage last-minute changes in terms of resource logistics, and that a contingency allocation of funds is required.

WW1 AHT experienced some challenges documenting project delivery due to diversity data not being readily available. Schools' data often lacked the desirable level of detail to enable them to report accurately on diversity. As a result, reporting needed to be based on existing data sources such as proportions of pupils with special educational needs (SEN), speaking English as a second language, and eligibility for free school meals. Across all the schools visited, the pupil population consisted of 30 percent or more of at least one of these characteristics.

### Next steps

WW1 AHT have been able to extend their delivery, enabling them to reach more schools in Essex. Because of the complicated logistics of transporting a flight simulator, their delivery is focused on Essex. As they have not been awarded further RFTS funding, they will now target future school visits to schools which can pay. They intend to apply again for future rounds of funding.

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*“Our offering is universally welcomed by the children, the staff, and our team of 10 who are invariably charmed by the enthusiasm of the children.”*

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## About Resilient Pilot

Celebrating its fourth anniversary in 2024, Resilient Pilot was established in response to the COVID pandemic, providing support, networking and continual development for pilots and other aviation professionals who had been displaced due to the disruption of international and local travel.

Finding great alignment between the objectives of Resilient Pilot and the Challenge Fund, Resilient Pilot drew upon their past experiences of engaging with young people, through previous careers in teaching, to design their project. Resilient Pilot delivers aviation workshops to schools in deprived areas, to address the aviation industry personnel shortage, build competencies, and to work towards a more diverse industry in the future.

## Project objectives

Short term:

- Inspire young people to start their initial aviation training.
- Develop young people's confidence, competence and connection to the aviation sector.
- Support young people from all backgrounds who dream of becoming aviation professionals.

Long term:

- Address the ongoing personnel deficit in the aviation sector.
- Diversify the aviation sector of the future by ensuring representation from across the UK, including deprived areas.

## What was delivered?

- Near 10,000 students attended a combination of in-person and virtual Inspiration Workshops and assemblies at schools, delivered by dedicated aviation professionals serving as mentors.
- Workshops were delivered to Year 7, 8 and 9 students in Greater Manchester.
- Just over 250 of these students joined Resilient Pilot's 5-year development programme.
- Development programme students were able to take part in educational visits to Manchester Airport.
- The programme was expanded to 18-25-year-olds, able to join monthly Personal Development and Competency Workshops.

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*"We are increasing social mobility. We're increasing opportunity for those who would not otherwise have had that opportunity [to pursue careers within aviation]"*

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### Key successes and impacts

When they designed their project, Resilient Pilot wanted to make sure they were able to follow young people longer term, as desk-based research they had conducted showed that enduring contact was required to impact young people into pursuing training and careers in education. They therefore designed a 5-year programme to follow on from an initial one-off inspiration session, and so far, 250 of the 10,000 young people they have engaged with have joined the longer-term development programme.

Resilient Pilot ensured local buy-in and targeted delivery of their RFTS-funded programme by collaborating with the local authority to recruit schools for them. The local authority had the knowledge required to nominate schools most suited to achieve the programme objective of reaching pupils in deprived areas, and facilitated communication between Resilient Pilot and the schools.

Resilient Pilot attribute much of their success to their iterative approach to programme design and delivery. By starting project delivery early, they avoided delays and were able to continuously improve the delivery of their programme.

### Lessons learned

Prior to designing their programme, Resilient Pilot conducted desk-based research on motivation and how to affect change in individuals' education and career choices. They found that longer-term thinking and multi-year projects involving the same individuals are required to carry young people through from initially being inspired by aviation, to them pursuing the relevant educational pathways and careers.

During the delivery of their programme Resilient Pilot learned that schools were less able to engage during the exam period in June and July. This led to a change to the timing of delivery of the programme, focussing their delivery between September and May.



### Next steps

Resilient Pilot are continuing to deliver their outreach programme to young people. With no external funding at the present time, they are currently self-funded and building on the success of their previous one-off inspiration sessions.

Resilient Pilot are now focussing their efforts on a lighter-touch 20-minute inspiration workshop aimed at 16- to 18-year olds in college, which is lower cost than the RFTS-funded deliverables. Scaling down in this way means Resilient Pilot can continue to deliver, albeit on a smaller scale.

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*“The CAA is wonderful. They’ve always supported us and encouraged us.”*

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The SYSTRA logo is displayed in a bold, red, sans-serif font. The letters are thick and closely spaced, with a modern, geometric feel. The 'S' and 'Y' are particularly prominent due to their size and shape.