Heritage Compass Evaluation Final Report

September 2023

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1   Introduction

The Heritage Compass programme is a Business Support Programme for small and medium-sized heritage organisations across England. The National Lottery Heritage Fund funds the programme, and the programme is delivered by a partnership of organisations, led by Cause4 and with support from the Arts Marketing Association (AMA) and Creative United. The programme originally aimed to work with 150 organisations; in December 2020 funding was confirmed to extend the programme to a further group of up to 150 organisations. DHA were commissioned in October 2020 to undertake the evaluation of the programme, and this is the Final Report from that evaluation, incorporating findings from the Interim Report and all learning from subsequent data and activities.

The programme seeks to address a number of issues for small and medium-sized heritage organisations, particularly addressing the skills gap and absence of specialist knowledge in the small and medium-sized heritage sector in areas like business planning, fundraising and income generation, governance and leadership. The programme involves a range of activities, including:
- 6 training courses in: fundraising, governance, business planning, financial planning, earned income and audience development
- Annual Symposium days in which case studies, good practice and examples of learning would be shared
- Access to e-Learning opportunities
- A critical friend
- A personal mentor
- Access to a newly developed dashboard benchmarking the financial makeup of small and medium-sized heritage organisations.

Applicants to the programme were asked to identify what outcomes they wanted to develop as part of their participation in the programme, from the following list of seven:
- A developed or re-invigorated Business Plan
- More effective governance and financial planning
- Created a process to manage internal culture change
- Developed or re-invigorated its income generation strategy
- Developed or re-invigorated its audience development plan
- Gained an understanding of how to use benchmarking to inform decisions
- Created an improved network and increased confidence

Recruitment took place across four waves, with 236 successful applicants being recruited across these waves. In one case an applicant was a wider network of 15 small organisations, and participants came to the programme from across the network. Additionally around 45 organisations have been involved in activities like Roadshows, Learning Lunches and the Benchmarking Success Guides. Ongoing Covid-19 disruption and widespread changes to working practices meant that the programme commenced delivery online using a range of virtual platforms and tools; when Covid-19 related restrictions were lifted, much of the delivery remained virtual but some activities also took place in person.

This Evaluation report reflects upon the recruitment to the programme, and looks at who took part. It explores how different organisations engaged with the programme, what the barriers and access challenges were for some, how participants found the programme and what the indications are of new learning and work towards those outcomes listed above. This report begins with an

explanation of the Evaluation itself, including the Theory of Change, outline framework, review of background material and methods for data collection.

2 The Evaluation

The development of the evaluation has been supported by a desk review and consultation with delivery partners in Autumn/Winter 2020. We looked at previous initiatives designed to support heritage organisations in similar areas of business development, and have drawn out some key lessons from those previous initiatives in section 2.1 below.

Working with the delivery partners, and looking at the original application from the partners to the Heritage Fund, we developed a Theory of Change for the programme, and a supporting framework which maps the Theory of Change against the Heritage Fund outcomes proposed by the delivery partners in their bid. The National Lottery Heritage Fund has nine broad outcomes in the Strategic Funding Framework 2019-2024, and the Heritage Compass programme aims to support activities which contribute to four of these outcomes. The Theory of Change and supporting outcome framework is included in section 2.2. of this report.

In section 2.3 there is a brief overview of the different methods of data collection used in this evaluation, and of how data has been analysed and presented.

2.1 Review of previous learning

A more extensive write-up of this review of previous learning has been included in the Evaluation Programme. There have been a number of previous programmes in the past ten years which were specifically targeted to the heritage sector, or targeted at heritage organisations as part of a wider focus on arts and culture. All have delivered a similar combination of one-to-one coaching and mentoring support, training and workshops, and provision of online resources. They have varied in their geographical scope, sector emphasis and the focus or breadth of the content. Looking across the learning from these programmes, the key headlines which the review identified are:

1. **Recruitment and Retention** – whilst there is evidence of strong latent demand for business support programmes, recruitment is often challenging and requires dedicated outreach activity. Retention within the programmes, though, is usually high.

2. **Learning and Skills Development Outcomes** – other programmes have been highly successful in terms of learning outcomes, reported increases in confidence and skills, and practical improvements such as organisations having better plans and strategies in place as a result of their participation. Where there were training sessions, participants rated the content and delivery highly. Programmes had also succeeded in strengthening sector networks, bringing together cohorts of organisations who were learning from each other.

3. **Capacity Issues** – some evaluations identified challenges for participant organisations in implementing the learning, and difficulty in using the intervention as a driver of meaningful change in their organisations. A number of factors were identified, including lack of capacity, challenges in engaging trustees and risk aversion. This combination of factors suggests that the sustainability of positive outcomes from business support programmes may be vulnerable.

4. **Sector-Specific Needs** – it is clear that the heritage sector has a distinct set of needs to be taken into account in order to maximise the impact of training and sector support programmes. The small size of organisation and reliance on volunteers need to be acknowledged, as does the preference for training tailored strongly to the sector. Rural and coastal-based organisations demonstrated quite specific business challenges, as well as some particular issues (travel, connectivity) in accessing business support programmes.

5. **Covid-19 –** there is evidence from more informal support programmes about specific difficulties heritage organisations are facing as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, including the loss of income from various sources, managing with limited capacity due to furloughing staff and cutting other costs and more generally concerns about ongoing sustainability; however, there is also evidence that opportunities have emerged to experiment with new business and fundraising models, such as crowdfunding and online shop services.

2.2   Theory of Change and Outcome Framework

The Theory of Change for the Heritage Compass programme was drafted originally in October 2020 and shared with the consortium partners. It has been updated, and separated into two models, to show:
- The inputs, outputs and outcomes for the Programme Participants.
- The proposition for wider change across the sector, reflecting on the role of the delivery partners, Heritage Fund as a funder intervening in this space and the wider heritage sector.

The Theory of Change provides an overall hypothesis for the programme, linking up the choices of the delivery partners in terms of inputs and the context of the participants to the engagement in and effect of the activities which take place. It separates direct outcomes and longer-term outcomes, recognising that some effects may take place within the lifetime of the programme itself, or as an immediate result, and that others may only occur at a later stage. One of the crucial challenges from an evaluation perspective is to think about how we might assess both direct and longer-term outcomes as part of this process.

The evaluation collects data within the lifetime of the programme, and is therefore able to say something about how participants progress and apply their learning; however, no specific provision is in place for engaging with participants and tracking potential effects beyond the end of the programme. Some of the aspirations set out for this programme may only be realised in the longer-term, and thus this report is only able to identify early indicators in some areas relating to those longer-term outcomes.

The other important factor in establishing a meaningful evaluation has been to recognise that each participating organisation or project has a specific set of circumstances and context which effect not only how they engage with the programme, but the degree to which we can attribute positive impacts to the programme itself. This report, therefore, pays attention to what organisations tell us about the things which hinder or support them to pursue the outcomes which they have set for themselves as part of this programme.

Programme Participants

Small or medium heritage organisations from across England take part in a range of business support activities, and develop with skills, knowledge and plans specific to their organisation and the challenges and opportunities they face

→ Organisations apply their plans, using new skills and confidence in order to begin to meet challenges and develop their organisation, and benefit from networks and peer-support in doing so

→ The small and medium heritage sector is more resilient, well-networked, engaging a wider range of people being in heritage and boosting the local economy

Inputs (activities and approaches)	Outputs	Direct outcomes	Longer-term outcomes
- Organisations are recruited through a mixture of open advertisement, local networks and referrals/signposting – they bring their own expertise, plans and ongoing activities (context) - Access grants to support smaller organisations to take part - Cohorts organised by needs/objectives, creating peer groups - Six training modules and e-learning - Critical friend and mentoring support - Symposia for sharing learning, and other networking opportunities (tbc) - A dashboard framework is developed, and data is gathered from 300 organisations - Responsive programme elements, where appropriate (e.g. EDI training/support) - The expertise of the delivery partners and design of the learning journey - A reflective process, in which organisations set specific aims and work towards them	- Type and spread of participating organisations Up to 300 participant organisations/projects, in a range of sessions (specified in the application to Heritage Fund; detailed below in the framework) - An improved network, via cohorts and wider participant group - Learning from symposia sharing - Participants are positive about having learnt new skills, and confident in applying those skills - Participants and organisations who have completed the whole programme - Production of heritage dashboard, and early findings - Amongst the participants, an understanding of how to use benchmarking to inform decision-making - Organisation outputs (completed, or work towards): - A developed or reinvigorated business plan - A developed or reinvigorated audience development plan (embedding lottery players as a key audience) - More effective governance and financial planning - A process to manage internal culture change - A developed or re-invigorated income generation strategy	- More skilled organisations and workforce - Better connected and networked organisations and workforce - Participants understand their leadership styles and are confident about putting new plans and approaches in place - Participants are confident in sharing new skills with other colleagues in their organisation - The Heritage Dashboard is a meaningful reference point for organisations who have participated - Participating organisations have tried out new approaches within the period of the intervention	- Participants demonstrate engaging a wider number of people in their heritage (e.g. supported by audience development strategies, board diversification, etc). - Participants continue to be better networked - There is evidence that skills are shared widely within organisations who participated in the programme - Participants have diversified income streams and strengthened business models. - Participants are boosting the local economy through addition visitors from outside the area, associated spend and additional employment. - The Heritage Dashboard is used by participants

4

Consortium, funders and the wider sector

The consortium partners develop a range of activities, materials and mechanisms for the programme, and refine/adjust these where appropriate. Feedback is gathered by partners, and a wider evaluation takes place.

The learning from programme delivery informs consortium partners practice.

The dashboard is a key reference point for the sector, and learning from the programme informs the wider sector, including funders and policy-makers.

Inputs (activities and approaches)	Outputs	Direct outcomes	Longer-term outcomes
• Symposia for sharing learning • A dashboard framework is developed, and data is gathered from 300 organisations • The expertise of the delivery partners and design of the learning journey • Specific programme design and materials • Evaluation framework and data gathering	• Production of heritage dashboard, and early findings • A model for business support programme delivery, and an infrastructure (delivery organisations and individuals) capable of delivering it • A range of findings and case studies from the evaluation	• The content of the programme is well-tested, and suitable for use in other contexts • The consortium partners have added to their experience and expertise in programme delivery. • The Heritage Dashboard has been well-tested and the sector understands how to use it • Learning from the delivery of the programme and its value which can be used in future business support interventions	• The Heritage Dashboard is used and referenced widely across the sector • Learning from the project is a key reference point for the wider sector, including funders

2.2.1   Outcome Framework

The theory of change is designed to provide an overview, and capture the overall proposition for the programme. The framework below lays out in more detail how the outputs and outcomes described in the Theory of Change might break down into specific indicators contributing to the four Heritage Fund outcomes which this programme aims to contribute to. Some of the indicators below come directly from the original application to Heritage Fund made by the delivery partners, others have emerged from work on the Theory of Change. As noted above in relation to the theory of change, there are outcomes which we may see evidence of within the lifetime of the programme, and outcomes which may be more likely to occur only after the programme is complete. The framework below identifies in more details those 'leading' indicators, in the direct outputs and outcomes, and the indicators more likely to be 'lagging' in the longer term outcomes.

	Wider number of people involved in heritage	Skills development within the sector	More resilient organisations	Boost to the local economy
Level 1 – Direct Outputs	• Proportion of different demographic groups being recruited and involved directly in the programme • Opportunities for a diverse group of peers to learn from and support each other • Organisations trained and supported to examine their activities in the context of diversity and inclusion practice	• Participation in/delivery of: - Mentoring - Critical friend support - E-learning for up to 600 participants - Training sessions - National symposia • Reporting/feedback on positive skills development (e.g. feeling more confident and equipped to do specific things): - 70% plus participants agree that the training/programme was of the right level and their objectives were met - 80% of participants feel more confident in their roles	• Number of participants who have participated in the whole programme • Production of heritage dashboard as an intelligence tool • Examples of participants having improved their strategic planning in one or more areas of their business/organisation, including: - 80% of participants creating a more realistic fundraising strategy - 75% of participants using data to inform decision-making in relation to business modelling	• Participants who have business plans and fundraising strategies that reflect the needs of key local stakeholders, e.g. local authorities • Participants who have business plans and other strategies which plan for additional employment or growth in key areas

	Wider number of people involved in heritage	Skills development within the sector	More resilient organisations	Boost to the local economy

Level 2 – Direct Outcomes	• Examples of participants using their new skills and confidence to support fellow staff and/or volunteers from diverse groups in the lifetime of the programme
	• Examples of participants using their new skills and confidence to engage with diverse groups within the public/widen their reach, within the lifetime of the programme
	• Examples of participants diversifying their board and/or workforce
		• Examples of participants using their new competencies in specific skills in their organisations
		• Examples of participants passing on the learning from new skills and confidence with fellow staff and/or volunteers
		• Any broader uptake of resources which are available for those who are not full programme participants
			• Examples of participants using their new skills and confidence to try out new things in their organisations, including more diverse business models, stakeholder engagement and partnership working, in the lifetime of the programme
			• Examples of participants using the dashboard as a planning tool in the lifetime of the programme
				• Examples of participants using their new skills and confidence to try out new things in the lifetime of the programme which result in:
				  • Additional visitors from outside the area
				  • Any associated spend within the organisation
				  • Any additional employment, or volunteering and skills development opportunities which might lead to employment

Level 3 – Longer-term Outcomes	• Participant plans' to use their new skills and confidence to support fellow staff and/or volunteers from diverse groups
	• Participant plans' to use their new skills and confidence to engage with diverse groups within the public/widen their reach
		• Participants' plans to continue with any particular aspects of skills development
		• 20% of participants go on to engage with other programmes run by Consortium partners
		• Participants' plans for passing on the learning from new skills and confidence with fellow staff and/or volunteers
		• Any materials or support structures which remain beyond the lifetime of the programme (e.g. networks, resources, etc)
			• Participants' plans to use their new skills and confidence to try out new things in their organisations, including more diverse business models, stakeholder engagement and partnership working, beyond the lifetime of the programme
			• Participants' plans to use the dashboard in the future to aid plans and activities
			• Wider availability/awareness of the dashboard as a resource leading to broader use and take-up
				• Participants' plans to use their new skills and confidence to try out new things in the lifetime of the programme which result in:
				  • Additional visitors from outside the area
				  • Any associated spend within the organisation
				  • Any additional employment

2.3 How we collected data

This evaluation draws together data from a number of key sources, as follows:

1. **Application Forms**

    Participants applied to take part in the programme, and had to provide a range of information about their organisation or project. This includes some useful information which helps us to profile what kinds of organisations/projects are taking part. Participants also had to outline why they wanted to take part, what the need was for their organisation/project and what they hoped to get out of the project.

    Almost all of the programme participants completed the application forms in full, and therefore this data is fairly comprehensive.

2. **Basic Data**

    Cause4 is the leading delivery partner for the programme, and has collected a range of basic data, including the attendance figures at different elements of the programme, the number of critical friend hours completed, etc, which provide a useful indication of the size and scale of activity and engagement across the programme.

3. **Feedback surveys**

    Following individual elements of the programme, like the training modules and Symposia days, participants were invited to fill in short feedback surveys which asked them about their experiences of accessing the programme element, their views on the relevance and pitching of the programme, their sense of the trainers and speakers and their initial sense of whether they were learning new things.

    The feedback survey for the Symposia days – an activity which all participants were invited to – has also provided an opportunity to collect some demographic data about the individuals who are attending on behalf of their organisations/projects. This data was not collected through the application process, where the focus was primarily on the organisation/project, rather than the individual. The data from the Symposia feedback survey provides a snapshot of individual participation, as well as organisational/project participation.

    On the whole, feedback surveys have had varying response rates, from around a fifth to almost half of respondents completing the surveys. They are, therefore, a snapshot of views from participants. Responses from feedback surveys have reflected both positive and negative experiences, and therefore do provide a range of opinions and views across the participants.

4. **Learning Journals**

    The Learning Journals have been put in place as the primary source of additional data being collected for the evaluation. Conscious of the resources and time pressures on many participants, we wanted to collect data in way which might support participants in their learning and reflection. In order to do this, the Learning Journals have been

connected to the critical friends' process. Each organisation receives 6 sessions with a critical friend. In three of these sessions – at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end – the participants are asked to complete a Learning Journal entry which comprises a range of information and reflections, including:

- What they have engaged with as part of the programme, and any barriers to engagement
- What they have learnt, how confident they feel in applying the learning and what the barriers might be to taking the learning back into organisations/projects
- What outcomes they want to work towards as part of the programme, and whether they feel they are making progress

In some places the Learning Journals provide an opportunity for reflection across the programme elements, and therefore sit alongside data from the feedback surveys enabling us to understand how well programme elements have worked for participants. In other areas Learning Journals are the main way in which participants are able to reflect upon how they are bringing any learning from the programme to bear on their planning and practice in their organisations/projects.

179 organisations completed and returned at least one of the Learning Journals, and 127 of these completed all or almost all of the three Learning Journal entries with others completing usually two out of the three entries. Tying the Learning Journals to the critical friends process appears to have been beneficial, both for the response rate – which is higher than that of any of the open feedback surveys – and the quality of reflection, which has been significant particularly for those who completed all three entries.

5. **Process Reflection**

For the purposes of the interim report we were able to undertake four reflections sessions: one with each of the consortium delivery partners (*Cause4*, Arts Marketing Association and Creative United), which included staff who were involved both in managing the partners input into the programme and in delivering parts of the programme, as trainers, critical friends and mentors; and one session with an individual contracted by one of the delivery partners to deliver training, critical friend-ing and mentoring.

Towards the end of the programme, we asked critical friends and mentors to complete a short survey, mostly of open-ended, reflective questions. We gained 21 responses with some really useful views and reflections from those who had been involved in delivering training, critical friend and mentoring sessions directly with participants.

6. **Case Studies**

In the second year of the evaluation we worked with critical friends and mentors to identify a shortlist of organisations who were really engaging with the programme. From this shortlist, we invited 10 organisations to contribute their experience as a case study. They were given a short pro forma to add some thoughts and notes on, and then this was followed up by a 1-2-1 session with the evaluation team, to fill out the details, and encourage further reflection. The case studies have been published as they have become available, and they are appended to this report and reflected upon in the conclusions.

3   Recruitment

The success rate for applicants is very high in all three waves of recruitment: 84-90% of participants across the cohorts qualified for the programme, demonstrated need and made a suitable case for the value of the programme to their organisation/project. This reflects some significant work undertaken by the team to engage with potential applicants prior to application, to ensure that those applying were in relevant circumstances and understood the programme, and to signpost others on to suitable programmes and resources outside Heritage Compass.

The programme delivery team reflected upon some of the things which they feel have affected recruitment. They identified a range of factors, including:

- The volume and range of other business development support on offer, including support from within the heritage sector (including other programmes being funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund), from local authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships, universities and a range of other sources.
- More generally, the volume of information which people in the sector are receiving about different funding and support opportunities, often Covid-19 related, from a range of sources including Arts Council England, local authorities and trusts and foundations.
- Some concern amongst potential participants about committing to longer-term business development programmes, where there have been shorter (e.g. one-day) support activities available.
- Specific Covid-19 related issues with timing. For example, as the first recruitment period opened, the January 2021 lockdown was announced. The second recruitment period opened over the summer 2021 period, when the programme delivery team felt that many in the sector were feeling the effects of fatigue, having in many cases started and stopped activities several times, and for many having been through one or more rounds of applications for emergency or recovery funding.
- Broader Covid-19 related issues relating to what organisations and projects might feel they need at specific times. One partner in the programme delivery team wondered if some of the wave 1 recruitment was motivated particularly by those who – finding themselves and their organisations in the earlier stages of a pandemic – were seeking support for both their personal and business survival, and trying to connect with others. As time has gone on, and the horizon of the pandemic event has extended, people are dealing with a range of pressures: the need to run their organisations, to engage again with the public, to try and find ways to carry on. There is a sense that many potential participants may be somewhat exhausted and overwhelmed with trying to run an organisation/project at this stage, and that some may be more critical or hesitant of what the Heritage Compass programme has to offer.
- Potential challenges with the cost of living/running an organisation going up, and the sense that organisations were finding it difficult to think about long-term engagement with a programme like the Heritage Compass programme.

The delivery team added face to face recruitment sessions into the final wave of recruitment, in order to better engage with and support potential recruits, and after Covid-19 related restrictions had ceased.

Overall, we have data (sometimes partial) from 236 applicants to the programme. When we look at overall participation in the programme, however, 15 further organisations/groups were able to engage with the programme via the participation of the Churches Conservation Trust, who disseminated the learning through a network of small churches. Beyond this, 6 organisations

engaged with the Benchmarking Success Guides, 2 in training/mentoring opportunities, 13 in learning lunches, 6 in roadshows, and 66 through grassroots network funding. At this stage, therefore, we can identify around 344 organisations who participated in the Heritage Compass programme in some way. The programme is not yet completed, as funding was granted for a further group of participants to engage in a more condensed version of the programme, and for some additional activities.

3.1 Types of participants

The application forms collected a range of data about the organisations and projects that took part in the programme.

Figure 1: Programme participants by heritage type
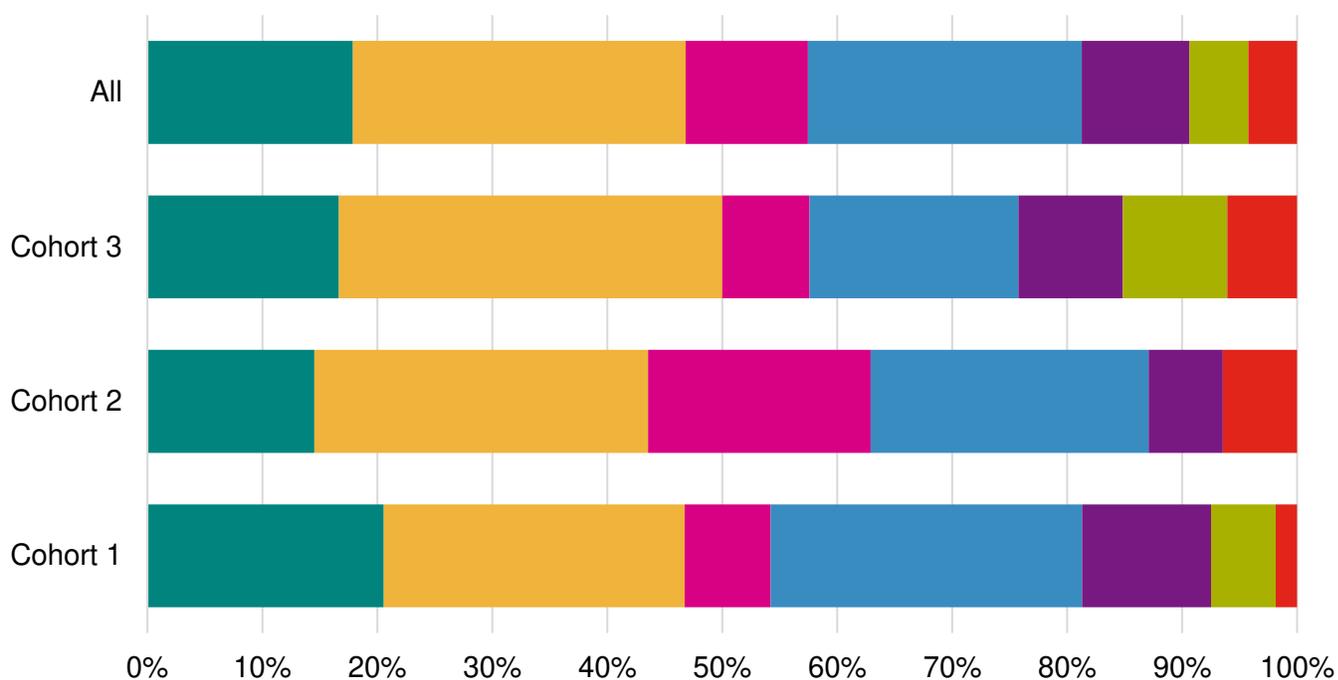
Source: applications to the programme, 235 successful applicants.

The largest groups amongst the programme participants are those undertaking work in community heritage (29% of all participating organisations/projects) and historic buildings and monuments (24%). This emphasis on community heritage organisations may reflect, to some extent, the focus which the programme has on supporting smaller heritage organisations and projects. The evaluation team looked at the information which applicants supplied about the activities that they do, and grouped them into three non-exclusive groupings, as follows:

- 35% of programme participants appear to be focused on delivering a specific project or projects, and are not based in a venue or particular space.
- 59% of programme participants could be classed as, in part, a visitor attraction: they own, or are responsible for managing, a physical building or space and the contents of that asset.

- 12% of programme participants are relatively early on in their journey: this included start-up projects being run by volunteers, campaigns and other non-operational or non-ongoing activities.

Applicants were also asked whether they own a heritage asset, such as a building, collections or land. Responses were open-ended: 38% report owning a building or having a very long leasehold on a building, 30% owning a collection of some kind, and 11% report owning land. 19% of applicants talked about being responsible for managing or animating an asset (usually a building or land), but did not technically own the asset. A small group of participants, around 6%, owned other kinds of assets, including: large vehicles, other kinds of spaces and unusual objects.

Applicants supplied some information about their organisational status.

Figure 2: Programme participants by organisational status
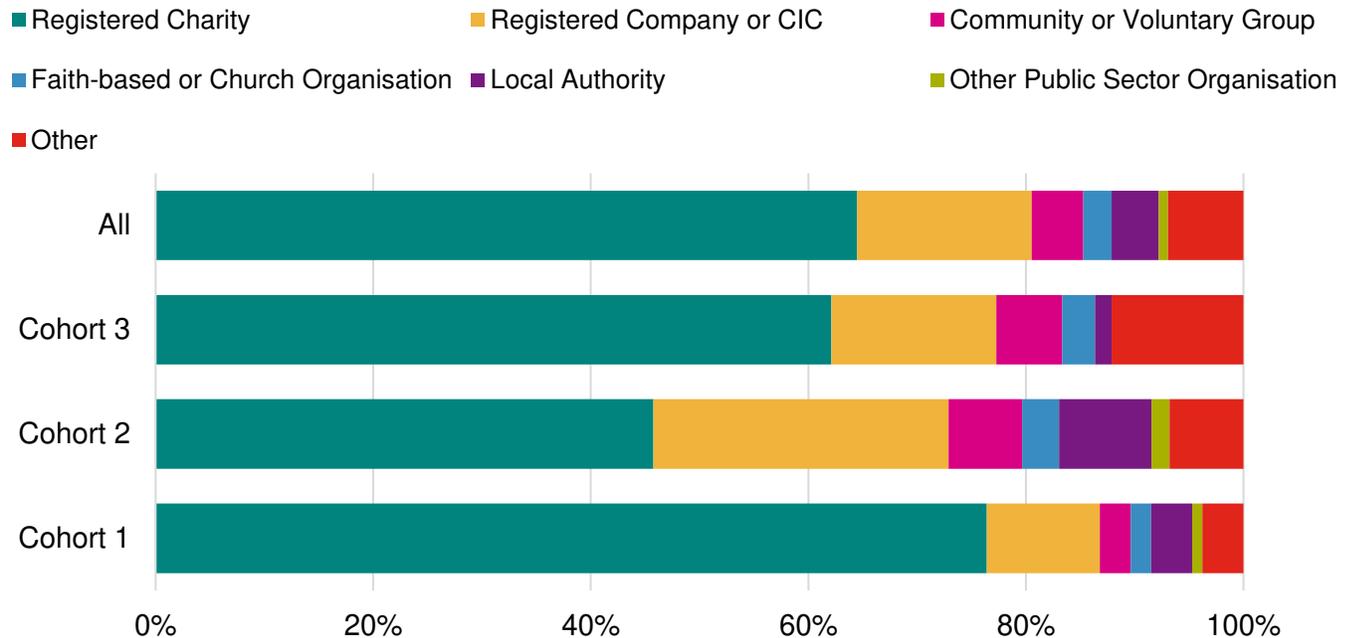
Source: applications to the programme, 231 successful applicants.

All three recruitment cohorts are made up in the significant majority by registered charities. Those start-up projects we referred to in the analysis above are reflected either in the 'community or voluntary group' category, or in 'other' – a few applicants discussed ambitions for developing their activities from an informal setting into a formal organisational structure, and in some cases mention plans to apply to become charities. Some participants sit within local authorities, sometimes within teams running buildings, collections or spaces owned by local authorities. Overall, what this reflects is some wide variation in the organisational settings (or lack of) which different participants bring to the programme.

3.2 Location of participants

Applicants were asked to provide their address, and indicate where their activity took place.

Figure 3: Programme participants by geography
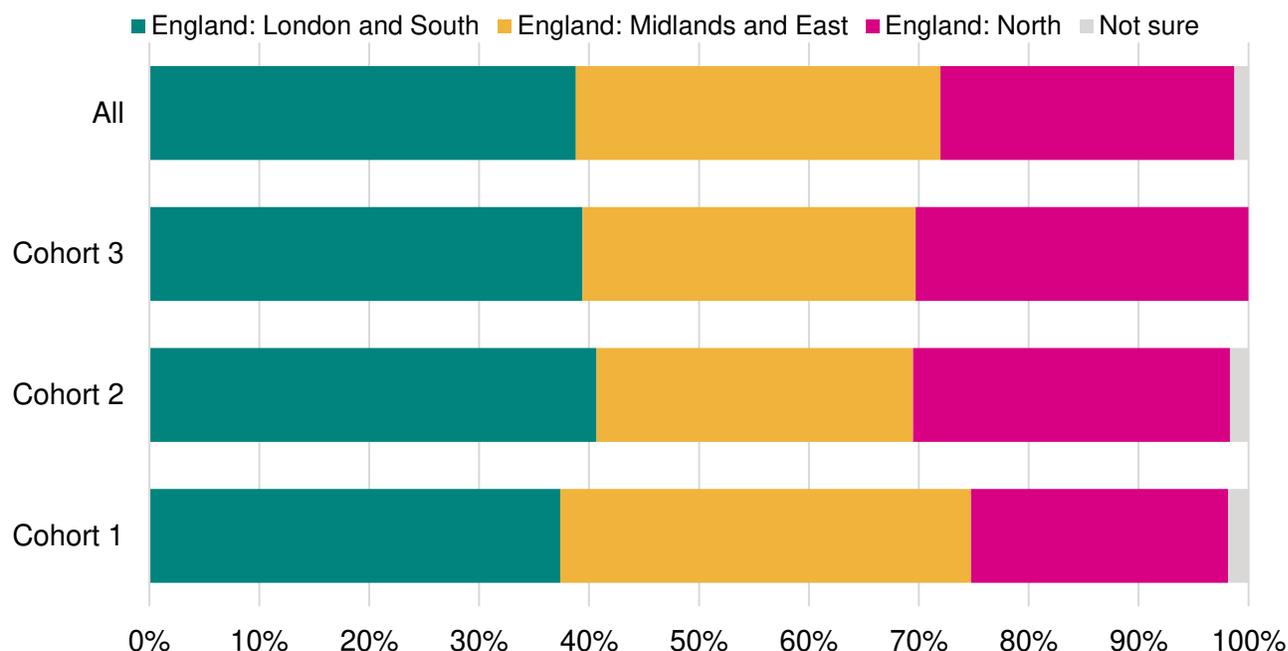
Source: applications to the programme, 232 successful applicants.

Across the overall recruitment for programme participants, more come from London and the South of England (39%) than from the Midlands and East of England (33%) and the North of England (27%). By way of comparison, the Heritage Fund's open data set of Grants Awarded between April 2013 to March 2020 (accessed via 360 Giving) shows that across grants made in England, a similar proportion went to London and the South of England (39%), slightly less to the Midlands and East of England (31%) and slightly more to the North of England (30%).

Looking at local authority data, some cities/city regions are particularly well represented. Manchester (with 6 participants) and Salford (with 3 participants) contribute to a strong showing from the Greater Manchester City Region; Birmingham (with 5 participants), Leeds (with 5 participants), Liverpool (with 5 participants), Nottingham (with 4 participants) and Chesterfield (with 4 participants), Cornwall (with 4 participants) and Shropshire (with 4 participants) demonstrate some urban and rural sub-regional clusters. Four London borough councils are amongst those local authority areas most well represented (with 3 or more participants from each area).

3.3   Size and scale of participants

The application form asked applicants to supply a range of information about the size and scale of the organisation.

Figure 4: Programme participants by number of paid employees (FTE)
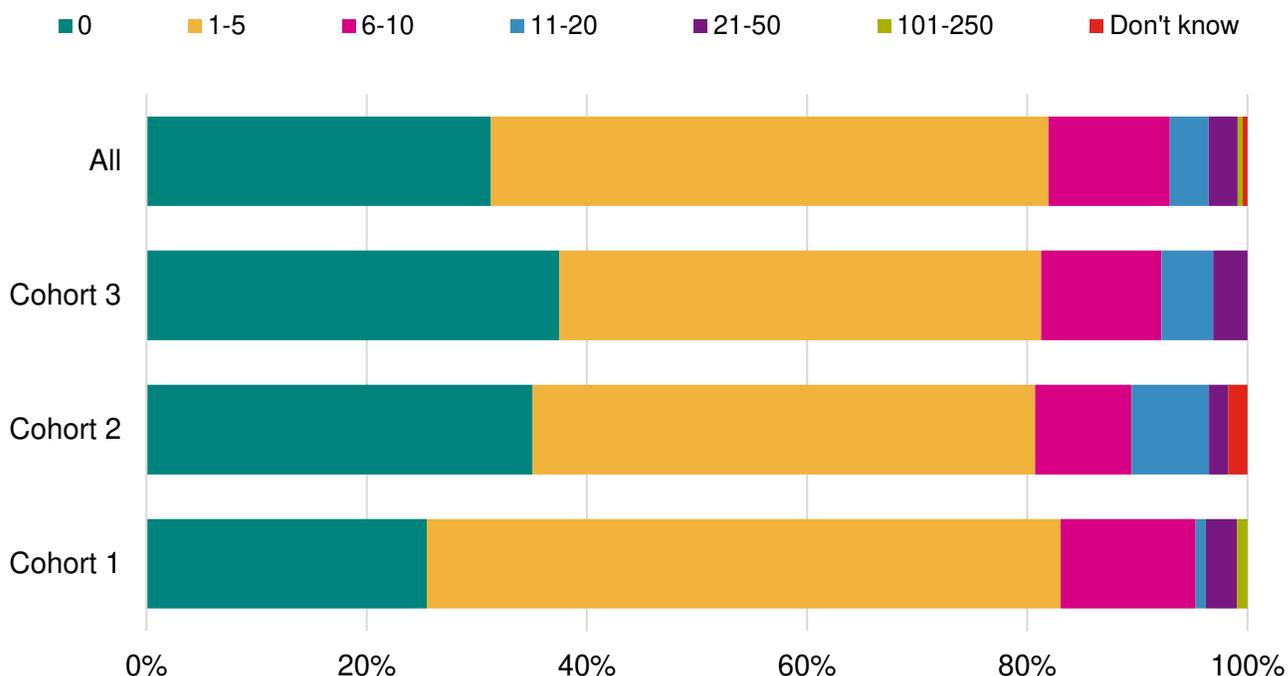
Source: applications to the programme, 230 successful applicants.

Across all the programme participants, 31% report having no FTE members of staff. This included registered charities and registered companies or CICs, as well as more informal groups. Elsewhere in the application data some participants discuss arrangements in which all their organisation's/project's activities are undertaken by volunteers, and we can see the significant effect of this in some of the bursary applications (discussed later in this report). Half of other participants (50%) report having between 1 and 5 FTE employees. Only 7% of participating organisations/projects have 21 or more employees; more than half of these are local authorities.

When reflecting on recruitment with the programme delivery team, the team identified that the programme has recruited a larger proportion of micro-businesses than they originally anticipated – it's not clear if there are specific reasons as to why more medium-scale heritage organisations have not come forward, though – as we noted earlier at the top of this chapter – there is evidence of both a range of business development support on offer in this period, and some concern amongst potential applicants about managing Covid-19 disruption and other possible requirements (e.g. bidding for funding).

Applicants were also asked to indicate how many board members or trustees they have, and the responses vary significantly. Some organisations/projects have no formal board members or

trustees; a small handful have 13 or more; and then around 86% of participants (from the data of 225 successful applicants) report having between 1 and 12 trustees or board members, and 60% having 8 or fewer. Some participants talked about plans to grow their trustee or board numbers.

The figure below looks at the duration of operation of those applying to take part in the programme.

Figure 5: Programme participations by duration of operation
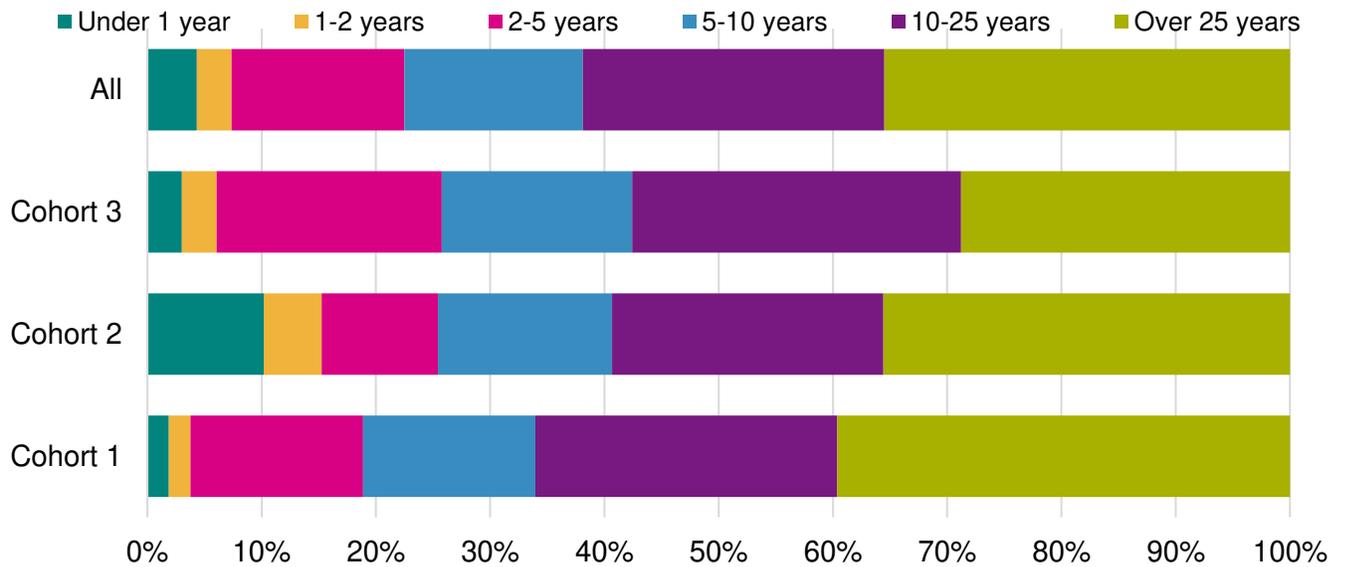
Source: applications to the programme, 231 successful applicants.

The majority of participants (62%) are organisations/projects that have been operating for more than 10 years. Reflecting some of those smaller, start-up organisations we identified, around 23% have been operating for fewer than 5 years, and around 16% for fewer than 2 years.

The application process also sought a range of financial data from applicants.

Figure 6: Programme participants by income in the last financial year

Source: applications to the programme, 229 successful applicants.

Looking at the income sizes of the participating organisations, the largest segment is the 32% of participants whose income in the last financial year was £100,000 - £500,000. 60% of participants had an income of £100,000 or less in the last financial year. Cohorts 2 and 3 both contained a higher proportion of smaller organisations (with £50,000 annual income or less) than cohort 1. Only 6% of participants had an income of between £500,000 and £1milllion in the last financial year, and only 1% reported an income of more than £1million. Where organisations participating in Heritage Compass had an income of over £1million, the wider organisation (often a local authority or a museum) would have had a small department or sub-area focusing on heritage with a turnover of less than £1million. MyCake has worked the Heritage Compass programme to create a benchmarking dashboard of heritage organisations, using a sample from the Heritage Compass participants and removing all those which had turnovers of more than £2million (which, in figure 6, we can see is only a very small proportion of programme participants). This data indicates a median turnover of £131,000 for 2019, a pre-Covid benchmark.

3.4 Diversity and inclusion

The application process asked applicants to identify if their organisation/project was led by someone with a particular lived experience.

Figure 7: Programme participants by lived experience led categories
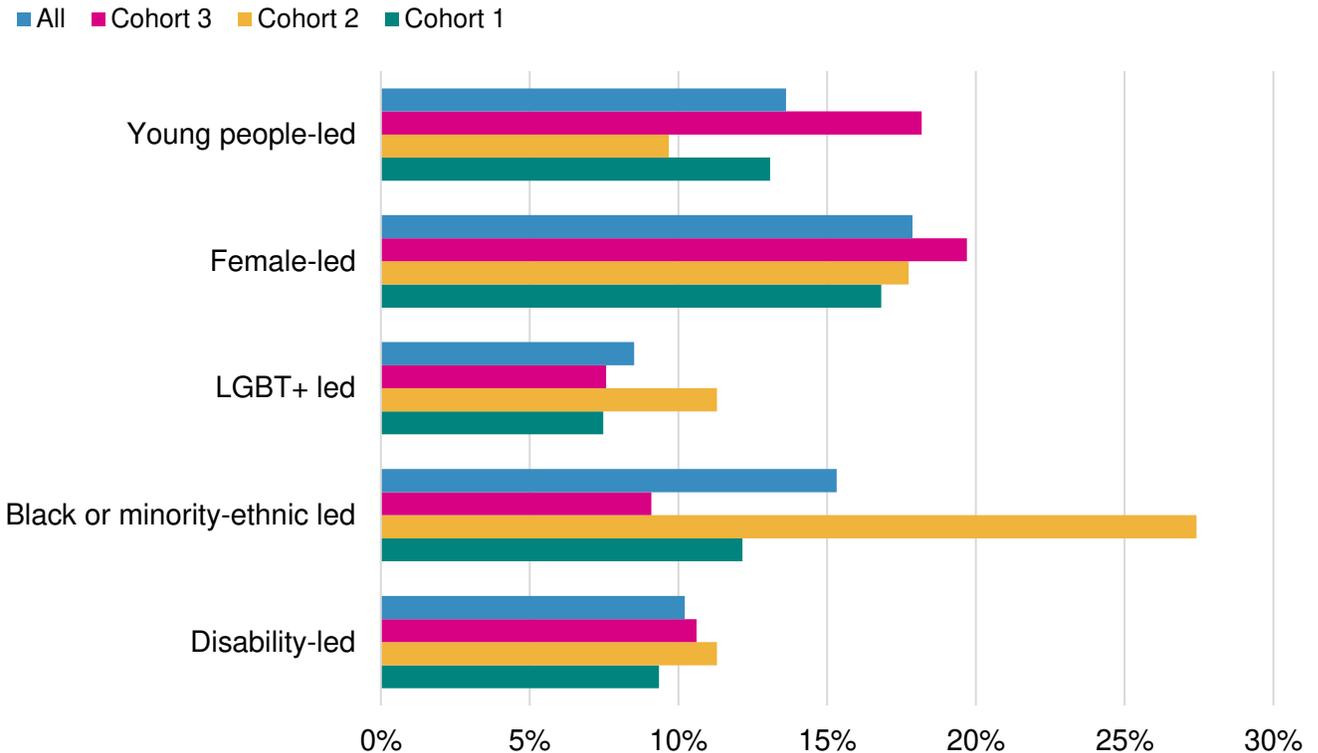
Source: applications to the programme, 235 successful applicants.

Amongst the responses to this question, a very small number of organisations appear to have interpreted the question widely, and reported that they are led by *all* or most of the groups specified. The majority of other respondents are clearly specifically led by and engaged with one or more of the groups listed in the question, and in the graph above. Participants were more likely to say that they are Black or minority-ethnic led or female-led than they are to indicate that they are led by any of the other groupings. Looking at the activities of different organisations, we can get a sense of what being lived experience-led might mean to participants. For some participants focused on community heritage, their work is centred on exploring, collecting and sharing the heritage of very specific communities, particularly those whose heritage is not so widely shared at present including specific ethnic and cultural groups, the heritage of disabled people, queer culture and a range of other areas. Other organisations are aiming to support better access and engagement for specific groups to heritage.

The application process did not collect any specific demographic data on individual participants in the programme, due to the focus on the organisation or project as an applicant. To give us a sense of the demographics of individuals engaging, we included a number of questions in the Symposia feedback surveys. The surveys were completed by 97 respondees, and therefore in terms of the demographics of participants this provides us with a snapshot only.

Figure 8: Symposia attendees by gender identity
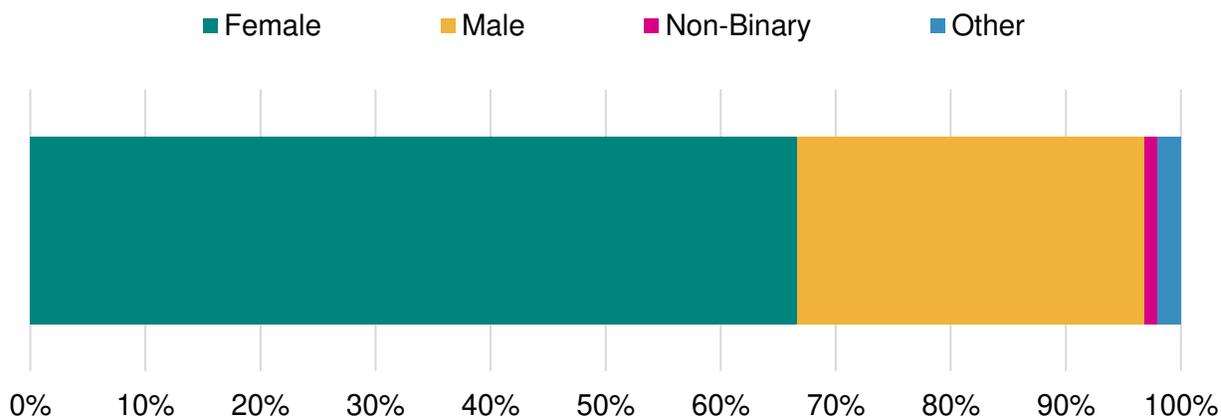
Source: Symposia feedback surveys, 97 respondents

The majority of respondents to the feedback survey identified as female (66%). The balance of male and female participants is very similar to the balance across museums funded as part of the Arts Council England national portfolio.[1] 7% of respondents stated that their gender identity was different to the sex assumed at birth.

Survey respondents were asked to identify which age group they were in.

Figure 9: Symposia attendees by age group
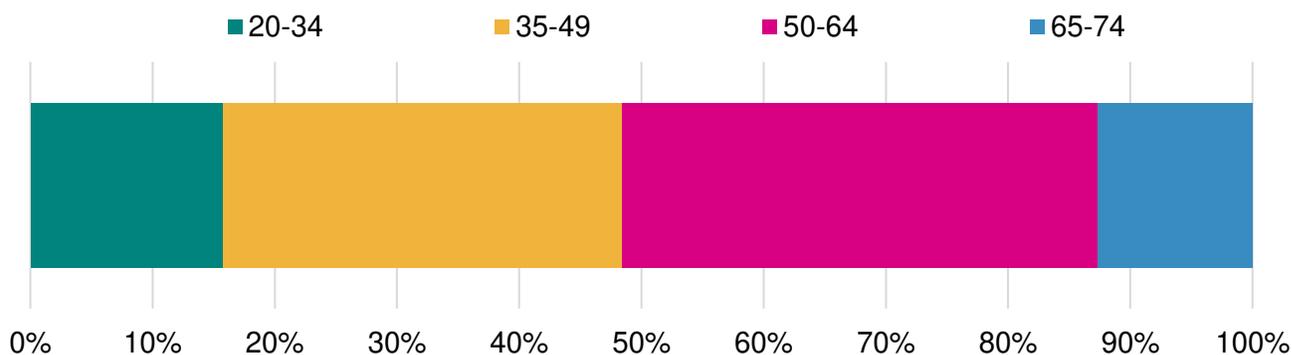
Source: Symposia feedback survey both cohorts, 97 respondents.

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[1] Based on data from the 2018-2021 constant sample of monitoring returns to Arts Council England, presented here, discounting the higher 'not known' values from the Arts Council England data: https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-data-report-2020-2021

The largest age-group of attendees was the 38% who were between 50 and 64. Across the respondents to both symposia feedback surveys, there is a smaller proportion of younger staff/volunteers (20-34) and older staff/volunteers (65-74) than we can see in the comparator of those employed in museums funded by Arts Council England; this may well reflect the smaller-scale nature of many of the participating organisations in the programme, and the fact that some are entirely volunteer-led and run.

Figure 10: Symposia attendees by ethnic group

- Asian/Asian British - Any other Asian background
- Black/Black British - Caribbean
- Mixed - Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic background
- White - Any other White background
- White - English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British
- White - Irish
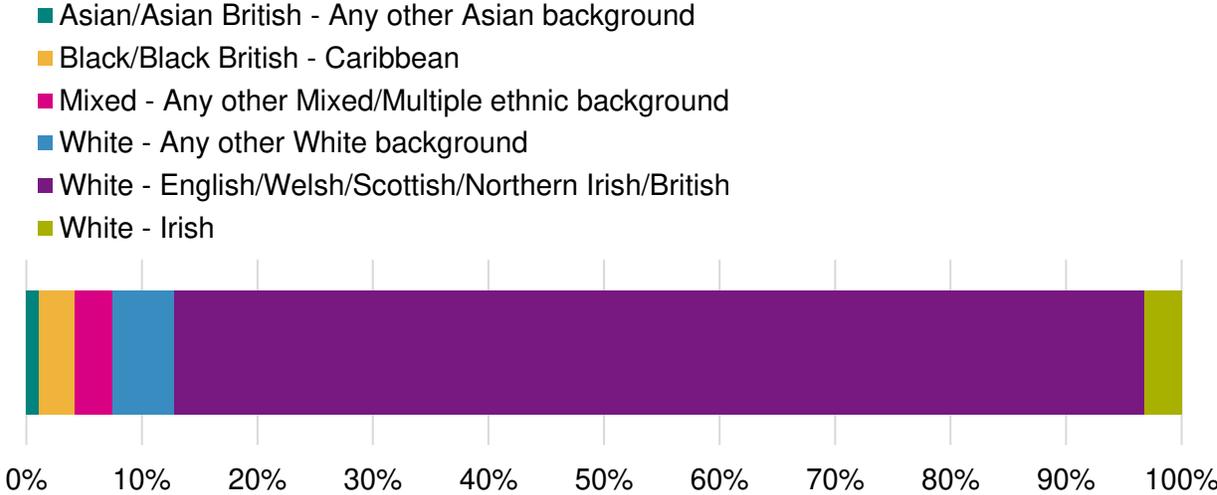
Source: Symposia feedback survey both cohorts, 96 respondents.

The large majority (82%) of respondents identified as being White – English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British. The next largest group were respondents who were from any other White background (8%). Small proportions of respondents identified as being Black/Black British (3%), Mixed (3%) and Asian/Asian British (1%). Broadly speaking this pattern of different ethnic groups is similar to that amongst the employees of museums funded by the Arts Council England national portfolio programme; amongst those museums there appears to be a slightly higher proportion of Black and Minority Ethnic staff overall, but given the small sample here it may not be statistically significant.

10% of respondents reported that they were Deaf or disabled, or had a long-term health condition. This is broadly similar to the proportion that we can see in our comparison data of employees of museums funded by the Arts Council England national portfolio programme where data is known.

When asked about their sexual orientation, 10% of respondents preferred not to say. 79% said that they were heterosexual/straight, 4% said they were bisexual and 4% reported that they were a gay woman/lesbian. When accounting for higher levels of 'not knowns' and 'prefer not to says' in the comparator data on staff working in museums which are part of Arts Council England's NPO programme, the symposia data has a slightly higher proportion of LGBTQ+ participants than we see in the ACE data.

3.5   What do they need to get out of the programme?

Applicants were asked to choose up to three outcomes from a list as the outcomes which they felt were the most important outcomes to them through participating in the Heritage Compass programme.

Figure 11: Programme participants by most important outcomes
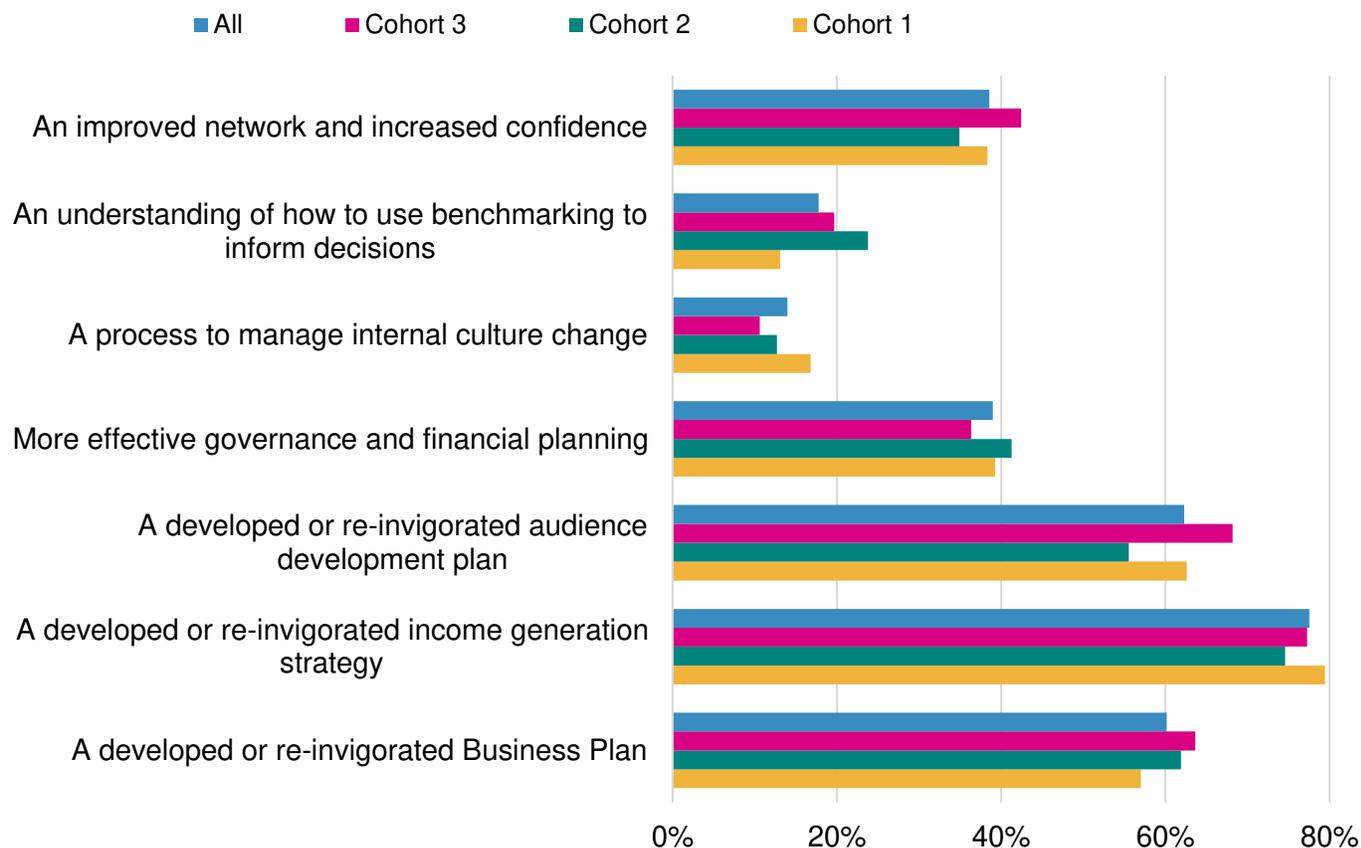
Source: applications to the programme, 236 successful applicants.

A developed or re-invigorated income generation strategy is the most popular outcome (selected by 78% of participants), and elsewhere in the applications many participants refer to the challenges of income generation and the necessity to address issues in this area urgently. Business planning (60%) and audience development planning (62%) are the next two most popular outcomes, and again we found applicants referring to the need to undertake these kinds of activities in other parts of their application. More effective governance and planning (39%) and an improved network and increased confidence (39%) have been selected by a significant majority, and applicants talk elsewhere about the challenges of recruiting board members and trustees and about their desire to learn from others in the sector. Finally, the least popular outcomes at the application stage are understanding benchmarking (18%) and internal culture change (14%).

Elsewhere in this report we explore the outcomes that participants tell us they are working towards, and also how participants have engaged in activities like the introduction to benchmarking session in the Symposia.

Applicants were asked to explain why they were applying to the programme, what they hoped to achieve and how they thought it would benefit their organisations' mission. Across these responses we found that a substantial majority (around 87%) of participants described their organisation or project as requiring a significant review of their activities and operations. Some applicants were already engaged in this work, whilst others hoped that participation in the Heritage Compass programme would instigate it. Many applicants described their organisation or project as being at a critical stage. This meant different things for different organisations. Some were well-established organisations, which were either seeking to refresh their activities or for which – despite their history of public engagement – there was now a threat to its continuation. Interestingly, for some organisations there was a sense that, despite some substantial history of ongoing operations, contemporary challenges meant that they needed to change or innovate in order to continue.

At the other end of the scale were projects or organisations in their very early stages, often supported by volunteers and project grant-funding, which were considering how they might transition into an ongoing operation. Some of these organisations were involved in or had recently completed a capital project, and were working on how to make a building or asset an operational visitor attraction. Others had begun with a community-focused project, and were exploring how to move from project to project funding, to something more ongoing. Amongst these, organisations were often volunteer-led, or largely volunteer staffed, or had staff but their income failed to cover all of their costs; some organisations discussed ambitions for moving to a more professional footing.

Around half of the successful applicants mentioned wanting to build new relationships with audiences, visitors and community. For some, this meant engaging in the first stages of widening their public engagement beyond initial groups of volunteers, communities or specific interest groups; for others, there was an acknowledgement that traditional audiences have moved on, and that different approaches are now required to renew connections with the public. Many applicants talked about wanting to engage and balance their activities for distinctly different groups, and most recognised that reaching out beyond those with whom they already engaged might require specific approaches. Amongst those applicants in cohort 3, which had applied after the majority of Covid-19 restrictions had been lifted, applicants already noted some post-Covid challenges with visitors and participants not returning in the same numbers as pre-Covid.

Applicants at both ends of this scale talked about the challenges of establishing a sustainable income/cost basis for their organisation or activities. Amongst the income challenges applicants mentioned, some identified post-Covid income not returning to pre-Covid levels, some discussed the problem of transitioning from project grants to ongoing income sources, others identified sources of funding (e.g. local authority support) which they thought would be under threat in the future. Alongside wanting to diversify their income, many saw sustainable business models as also reflecting a more sophisticated and robust approach to financial planning, with better oversight and control of their financial information and decision-making.

Work undertaken by MyCake as part of the Heritage Compass programme includes an analysis of the financial data of many of the participants. Taking 2019 as a pre-Covid baseline, data across 155 organisations (excluding any with over £2million turnover, which would be a very

small proportion of programme participants) we can get a sense of what kinds of different income patterns the organisations entered the programme with. The median turnover of organisations in the sample for 2019 was £131k. The analysis undertaken by MyCake indicates that in 2019:

- 73% achieved some income from grants (the figure may be higher, as some organisations did not provide a breakdown of where income came from), with the median value of grant income being 42% of turnover (excluding, where possible, capital grants). For those organisations which were very successful with grant-funding, around 28 organisations received over 75% of their turnover from grants. Those achieving the highest proportion of grants were likely to have a slightly bigger turnover than the median.
- 84% achieve income from one or more types of commercial and trading activity, with the median value of earned income being 30% of turnover. Those organisations which were most successful in earning income achieved over 59% of their income from commercial and trading activities. Those achieving the highest proportion of earned income were likely to have a much bigger turnover than the median.
- 79% achieved some income from one or more sources of donations (not grants), with the median value from donations being 14% of turnover. The top group of organisations achieve over 48% of their income from donations; organisations in this group were likely to have a turnover of slightly less than the median for all organisations in the dashboard.

Broadly speaking, what this suggests is that larger organisations typically have more commercial income, and smaller organisations typically have more donations. The dashboard also helps us to understand a bit about the overall financial health of organisations: around 38% of the organisations in the data sample had an expenditure which was more than 102% of turnover in 2019, and the median loss was -16%. As a rule of thumb, MyCake suggests that between 30-40% of charities have higher expenditure than income in any given year; annual fluctuations, including losses, are not atypical in the charitable sector, and so a longer period of data is required to understand if organisations are financially healthy.

Overall, what the data produced by MyCake for the Heritage Compass allows us to understand is that different organisations typically have different emphasis and opportunities in terms of where their income comes from. This doesn't necessarily mean that organisations only receive income from one or two sources, more that the emphasis and proportion of income from different sources changes, relating to the size and operations of the organisations (e.g. we might expect that running a building or destination with a café, for example, provides opportunities for income streams not available for a community heritage project).

Some applicants identified specific changes or challenges which were taking place, which they felt demonstrated the need for their participation in the programme. Around 14% of participants were delivering or had recently completed a capital project, and many of these applicants were particularly focused on needing to plan to move from capital management to an operational model which could be sustained. 21% of participants specifically referred to Covid-related disruption, and identified that disruption as a significant threat to their ongoing activities and the health of the organisation/project. Finally, 21% of applicants reported that they were in a period of internal change, related either to the staffing or the structure of the organisation/project, and in some cases the Heritage Compass programme was seen as key to supporting new staff members and structures.

Applicants were asked to provide more information about *why* participating in Heritage Compass would be important for their organisation. Many applicants focused on the need to

upgrade the skills and knowledge of those running activities, particularly to support them in knowing how best to achieve their ambitions – 62% discussed improving the skills of individual staff members or volunteers, including developing their confidence in knowing how to pursue their mission. Some applicants were particularly frank about gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Around 14% mentioned being new to running heritage activities or assets, and acknowledged that whilst they might know a lot about an asset or a topic, they did not necessarily know how to run a visitor attraction, engage audiences and participations, or set it up as a going concern. This was also reflected in the responses to the previous application question, about why they were applying for the programme: as one applicant put it, they knew what they needed to do, but they weren't confident in knowing *how* to do it.

Some applicants (around 21%) also stressed that they were volunteer-based, and many were particularly keen to point out that this meant both that resources were very limited – and based on goodwill – and that the skills of those involved did not always reflect the needs of a small heritage organisation. Related to this, about 22% of participants talked about the need to recruit trustees and/or address gaps in the skills base and development of trustees. Where applicants discussed the need for increase the skills and knowledge of staff, volunteers and/or trustees, they often talked about the difficulty of doing so without a programme like Heritage Compass. Sometimes this was because other training and skills development opportunities were seen as unaffordable and sometimes it was because applicants didn't think that other similar opportunities were available at all.

Interestingly, some applicants discussed capacity issues with upskilling, reflecting the limited time available for staff or volunteers to undertake things like training; they were not clear about why they thought Heritage Compass might increase their capacity in this area or overcome capacity issues. In our interim report, we included some findings from a review of earlier business development programmes funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund; one of the findings was the challenges which small and medium sized organisations experience in having enough capacity to engage with these kinds of programmes. Given this data from the applications, and the learning from previous programmes, this is a key question for this evaluation: to what extent did organisations have the capacity required to engage?

Many applicants expressed their need as specific and urgent. This took different forms for different applicants. For example, around 11% referred to urgent preservation issues relating to a building or other physical asset. 29% talked about an existing asset that required activity around it and supporting it to be geared up in order to really make proper use of it, and some applicants expressed uncertainty about the survival or sustainability of assets if better ongoing operational models were not established. About 28% of applicants framed this need as the necessity for a step change in their organisation: they had reached a particular point, but felt unable to go further without some specific support. 21% suggested that their planning was currently too short-term – they operated on a day-to-day basis. Related to this, 41% felt that their organisation or project needed a stronger strategic direction. Overall, reading through the applications, there is both challenge but also plenty of ambition from the Heritage Compass participants. Many could articulate an exciting vision for the future, but also identify significant issues standing in their way – often relating to resources, skills and capacity, as well as (in some cases) fatigue.

Applicants also expressed a wish to hear from and learn from others, and to experience some solidarity with others facing similar challenges to their own; around 38% of applicants specifically referred to sharing learning and networking with the sector as a key part of what they hoped to get from the programme. For some, this connection with the wider sector was

also a way to fill gaps in their knowledge and confidence; they hoped that examples of other organisation's activities would help them understand what worked and what didn't. Amongst Cohort 3, a small number of organisations referred formerly to the Heritage Compass Benchmarking data, and expected to be able to use this to understand how other, similar organisations operated.

Applicants were also asked to talk about their own experiences, and what they thought they might bring to the programme. Looking at these responses, participants are bringing a broad range of skills and experiences to the programme. There are heritage and culture professionals amongst those participating, and in some cases there are people with not only sectoral experience, but also with specific experience of particular areas of heritage operations like public engagement, marketing, venue management, managing capital projects, curatorial and preservation skills and knowledge, funding applications, creating digital content, building partnerships, etc. Some participants had already had experience of working on national or regional programmes before, as part of wider learning or project cohorts. In addition, some applicants – whilst they were not heritage specialists – brought relevant experiences from other sectors, including business planning, financial management, community leadership and development, human resources and hospitality management.

Some applicants also wanted to share their specific experiences, including their role in leading particular communities to which they belonged or providing a platform for underrepresented voices and heritage. Applicants were also keen to share their passion for heritage, and passion for different kinds of heritage assets and practice; this included volunteers with no formal training in their heritage area, and experts with significant training and experience in a specific area of heritage. Some applicants identified very specific examples of activities which they had been involved in, which were successful, that they wanted to be able to share the learning from with other participants in the programme.

Within the financial information that applicants were asked to supply, they were asked about their financial reserves. 58% of participants report having a financial reserves policy.

Figure 12: Number of months of unrestricted reserves held by participating organisations
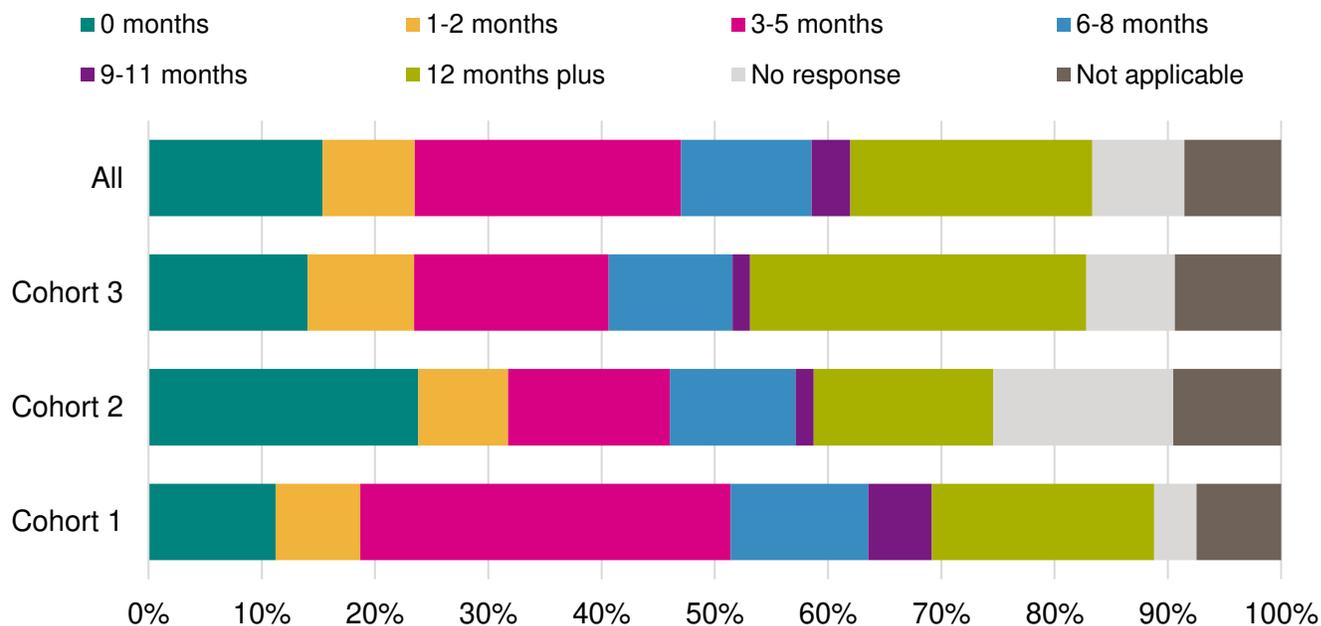
Source: applications to the programme, 234 successful applicants.

Reflecting both the very small or start-up nature of some participating organisations, 15% reported having no reserves, and a further 8% had between 1-2 months of reserves. A higher proportion of participants from cohort 2 report having very low or no reserves than those in cohort 1 or 3, which may reflect the larger group of organisations in cohort 2 with a small income in the last financial year. The largest group is the 24% of participants which have between 3-5 months of reserves, but the spread of reserves – from no reserves to more than 12 months – seems to reflect both the variety of heritage types and the different stages which organisations and projects are at in terms of their activities. At the other end, 21% of all participants reported having reserves of 12 months or longer.

Applicants were asked to indicate what level of unrestricted funds was sitting in their reserves. Around 14% of participants have unrestricted reserves of more than £100k. The largest group (25%) reported unrestricted reserves of between £10-50k. 19% reported have zero unrestricted reserves, and 16% had less than £10k.

As part of the Heritage Compass programme, MyCake has worked with data from Heritage Compass participants and similar-sized heritage organisations in order to create a benchmarking dashboard, which enables organisations to view typical financial data from similar organisations. The idea is that organisations can select the segment of the data which most closely aligns with the profile of their organisation, and the dashboard will help them to understand the average (median) income and expenditure for organisations within that segment. The work which MyCake has undertaken looks at reserves, though there are sometimes problems with the way in which reserves are reported in accounts and so the focus from MyCake has been to understand the liquidity or working capital of organisations. This

means that MyCake looks at the net current assets as a percentage of the turnover: the median is 51.7% of turnover, which gives organisations approximately 6 months of working capital, using data from 2019.

Elsewhere, applicants were asked about why their organisation/project needed to participate in the Heritage Compass programme, and many talked about financial pressures (discussed above). In addition, the application form specifically invited applicants to reflect upon the current financial situation of their organisation, and particularly whether they were in a period of concern due to Covid-19.

23% of participants reported that Covid-related disruption had not caused them any financial concern, and 4% offered no response to the question at all. 42% of participants reported that Covid-related disruption had resulted in a loss of income. For many, this was a loss of earned income, from things like workshops and other activities, hiring spaces, tickets and different types of secondary income, such as cafes. 29% of participants reported accessing some form of emergency funding. For most, this was the Cultural Recovery Fund, but there were also mentions of local authority administered grants, of loans and of other types of Covid-related funding sources. 14% of participants mentioned reducing their expenditure, with references to furlough, reducing activities and one or two references to reducing hours or making staff redundant. 18% talked about activity which had halted: sometimes this was regular ongoing activity, for others, things like capital development plans had been put on hold. 6% of participants mentioned other specific fundraising challenges, often related to trying to raise funds for capital works. Finally, a small number of participants are part of much larger organisations – often local authorities – and were feeling the effects of Covid disruption on the wider organisation.

Despite Cohort 3 participants applying after the majority of the Covid-19 related disruption, their answers indicate that Covid-19 had had a significant effect upon the current circumstances of many organisations. In addition, in response to this and other questions, Cohort 3 participants also provided some reflections on post-Covid challenges, particularly in relation to whether visitors and participants were returning to activities and destinations which had been closed; several reported that visitor levels and things like school bookings were *not* back to pre-pandemic levels.

3.6   What do they need in order to engage with the programme well?

As part of the application process, participants could apply for a bursary of up to £5,000 in recruitment wave 1, £2,000 in recruitment wave 2 and £2,000 in recruitment wave 3, in order to facilitate their access to the programme. 57% of all successful applicants asked for a bursary. Around 28% of those who asked for the bursary asked for £5,000; this was around half of those successful applicants in recruitment wave 1. 35% for between £2,500 and £5,000; and 36% asked for less than £2,500. Applicants were asked to indicate what kinds of things they needed to use the bursary for. The most common reasons related to staff time, with 64% planning to use the bursary for backfill, so that when staff members attended the course, their work responsibilities could be picked up by someone else – often a freelancer – and 40% planned to use the bursary to extend the hours of part-time staff or to pay those usually involved in volunteering to enable them to give the extra time required to attend the Heritage Compass programme.

Beyond this, there were some other quite specific reasons for requesting a bursary. 8% of those requesting a bursary indicated that they planned to buy or upgrade technology with it, to enable them to access different parts of the programme virtually. Within this group, many applicants painted a picture of very limited technology held within the organisation or project. 12% of applicants talked about travel subsidies, and a further 7% talked about a range of other potential out of pocket expenses associated with attending the programme. 12% of those seeking a bursary indicated that they had plans to use some part of the bursary to undertake programme activity related to their wider ambitions. 6% reference general financial hardship, and there were a small number of requests which were slightly unclear about exactly how a bursary might be spent. Amongst other reasons, there were also requests for funding to enable access support to be put in place for an individual with specific requirements, and a request for funding to cover caring responsibilities so that an individual might be free to participate.

Funds have been paid up front to those organisations who have been awarded a bursary, with an accountability agreement which seeks to be both light touch and ensure responsible reporting is in place. Across all those receiving bursary, the average bursary was around £2,250 per organisation. 115 bursaries were given (almost all those who sought a bursary received one), totalling £261,845 of support. Where bursaries were refused, the applications were either from commercial organisations, or the rationale given for seeking a bursary did not sufficiently relate to accessing the Heritage Compass programme.

4 The Programme

4.1 Programme delivery and engagement

The Heritage Compass programme has a number of different elements, including training modules, events like the Symposium days, access for participants to critical friends and mentors and more informal resources like a Slack channel. In total, the programme has included:
- **136** training sessions in total, across **6** different modules delivered by **6** specialist trainers:
  - The Fundraising module had **465** or more attendees across 24 sessions, covering all the cohorts.
  - The Business Planning module had **303** or more attendees across 24 sessions, covering all cohorts.
  - The Governance module had **337** or more attendees across 24 sessions, covering all cohorts.
  - The Cash Management and Forecasting module had **303** or more attendees across 24 sessions, covering all cohorts.
  - The Earned Income module had **253** or more attendees across 24 sessions, covering all cohorts.
  - The Audience Development module has had **618** or more attendees across 16 sessions, offering both introductory and masterclass level workshops, covering all cohorts.
- **3** virtual welcome lunch events.
- **4** programme recruitment Q&A events.
- **4** virtual Learning Journal and Critical Friends support sessions online.
- **4** virtual networking sessions online.
- **4** virtual YouTube, Eventbrite and Slack tutorial sessions.
- **6** virtual Benchmarking Dashboard Q&A sessions.

- **222** Critical Friend pairings and **203** mentoring relationships have been established for all cohorts, with **1437** hours of critical friend support and **1422** hours of mentoring support provided.

Participants in individual sessions have ranged from **4** up to **64**. Each module is made up of a pair of three-hour long sessions; recruitment waves were broken into smaller cohorts to take the modules. Looking at the comparative attendance between the first and second session of each module, it is occasionally the case that the second session has lower attendance, but also very occasionally that it has a higher attendance. There is no general evidence of significant attrition *within* modules (i.e. between the two sessions which were part of a module), and one member of the programme delivery team noted that in their experience of delivering a module, they thought they had never 'lost' more than one participant between the two module sessions.

It is less clear if the lower numbers for a module like Earned Income might reflect capacity (participants have, in some cases, been given the option to take modules alongside other cohorts or even recruitment waves in order to allow them flexibility when work demands are significant), or whether they reflect the perceived relevance or value of a particular module. One member of the programme delivery team thought that some participants were looking at particular modules, and potentially choosing not to attend them either because they felt it wasn't relevant or because they felt they knew about the topic already; another wondered if some topics were being avoided because participants felt less confident to engage with them.

The online Symposium day (September 2021) included 12 different sessions, 10 of which were paired as parallel sessions. 24 people contributed to the sessions, as speakers or facilitators, and these were drawn from the programme delivery team, non-participating organisations in the heritage and cultural sector, and organisations participating in the Heritage Compass programme. 215 people registered to attend the Day, and around 177 people attended for part or all of the day, with most spending an average of 4.5 hours or so in the conference. The majority of these were programme participants.

The in-person Symposium event in Coventry (January 2023) included an opening plenary, before 12 different breakout sessions, running as parallel workshops on the themes of resilience, audiences and income generation, followed by a closing plenary and a networking reception. 29 people contributed to the sessions as speakers or facilitators, and these were drawn from the programme delivery team, non-participating organisations in the heritage and cultural sector, and organisations participating in the Heritage Compass programme. 211 people attended the day in person, 343 viewed the livestream online and there were 54 views of the recorded sessions after the event. The majority of these were programme participants.

Whilst it has not be feasible to track in detail how organisations/projects engage across the programme, or how individuals within those organisations/projects engage, we used both the Learning Journals and feedback survey for the Symposia to get a snapshot of how participants were managing their engagement with the programme.

For example, looking at Symposia attendees' experiences of the programme to date, around a quarter (across both Symposia) were attending the Symposia as the first activity in the Heritage Compass programme with which they had engaged; given the slightly higher proportion of respondents attending the second Symposia day who reported this, this suggests that some organisations used the Symposia with members of staff, trustees or volunteers who had not otherwise engaged with the programme; there were also potentially attendees (and survey respondents) who might have been part of the newly recruited cohorts who will take part in a

condensed version of the programme which has just commenced. Across both Symposia, 69% of survey respondents had attended some or most of the programme.

Similarly, in the Learning Journals, the significant majority of respondents report doing all or some of the modules. The responses in the Learning Journals suggest a large core of participants where the same individual has engaged with the modules, the critical friends/mentors and activities like the Learning Journals; there is then a smaller group who appear to have spread their engagement with the Heritage Compass programme across multiple staff members, trustees or volunteers. Those completing the Learning Journal also told us about engaging with the Symposia days, networking opportunities, attending information sessions on the benchmark dashboard, engaging with digital marketing training and other activities. The Slack channel was also mentioned by some participants, and the Learning Journals (completed at three different points in the programme) enable us to see that towards the end of the programme some participants were using the Slack channel to check for information and connect with other participants. It does not, on the basis of the Learning Journals, appear to have had widespread use.

Looking at symposium participants in comparison to all the participants in the programme, the Symposium days had a similar geographical spread to the wider group of all programme participants; a slightly smaller proportion at the Symposium reported being from London and the South, but the difference may not be significant. Broadly speaking, Symposium participants reported a similar spread of heritage types that we see amongst all the programme participants; there were slightly fewer Symposium attendees proportionally from heritage types like community heritage, and slightly more from industrial, maritime and transport, and 'other' heritage areas.

When participants engaged with different parts of the programme, we asked them to tell us how they found the process of engaging and whether they experienced any issues accessing different elements of the programme. The following data is based on feedback surveys, which may not be representative of all participants. Some questions were asked across both training modules and the Symposia, others were asked only for one or the other.

Figure 13: Participants experiences of accessing and engaging with different parts of the programme, net agreement
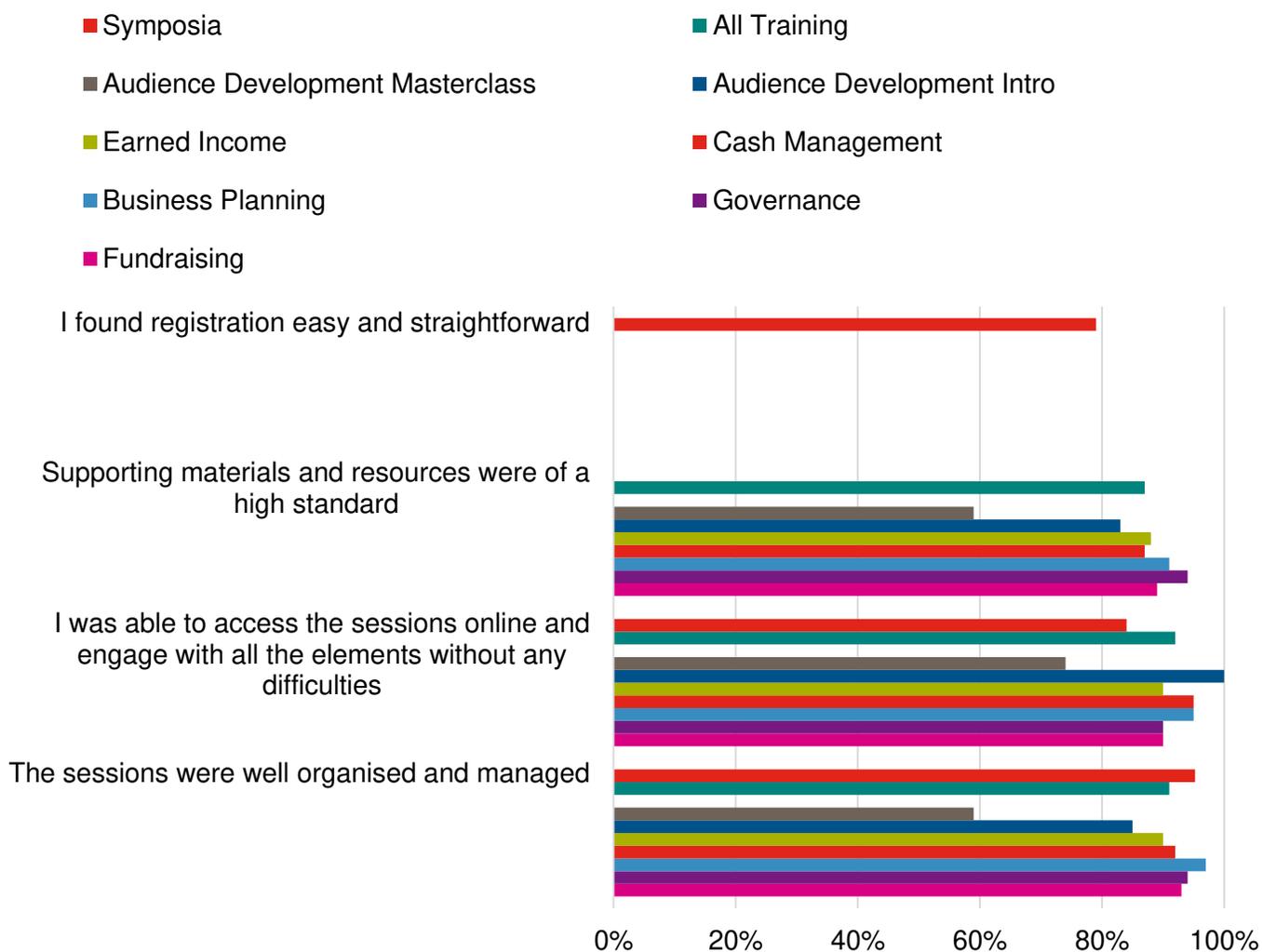
Legend:
- Symposia
- All Training
- Audience Development Masterclass
- Audience Development Intro
- Earned Income
- Cash Management
- Business Planning
- Governance
- Fundraising

Categories:
- I found registration easy and straightforward
- Supporting materials and resources were of a high standard
- I was able to access the sessions online and engage with all the elements without any difficulties
- The sessions were well organised and managed

X-axis: 0%, 20%, 40%, 60%, 80%, 100%

Sources: All training course feedback surveys, 392 respondents; Symposia feedback surveys, 96 respondents.

Figure 13 presents a number of statements which survey respondents were asked to agree or disagree with, on a five-point scale from definite or complete agreement, through to definite or complete disagreement. The score presented in the graph is 'net agreement': that is, looking at all those who mostly or completely agreed with a statement, and subtracting from this score all those who mostly or completely disagreed.

Participants were asked for their experiences of registering for the Symposia. Whilst most felt registration was easy and straightforward, a small proportion did not find registration easy. In the first year, the Symposium took place online, and more respondents reported difficulties in engaging with elements; in the second year, the conference had a hybrid element (in person and online) and so overall online access to the Symposia scores highly, as does online engagement with all the training sessions.

Looking at open-ended responses, a small cluster of participants experienced some technical difficulties in accessing the first Symposium, which took place online. A few struggled with connections in their own environment, but most referred to issues with getting links to work or the Hopin platform logging them out, or audio not working. A small number of participants disliked the Hopin platform and found it difficult to navigate or engage with. For the second Symposium, which took place in person, fewer respondents reported any issues with accessing parts of the day. The breakout rooms were a challenge for some participants, being too small and the acoustic too loud to support multiple discussions taking place at the same time. Some respondents also mentioned the main space in the venue – Coventry Cathedral – being quite cold. Almost all the negative feedback reflected practical issues, rather than issues related to the purpose or content of the sessions, which participants were in the majority very positive about. For the second symposium, whilst the venue offered some challenges from a comfort perspective, participants were also pleased to have the chance meet and engage in person in a spectacular space with significant heritage of its own.

Almost all of the training courses were delivered online. The feedback surveys for the training courses also suggest that some participants experienced technical difficulties, including:

- Problems with their own internet connections
- Problems with the trainers' internet connection
- Issues with login details, having to login via Eventbrite and/or finding the link to access the sessions
- Background noise, or problems with sound quality.
- A lack of captions in breakout rooms.

On the whole, as the cohorts progressed through, these issues became fewer. A very small number of participants raised other issues: for some the virtual delivery did not suit them, and some also found that the scheduling of the courses meant they were unable to engage fully. A couple of participants had struggled to access slides or material after the courses which they felt might be valuable. Finally, a few participants reported unclear facilitation, particularly in the management of breakout groups.

When we asked the participants to reflect on barriers to accessing and engaging with the programme in their Learning Journals, the earlier learning journal entries also discussed issues with technology, including the quality of participants' internet connections, problems with findings links for sessions and signing up; some participants were also very clear that their own knowledge and experience of technology was limited; and for some, old IT equipment and poor IT set-up also contributed to the issue. As we saw in the survey feedback, issues with technology were reported less and less as the programme progressed.

Looking at the later Learning Journals, as participants had progressed through the majority of the programme, different kinds of barriers and challenges were reported. What we see in the Learning Journals is that barriers to engaging with the programme were largely internal for the organisations which struggled, relating to time and capacity issues. Some organisations struggled to allocate attendance and participation in Heritage Compass across a number of staff, trustees and volunteers, leaving one or two people engaging with the whole programme. We can see that in some cases, those individuals have found it challenging to take the learning back and influence organisational change based on their new knowledge.

On a practical level, some organisations found it hard to engage in everything the programme had to offer because of scheduling issues, with daytime sessions not always meeting the needs of trustees and volunteers. Others struggled to keep track of the dates, timings and links for online meetings, and would have welcomed more personalised prompts and reminders before sessions. However, once participants found their way into the online sessions, they found them accessible and there were few issues reported during the training itself. Following the first symposium and some of the feedback around the timing of sessions, the programme also ran some twilight sessions (early evening) for Trustees, and some twilight briefing sessions (e.g. about the evaluation) in order to support more participants to be able to access the sessions.

The biggest issue we see is with the Slack channel, which the programme team set up as a resource for peer engagement, information sharing and hosting of resources. There was resistance from many people in the cohort to signing up for an additional communication channel and remembering to check it, and as a result many did not experience the potential benefits of Slack.

We discussed earlier in this section evidence that participants who signed up to individual modules tended to attend both sessions. From the Learning Journals we can see that there was some variation in how participants engaged with modules, for example whether it was the same individual who attended both parts, or all of the modules, or different members of the team. The slight variations in overall numbers engaging in modules suggests that some, participating organisations or projects may not have taken every module; however, we also know that the delivery team enabled flexibility for some participants in allowing them to pick up modules later on, for example.

From a survey we undertook with critical friends and mentors, we know that several members of the delivery team reported that they had had difficulty in securing the engagement of participating organisations with the offer of critical friend or mentoring support. They had dealt with organisations who were hard to reach, missed sessions and did not fully engage. This appears to have been because of the issues of organisational capacity we see reported in the Learning Journals at length (see section 5 of this report), rather than a direct rejection of the need for a critical friend and/or mentor. Where this had happened, critical friends and mentors felt that the organisations had missed out on a valuable opportunity. Organisations which had participated fully in the programme, especially where training and critical friend/mentoring opportunities were widened out beyond one or two people, had been able to use their experience as a springboard for change.

The picture this gives us of engagement with the programme suggests that whilst overall attrition (people dropping out altogether) was very limited, some participants definitely engaged more substantially and fully with the programme than others. From an evaluation perspective, we have to be mindful that our data reflects self-selection: those participants who have decided to complete feedback surveys, or engage with the Learning Journals. It seems likely, particularly in the case of the Learning Journals, which were attached to the critical friends process, that participants who were overall able to be more engaged with the different elements of the programme were also more likely to complete the Learning Journals. As such, this means that we have a less complete picture of what the experience of engaging with the programme was like for those who were overall less engaged with the programme.

In the process reflection sessions for the interim report we asked members of the delivery team to reflect upon the challenges of undertaking the programme online. The team identified both a learning curve for themselves as delivery partners, but also for many of the participants

amongst whom there were some with both limited technical knowledge/experience and equipment/connectivity. In the early stages of delivery, participants required quite a lot of support navigating different platforms, finding links, etc – however, delivery partners felt this had improved over the course of the programme. More generally, however, delivery partners thought that virtual delivery had had some other effects upon the programme, and particularly on the degree of engagement with others across the cohort (this is discussed in more detail below in section 4.3). One delivery partner wondered if the virtual delivery meant that participants were more likely to feel that they could drop out of programme elements with short notice, having not committed to being somewhere in person.

4.2 Relevance and quality of the programme

Across the different feedback and reflection routes for participants, we asked them to tell us whether parts of the programme – and the whole programme – met their expectations, whether they were finding it relevant and pitched at the right level for them and their organisation or project.

Figure 14: Participants' expectations and perceptions of relevance of different parts of the programme, net agreement
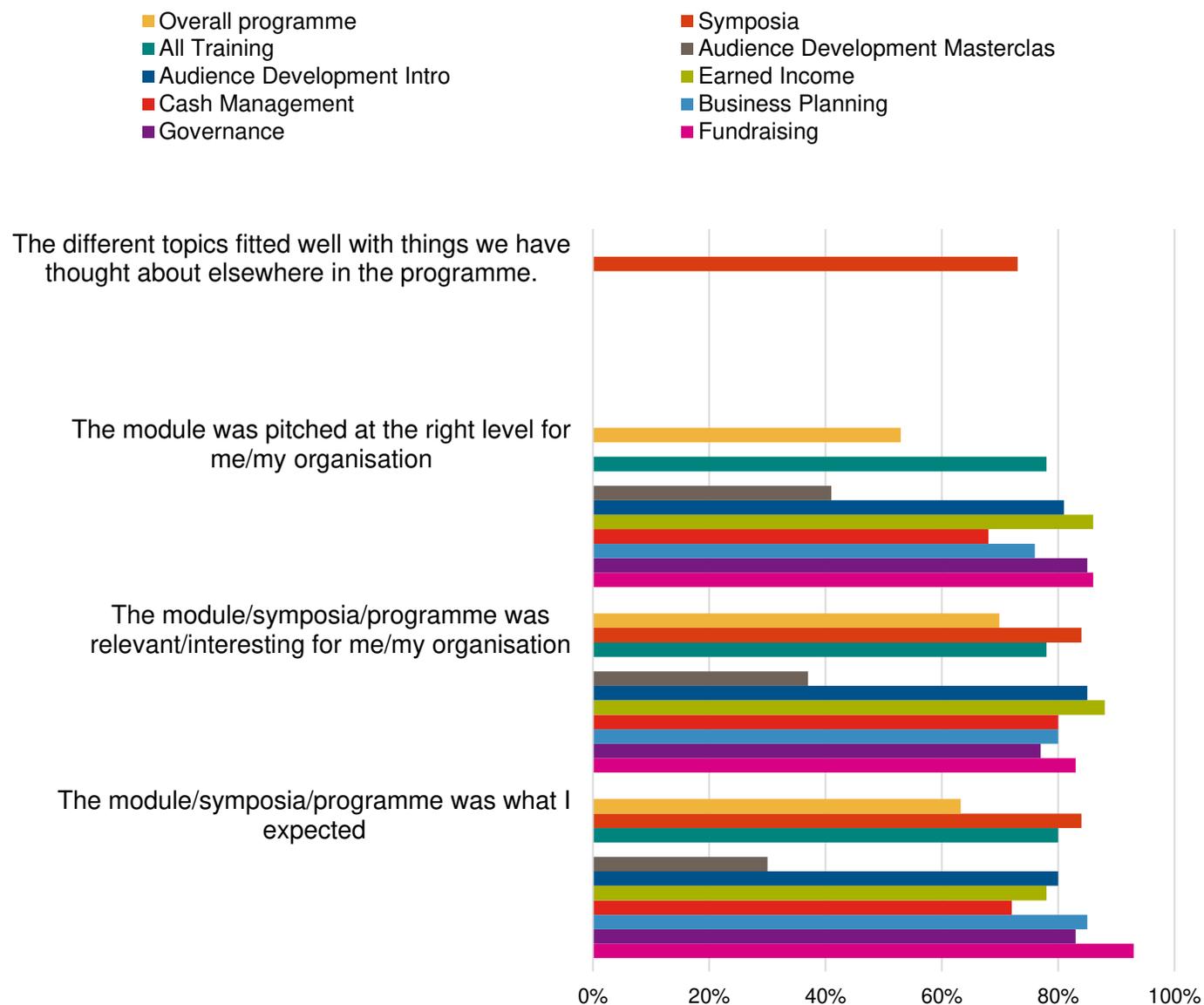
Sources: All training course feedback surveys, 392 respondents; Symposia feedback surveys, 96 respondents; Learning Journal 3, 136 completions

As with the previous figure, the scores are presented in figure 14 are those of 'net agreement' with the statements. Overall, participants were most likely to feel that the training courses – in Fundraising, Governance and Business Planning – were what they expected; the Audience Development Masterclass is the only training course where a substantially higher proportion of participants felt that it was not what they were expecting. Across the two Symposia, respondents to the feedback survey felt that it was, for a significant majority, what they expected. Across the whole programme, from those participants who completed the Learning Journals, this net agreement figure drops a bit to +63%.

Looking at the question of relevance to organisations and projects, the score for the overall programme from the Learning Journals (+70%) is much more in line with the scores which discreet parts of the programme have received. The net agreement scores for the relevance of training courses range from +77% net agreement (for Governance training) to +88% net agreement for earned income, with the exception of the Audience Development Masterclass which (similar to its score on expectations) is significantly lower at +37%. The Symposia at +84% has a score in a similar range to the training courses.

Participants were asked whether they felt that training modules and the overall programme were pitched at the right level for them and their organisation/project. As with expectations, positive scores for the overall programme sit at a lower level (+53%) behind those for most of the individual training modules, which range from +68% (Cash Management) to +86% (Earned Income and Fundraising); again, the Audience Development Masterclass, whilst gaining an overall positive net agreement, sits at a lower score with +41%.

Finally, those attending the Symposia were asked whether they felt the different topics in the Symposia day fitted well into the wider programme; this received a net agreement score of +73%. The largest group of respondents (45%) definitely agreed that this was the case, and only 2% of respondents disagreed, suggesting that the Symposia was, on the whole, well pitched to sit within the wider context of the programme.

What participants learnt from the programme is explored in detail in section 5 of this report, but the following quotation from a later entry in the Learning Journal, in response to a question about what learning participants will take back from the programme to their organisations, encapsulates the way in which the different parts of the programme have worked together in a meaningful way for some participants:

> 'Most of it - mostly the confidence given to see our objectives more clearly - to believe that we can actually achieve them and to have a few tools to do so. It has become clear that projects and objectives such as ours can only develop slowly and with perseverance and that Rome wasn't built in day! Since starting on the programme there has been a subtle shift in the organisation's understanding of the challenges. We now need to make more progress on our business plan.'

We also asked participants to reflect upon their perceptions of the quality of the training/facilitation in the training modules undertaken to date, and upon the speaker programme in the Symposia day.

Figure 15: Participants' perceptions of training/facilitation and speaker programme, net agreement
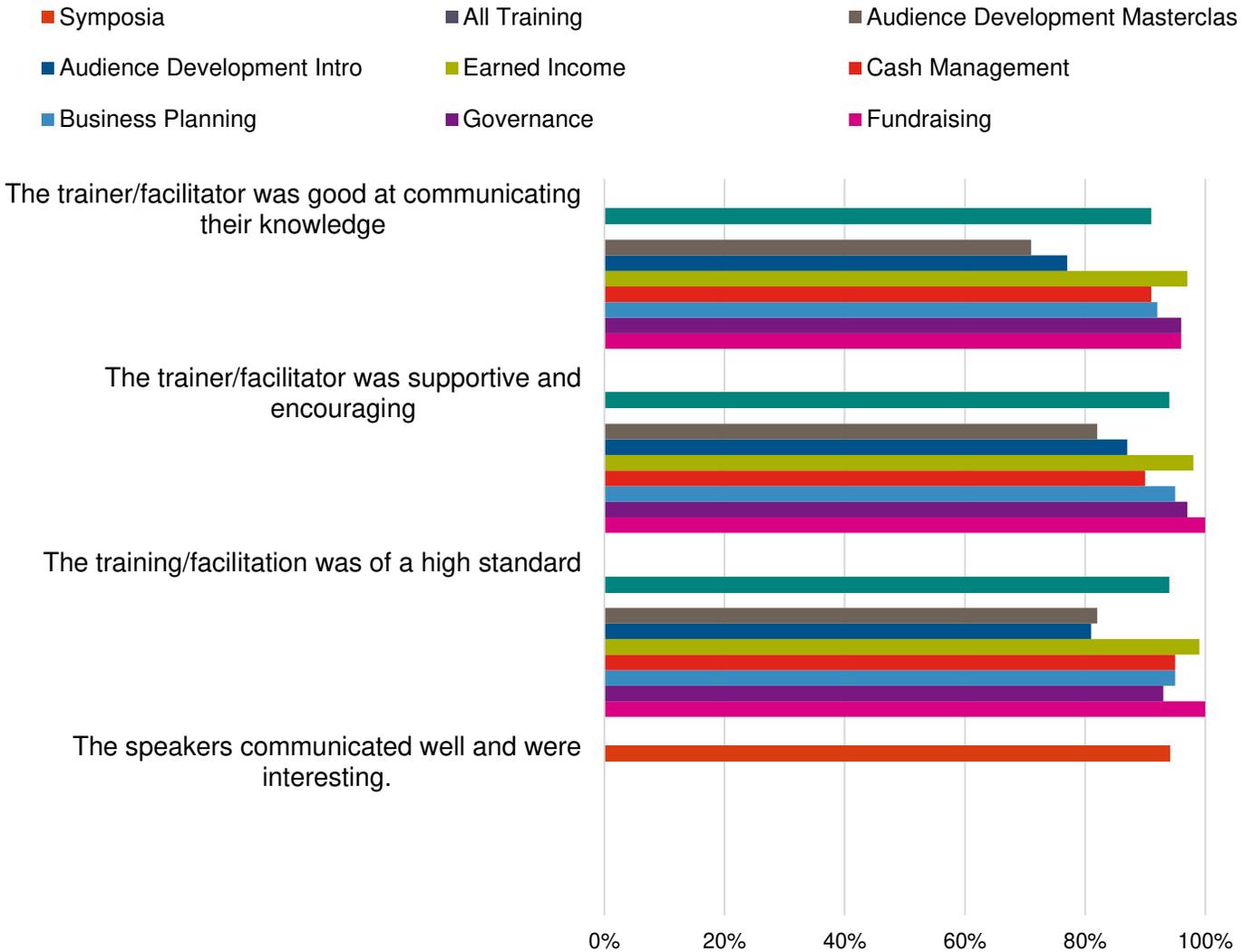
Legend:
- Symposia
- All Training
- Audience Development Masterclas
- Audience Development Intro
- Earned Income
- Cash Management
- Business Planning
- Governance
- Fundraising

Categories:
- The trainer/facilitator was good at communicating their knowledge
- The trainer/facilitator was supportive and encouraging
- The training/facilitation was of a high standard
- The speakers communicated well and were interesting.

Sources: All training course feedback surveys, 392 respondents; Symposia feedback surveys, 96 respondents.

Respondents were extremely positive about the training and facilitation they received in all the training modules. All the respondents agreed that the training and facilitation was of a high standard, with net agreement ranging from +81% to +100%, and between 49-86% of respondents across the training courses definitely (rather than mostly) agreed that this was the case. Trainers/facilitators are seen as supportive and encouraging, again with very high proportions of respondents (from 65%-90%) stating that they definitely (rather than mostly) agreed this was the case. Respondents also gave similarly high scores for the way in which trainers/facilitators communicated their knowledge. We also asked those participants who attended the Symposia to tell us about their experience of the speakers, which included a number of course participants talking about their own experiences. Respondents gave a net agreement score of 94% to the statement: 'the speakers communicated well and were interesting'.

In the feedback surveys for different aspects of the programme we asked respondents to tell us about the most and least useful or interesting things from the different training sessions and the Symposia day. Looking at feedback on the training modules, lots of respondents mention specific elements of the training. For the business planning, SWOT and RACI exercises worked well; for the cash management course, participants referred to the Risk Register and Cashflow Forecasting; financial asset mapping was popular in the earned income module; work on the Case for Support was commonly mentioned from the fundraising module; regular 'sins' of being a trustee and information on the Charity Governance Code was popular in the governance module; participants in the Audience Development Introduction mention the Ansoff Matrix and more generally the introduction to desk research; and those who provided feedback on the Audience Development Masterclass also mentioned the Ansoff Matrix.

The Audience Development Masterclass had included a statement on British colonialism and imperialism at the beginning, and more generally some participants reflected on the emphasis which the Masterclass had on social justice. The feedback survey contains both positive and negative responses to this element, with some participants finding it a really useful prompt to reflect on their own practice and others feeling that it was not relevant for them or the session.

We can see this enthusiasm for specific content reflected in the feedback on the Symposia day also. Respondents identifying their most useful or interesting part of the day talked about specific sessions, and popular ones included the Case for Support session and the Benchmarking session. Given the lower level of applicants selecting 'an understanding of how to use benchmarking to inform decisions' the enthusiasm for the Benchmarking session at the Symposia is encouraging, and attendance was significant for both Symposium days. Benchmarking may be an area that participants simply know and understand less about, and looking at the feedback in the Symposia survey participants who attended felt they learnt a lot about what benchmarking is, and why it might be useful to them.

In the feedback survey for the second symposia, we asked participants if they had accessed the Heritage Dashboard, which is the benchmarking information portal built as part of the Heritage Compass. 37% of respondents said that they had taken a look, but not used it in detail; 15% said they had used it already for planning or benchmarking their organisation. Almost half (49%) at that point (January 2023) had not yet accessed it. Similarly, when we asked participants to tell us about their engagement with the Dashboard in their third Learning Journal entry, 56% had not yet accessed it, 32% had taken a look but not used it in detail and only 2% at that stage reported using it for planning or benchmarking their organisation; some respondents will have completed the Learning Journal entries some months prior to the Symposium day, so these responses suggest that the Dashboard may have gained some awareness amongst participants between those final Learning Journal entries and the Symposium day.

In the Learning Journals we also asked participants to tell us about any engagement which they had had with the Dashboard. The Dashboard was created whilst the programme took place, and so was only available to participants towards the end of the programme. Responses fell into the following groups:
- Respondents who did not know or understand what the Dashboard was; some of these confused it with Slack or thought that it was another platform for programme information like Slack. Some simply said that they had forgotten what it was, or did not know what it was, or were not sure if it was available yet. For some respondents who were not sure what it was, there was a sense of 'one more thing' that they needed to understand, and that some felt challenged from a capacity perspective.

- A very small number of respondents who thought they knew what it was, and were planning to look at it at some point.
- A small number of respondents who had used the dashboard; all but one of these were very positive and enthusiastic about the Dashboard, felt it was easy to use and were confident in talking about how they planned to use it. Several of these respondents said they had only just had a first look, and expected to return to it again to use it in more detail.

Both before and following the symposia, MyCake, who built the Dashboard, ran a series of information sessions for Heritage Compass participants. From feedback at those sessions we can see that participants were often quite surprised about what the Dashboard could tell them and how easy it was to use. They discussed using the Dashboard to inform their thinking and planning, and to allow staff to engage other colleagues and trustees in thinking about financial and strategic planning. Key to this was a sense that participants now had access to reliable data about how similar organisations worked, enabling them to put their current operations and future ambitions into context. We can also see in the final Learning Journal entries that some participants had found the Dashboard valuable in understanding their organisation in comparison to others, and thus as a way of identifying potential areas for growth.

There is some evidence that the training modules enabled participants to think about things in a different way – for example, thinking about how fundraising might fit into an organisation, or what the purpose of business planning is. The cultural aspect of how organisations work, and how organisational culture can support or hinder an organisation in its aims was referenced in relation to the business planning and governance training modules. Participants also relayed their relief at finding that topics they had perceived to be 'difficult' or perhaps quite technical were made accessible; modules like cash management, for example, helped to make the topic both friendly and understandable for some participants who had been apprehensive.

Beyond the specific content, the respondents to the survey cite the value of the trainers' or speakers' knowledge and approach and the value of specific resources which the training session provided them with. Respondents were also very keen on learning from real-life examples, and referred both to examples identified by trainers or those presented by speakers in the Symposia, and to the examples offered by other participants in the cohort through break-out sessions. Participants have enjoyed hearing about others experiences, and it clearly plays an important role both in enabling them to situate abstract learning and in helping them feel that they are not alone in the challenges they face in their own organisations/projects.

As an extension of this, in each of the feedback surveys respondents said that one of the most useful/interesting things was being able to connect with their fellow participants. In the feedback for the second Symposia, held in person, by far the most popular response to what they found most useful or interesting was the opportunity to meet and connect with other participants. How the cohort have engaged with each other across the programme to date is discussed further in the section below.

We also asked participants to tell us about the least interesting or useful things for them in the training modules and Symposia day. Across all the feedback surveys the single most common response to this open-ended question was 'everything was useful/interesting'. Beyond this, however, there are some other areas in which not all the content suited all the participants. These included the following:
- In the training modules, a small number of survey respondents felt that there was content they knew already

- Conversely, a few (but only a very small number) felt that some content was too advanced for them
- Some respondents were not sure how relevant some content would be to their organisation's situation and challenges; sometimes this reflected a very specific context (e.g. the value of the Governance module to a project/team based in a local authority, a focus on examples from an urban context where a participant's organisation was rural, a focus on physical assets and venues where a participant's activities did not include running a venue), and at other times these seem to indicate a lack of confidence that lessons might be transferable from one context to another.
- Connected very directly to this were some respondents who felt that all the examples cited in a training module related to organisations or activities very different from their own, and therefore they did not feel that they could 'read across' from any learning into their own situation.
- There were occasionally topics which respondents felt were missing, or not explored as fully as they might have liked.
- There were a small number of responses who felt that the pacing of modules or sessions did not work, and there were responses indicating that it was too fast, and respondents who found it too slow. Similarly, a few respondents either wanted longer sessions or a generally longer module, or shorter sessions/modules.
- Some respondents wanted more of an opportunity to engage with other participants, and did not feel that activities were interactive enough; some respondents also lamented the virtual nature of the connections, and (whilst they understood why activities took place online) would have preferred to do them in person.
- Finally, there were very occasional criticisms of facilitation from speakers and trainers, usually related to clarity (e.g. an exercise had been given to work on in breakout rooms, but the instructions were only provided very briefly).

In the early Learning Journal entries, participants demonstrated high expectations of the role of critical friends in helping them to figure out how to apply what they are learning in training modules. Feedback from the later Learning Journal entries indicates strongly that the role of critical friends and mentors was very important to the participating organisations, helping to embed the learning from the training sessions and to provide guidance and support as they developed and implemented new strategic plans. In the first learning journal, we could see that participants were keen to meet their critical friends and mentors and felt that their support would be key to their implementation of the ideas and strategies they had learned in the training session. By the end of the programme, many organisations reported highly positive and impactful work with their critical friends and mentors. In many cases it is clear that the critical friends and mentors had gone beyond what was originally expected of them by the participants, for example, by facilitating board level discussions, providing further tools and resources, and providing detailed feedback on draft plans.

> 'All of what we have done with our Critical Friend and Mentor has been instrumental in giving us focus and clear goals for our future in allowing us the space, time and expertise that they have given us. This 'space' for individual support should not in any way be undervalued as it has been excellent and extremely valuable to us in providing a 'backbone' of support to us in relation to the training. James and Jane have been exceptionally insightful, useful and hardworking (they have clearly shown their research into our organisation prior to our meetings which has created trust and enabled us to build an exceptional relationship for maximum benefit).'

'Our Mentor provides some useful resources we can adapt and out CF [critical friends] has helped us understand what needs to go in the BP [business plan] and what needs to be developed separately in a comms or audience development plan.'

'On audience development we have been re-evaluating our existing core audiences in our workshops with Cath and I think we might have been a bit surprised in terms of our audiences not necessarily being the people we expected - but surprised in a good way. Cath showed us the Empathy Map technique followed by the Value Proposition Canvas and we have been working through these with our selected core audience groups considering the thoughts and needs of each.'

We undertook a survey with members of the delivery team, including members who had been involved in training, mentoring participants and being a critical friend. We gained 21 responses, and some respondents had undertaken more than one of these roles as part of their contribution to the programme. We asked them to reflect upon their experiences of being a critical friend and/or a mentor in the survey, and have been able to add these reflections to the data from 1-2-1 reflection sessions which the Evaluation team ran with some members of the delivery team towards the end of the first year of activity. In those earlier reflections, members of the delivery team did report high expectations from participants of critical friends and mentors, and acknowledged that some participants were bringing a complex range of problems and challenges to the table, which in some cases included significant personal challenges.

In the survey, critical friends and mentors told us that they worked with participating organisations in a variety of ways, switching between coach, mentor, consultant and critical friend approaches depending on the needs of the participants, regardless of whether they had been allocated as a critical friend or a mentor. There appears to have been considerable overlap between the roles of critical friend and mentor, which on occasion led to some confusion when participants received conflicting advice. They described taking a variety of roles and approaches including:

- Being a listening ear or 'sounding board' as organisations worked on strategy and implementation of change
- Reviewing draft versions of business plans, audience development plans and fundraising applications
- Facilitating discussion and providing advice on specific topics or challenges within the organisation
- Running more broad 'clinic' sessions where participants raised whatever issues they were currently dealing with
- Facilitating workshops and away days for staff and boards
- Providing templates and resources to support organisations with planning
- Helping participants to understand and 'unpack' the learning from the training sessions
- Signposting to other organisations and providers e.g. NCVO
- Championing participant wellbeing during the programme.

More generally, from the feedback from critical friends and mentors, there is a question about how this support was structured. The challenges of getting some participants to engage meant that some critical friends and mentors found that the necessary time required was under-resourced through the programme, particularly in terms of time for booking meetings and chasing participants. The interchangeability of the two roles from the perspective of some critical friends/mentors and some participants, which was discussed earlier in this report, might suggest

that a single connection with a more substantially resourced arrangement might have been preferable. The question of how time was used in the sessions also came up; some critical friends/mentors felt that a more intensive approach, with sessions closer together, might have limited the amount of time they otherwise had to spend in catching up with organisations and reviewing progress. Finally, some critical friends/mentors felt that there were organisations for whom the Learning Journal did not work as a reflective tool, instead being seen as too much of an administrative burden.

Critical friends and mentors considered some organisations to have been unready for Heritage Compass, either because they were too small or early in their development or because they could not make sufficient time available. For these organisations, the content of the training sessions was advanced and could be overwhelming. They saw their role in these cases as helping participants to consider which elements of what they had learned were most immediately relevant to them and identify how to use this learning. For other large organisations, some sitting within local authority structures, the training programme was at a basic level, especially where organisations were already in a position to employ specialists in marketing, fundraising or business development roles. In these cases, critical friends and mentors used their expertise to go beyond the training and provide challenge and consultancy type support. This feedback reflects what we see within those responses to the training module feedback surveys, where for some participants the training was pitched either above or below the level of their existing knowledge and experience.

4.3 Cohort engagement in the programme

Across the different feedback routes, we also asked participants to tell us about how they found engaging with other participants on the programme.

Figure 16: Participants experiences of engaging with other participants
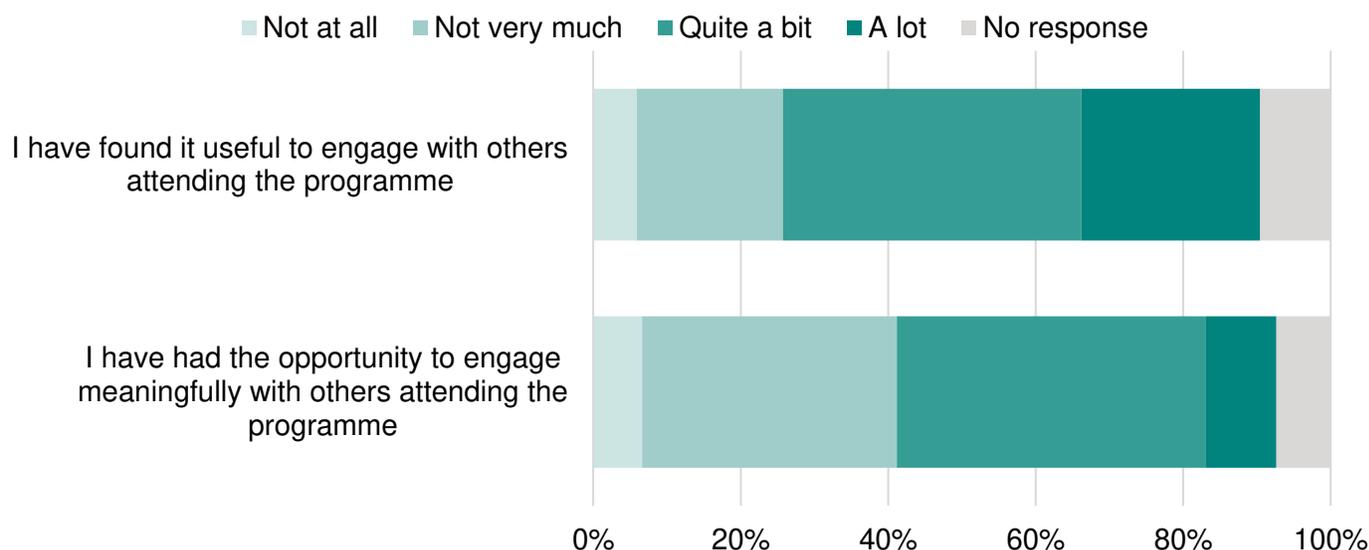
Source: Learning Journal 3, 136 responses

From other open-ended questions in the early Learning Journal entries we can see that participants hoped to have the opportunity to engage with each other more; the data in the figure above suggests that when participants get the opportunity to engage with each other, they find it useful. By the time participants completed their final Learning Journal, we see some making contact with one or two others they have met during the programme who have similar issues or relevant experience to share. There is, however, little evidence of participants developing extended networks of new contacts. The first symposium was online only, and participants were positive about connecting with other participants via online chat and coffee breaks: 66% of feedback survey respondents mostly or completely agreed that they enjoyed networking with and hearing from other participants in the programme. The second symposium took place in person, and 98% of feedback survey respondents agreed that this was the case, with 80% definitely agreeing.

Feedback from the Learning Journals indicates that most of the contact and discussion between participating organisations on the cohort has been within the training sessions, particularly during breakout activities. Participants enjoyed meeting other people with similar circumstances and developed an understanding of the breadth and diversity of the sector.

> 'I also benefitted from open discussions with course attendees and it was good to get the lay of the land around how other organisations were doing. I picked up some very helpful tips from these sessions.'

Where organisations had engaged with others outside the training sessions, this tended to happen as a result of participants reaching out to people they had met in the sessions who were

working on similar issues or had similarities in the type of heritage they were managing. Several organisations have made this type of individual connection and the Learning Journals suggest that that this is making a difference and addressing isolation felt by some.

'There was probably only one other organisation similar to us and that was the digital archive for IT. This was useful as a digital archive is our goal for the physical material we have as well as collecting and protecting the digital material of contemporary history. I have been in contact with them.'

'I have fruitfully engaged with another museum outside the programme and personally it has been very important to hear firstly that the problems I face in running a museum are problems that are faced by others and secondly the innovative ways in which others have overcome these problems. A consequence of this is a feeling that I am no longer isolated.'

Critical friends and mentors had also supported the process of connecting participants with others:

'Jane introduced me to a participant from one of the other cohorts and we had an interesting and worthwhile chat about our respective experiences.'

For some people, the lack of opportunity to connect outside the training sessions has been disappointing, and there is a desire for more opportunities to connect, with similar organisations and with those in the same region.

'I have not been in contact with any others attending the programme. Those that I have met in sessions online have been very friendly and I have learned about the rich heritage landscape we have in the UK but beyond that I have not successfully made any networks with others in my area. A lot of this is probably because of restrictions with Covid-19. I have been on Slack but people don't seem that active on there so I haven't been able to have conversations about anything with other delegates.'

We asked members of the programme delivery team to reflect upon their sense of engagement across the cohort for the interim report. All felt that delivery in a virtual environment potentially limited some of the more informal engagement which might help participants to make new connections and network. There is evidence from those delivering training of a sensitivity to this, and two individuals involved in delivering training talked about adjusting breakout sessions in training modules to enable participants to talk to each other without focusing solely on the training topics, in order to facilitate some more informal sharing and exchange. The delivery team had put in place some support mechanisms to encourage participants to use Slack, but some thought that the platform might not work so well for a group which had never met in person, and therefore had limited prior knowledge of each other.

One member of the delivery team wondered what successful peer networking might look like, and suggested that in reality this might mean some limited engagement with a wide range of participants, but perhaps one or two really meaningful new connections. There was evidence amongst those delivery team members involved in delivering critical friend and mentoring support of team members already supporting individual participants to engage with others where particular similarities or connections could be made. The degree to which this kind of bespoke and specific peer engagement can take place may rely heavily on critical friends and mentors to identify and encourage useful connections.

The other element of programme design which was originally intended to support greater peer to peer engagement was the intention to organise participants into sub-cohorts by need – driven primarily by what they had identified as their most important outcomes when they applied to the programme – for the training modules, so that participants would undertake their training activities alongside the same group throughout. At the very beginning of the programme Covid-19 related restrictions meant that the entire programmed needed to be delivered online, and limited the in-person engagement within cohorts which might have made this element both more apparent and more meaningful to participants. In practice, the delivery team report that some flexibility has been necessary to allow individual organisations/participants to swap training sessions for better dates, and therefore that principle of a common cohort of fellow trainees has been less fully applied. Whilst they had been part of the original programme design, in practice, the cohorts were not a particular guiding principle in the way in which the wider delivery team were approaching participants, due to the circumstances in which delivery took place.

5 What are they learning?

5.1 Knowledge and Tools

The responses in the Learning Journals clearly tell us that there is new learning happening as a result of the Heritage Compass programme, and that this learning is being practised and embedded, supported by participants' relationships with their critical friends and mentors. Participants in the training are being introduced to new concepts and new ways of approaching regular tasks. Others are finding the sessions useful as a refresher, or as a way of confirming what they have learnt through their hands-on experience of heritage management.

Across the different feedback routes, we asked participants to tell about their experiences of learning – specifically we focused on whether they were learning new things, and how they felt about taking that learning away and back to their organisations.

Figure 17: Participants' experiences of learning across the programme, net agreement
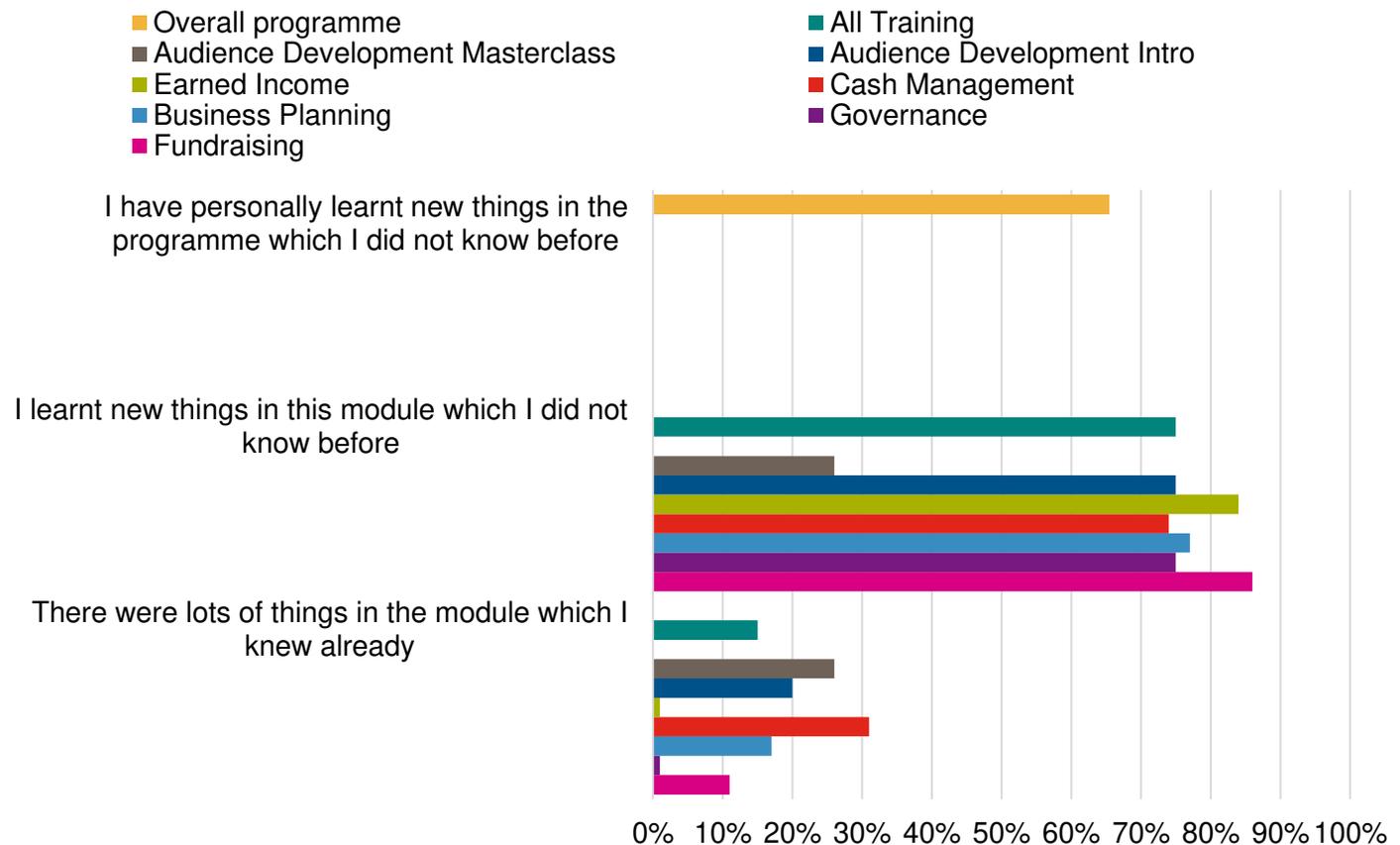
Sources: All training course feedback surveys, 392 responses; Learning Journal 3, 136 completions.

Looking at all the training courses combined, respondents gave a net agreement of +75% that they learnt new things in the module which they did not know before. Similarly, amongst those who completed the Learning Journal and reflected on their experience of the overall programme, there was a net agreement of +65% that they had *personally* learnt new things which they did not know before. Looking at the training, this was particularly the case in the

fundraising and earned income modules, and least likely to be the case for the audience development masterclass.

Across all these learning scores, with the exception of the audience development introduction, more respondents 'definitely agreed' than 'mostly agreed' – a strong sign that the programme is introducing participants to new ideas, approaches and information.

The Learning Journals highlight that for some participants, the sessions were useful as a refresher and helped to consolidate knowledge learned over time:

> 'Sessions so far have been extremely helpful in formalising, simplifying and tying together information that we already possess and then expanding further.'

> 'Not learnt new things but have re-learnt and re-explored existing learning.'

When participants describe what they have learnt, this mostly relates to specific principles and approaches related to the training topics, as we found earlier in the responses to the feedback survey questions about the 'most useful/interesting' things in the training modules (section 4.2 of this report). Participants have been introduced to new techniques for strategic planning which they can apply within their organisation.

> 'My understanding has deepened in relation to broad areas like opportunities to commercialise as its different from fundraising and looking at assets as a leverage and thus showed new ways to generate income.'

Participants valued the new tools and suggestions offered during the training sessions which could be implemented quickly, as well as guidance about how to plan and implement long term strategic change.

> 'I have come away from each session having learnt at least one new thing, which I have been able to immediately implement.'

In their final learning journal submissions, we see that in addition to the specific principles and approaches they have learned, and the new knowledge they have picked up, participants report opportunities for self-reflection, prompted by new knowledge, as a key element of their personal learning from the programme. This learning took place over time, through ongoing work with critical friends and mentors beyond the completion of the training sessions.

> 'I have learned new things on this programme – the mentoring and critical friend part of the programme has been very useful and supportive at a time of organisational change in my parent organisation. Sabina and Nigel have given me some good advice and I have learned new strategies on how to make myself more visible internally, and externally.'

> 'The coaching from Fiona has been invaluable in helping my colleague and I navigate a restructure, our new roles and helping to deal with some difficult management issues around staff, to make teams work better together and looking at our new approach to appraisals.'

5.1.1 Training Courses

In the Learning Journals participants referred to their learning from specific training courses. In Section 4.2, where we looked at the feedback surveys completed immediately after the individual training courses, we found that participants often named specific tools or module content as the most useful or interesting thing from the session, and we found a similar focus in the Learning Journals on specific course content. For example, with the fundraising training, participants highlighted the value of learning about key strategic tools for fundraising: auditing their organisational fundraising impact, and producing a case for support. For some, this was a new concept, as their organisation did not have a case for support in the form of a formal written document.

> 'Fundraising sessions have given me a good starting point for thinking more deeply about our case for support and how this can really benefit our fundraising plans.'

> 'I learnt about writing a Case for Support to help with fundraising.'

> 'From the fundraising session I learnt about how making a strong case for business can increase your income generation.'

> 'The fundraising audit was a new concept to us.'

The sessions also were helpful in providing the participants with actionable tips and ideas which they could use to enhance their fundraising practice.

> 'I needed fresh ideas and the first training sessions on fundraising did just that. It was spot on for me.'

> 'Also, top tips on how to ask for money – which I think is a hard task if you're not used to it.'

> 'I also learnt about images for fundraising, the need for people in them and them looking out at you.'

From the responses in the Learning Journals, it appears that participants in the business planning sessions had very varied starting points in terms of their experience of writing business plans. Some were very familiar with this, with experience gained in other professional contexts, while others had created business plans before without any structured training or formal support.

> 'I have written a number of business plans in the past, but it was refreshing to hear from peers and what they do, and from the facilitator about other things to include in the business plan – a realistic, achievable and mission driven plan.'

> 'I found the business planning session very helpful, especially in the concept of a one-page business plan and demystifying the process.'

The participants were introduced to new tools to help them to think about their business decision making and they found these especially valuable. In particular, they found an exercise which asked them to work in breakout groups to think about how to use the findings from a classic SWOT analysis to generate ideas for actions to overcome weaknesses was particularly

helpful. They also highlighted being introduced to the RACI concept (who is responsible, accountable, consulted and included in each aspect of the business plan) and the content around markets and diversification.

> 'I learnt some useful new business planning tools from Michelle's sessions particularly around using SWOT to inform decision making.'

> 'One of the greatest exercises during the training session was when we were asked to think about how threats and weaknesses could be combined with strengths and used as opportunities. It was also refreshing and reassuring to hear Michelle's advice on keeping the business plan real and honest; acknowledging competitors, where we are not so strong etc. This makes the task of creating a Business or Forward Plan much less daunting and I am really appreciative of the training course being focused on this subject.'

> 'Found the discussion on SWOT and TOWS and RACI particularly interesting.'

When we examined the responses in the Learning Journals, it was not always clear which training modules participants were referring to, and for some, both the earned income and cashflow management modules were referred to in very similar terms.

For some participants, the earned income training session introduced new ideas about how to assess opportunities for new income streams, and how to balance the organisation's work to include a mix of profitable activity and charitable purpose. This was leading them to re-evaluate their existing income streams, looking at the income and other benefits against the resources they required; their Learning Journals demonstrate that some participants had already identified very specific areas in which they could apply their knowledge:

> 'Will apply techniques from Earned Income to
> - evaluate potential new income streams
> - performance of existing income streams, including whether to continue membership scheme'

> 'Main goal is to reduce dependence on our two primary benefactors. Core /development/diversification income chart used to focus on core ideas initially, along with evaluating strategic fit.'

The cashflow session was of particular value to smaller organisations which had managed to get by without thorough financial planning in the past. We can see from the Learning Journals, that organisations which have low levels of income and manage small grants often have no processes in place for setting budgets and predicting future income and cashflow. The session appears to have successfully 'demystified' the process of creating and updating a cashflow forecast, and highlighted the importance of effective financial monitoring.

> 'The main objective was to create a budget and have adequate financial planning in place for the future. The programme has made [us] more aware of our responsibilities and we are more rigorous in decision making processes.'

> 'Financial planning was a big one- we had no real budgets, no real budget-setting devices, no ways of tracking and reporting financial information. We've since been able

to bring in some of this, successfully setting an organisational budget and preparing new monitoring systems.'

We understand from the Learning Journals, that there are a range of issues and challenges facing organisations in relation to governance. These are largely around relationships and people: recruiting trustees with the right skillsets; equitable sharing of workloads; effective chairing; and managing relationships between staff and board. The governance training sessions focused on the essentials of trustee roles and responsibilities, particularly in respect of financial oversight, record keeping and reporting. It provided trustees with an understanding of the standards of governance against which they should compare the day-to-day practice of governance in their own organisation. Some participants have used this as a springboard for the improvement of their governance, from recruitment practices to strategic planning.

'We transitioned from a CIC to a CIO during the time of doing the Heritage Compass training. Our chair did the governance training and we have used the learning from these sessions to guide new trustees. We are looking at ways of supplementing the work of the board with advisory groups and have already set up a steering group.'

'Some of the tips around Trustee Board effectiveness from the Governance Programme were useful and I can see that we need to implement these which I feel able to do in 2023.'

'In Governance the importance of a proper decision-making process, discussing the issues and recording decisions. Seeking specialist advice when appropriate to aid this decision making. This derives from the Heritage Compass programme. Our next step regarding governance will be to create a 'Trustees Area' on our new website where the relevant policies and guidance can easily be found along with [the] agenda and minutes of trustees meetings.'

'The Heritage Compass programme allowed us to see the different opportunities around governance, lots of things we didn't know before, but we will need time to see how the different options would work for the company. Through our current projects we are researching different governance and financial models to see what works best in practice before deciding on what is suitable for us.'

However, through the Learning Journals, for some organisations we can see that persistent and challenging governance issues remain, where more bespoke intervention may be needed.

The audience development introductory session and masterclass were of value to the cohort in encouraging them to think beyond their traditional audiences, and to think about what might have to change about their offer to be more attractive to a wider range of people, rather than how to reach people through marketing and communications techniques. The Learning Journals indicate that templates and strategies for thinking about audiences have been adopted by participants.

'We have used useful HC templates and powerpoints in order to start compiling the audience development plan. We are continuing to adapt and find solutions to make our venues more inclusive and attract more BAME and LGBQ communities.'

'We are currently working on developing a project which focuses on audience development. The Ansoff matrix has been a very useful tool which we have used.'

'The audience development sessions were helpful in providing analysis tools that I hadn't heard of before so we will look at working on these.'

In addition, they have been introduced to new and less traditional ways of thinking about audiences, as co-creators and partners rather than consumers.

'Learning from the audience development training has helped in our approach to reaching local people and encouraged us to connect with our wider community and establish new relationships.'

'The primary approach we are taking, from what we have learnt on this course, is the way we need to work further with the venues themselves to build audience engagement within the community (in our case disability-specific but also a mainstream one for disability specific work/content). We have not identified new audiences (that was not our aim) but more effective ways to engage, build and sustain the specific one we are committed to (along with a mainstream audience often unresponsive to the work of marginalised groups) for which similar lessons will have been learnt for future implementation. We particularly liked the idea of creating audience champions for various groups / content. Our next step is to work more closely with our partners in developing a coherent plan that can be evaluated in relation to its success or failure in relation to audience growth for our product both to a disabled audience and mainstream impact. One of the clear ways identified on the course was in the development of projects with the audience as co-creators (something we knew about but did very little about) but which we now see as more relevant and a more effective way of appealing to funders.'

For more established organisations with in-house specialists, the audience development aspects of Heritage Compass were less likely to provide new learning and information.

'We did not really take much from the Heritage Compass training on audience development. Our Communications and Development Manager attended the course but felt that this was an area that we already understood well.'

5.1.2   Other learning

More generally, and across the sessions, participants were able to pick up new knowledge and useful information where the training strayed slightly outside the boundaries of the topic:

'We learnt about digital marketing, social media profiles such as Twitter and LinkedIn.'

'Working with copyright exemptions was a fresh look at a subject for me and I learnt new things about clearing rights on acquisition.'

A number of participants referenced learning from fellow cohort members, or comparing their practice to others.

'I've gotten some really great ideas from the fellow cohorts (around ways of working with steering groups that will work well for our organisation)'

'An overview of how others of similar make up and scale have approached/are approaching similar challenges which has been helpful.'

'Getting a feel for what is happening with non-London organisations.'

5.2 Confidence to use the learning

Participants expressed increased confidence as a result of the training, and felt able to use it within their organisations. We asked participants in the feedback surveys and in the Learning Journals to tell us how they felt about taking learning away and using it. In the feedback surveys, participants were asked to what extent they agreed with the statement: I am confident in taking away what I have learnt to my organisation and doing things differently.

Figure 18: Participants' confidence in taking away the learning, net agreement
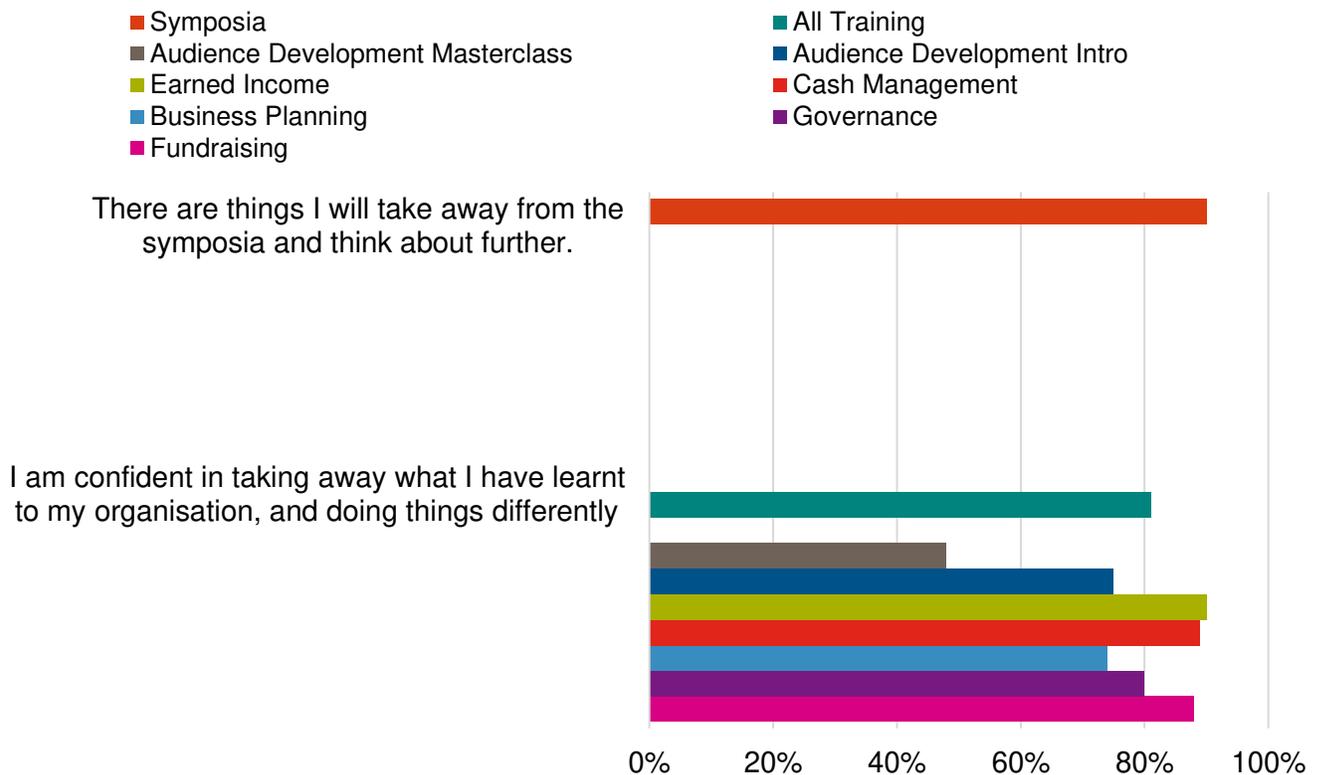
Sources: Symposia survey, 96 respondents; Learning Journal 3, 136 completions.

In respect of the individual training modules, participants seem both keen and confident to take away what they are learning and apply it, with net agreement scores ranging from +48% (for the audience development masterclass) to +90% (for cash management). Four of the training modules score more than +80% net agreement for participants' confidence in taking away what they've learnt and doing things differently. Looking at those who strongly agreed with the statement, participants in the fundraising, earned income and cash management modules were more likely to strongly agree than give any other response.

There was also learning and new thinking as a result of the symposium. Symposia attendees were asked whether they would take things away from the Symposia to think about further, which received a net agreement score of +90%. Of the respondents to the feedback survey after the symposium, 65% completely or definitely agreed that 'there are things I will take away from the symposium and think about further'.

We asked participants about whether there was content in the programme which they felt able to use in their organisation or project. We also asked whether they felt confident to implement these new approaches now.

Figure 19: Participants views on using their learning

■ Don't know/not sure   ■ No, there isn't anything I'm planning to use
■ Yes, there's a bit I'll use   ■ Yes, there's a lot I'll use
■ No response

Are there things which have come up in the programme which you will personally be able to use in your organisation/project?
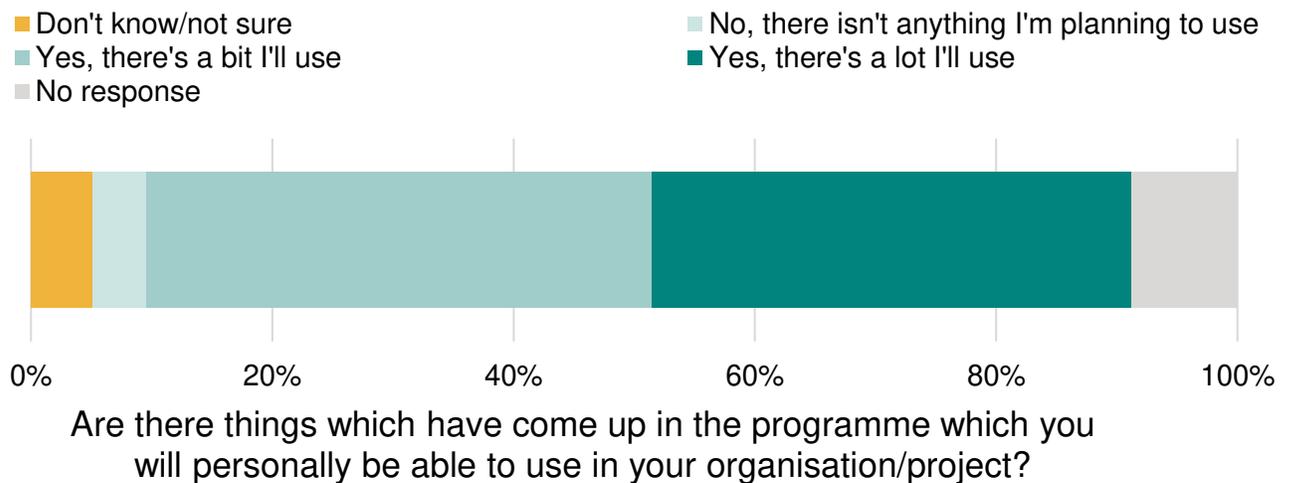
Source: Learning Journal 3, 136 completions.

The responses to these questions indicate that the course content is providing participants with actionable ideas. In total, 82% of participants agreed that there were things which had come up in the programme which they would be able to use in their organisation or project (40% a lot, 42% a bit). They were only slightly less confident that they would be able to use Heritage Compass approaches immediately. When asked 'how confident do you feel personally to take approaches from Heritage Compass back to your organisation *at the moment*?', 31% felt very confident and 46% felt quite confident (see figure below).

Figure 20: Participants' confidence in personally applying their learning in their organisations/projects

Legend:
- Not applicable
- Not at all confident
- Only a bit confident
- Quite confident
- Very confident
- No response
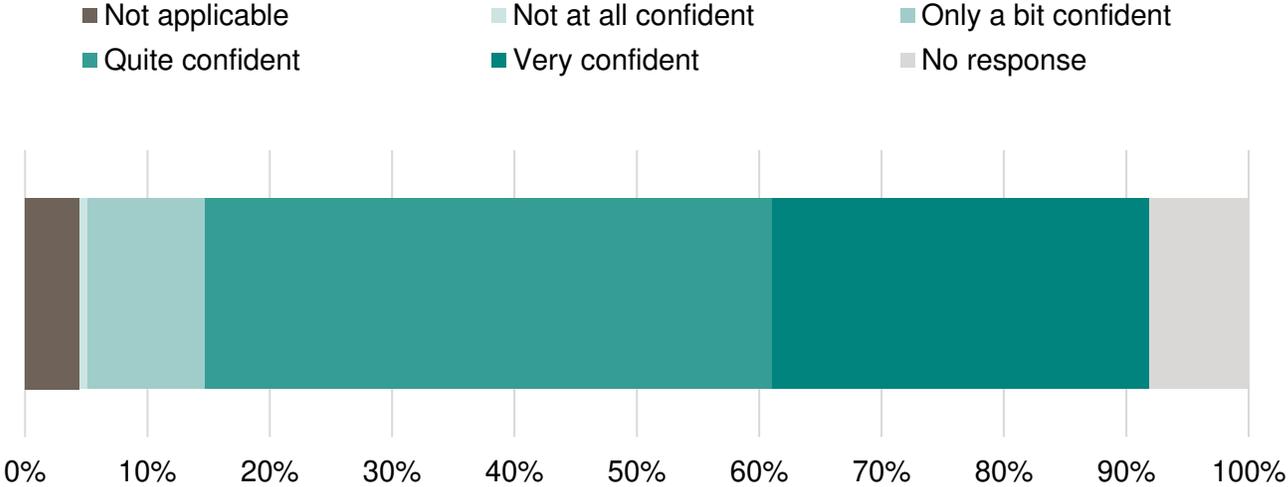
Overall, how confident do you feel personally to take new ideas or approaches from Heritage Compass back to your organisation at the moment?

Source: Learning Journal 3, 136 completions.

There is a small proportion (10%) who are either only a bit or not at all confident; looking through the three phases of the Learning Journals, this proportion did not alter significantly.

From the Learning Journals we can see that the new approaches which participants are keen to implement have come from across the training programme. Predominantly, organisations are carrying out work related to finances using tools and approaches they learnt in training, and they are using their critical friends and mentors as sounding boards as they develop their plans. Many are writing new business plans, or as part of wider strategic planning they are considering diversification of their income generation streams, testing out new approaches including investment in retail and hiring out of event space. They are using what they have learned to prioritise investments of time and resources.

> 'Information from both the Fundraising and Earned Income courses have been useful to us. Business Planning and Audience Development did not really tell us anything new but did confirm that we are on the right track…Conversations with both of our mentors have been really useful to me, we are currently discussing our draft business plan and that has been very helpful as have conversations about prioritising and benchmarking.'

> 'As we work through our 5-year plan, and the financial situation within [the] [organisation] changes, we have been looking at creative income generation, with particular reference to how we can use our spaces for best public use.'

Another key area of work is around audience development, with lots of organisations using the techniques they learnt in training to understand their current and potential audiences in more detail. There are examples of organisations then going on to refresh and develop their websites

and social media presence to appeal to new audiences. The motivation for this varies – while it is mostly driven by the need to grow audiences, some organisations' audience development work is focused on enhancing diversity, or on fundraising and donations.

> 'To use inclusivity in this planning to approach systemic inequalities – how to include and embed this in the business planning and governance, and recognise the behaviours and traditional approaches which don't support diversity in order to change this. Instead of using the same governance and strategic approaches and trying to be more audience inclusive – we need to have awareness of what is missing in creating the priorities, in language used, removal of cultural barriers and the way we approach partners or plan events. If representation in our organisation and our user demographic is a problem, we should be seeking to work in inclusivity rather than inclusion, breaking down and examining what's missing and finding out how to bring in other voices to support the work we are doing and do we need that support from outside and trying things differently.'

> 'Thanks to the training provided by the 'Earned Income' module I have been developing the site of our Pop-Up museum (the main museum being closed for renovation until next year) as a permanent asset. The course has given me a structure around which to develop ideas and evaluate its feasibility.'

> 'The audience development and fundraising topics have given me enough knowledge to be able to start a project within our organisation to revamp our public image and focus directly on building audiences and specifically target fundraising.'

Governance is another area of development for many Heritage Compass organisations. They are using what they have learned about what good governance looks like to review their own boards, in some cases then going on to tackle underlying issues and to recruit new board members. Boards are examining and redeveloping their vision and strategy documents using tools and techniques from Heritage Compass. Several organisations are looking again at issues around risk management, reserves policy and contingency, as Heritage Compass training has raised awareness of the importance of these issues for boards.

> 'We also held our first ever Away Day with our board and have been reassessing our governance and training of Trustees.'

> 'Governance, refocusing on the roles and terms of the board and more effective ways of communication between staff and trustees.'

> 'Some of the tips around Trustee Board effectiveness from the Governance Programme were useful and I can see that we need to implement these which I feel able to do in 2023.'

5.3   Barriers to taking back the learning

5.3.1   Staffing Resource

We asked participants to tell us about the barriers to taking the learning from the Heritage Compass programme back to their organisations. The responses to this question indicate strongly that barriers relate in the main to under-resourcing, in staffing and in budget.

Organisations enrolled onto the programme are by definition small to medium sized. In practice, this ranges from organisations with a small number of paid staff to some which are entirely volunteer run. Others are in early development stages so there is an intention to hire paid staff at a future date.

Many organisations described facing a lack of time for strategic thinking and implementation of new strategic plans. In some cases this was because members of staff who were responsible for strategy also had hands-on roles which had to be prioritised in order for the organisation to function.

> 'As my job is already very time demanding, involved with hands-on gardening, delivering events and estate maintenance, much of my new work on administration, strategy and fundraising currently takes place out of work hours, including me sharing and applying what I'm learning on Heritage Compass with my organisation.'

> 'Yes, I'm afraid my management and administrative time. We are so lean on resources and only seem to operate on a hand to mouth basis. There is definitely the will to engage I just have to find a structured pathway through.'

> 'Time! Unfortunately, due to a current lack of resources and other pressing priorities, this is not something we can action immediately.'

> 'We're a small team doing a lot and there isn't always the time for training or strategic thinking.'

One organisation described the time commitment involved in cascading the learning through the organisation so that staff could be tasked with implementing changes to practice as a result of the learning from Heritage Compass.

> 'Time and resource challenges in a small organisation where there is a high level of reliance on the leadership to dictate the pace of change and monitor activity – delegating to others and trusting that tasks will be done with the overview or support of management means having conversations with those delegated to understand what drives the way they do the tasks and why those things need to be done.'

However, one participant felt that the value of being accepted onto the Heritage Compass programme was that it made strategic thinking into a priority, which meant that time would be found for this work.

> 'This programme will help in that we will have set aside time to have those strategic discussions as a team.'

In the final learning journal, we see that organisations have recognised that they will need to act on their limited capacity issues if they are to make changes as a result of their learning on the programme. However, the process of growing the capacity of their staff and volunteer teams, from finding funding through to recruitment of suitably skilled people, is slow.

> 'Staff capacity/time is the barrier that will stop us achieving our ambitions, hence the important focus on developing income to be able to increase capacity. In the short term

we are re-structuring the organisation to be able to build capacity and grow the impact of the organisation.'

Some reported that their situation in relation to capacity was improving, and they expected to be able to make further progress on their strategic goals over time.

'Nothing other than capacity issues but we are building these up.'

'Only one of scarce volunteer resources but we are making efforts here.'

Critical friends and mentors were asked to reflect on what they thought organisations would need in the future to support their business resilience and wider ambitions, and their responses mirror much of what we have heard in the learning journals about the challenges still facing small and medium sized heritage organisations. The critical friends and mentors highlighted issues of capacity and resource in the sector, having witnessed individuals facing exhaustion and burnout. They identified the root of this problem as a scarcity of core funding available for small organisations to adequately fund business administration – an issue reflected by participants through their Learning Journals, and explored further in section 5.3.2 below - a problem which was particularly challenging for those who had set up creative organisations because of a passion, special interest or talent and were now bogged down in the day to day running of a small business.

5.3.2   Financial Constraints

Financial constraints are affecting the ability of organisations to implement the strategic changes which have been prompted by the Heritage Compass programme, although we see from the Learning Journals that organisations are taking steps to address these. In some cases, as we have seen above, the financial challenge is to increase income in order to address staffing capacity issues, and thus have time to instigate and embed strategic change.

'I do not believe anything will stop [organisation name] putting into practice what we have learnt from the Heritage Compass programme. However, potential barriers might be: shortage of funds/funding in the long term/future (i.e. for overheads, staffing, connectivity etc).'

'Time and money to resource the process of implementing changes. It's a lot of work needing doing to create packages and web presence and infrastructure and we don't have any financial assets to finance the work to be done. However, we are looking into this i.e DYCP grant for [name]. Keeping a track of opportunities for funding and deadlines.'

In others, organisations are struggling to smooth their cashflow when they are largely funded by grants.

'Project funding ended and we are left unfunded for a period with assets that have to be offered to the public for free.'

'Our main issue at the moment is ensuring that we have sustainable reserves and a confidence in our cashflow. We are trying to build this up with help through fundraising with the support of an external fundraiser.'

Grant funding for anything other than unrestricted core costs, while hugely beneficial to organisations, also creates workload in managing the grants and relationships with funders, as well as in the delivery, monitoring and reporting of project outcomes.

> 'The limitations that can stop the development of a heritage strategy for the city are the inability to draft funding bids to funders that do not comprehensively include "activity plans" and building usage for the venues looking to be funded. Time is a large factor in ensuring there is enough space to deliver on the ambitions being set for [city's] Heritage development. There is also the critical need to manage resources and to ensure that any funding application that is successful is well managed and delivers on the objectives being set.'

5.3.3   Governance Challenges

In the Learning Journals we are seeing two distinct challenges facing boards.

Firstly, board members in smaller and entirely voluntary organisations are struggling to find the capacity to make the strategic changes required, and sometimes finding that other responsibilities at home and at work are affecting their ability to contribute.

> 'During the course of the programme, our organisation has come under greater 'stress' due to the difficulties in securing grant[s] to assist with recovery from the impacts of the pandemic and from other pressures on board members (partners becoming ill). Wholly voluntary-based organisations are highly vulnerable to external factors. Unless the 'Catch 22' issue of securing some recovery funding to provide capacity for engagement work, our board will continue to be 'time poor' and this will greatly impede taking on board much of what has been learnt.'

> 'Personally I have learnt a lot and am very excited about the opportunities ahead but I am concerned about how fast we can change given the committee are all volunteers, generally retired and whilst keen to change, I think it will only be a few members who will actively support this – i.e. do stuff.'

This lack of capacity has meant that in some staffed organisations, a staff member or maybe one lead board member has been more engaged in the training sessions and working with critical friends and mentors, leaving board members out of touch with the content of the programme.

> 'The Trust and board have been less engaged with this project than staff and as a result, they haven't shared the same values in the training, or have prejudged that the training won't be useful for them. Frequent board/leadership changes has meant it has also been difficult to apply the learning from the programme.'

Occasionally in the Learning Journals we see frustration with boards and the standard of governance in organisations.

> 'My biggest challenge is that we have a set of trustees who are performing badly but lack awareness of their lack of competence. Sadly, the Board of Trustees are a barrier to progress and good governance.'

'We are still experiencing problems on our governing body which are yet to be resolved and get in the way of enabling Trustees to concentrate on their strategic role.'

'I have concluded that I am not a good fit for my organisation's needs (nor they for me) so have resigned as a trustee. The 'push' for me to resign was driven by my experiences on the HC programme. I am however a trustee at two other organisations and will draw on the HC programme for these organisations I am sure.'

Critical friends and mentors also identified governance as a key challenge for the future: one critical friend described governance as 'the next big issue for the sector to tackle'. Difficult relationships between staff and board members were a key barrier to progress, as were challenging relationships between staff, board and other volunteers, especially in organisations which had grown from a volunteer based starting point. Another critical friend/mentor highlighted resistance in some voluntary organisations to paying for any sort of support, which was holding back organisations which would benefit from technical expertise or consultancy support.

5.3.4   Embedding Change

Some organisations described experiences of bringing learning and ideas back to the organisation and finding that there is limited willingness to engage in the work required to bring about organisational change, or a resistance to the ideas embedded in the Heritage Compass programme.

'Culture is often a slow process of change as you might meet resistance.'

One participant highlighted the specific challenge of carrying through the implementation of changes until they become regular practice.

'The main barriers are actually getting the ideas practically implemented. The ideas will be discussed and agreed and taken forward but there seems to be a barrier of actually getting implemented, through lack of volunteer buy in or take up or a 'bottleneck' of new ideas or things waiting to be implemented – need for a 'driving force' to get done. There is a tendency to ignore changes hoping everything will go away and revert to previous modus operandum!'

Another noted that changes which have been implemented, aimed at making the organisation more strategic in the way in which it responds to opportunities, are vulnerable to people falling back into the old ways of doing things, where this feels more comfortable. This suggests that it may take time for an organisation to begin to have confidence in the efficacy of the type of strategic approaches they have learned on the Heritage Compass programme.

'There is a danger that individuals and the team as a whole will 'slide back' into the reactive way of doing things in order to maximise opportunities, or be seen to be 'achieving'. In some cases, extra engagement or joint working brings a direct benefit to one or more of our strategic aims but in some cases, there is no significant benefit for the amount of resource expended on an activity.'

Critical friends and mentors also highlighted ongoing challenges for some organisations with adequate strategy and business planning. Despite the support offered by Heritage Compass in this area, some organisations will need further support to be able to develop and implement effective forward planning.

5.3.5   Relevance

It is clear from the responses in the Learning Journals completed early in the programme that participants trusted the information they were given in the training sessions, but in some cases were not sure how to apply it in their own situation. As we saw in the data from the feedback surveys (discussed in section 4.2 of this report) there are some organisations which found it difficult to know how examples from bigger organisations, and particularly building-based or asset-owning organisations, might apply to their experiences. Similarly, some participants completing the Learning Journals raised the same issue:

> 'I feel like a lot of the things we've covered apply to [our organisation] but as we are such a small organisation, I'm not sure how to tweak the learning and ideas to fit us.'

> 'I feel like much of what we've learnt has been geared towards larger organisations with a clearer mission whereas we are very small and very responsive.'

Feedback from the third Learning Journal, completed at the end of the programme, indicates that in some cases, perspectives on the relevance of the programme content has shifted through working with critical friends and mentors to apply the learning within their unique context.

> 'Critical Friend sessions have been invaluable. Our CF was able to help us steer through some difficult decision making processes and gave us very good guidance/advice on the development of our Strategy and Business Plan.'

5.3.6   Training Format

Some respondents indicated that the format of training delivery was a barrier to sharing the benefits across the organisation, and thus to implementation of new ideas. Timings were a particular issue for trustees who are volunteers and have limited daytime availability.

Other organisations, in particular those which are very small or start-ups, struggled with technological issues in accessing online training, or have had problems with the administration of the Heritage Compass programme, such as registration issues or not being able to find the links to online sessions. Others struggled to find the time to learn how to use Slack, or to use the platform for engagement with other members of their cohort. Again, we saw some of these issues raised in the feedback surveys also, and so there were some persistent issues for a small number of participants in terms of accessing different parts of the programme.

These issues appear largely to have been resolved, as organisations became more familiar with the protocols for accessing materials and booking sessions, and Heritage Compass adjusted its communications with participants, becoming more user-friendly.

5.4   Additional Support Needs

Participants were asked what additional support would be helpful to them in maximising the benefit of the Heritage Compass programme and enabling them to implement positive change in their organisations.

Early in the programme, the responses indicated that much of the support they needed could be provided within the Heritage Compass programme, or be sourced from the network of organisations within the cohort. They were looking forward to the benefits which would result from their continued engagement on the programme. In particular, participants were hoping that working with critical friends and mentors would help to embed the learning from the programme within their organisational strategies and working practices.

> 'I feel like the mentor and critical friend are going to be most helpful as I feel like what we need is guidance to get in place the ideas and processes you are introducing in the course.'

> 'I think the Critical Friend engagement could well be a lifeline, someone outside the operation who could motivate and help reflect on what's been achieved or otherwise.'

Responses from the final Learning Journals, completed when organisations were at the end of the programme, indicate that the sessions with critical friends and mentors did meet their expectations.

> 'The critical friend and mentoring sessions have led me to feel confident in my idea and decision making, and have inspired me to think creatively whilst setting realistic goals.'

> 'Both the critical friend and business mentor have brought new ideas and given us links to organisations that are new and useful to us.'

As a result, when asked at the end of the programme what further support they would like in order to overcome any persistent barriers to acting on the learning from Heritage Compass, many responded that they wanted more support from critical friends and mentors.

> 'The most valuable thing by far would [be] ongoing meetings with my mentors, they have been amazing and I will really miss their input.'

> 'It might be good to have a check in or follow up after 6-12 months to frame progress made and offer helpful course corrections.'

In some cases, this was a desire to continue the existing relationship, in others, participants had become more aware of the support available from freelancers, consultants and specialists working in the sector.

> 'Possibly help with formulating bids for larger grants when we reach the appropriate stage and maintaining the momentum on the larger stage. The critical friend sessions have been superb - well managed by [name] who has, throughout, had a brilliant grasp of what we are about and coaxing us onwards. Some more of the same may be needed at a later stage as we progress.'

> 'Support that is targeted towards Trustee recruitment and building a fundraising case for support.'

One comment indicated that the Heritage Compass programme had highlighted a need for deeper and longer-term support for leaders in the sector.

'Still feel I am on my own with many of the issues I came into the course with … longer term financial sustainability still a problem … e.g. utilisation of individual skills / expertise really hasn't been explored … would have appreciated some more dedicated support around this.'

Early in the programme, participants expected to see increasing value from their engagement with the wider cohort of participating organisations as the programme rolled out. As the programme ended, it was apparent that this had not happened in the way they had expected. It was difficult to organise training sessions in order to keep cohorts together, and as a result participants had not been able to form a peer network in the way they would have liked. Despite this however, it is clear from the Learning Journals that very helpful individual connections have been made between participating organisations, and that the continuation of these relationships will be of benefit.

Commonly, participants referenced the improvement of their organisation's financial situation as the change which would help them to implement the learning from Heritage Compass. They referred to the need for funding to boost their capacity in order to help them deliver strategic change, whether through additional staffing or engagement of external consultancy support. The Learning Journals also indicated that organisations were open to further training and development activity if they could find the funding and capacity to take part. Specific suggestions around this issue all related to the delivery of the Heritage Compass training to more people within the organisation.

'Opportunities for our Trustees / my colleague to undertake some of the training I've experienced on the Heritage Compass programme, to help them better understand the heritage sector and the ideas I'm proposing for our organisation.'

We asked critical friends and mentors what type of support they felt that the organisations they had worked with would need next. In many cases, the suggestions made related to extension of existing training to embed the learning and to enable organisations to make a shift from the basic planning and financial tools they had seen on the first programme to a more nuanced and sophisticated approach. Suggested topics which would stretch organisations beyond the introductory training sessions were: how to generate unrestricted income, especially through partnerships and providing services; moving from business planning to long term visioning (30 years +); and additional training on governance, so that organisations understand what good governance looks like and how to carry out a governance review.

In addition, the group suggested new topics which would complement the learning from the Heritage Compass programme and support organisations in key areas. These topics were outside the scope of Heritage Compass, but are useful to see as an indication of areas in which small and medium heritage organisation feel they need support:

- Support to understand tax and VAT regulations
- Training on matters relating to copyright, intellectual property, licensing and image rights, particularly for organisations with an archive or small collection
- Wellbeing as a systemic practice
- Equality, diversity and inclusion policy and practice
- Volunteer management, succession planning and managing the triangular relationship between board, staff and volunteers
- Conflict resolution and making tough decisions.

Beyond further training, critical friends and mentors suggested that some organisations would benefit from the availability of dedicated consultancy support, particularly those with no paid staff. They also highlighted the potential for peer-to-peer networking and knowledge sharing. Some mentors had signposted participants to further support beyond the programme, for example from NCVO, and the availability of links to other sources of advice and training may also be beneficial.

A number of critical friends and mentors highlighted ways in which the wider sector needed to change to enhance the resilience of small and medium sized heritage organisations. These included more availability of unrestricted and core costs funding to enable more professional business administration; more proactive and supportive local authorities; and access to fundraising capacity.

5.5   What has changed for organisations?

The Heritage Compass programme is being delivered through a period of considerable turbulence for the sector. The cohort of organisations on the programme is using Heritage Compass as a support programme to reset their strategies, business and financial plans as they emerge from the pandemic. At the time initial cohorts of participants were undertaking training, there was ongoing uncertainty about the longer-term impacts of Covid-19 on audiences and funding streams, and reluctance to make assumptions that there will be no further Covid-19 related disruption. As the threat of further Covid-19 impacts recedes, organisations are faced with new challenges, in particular relating to rising running costs and energy bills, and the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on visitors and local communities.

Against this backdrop, the day to day running of heritage organisations and visitor attractions continues. We asked participants what had changed for them during their time on Heritage Compass, to help understand what is happening within the heritage sector and how it might impact on organisations as they implement the learning from the programme. When we asked this question early in the programme, most responses were related to natural churn and change such as staff moving on. There were also lots of responses related to managing Covid-19 disruption. However by the time organisations were completing their final Learning Journal, we see a shift towards change instigated as a result of participation in the Heritage Compass programme. Organisations are developing new and more ambitious plans as a result of their participation in Heritage Compass, and are wrestling with the various challenges thrown up as they implement them.

5.5.1   Funding related change

Many responses related to the process of preparing funding applications, waiting for decisions, and then either progressing with planned spending or revising business plans to mitigate for rejections of funding applications.

A number of organisations had successfully attracted new funding, which was enabling them to embark on a wide range of projects and recruit new members of staff. National Lottery Heritage Fund and Arts Council England were most commonly referenced, while other organisations were applying for 'levelling up' funds or to trusts and foundations. This was seen as a huge positive by the organisations concerned, especially in its impact on organisational capacity and

resilience. However, there is also a steep learning curve for organisations embarking on new work.

> 'We have been successful with a grant for £100k and £237k. These will be game changing for our organisation.'

> 'Yes, we have just achieved a £25,000 grant from Historic England for a project called [project name], I believe our success is due to the clarity of the storytelling related to the unique offer the company can give to people. We will be working with a larger and wider variety of partners in a new area which is very exciting.'

More organisations were waiting for decisions on funding applications, or in a gap between funding.

> 'Project that employed me has finished so now on a volunteer basis until further funding comes through.'

In a small number of cases, participants reported rejected funding applications which had a significant negative impact on their confidence, and necessitated further work on strategy.

> 'The HLF grant which was integral to the business plan was not successful. The future of the charity is still undecided.'

> 'We unfortunately did not progress with a funding application we applied for which put more pressure on our financial needs as we thought it was a certainty. This has led to us changing our strategy and be a lot more pragmatic, using cash forecast and being more open talking about our financial matters.'

5.5.2   Change in staffing and board membership

As at the earlier stage of the programme, when many organisations told us about changes which related to the natural churn of staff and trustees, we can see from the Learning Journals that staff and trustees are still coming and going from organisations, and that this has significant impact. At the end of the programme, we can see that some organisations have used the strategic learning from Heritage Compass to make a business case for the recruitment of additional staff or consultants in key areas, and that these staff are starting to make a difference. In other cases, new trustees are having an impact on the quality of boards.

> 'We have had a facilitated session with our H.C mentor, with our management committee. This session was really useful, and reinforced the things I have been discussing with my critical friend. Mostly, what should our fundraising priorities be, and this was clearly a new member of staff. I have now got full Board approval for fundraising for this specific role, and a signed off job description. More importantly, I have the buy-in and support from the Management committee for this significant change.'

> 'Our lack of capacity has been eased somewhat by the recruitment of a Project Manager who has been able to take on some of the people management from Cathi. We have just finished a new-product feasibility study using a contractor rather than trying to do it ourselves. This meant the work kept to the set deadlines and was managed by an experienced professional.'

'We have now recruited two new Trustees who will enhance the expertise of the Board, and we have also recruited an excellent Learning and Participation Officer who is already working on ways to expand our offering.'

Responses in the Learning Journals also highlight the challenging recruitment context faced by heritage organisations. The impact of making a poor recruitment decision is felt strongly by smaller organisations.

'An appointment we made has not worked and we now face a deficit which needs addressing over the next 2 years. Although won't change my direct practice and the quality of the outputs it is much more stressful across the organisation.'

'Our Marketing and Events Manager has left to take up a new post. Our first attempt to recruit a replacement was unsuccessful. We are a very small team and are trying our best to pick up his work but feel very concerned that the reduced marketing will have an impact on visitor numbers over the summer. We are taking the opportunity to review our staffing structure and [are] looking at recruiting an intern to help with marketing.'

5.5.3 Heritage management and capital projects

It is clear from the Learning Journals that many Heritage Compass organisations are working on capital projects, or negotiations related to the lease or purchase of heritage assets, and have used their time with critical friends and mentors to develop their plans. Many are dealing with complex partnerships, funding arrangements, planning permissions and schedules. Capital projects are experiencing the impact of inflation on building costs, requiring additional fundraising and cost savings.

'Work on the restoration of the [building] is progressing, with, at long last, Planning and LBC for the building. We are currently tied up with some complex conditions related to tendering for work to the roof and exterior of the building, and this reflects the difficulties with appointment of contractors, contractors' timetables and resourcing materials; issues that every organisation is having to face. These conditions are necessary to release some of our funding, so we need to work with the agencies on this. However, the majority of funding is now in place and we are awaiting the results of our final grant application. Of real note in relation to the [building] is a potential client lease for all the ground floor, with a charitable organisation…, with whom we share many charitable objectives. They are interested in both a lease and in partnership and will (we hope) work with us to develop our community work and to raise funds.'

'Building work has started, all going to plan and on time at the moment.
Areas of the budget had to be cut back for capital works. NLHF granted the additional grant increase, but not all areas we applied for were granted (no current extension to the project) but they have said to reapply in 6-9 months for these areas.'

In some cases, organisations are dealing with changes resulting from landowners thinking differently about how to use their assets in the current economic situation.

'We have had confirmation that the developers that were looking at buying our site that we occupy (as part of a wider development) have completed on their sale. This developer is very positive about a future relationship with us and has made very public

statements about our importance and their intention to work together in the future. The next challenge will be working with the developer and other stakeholders to develop the roadmap for the museum's future.'

'Nothing has changed. However, the rent review is now getting closer and we fear that commercial pressures on the [organisation name] the £25[k] pa charge. This may make it very difficult, or even impossible, for us to continue without finding a significant and reliable source of funds.'

'The donor of the property we were going to take over has had a change of heart. At present he has decided not to transfer the ownership to the trust.'

'The project is put back yet again dependent on developer and local district council. We are on hold at the moment.'

The Learning Journals demonstrate how heritage organisations are often reliant on partnerships and reciprocal arrangements in order to be able to maintain their heritage assets and operate effectively – and this leaves them vulnerable to cutbacks and strategic changes in other organisations.

'We have a new challenge facing us in that we need to do some dredging in the river close to the Mill to ensure that we can continue to mill flour with our waterwheel, which is a major attraction to our visitors and makes us only one of two working tide mills in the country which continue to produce flour. This is an expensive project and will require external funding. It is also a complex project in that the dredging needs licencing from the Marine Management Organisation, and also involves a number of other interested parties both nationally and locally. We feel that this will take up a significant portion of time, but it is essential for us in being able to continue to provide a working tide mill.'

5.5.4   Returning to 'normal'

Two distinct trends emerged from the Learning Journals when participants discussed the ongoing impact of the pandemic. Many are feeling positive, having secured emergency funding to support them through Covid-19, they have emerged no worse off, and are now able to progress strategic plans and partnerships.

'We have received our accounts for 2021, and they are much more positive than anticipated. Now that we are coming out of the pandemic, there is much more opportunity to meet people, and make connections. The Capital Development and Strategic Plans are taking shape.'

'Our Trust is continuing to grow and develop its business at quite a rate. This is a measure of its growing confidence and the excellent team working of its Trustees and volunteers. There has been a number of significant developments, which reflect our responding to coming out of Lockdown and the new opportunities for developing our work.'

Other organisations report challenges as the cost of living crisis is slowing the recovery of ticket sales and secondary spend at heritage sites, while simultaneously putting pressure on their own staff and running costs.

'Who knew we'd look back at Covid and think it a better time than the present?'

'New challenges with lower ticket sales for workshops and ticket events - it's not entirely clear why this has changed, but we feel it is reflected in the higher cost of living and also possibly linked to switching tickets across to our new website.'

'Difficulties with ticket sales attributed to cost of living are proving challenging to the Trust's general operations and are below budget forecasts from the start of the year.'

'The financial situation is a major challenge as staff and utilities costs increase, and as the Museum is a discretionary expense there is a risk of reduction in visitor numbers as the cost of living rises. It is a challenging time to persuade customers to spend more money.'

5.5.5   Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The responses to the prompts in the Learning Journals also indicate that some organisations are finding that equality, diversity and inclusion issues are gaining greater prominence within their organisations, possibly in response to the Black Lives Matter movement and increased coverage of issues around 'contested heritage'. These issues are relevant to the Heritage Compass programme as they impact on governance, and boards are considering trustee recruitment and strategy through a new lens.

'Look at language and inclusivity that has been part of our board in the past. How does this fit with a new generation of supporters? Remember the governance is about the intention towards the audiences we want to engage.'

'We have instigated a new mandatory training package in equality and diversity for our staff, trustee and volunteer teams.'

5.6   Priorities and work towards outcomes

Participants were asked to note in their Learning Journals what work was happening in their organisations as a result of Heritage Compass: what were they were taking back to their organisations? 101 organisations (75% of those who completed the Learning Journal 3 entry) stated that they were working on specific organisational plans, with some carrying out work across a range of priority areas. 50 organisations reported that they working on business plans or shifting their business model and developing new income streams. Others were carrying out broader work on strategy, prioritisation and forward planning. A further 33 organisations were working on audience development, or on development of marketing, social media or digital channels. The other highly prioritised area of work is fundraising, and 24 participants reported that they were working on fundraising strategy, or developing applications or a case for support. There was also a focus on governance, with organisations reviewing governance, recruiting trustees, or carrying out reviews of risk and contingency plans. It is notable that the focus in their final Learning Journal had shifted from planning to delivery. Work remains ongoing and will continue beyond the completion of the Heritage Compass programme.

We asked participants to use the Learning Journals to tell us with each of the three Learning Journal entries which of the outcomes which they originally identified in the application they were working towards. The figure below indicates what proportion of applicants and participants

completing the Learning Journal selected each outcome as one of their 'three most important' outcomes from the Heritage Compass programme.

Figure 21: Programme participants by most important outcomes, 2
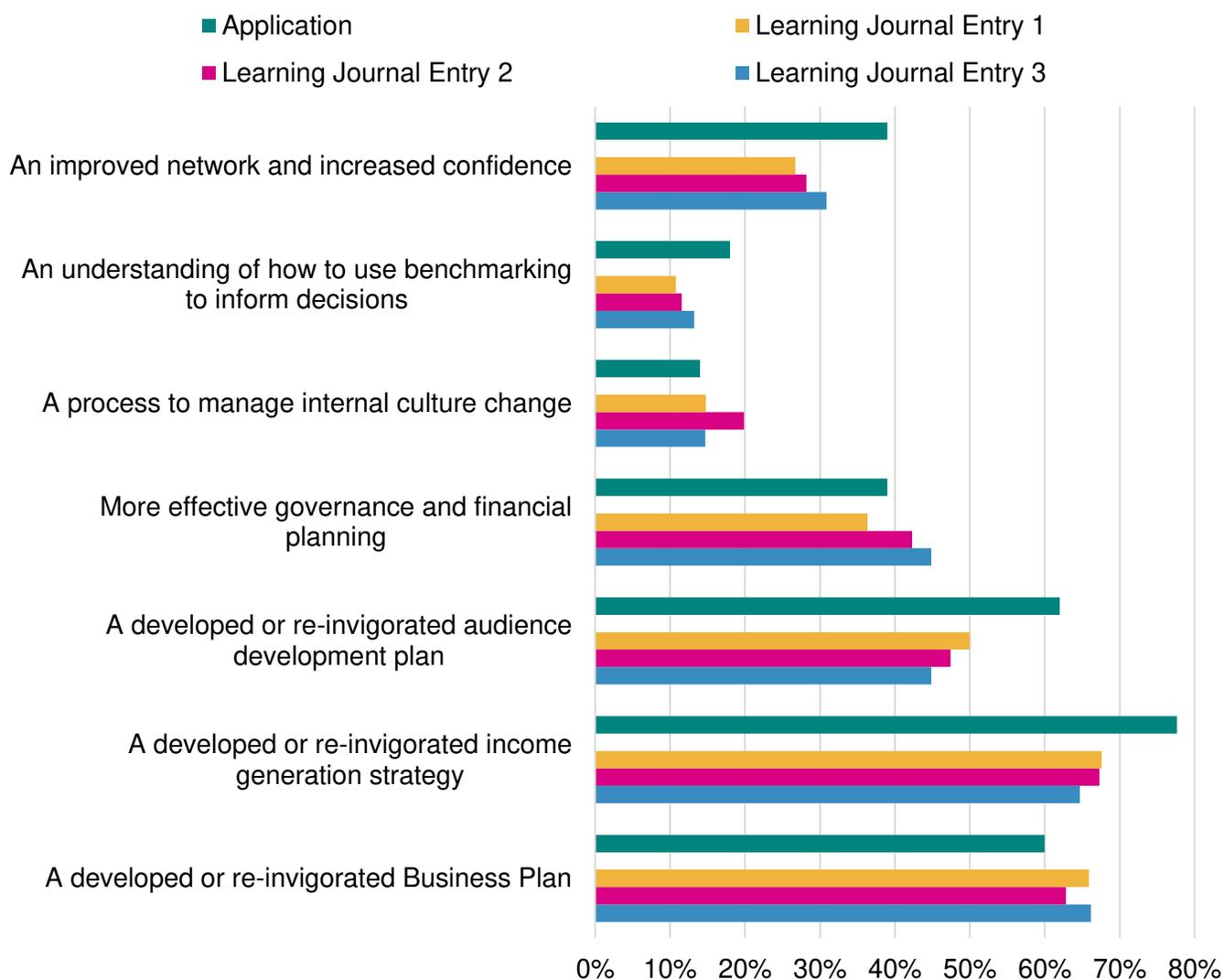
Source: 236 successful applications; Learning Journal entry 1, 175 completions; Learning Journal entry 2, 156 completions; Learning Journal entry 3, 136 completions.

This data suggests that, broadly, the balance of most important outcomes across organisations did not change significantly over the course of the programme. Business plans and income generation strategies have remained amongst the most popular outcomes which participants identified at application, and reported they were working towards; at the other end, using benchmarking and managing internal culture change have been much less selected, though elsewhere in the Learning Journals we can see evidence of participants beginning to learn about the benchmarking Dashboard, and starting to use it, reporting the value of learning from other participants and finding similar organisations, and the way in which participants are navigating their internal culture and often engaging in forms of change.

Participants were asked to tell us a bit more about the kind of progress which they had made towards the three outcomes they had chosen. For those working on their Business Plans, some were revising existing plans in response to new external challenges, ongoing issues or the need to update assumptions. Others had begun from scratch, writing their first business plan. The responses demonstrate significant input and support from critical friends and mentors, as well as use of tools and approaches introduced in the training modules, for example:

> '[Our business plan is] In draft form after 2 successful away days for trustees. We used the training to complete a SWOT and TOWS analysis for the plan. We also had a lot [of] help and advice from our critical friend on how to approach developing a business plan and implementing our transfer from one charity to a new one. The next step is to put this all together in one cohesive document.'

Amongst those undertaking business planning, the idea of what a business plan is and what it is for has been developed through their participation in the Heritage Compass programme. One participant talked about viewing a business plan as 'a live working document – an operating manual' for the first time. For some participants, business planning has revealed gaps or challenges in their mission and strategic thinking. Several organisations discussed the way in which business planning has enabled them to address these issues:

> 'The main challenges are the need to reopen following a three-year closure and how we were going to manage this with a (historically) volunteer-led business model which has never worked nor been sustainable. The business plan, as discussed in more detail above, describes a new way forward. It has been completely necessary to rewrite the organisation's structure from scratch and, dispose of the original intentions for the organisation and building created for its purpose. We came to the realisation that following the stabilisation project, no real consideration was given to the internal mechanisms to support the grand vision for the Interpretation Centre and, this oversight has placed us in the position we are in now. It has therefore been incredibly valuable to be involved with the Heritage Compass programme as we experienced many benchmarks for a successful business and, from this, I was able to analyse the museum's strengths and weaknesses and address these, alongside our aspirations, accordingly. The next steps are to finish the Business Plan and review the plan again once it can be absorbed in its entirety and further risks or opportunities are identified as the plan is produced in full colour and fully described.'

> 'We have never done a meaningful assessment of our business activities to date. However, since joining HC we have done a full Business Plan and Strategic Plan review and re-write, and a full revamp of organisational and staff performance management and monitoring. This has totally changed the way we staff the organisation, set organisational priorities properly, and left us in a much stronger, more streamlined position.'

> 'Before this programme, we felt that we were beginning to be stuck in a rut. Covid and the Heritage Compass programme have given us a better understanding of where we are, and where we want to be in the next five/ten years. We are also much happier to look beyond the present committee and begin to empower others to take over. And we feel comfortable in doing this.'

Some organisations, at the time of writing their third Learning Journal entry towards the end of the Heritage Compass programme, had not yet begun work on a business plan, but discussed

what they knew they needed to do, and how they planned to put their learning from the programme into that business planning process. It is also worth noting that a number of organisations discussed working with external consultants in the development of their business planning; from a resource perspective, many of these organisations have needed to buy in this kind of expertise and capacity in order to engage in a business planning process.

For those participants who wanted to undertake work on more effective governance and financial planning, they had undertaken a range of activities. As with the business planning, participants discussed using the learning from the training modules, and seeking and making use of advice and support from the critical friends and mentors. Many participants talked about governance and the roles, skills and capacities of trustees. Activities in this area included: working with their mentors/critical friends to develop a brief for a consultant to help them explore governance models, or to explore different kinds of governance models themselves; working on new approaches to trustee recruitment; recruited new trustees or treasurers; and developing training and support for trustees. From the responses, it is clear that governance models, and the availability of good trustees, with relevant knowledge and skills and appropriate capacity, remain an ongoing issue for many of the participants in this programme.

For those engaging in work to improved their financial planning, some discussed developing new financial planning processes and analysis to support decision-making, and for several this meant having clear budgets and budget-setting processes for the first time. Several participants discussed the value of clear, meaningful information, underpinned by robust processes which was providing them with the confidence that they understood what was happening financially in their organisation/project. Again, similarly to the business planning there were some participants who said that governance and financial planning were a priority, and that the Heritage Compass programme had helped them to think about what they needed to do, but who had not yet started on making active plans or changes.

Where participants had selected 'a process to manage internal culture change' as one of their most important outcomes from the programme, a few participants had already engaged very directly in setting processes in place. Reflecting the nature of the organisations participating in the programme, these approaches often included trustees or board members. Participants were not all finding internal culture change easy to address:

> 'With advice from my mentor I set up a trustee self-assessment of Board effectiveness and then a discussion session about Board effectiveness at the Board's away day in January. Frustratingly, and despite the obvious warning signals in the collated statistics, the Board concluded that everything was fine. I now plan to review the Heritage Compass tools and other sources to see if there might be another approach to nudging the Board to talk a more critical approach to assessing its own performance.'

> 'The challenges remain the same in such a traditional and conservative organisation but we continue to progress and the interest and support being received from new faces and organisations is starting to make a subtle cultural shift. We need to maintain the consistency of the message using the approaches learned and demonstrating that we can succeed albeit in relatively small ways (such as successfuly securing funding). Success and change in small ways starts to spread confidence and a "can do" feeling.'

> 'The main challenges are in engaging people (volunteers and Trustees) in charge, making the changes necessary and maintaining momentum. Through a case for change exercise (tool provided by our Mentor) with volunteers and Trustees people in the

orgnisation are agreed on the need for change, but there is an attitude with some of 'We've been here before'.'

In some cases, changes to the internal culture meant the removal or departure of some staff members or board members/trustees; in some other cases, it meant new staff roles or attempts to recruit new trustees. Recruitment, of both staff and trustees, comes up as a challenge across the Learning Journal entries, with organisations finding it hard to find people either on an employed or voluntary basis. Despite these challenges, some participants have engaged positively in new approaches to their internal culture, gathering the views of volunteers, using tools and approaches from the modules and their mentors and critical friends, and engaging in difficult conversations. Some participants also used the Learning Journals to describe how they had not previously realised that internal culture might be part of the challenge for their organisation or project:

> 'Our critical friend helped us realise that this is a major issue for the [organisation name] and it is illuminating to realise that I did not see it at all until it was pointed out! I will not be involved in addressing it at the [organisation name] but am now more aware of how challenging it can be ('culture eats strategy' as Michelle Wright said) and [I] feel more able to identify and address it.'

A developed or re-invigorated income generation strategy was a very popular outcome for many participants in the programme. Some participants have written formal plans, for example fundraising strategies; others have undertaken substantial analysis of their current income streams and opportunities. As one participant put it:

> 'For income generation, I am planning a wide and eclectic range of funding initiatives and strategies. This is a massively untapped resource for the city (particularly when the council has no additional funds) and I am receiving lots of advocacy and support for this work. The key process from heritage compass I have found is in the planning of the work and also to set realistic goals and targets. I now have a schedule of work rather than a chaotic rolling programme and am already reaping the benefits.'

Several participants discuss very direct activities they have undertaken, including:
- Developing or refreshing a case for support
- Grant applications, including successful grant applications to public funders and trusts and foundations, as well as applications in process, and preparation for grant applications including researching funding
- Plans to test new approaches to earned income, including activities, cafes and other areas of potential secondary spend like space hire
- Alter the focus of current activity towards activities with a better cost/income ratio
- Plans for individual giving campaigns or approaches, or altering existing membership or donation models; some participants had already set up their new approaches, e.g. contactless and online donation portals. One organisation reported that a successful revamp of their individual giving 'ask' had already resulted in higher donations
- Plans for sponsorship development, and a couple of examples of organisations receiving new sponsorship in the programme period
- Plans to expand trading income

In some cases, these activities were supported by plans or already implemented arrangements for new staff and resources, or for restructuring their existing staff and resources.

Amongst those participants who chose a developed or re-invigorated audience development plan as one of their most important outcomes, there is a significant emphasis on participants building their understanding of both their existing and potential audiences:

> 'A lot of monitoring and research is required to understand our current situation with audience[s], building users backgrounds and ethnicities across all three of our venues. We do keep track of our visitor numbers but are now working on getting an accurate measure of equal opportunities in all 3 spaces. We have used useful HC [Heritage Compass] templates and powerpoints in order to start compiling the audience development plan. We are continuing to adapt and find solutions to make our venues more inclusive and attract more BAME and LGBQ communities.'

Participants report paying significant attention to building their relationships with specific audiences, and many talked about growing and deepening their relationships with existing audiences or those adjacent/similar to existing audiences. Some had undertaken surveys or gathered data in different ways from existing audiences, and others were planning to do so. For some organisations, Covid-19 had exacerbated existing challenges in their audience demographics:

> 'Like many heritage organisations, the pandemic intensified pre-existing audience trends. We were seeing much less foot-fall and an increased demand for digital delivery. Our core users (our regulars) are aging and many did not return after the pandemic. We feel that we need to target a new generation.'

Some participants had had successful ongoing connections with their audiences through Covid-19 related disruption, e.g. via a digital offer, but were keen to convert this success into in-person connections. When thinking about engaging with specific new audiences, some participants felt strongly that there was work they needed to do to change their activities and profile in order to widen the audiences to whom they appealed.

> 'We have to overcome the perception that our organisation is only for [a] certain type of person - and we are seeking to further diversify our audiences by engaging with people who do not usually engage. We have commissioned a diverse range of artists and writers to work with our collections to explore themes such as colonial imperialism, gender identify and social class. We have identified target audiences and are making direct invitations for people to get involved in our collection review. We are seeking people who have expertise by lived experience and not just the usual academic qualification[s].'

For some participants, things like audience development were important, but were lower down the priority list than tasks like business planning or fundraising; this may particularly reflect the challenges facing organisations coming out of Covid-19 restrictions. For others, this reflected a broader, ongoing challenge about the available resources:

> 'We have struggled to make headway with our audience development planning. I found the session incredibly inspiring, and I have put together a grant application to Museum Development Recovery Grants to cover the cost of some surveys of our community, to assess their perceptions of us, and why they do/don't visit. However, I am really aware that I don't have anywhere near the time needed to do the rest of the research and planning to make this a really good exercise. It's hard to spend a day researching

demographics or planning a focus group when you're constantly firefighting operational issues.'

Amongst those participants who chose 'an improved network and increased confidence' as one of their most important outcomes, some participants had found it difficult to make progress with developing their network through the programme. For some, the online nature of the programme had been a limitation; some respondents discussed making an effort to use Slack in order to try and make connections. The virtual nature of the programme, however, had had benefits for some participants:

'As a disabled organisation of disabled personnel Networking is quite difficult as we, in a visible situation, are often 'missed' for whatever reason (many and complex) so online (via this course) has been very beneficial in that it has allowed many issues we find as disabled people in a room full of ordinary people (usually standing whilst we sit) have been made invisible so that we are seen and valued for our contribution and our words. Thus, we have found this process (all online) much more enjoyable, beneficial and rewarding for us and for those we have networked with who may (or may not) have linked with us in a conventional setting.'

Others also recognised that there were other barriers to a wider network, for example:

'Little progress has been made with this. Again I think this is just due to the organisation being necessarily inward looking at this very challenging time. The ambition to be part of a wider cultural network hasn't happened.'

'Networking is extremely important and I am constantly engaged in the process. The challenge is to act every time an opportunity arises. I have met some interesting organisations during Heritage Compass but none have followed up when I have reached out.'

Despite some challenges, there is evidence that some organisations have made meaningful connections through the Heritage Compass programme. For some, the benefit of engaging with peers was immediate – hearing learning from other organisations – and not everyone had made connections which went beyond the training sessions. Some participants reported mentors and critical friends helping them to make useful connections across those participating in the programme, and some talked about plans to follow-up leads and connections they had made; there are also examples of organisations which have pursued further conversations, and found these beneficial:

'It has been really important for us to see what other organisations in the heritage sector have been doing and what they've been able to achieve. The initial symposium in particular gave us lots of ideas, particularly relating to working with young people. We've also been in touch with some of the other groups in our cohort to share knowledge and experience. [Other participant] were really helpful in advising us about salt production for a project that we're working on!'

Beyond the group of Heritage Compass participants, several participants discussed other connections and networks which they were building, or were planning to build. Some had very detailed specific plans, often to develop their connections in the local area. A key benefit from some participants has been the way that Heritage Compass has developed or restored their confidence in their own networking skills:

'I think this has been achieved for me personally. I have new skills, confidence, and have met and spoken to a large variety of people. I have been able to bring up examples of organisations I've met through this programme when presenting ideas for projects to our project director and that has been a really valuable thing for me as I was so inexperienced in the sector.'

'Our critical friend and mentor have given us confidence in reaching out to new partners and guided us in the experience.'

Participants who wanted to gain an understanding of how to use benchmarking to inform decisions as part of their most important outcomes from the programme generally suggested that they had not yet done so, but that they would like to use benchmarking or were planning to. They discussed benchmarking in broad terms, usually referring to a range of different data areas – e.g. audience data, income data – which they wanted to build an understanding of. For some, benchmarking was taken as a shorthand for setting targets, or understanding their progress against a previous year's performance; some participants were, however, more specific and wanted to develop their data and information so that they could compare themselves to other organisations or activities. A few organisations were familiar with benchmarking tools, such as the Audience Agency benchmark for audiences. Some participants specifically mention the Heritage Compass Dashboard, but at the time of completing the Learning Journal they had not necessarily had access to it.

Feedback about the barriers to achieving the outcomes also reflects the findings set out elsewhere in this report, about the barriers to engaging fully with the Heritage Compass programme. By far the most common issue for participating organisations is time and capacity.

'We have no staff, just local volunteers who man the reception desk at weekends when the museum is open. That means that to get anything done we have to do it ourselves - not all the trustees are willing to devote that amount of time.'

While we found that at an earlier stage of the programme, there was a need for internal cultural change or dealing with resistance to change, this had become less of an issue as plans had been agreed and were being implemented – although it was still a problematic issue in some organisations. More significant barriers are around the availability of funding and the generation of enough income to be able to embark confidently on new projects and plans. Recruitment and retention issues have also grown in significance for many organisations, relating to both staff and key, skilled volunteers.

'We are going to struggle with personnel available with appropriate skills to get this project off the ground. The key people in the organisation now are limited in time.'

6 Conclusions

6.1 What has been achieved?

In the second section of this report we set out a Theory of Change and Outcome Framework, which built on the original application made by Cause4 and its consortium partners to the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The Outcome Framework particularly sets out how the Heritage Compass programme sought to deliver activities which would contribute to four of the National Lottery Heritage Fund's outcomes. In developing a Theory of Change and Outcome Framework, we articulated the inputs and approaches which the Heritage Compass programme sought to take, and separated out the anticipated effects into outputs, direct outcomes (which we expected might take place within the lifetime of the programme itself) and longer-term outcomes, which we thought in some cases might occur *after* the lifetime of the programme. This evaluation is based on data collected within the lifetime of the programme, and thus in some cases our understanding of the effects of Heritage Compass as an intervention takes us only as far as the outputs and direct, immediate outcomes.

6.1.1 Inputs

The Theory of Change (section 2.2 of this report) outlines a series of inputs both for programme participants and for the consortium, funders and wider sector, which this evaluation report can clearly evidence have taken place. By way of an overview, these are:

1. The recruitment of organisations via open advertising, signposting, referrals, and networks, who bring in their own expertise, plans and ongoing activities (contexts). What is clear from the data and reflections that we have is:
   - That the recruitment process required significant time resources and connections, in order to reach and encourage organisations to apply. This is very similar to the learning from previous, similar interventions funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, in which recruitment was a similarly complex and resource intensive process.
   - That the context which individual organisations operate in, and bring in to the programme, is a significant factor in the way in which they progress through the programme, how they make use of what they learn and, ultimately, the potential for the programme to impact upon their resilience.

2. Access grants to support smaller organisations to take part. From the data we can see that:
   - Bursaries were available, requested by 57% of successful applicants and awarded to around 49% of successful applicants to the programme. The average bursary was around £2,250 per organisation, and the most common use of bursaries was to backfill for existing staff and/or to enabling a volunteer or part-time work to add to their days, turn other work down or cover costs to enable them to engage: for most, this effectively meant underwriting the capacity of individuals from those organisations to take the time to engage with the programme.

3. Cohorts organised by needs/objectives, creating peer groups:
   - Covid-19 disruption moved the majority of the delivery programme online, and has affected both the connections which participants were able to make and the

way in which some cohorts were managed and formed. To enable some participants to be able to engage fully with the programme, the delivery team have had to operate cohorts on a more informal basis. Whilst the move online limited some of the peer engagement, some participants have indicated that it helped them to engage with the training modules; given what we understand about the capacity issues of many of these organisations, it is important to note that in person training might have limited the involvement of some. This proposed element of the programme design was, therefore, never fully realised or tested.

4. Six training modules, e-learning opportunities, symposia days, networking opportunities, responsive programme elements:
   ➢ Training modules and symposia days went ahead as originally planned, contributing to direct outputs for **Skills development within the sector**. We can see from the feedback provided that a significant majority of participants found these learning opportunities to be pitched well for their organisation, the quality of trainers and speakers was considered high and participants learnt about things which felt immediately relevant to their organisation/project. The e-learning element has emerged after the end of the main Heritage Compass programme for all the participants reflected in this evaluation, and is based on some of the specific responses and requests made by participants. It is beginning to run in Autumn 2023, and will be available to all Heritage Compass participants.

5. A dashboard framework is developed, and data is gathered from organisations participating in Heritage Compass:
   ➢ The benchmarking dashboard has been developed.

6. The expertise of the delivery partners and design of the learning journey:
   ➢ In the feedback from the individual training modules, the symposia days and through the Learning Journals, we can see that participants have benefited from the experience and expertise of the deliver partners, both directly through the trainers, speakers, critical friends and mentors and indirectly through the design of the learning journey.

7. A reflective process, in which organisations set specific aims and work towards them:
   ➢ Uptake of critical friends and mentors and response rates to the learning journal suggest that a substantial proportion of participants have engaged very fully in the reflective elements of the programme, and have been able to determine their own aims and work towards those through the programme.
   ➢ Similarly, the Learning Journals gained a response rate higher than that of feedback surveys, and for some participants have formed a useful part of their journey through the programme; however, we also know that for some participants, particularly those with limited capacity, they were either unable to engage with the Learning Journals or found it difficult to do so.

6.1.2   Outputs

1. Type and spread of participants, and participants and organisations have completed the whole programme:
   ➢ 236 successful applicants, almost all of whom completed the Heritage Compass programme to some extent, contributing to direct outputs for **More resilient**

organisations and **Skills Development within the sector.** The delivery team supported organisations in some cases to stop and then start again when individual staff or volunteers had other pressures to deal with. In some cases additional staff members from organisations who were already participating joined a later cohort in the course, enabling organisations to strengthen their engagement with the programme.

➢ At this time, an additional 45 organisations have participated in specific elements (e.g. Roadshows, Learning Lunches and Networks) which have taken place alongside the main programme or emerged following it.

➢ The spread of participants is England-wide, with a focus on small and medium organisations. Participants come from across the range of heritage types, including a substantial portion from Community Heritage. Participants include organisations and projects which are black or minority-ethnic led, female-led, young people-led, disability-led and LGBT+-led. This diversity of participants contributes to the direct outputs for **a wider number of people involved in heritage.**

2. An improved network, via cohorts and wider participant group and learning from Symposia sharing:
    ➢ There is evidence that participants have enjoyed meeting each other (in-person and virtually), and that they have shared and learnt from each other in training modules and the Symposia days. Participants have benefited from hearing from similar and different organisations and experiences to their own. Some organisations have been able to make deeper connections beyond the formal arrangements, using Slack, networking sessions, their critical friends and mentors and their own initiative. Some participants feel more confident about networking because of Heritage Compass. These contribute to the direct outputs for a **wider number of people involved in heritage.**

3. Participants are positive about having learnt new sills, and confident in applying those skills:
    ➢ On the whole, participants felt that the training modules were pitched at the right level for them/their organisation/project (+78% net agreement) and that the overall programme was pitched at the right level (+53% net agreement). The relevance and interesting-ness of the training received similarly high scores (+78% net agreement), as did the Symposia days (+84% net agreement) and the overall programme (+70% net agreement). Participants also generally reported that the training was what they had expected (+80% net agreement), the Symposia days were as expected (+84% net agreement) and that the overall programme was what they had expected (+63% net agreement). These findings contribute to the direct outputs for **skills development within the sector.**
    ➢ Participants reported positive net agreement (+70%) that they had learnt new things in the training courses and that they had personally learnt new things across the programme (+60%). 82% agreed that there were things which had come up in the programme, that they would be able to use in their organisation or project. These findings contribute to the direct outputs for **skills development within the sector.**
    ➢ Participants reported positive net agreement (+81%) that they were confident in taking away what they had learnt in the training modules to their organisation, and doing things differently. Overall, 31% of participants were very confident and 46% quite confident to take their learning from the overall programme back, and

apply it in their organisations/projects. These findings contribute to the direct outputs for **skills development within the sector.**

4. Production of heritage dashboard, and early findings. Amongst the participants, an understanding of how to use benchmarking to inform decision-making.
   ➢ The dashboard is working and introduction sessions have been offered to and taken up by participants. There is an accompanying report, and the dashboard demonstrates some of the key segments amongst the Heritage Compass participants, contributing to the direct outputs for **More resilient organisations.**
   ➢ Participants who understand what the dashboard is are positive about having an opportunity to engage with it; those who have engaged are positive about how they might use it.
   ➢ Towards the end of the programme and beyond the end, significant public engagement with the Dashboard has been supported by Q and A sessions, sessions introducing and discussing success guides, 1:1s with MyCake and some bespoke work individually with organisations.

5. Organisation outputs (completed, or working towards) – participants work on the three most important outcomes that they selected:
   ➢ There is evidence across the Learning Journals and case studies of organisations refreshing or writing new business plans and income generation/fundraising strategies particularly, and demonstrating more confidence in their strategic planning and thinking, contributing to the direct outputs for **more resilient organisations.**
   ➢ In relation to areas like earned income, audience development and benchmarking participants, have placed significant emphasis on data: understanding what information they need in order to assess their current situation and future opportunities, and in beginning to use learning and tools signposted from the Heritage Compass programme to develop that evidence to underpin their thinking and decision-making, contributing to the direct outputs for **more resilient organisations.**
   ➢ Participants who have been addressing areas like governance and financial planning have taken active steps to improve their trustee/board recruitment, training and support, and to put their financial management and planning on a more robust footing, contributing to the direct outputs for **more resilient organisations.**
   ➢ Amongst those participants who wanted to build networks, we can see a group who have also undertaken development of their local stakeholder networks in systematic ways, engaging with the needs and opportunities of those stakeholders, and including this in their strategic planning, contributing to the **direct outputs for boosting the local economy.**
   ➢ Some organisations have been able to find new funding, secure new commissions or relationships, and employ additional staff or resources as part of their development in this period, contributing to the **direct outputs for boosting the local economy.**
   ➢ Through the Audience Development Masterclass, some participants have engaged significantly with questions of social justice, and equality, diversity and inclusion. Amongst those undertaking work to produce or refresh audience development plans, we can see that participants are thinking carefully about how to engage different people in their heritage offer, and sometimes about how to

alter their offer to engage more widely, contributing to the direct outputs for a **wider number of people involved in heritage.**

➢ Some participants have directly addressed questions of internal culture, and others have come to realise through the course of the Heritage Compass programme that internal culture change is required, as a result of their work on business planning and other areas.

6.1.3 Direct Outcomes

1. More skilled organisation and workforce. Where participants have been in a good position to engage substantially with the Heritage Compass programme, we can see evidence of:
    ➢ The combination of the training modules and the support from critical friends and mentors has turned new knowledge into skills. Organisations have been provided with training around how to develop specific plans such as business plans or fundraising strategies, and have then been supported through the process of putting this into practice. We can see through the Learning Journals, and particularly through the case studies, that some participants have tried out new techniques for strategic planning, from visioning sessions with trustees to business and financial planning, new approaches to fundraising and audience development, and developing new stakeholder relationships and partnerships within the lifetime of this intervention, contributing to the direct outcomes for **skills development within the sector** and **more resilient organisations**.

2. Better connected and networked organisations and workforce.
    ➢ There is evidence that some participants have made new connections through the Heritage Compass programme, and that some have plans to continue these connections beyond the lifetime of the programme itself. The programme has been important in building the confidence of participants in networking.
    ➢ Some participants have struggled to make connections, due to the virtual delivery mechanism and/or their own limited capacity.

3. Participants understand their leadership styles, are confident about putting new plans and approaches in place and in sharing new skills in their organisation, and have tried out new approaches in the period of the intervention.
    ➢ Through the Learning Journals and case studies we can see that participants are not only confident in applying the learning, but have in some cases increased their personal confidence in their own abilities and role within their organisations/projects. As a result of this, we can see that some participants have made significant progress towards the outcomes they chose for themselves, and in developing the quality of the strategic thinking and decision-making which takes place within their organisations, contributing to the direct outcomes of **more resilient organisations.**
    ➢ There is evidence of some organisations sharing the training and critical friend/mentoring opportunities across the organisation, using their critical friend/mentoring time to work more widely with staff and trustees in the organisations, and of taking tools and learning directly back to share with colleagues and trustees, contributing to the direct outcomes for **skills development within the sector.**
    ➢ Whilst there is evidence of participants sharing skills with fellow volunteers, staff and trustees, and recruiting new staff and board members, we did not see

examples of these activities specifically reaching more diverse groups in heritage. There are, however, examples of participants actively planning to engage with diverse groups within the public, and widen their reach, contributing to the direct outcomes of a wider number of people involved in heritage. We can also see participants actively fundraising for the capital and revenue investment which will enable them to attract more, and more diverse, audiences and visitors, contributing to the direct outcomes of **a wider range of people will be involved in heritage.**

➢ We also know from the make-up of the participants, that organisations led by those with lived experiences of inequality are part of this cohort, and from the Learning Journals and case studies we can see that some of these organisations have engaged deeply with the Heritage Compass programme, and made significant progress towards their aims. For some organisations which are minority-led, this has included significant repositioning of their organisations, and the development of the profile of their organisations amongst key stakeholders. Many of these organisations are culture/story based, rather than based in a building or attached to physical assets, and so they have had quite a specific set of challenges around building their profile and partnerships which is sometimes different to those heritage organisations attached to collections or buildings.

➢ On the whole, where participants have made progress, much of their activity has taken place internally, with new business plans or strategies, recruitment and reorganisation and new processes and thinking. Some organisations have progressed to the next step, either applying their new approaches to their public-facing activities or, more commonly, using their new plans and strategic thinking to underpin funding applications. There are some examples of additional employment which have taken place or been planned within the period of the programme, contributing to the direct outcomes of **boost to the local economy.**

4. The Heritage Dashboard is a meaningful reference point for organisations which have participated.

➢ We can see that amongst those organisations which understand what the Dashboard is, and particularly for those that have engaged in an information session, the Dashboard is seen as a relevant tool which they plan to make use of. Some participants report already dipping in to the Dashboard, contributing to the direct outcomes for **more resilient organisations.** The Dashboard has only recently become available, and so we might expect to see greater take-up beyond the end of the programme.

6.1.4   Longer-term Outcomes

When we worked with the delivery partners on the Theory of Change and Outcomes Framework, we discussed the challenge of understanding the likelihood of longer-term outcomes which may not take place within the lifetime of the programme itself. The evaluation collected data within the lifetime of the programme, and has no current access to post-programme data or feedback from participants. Thus, what we have looked for across the existing evidence are plans and ambitions from participants to work towards these longer-term outcomes.

1. Participants are involving a wider number of people in heritage.

➢ As noted in relation to direct outcomes, currently the evidence of specific impacts in this area is limited, but the Learning Journals demonstrate that participants are

thinking about how they engage with wider audiences, and that some participants are specifically thinking about how they engage groups which they do not normally or currently engage with. Participants feel more equipped with an understanding of what data and information they need to plan their audience development, and some participants have begun thinking about how their heritage offer might need to change in order to engage different groups. This contributes towards the long-term outcomes for a **wider number of people involved in heritage.**

➢ We did not, as part of this programme, find participants actively thinking about how they might use their new skills and confidence to support staff or fellow volunteers specifically from diverse groups.

2. Participants continue to be better networked.
   ➢ From the Learning Journals, we can see that a small group of participants engaged significantly in building their network and connections across the Heritage Compass participants, and that some of them had specific plans to continue those connections. These plans contribute to the potential longer-term outcomes for **more resilient organisations.**

3. There is evidence that skills are shared widely within organisations who participated in the programme.
   ➢ We can see that some participants have been able to include more than one member of staff, volunteer or trustee in participating in the programme, and that many had specific plans to share their learning and skills across their organisation. Some participants were already putting their new skills into action, contributing to the potential long-term outcomes for **skills development within the sector.**
   ➢ Despite this, it is also clear that for some organisations there may be a vulnerability in their skills development, where one or two members of staff or volunteers have participated in the Heritage Compass programme and may not be able – for a variety of reasons – to transfer that learning into the organisation. Where this is the case, the benefit of the skills development for the organisation relies on that individual(s) staying in the organisation.
   ➢ When we asked participants what kind of support they might need in the future, some felt that their colleagues or trustees would benefit from accessing similar training modules to the ones they had participated in. Some individual participants felt that they might need a 'top-up' at some point, and several talked about how useful the critical friends and mentors were, and what the benefit might be of continuing to have access to that support. What we can say clearly is that there is both a need and an appetite amongst some participants for further skills development, which would contribute to the long-term outcomes for **skills development within the sector.**

4. Participants have diversified income streams and strengthened business models, and are boosting the local economy.
   ➢ From the applications we can see that the most common outcomes which participants sought were income generation strategies, business plans and audience development plans. These remained important for participants throughout the programme, and the most common areas in which participants had made progress were in business planning and thinking about their income generation in particular; this reflects what applicants told us about the ongoing

pressures to ensure that their organisations and projects are financially resilient. Whilst we have limited detail about future plans, what we can see from the Learning Journals, the case studies and the funding applications which participants are making (in some cases, already successfully) are ambitions and efforts to ensure that they are financially resilient, and that they have active and meaningful relationships with audiences. Long decision making processes for funding applications mean that we see many organisations waiting to find out if they will have the financial resource to progress their plans. These plans begin to contribute to the potential longer-term outcomes for **more resilient organisations** and for **boost to the local economy.**

5. The Heritage Dashboard is being used by participants.
   ➢ As noted above, we can see that for those participants who understand the Dashboard there is willingness to engage, and for those who have attended an information session there is confidence that the Dashboard will be helpful in supporting organisations to plan and understand their operations better. We can see from the Learning Journal that some organisations are already planning to make significant use of the dashboard in their future thinking and business planning, contributing to the potential longer-term outcomes for **more resilient organisations.**

6.2 Wider learning

6.2.1 The role of business development programmes

Fundamentally, what we saw in this programme was **similar to the learning from our desk research into other previous programmes like this**:

- Recruitment is hard, but retention is generally good in that organisations continue to the end of the programme. However, this masks significant differences in organisations' level of engagement, with some taking up all or nearly all of the programme offer across training, mentoring and benchmarking while others dip in to the elements which they feel will provide the best return on their investment of time.
- As with other programmes, the training content is rated highly, and organisations report good learning outcomes.
- Organisations which participate do begin to work on the development of new plans and strategies. Often this is the extent of their activity within the lifetime of the programme and it is difficult to evidence longer term outcomes.
- Networks are strengthened to some extent as a result of participation in sector-specific training, however, in this programme this has been hampered by online delivery and organisations' lack of capacity.

Our evaluation indicates that in the Heritage Compass programme, **the provision of critical friends/mentors has been really key in turning knowledge into skills**, for many organisations enabling the training provided to make a real difference to their organisation, as the following quotation from a learning journal demonstrates:

'…all of what we have done with our Critical Friend and Mentor has been instrumental in giving us focus and clear goals for our future in allowing us the space, time and expertise that they have given us. This 'space' for individual support should not in anyway be undervalued, as it has been excellent and extremely valuable to us in providing a 'backbone' of support to us in relation to the training. [Critical friend and mentor names] have been exceptionally insightful, useful and hard working (they have clearly shown their research in to our organisation prior to our meetings which has created trust and enable us to build an exceptional relationship for maximum benefit).

Some participants were particularly keen to carry on with this element and would welcome further support or a follow up session at a later date. However, we heard that the difference between the roles of critical friend and mentor wasn't clear, and also that some critical friends/mentors felt that their time was under-resourced, particularly in balancing big expectations and significant need. Many had dedicated significant time to chasing and following up mentees who were struggling to engage, and some found themselves switching between coaching, mentoring and consultancy approaches depending on the needs of their participants.

Overall, we conclude that the inclusion of this element has been crucial for those participants who engaged, and we can see it has been particularly valuable for those who have really been able to apply the learning from the programme – the case studies all demonstrate this value. In any future programme, consideration should be given to:

- Whether a single critical friend or mentor relationship might be better, or some arrangement which provides a single, coherent package of support rather than two separate relationships.
- The degree to which individuals undertaking these roles have been resourced, where there has clearly been both an administrative burden, but also some substantial need.
- The potential for some on-going support using this model, or follow-up. We heard a lot from individuals who were shouldering a substantial load in their organisations, and for whom critical friends/mentors were crucial to enabling them to reflect, giving them a sounding board and preventing them from feeling they were doing everything 'alone'. For small and medium-sized organisations undertaking heritage activities and practices, there is an ongoing need for this kind of support.

We saw that **the potential of the Heritage Compass programme to create supportive peer relationships and networks across the cohort was not completely realised**, although many participants were able to share examples of helpful contacts they had made with others. This was partly because of the online delivery of the programme; however, it was also closely linked to the capacity issues which have been such a challenge for participating organisations, with participants unable to find time to follow up interesting contacts or to engage on Slack or in networking sessions. Members of the delivery team did much to promote a networking culture across cohorts, from online welcome and networking sessions to in-person events when possible. The Heritage Compass programme is going to be continuing for another group of cohorts, and alongside that, participants from the cohorts covered in this evaluation will be invited to apply for funding to develop their own networking activities.

It is clear **that the design of a programme which met the needs of this diverse cohort, which included all types of organisations from start-up projects to local authority museums, was challenging**. The feedback on training suggests that this was pitched as well as it could be, with some organisations finding it challenging and others finding it basic, but most reporting that there was learning they could take away from each session. The role of critical friends and mentors was vital in embedding the learning, breaking it down for those participants for whom it was all new, and providing stretch and food for thought for those in larger venues. We saw some small and new organisations suggesting that they would have benefited from a dedicated cohort; however, they also acknowledged that they had learned from the experience of other, more established heritage organisations.

When we ran sessions at the two Symposia days, we discussed 'resilience' with the participants using a simplified framework (reflecting on work on resilience from Heritage Fund, Arts Council England and others). This framework encouraged participants to think about resilience under three key headings:
1. 'Money' resilience, encompassing their financial circumstances, income and financial risks.
2. 'People' resilience, reflecting the skills, knowledge and capacities of the people in organisations and involved in projects, including staff, volunteers and board members/trustees.
3. 'Mission' resilience, which means the clarity of their mission, and the viability of the offer to the public, the relationships with the people they want to engage and serve.

We see from the learning journals that **organisations begin, on the whole, with a focus on 'money resilience'**: needing more diverse, or just more, income streams. They also begin **wanting to know 'how to' do things,** and although many of them identified challenges with their internal capacity, they often hoped or suggested that new knowledge and skills might help

them to overcome those capacity issues. There are several things we can observe about how these initial perceptions have shifted during the programme:

- While organisations come into the programme thinking that their problem is money, it is human resources and their amount of staff capacity – **their 'people resilience' - which is key to their successful engagement with this programme**, in terms of accessing the programme and then implementing the learning. Not all organisations can overcome this, especially where low capacity is compounded by resistance to change. Participants located this resistance as primarily sitting with the Board, and in a small number of cases with the organisations' longstanding volunteers.

- **'Mission resilience' isn't mentioned as often in applications**, but many participants benefited from the way in which the programme enabled them not just to think about 'how to' but also to think about 'why' – to do strategic thinking. For some, the training particularly on business planning and fundraising, led them to reconsider whether their organisational mission, which was clearly understood and shared within the organisation, was fit for purpose when they needed to communicate with external stakeholders, audiences and potential funders. The inclusion of the critical friends/mentors element of the programme has been crucial in helping participants translate their learning into something they can apply. **This translation has helped them learn 'how to' do things, but it has also added for many a stronger sense of 'why' they are doing things.** The following quote from a Learning Journal demonstrates some of this conversion:

> 'We knew broadly what we wanted to do as a group, but though we possessed an array of business specific skills that have been useful, none of us have a professional in the heritage sector. The course so far has us 'thinking' more like a heritage org and has given us more confidence that what we really want to do is heritage focused. It has also highlighted, and so far partially addressed, the gap in our understanding of what we needed to be doing to be taken seriously - and I think we needed to be hearing it from heritage and arts sector insiders to understand it. I personally have learned a lot more from thinking about the specifics of money and earned income - my own experience in business (day job) has been in part of a large technology company where we focus on our part in the overall value chain, where the course has given us ways to look at the whole value chain at the level this CIC is operating at.'

6.2.2   Challenges for the small and medium-sized heritage sector

Responses from the Learning Journals have clearly articulated a shared set of challenges facing the sector, which can be summarised as follows:

- **External circumstances continue to be challenging.** Covid-19 disruption continues to have an impact, and for smaller and volunteer reliant organisations the recovery has been slow. For many organisations, inflation and energy costs have exacerbated the situation, with much reduced support available. This is manifesting in a range of ways, including slow returning audiences, lower visitor spend, volunteer fatigue, energy costs, and wage pressure. Some participants reflected on these challenges in their Learning Journals, and were interested in how there might be something of a collective response from the sector, for example:

'We need a national drive to get more people into the cultural and heritage sector. There has been a steady decline in numbers and quality of this workforce over the last decade or so and this Govt has made the situation a lot worse. We need people, both young and old, to be trained to do the work that is required to keep venues, museums and festivals running. We need artists being given relevant training to be able to sustain a life and career in the Arts, and we need organisations like the Arts Council and Heritage Fund to engage more with the Business sector so that large sponsors can be found to support freelance creatives and small groups.'

- We saw a lot of **organisations demonstrating the same challenges as those noted in previous business development programmes, namely capacity issues – 'people resilience'** - including:
  - ➤ Lack of resources (people/staff)
  - ➤ Challenges in engaging trustees
  - ➤ Risk aversion.

  This suggests that there are **enduring, sector-wide structural challenges which cannot be resolved at the level of individual training and support programmes.** These challenges were reflected upon by some participants through their Learning Journals, for example, in this response to a question about what further support an organisation might need:

    'Complementary support to organisations in terms of help to improve governance, management and effectiveness being linked to funding for recovery and development. It is not a sensible use of public money to provide substantial financial support to organisations that are strategically weak and which have no motive to change and yet not provide support to organisations that want to improve and which invest a lot of effort in programmes such as Heritage Compass.'

  Participants are aware of the differing starting points across the cohorts, and for some – as in this example – they wondered what the relationship was between wider funding opportunities and their engagement with a programme like Heritage Compass.

  'Money resilience' and 'people resilience' (see above) are crucial to organisations being able to really address questions about 'mission resilience'. Lack of staff and volunteers, and lack of income and reserves (or confidence about the potential to generate adequate income via fundraising) are holding organisations back from being ambitious in their thinking, able to take risks or make strategic investments.

- Based on the Learning Journals, we can see that there are **specific sticking points for organisations: times when they are particularly challenged and lack resilience**. These include:
  - ➤ Organisations which are effectively one person running a project, struggling to generate enough income to support them to dedicate the time required to grow and become established. Project grants cover their project delivery time but not time to focus on strategy, policies and processes, or fundraising. Individuals often have other jobs which help them to earn a living, and so their heritage activities are not their only focus. The challenges of accessing unrestricted funding for very small organisations is substantial, and can prevent them from having the space to think

strategically and transition their work from being project-based to an ongoing programme.
- ➢ Organisations moving from being entirely volunteer based to taking on their first paid members of staff or freelancers, and experiencing resistance to this cultural change.
- ➢ Coping with financial shocks, particularly when the heritage they care for requires significant capital investment to enable them to continue their work.
- ➢ Churn at senior level, and particularly managing the loss of a founder, Director or Chair of Trustees.

DHA

This report was written by Tamsin Cox and Kate Rodenhurst