

# IMPACT Report 2023



The Inclusive Economy project is funded by the UK Government through the UK Community Renewal Fund.



# BACKGROUND

The Inclusive Economy Project launched in January 2022 with funding from the UK Government's Community Renewal Fund. In Norfolk, the funding was administered by Norfolk County Council.

The project is delivered by a partnership of voluntary organisations which is led by East Coast College. These core partners have a strong connection to the communities they serve. They also make a positive contribution to their local economies by recruiting local people and buying local goods and services.

These partners are:

- > Access Community Trust
- > Action Community Enterprises CIC
- > DIAL Great Yarmouth
- > East Coast College
- > Future Projects
- > Royal Association for Deaf People

In addition to the core partners, the project also worked with the Royal Association for Deaf People to improve access to employment support for deaf people. The project also partnered with Norfolk Community Foundation to provide Your Big Idea grants to small and medium sized organisations in the voluntary, community, and social enterprise sector. These grants provided 21 organisations with extra capacity to try out new ideas aimed at creating training, volunteer placements and jobs for people who are long term unemployed and disconnected from the labour market.

Although the Community Renewal Fund came to an end on 31 December 2022, the partnership continues to work together to encourage and deliver inclusive economy work. This includes facilitating an Inclusive Economy Network.

The Inclusive Economy project was guided by a multi stakeholder Community Budget Group comprising strategic partners to ensure activities met local need and to facilitate co-production between communities and funders. These members include local councils, DWP, Norfolk Community Foundation, Mercers' Company, Lloyds Bank Foundation, Norfolk and Waveney CCG and the National Lottery Community Foundation and the New Anglia LEP.



# THE ROLE OF EAST COAST COLLEGE

Since 2015, the College has been working closely with the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector to design and deliver new employment support services.

This partnership has led to the development of a network of community-based projects supported by the European Social Fund. This includes the Norfolk Community College which is co-financed by the National Lottery. Since 2017, this network of projects has supported more than 3,500 people to gain the confidence and skills needed to look for work.

The leadership provided by East Coast College has enabled voluntary organisations to deliver larger scale projects without having to take on high levels of risk. At the same time, this approach has given smaller organisations the opportunity to develop their own management skills. The College has also complemented this approach by delivering training and skills programmes which meet the needs of employer and the aspirations of individuals.

# TOWARDS AN INCLUSIVE ECONOMY

The Inclusive Economy Project was developed in response to the learning gained by the College and its partners over the last 7 years. This period has involved working with communities to design and test a range of employment support approaches aimed at people who are disconnected from the labour market.

A common thread across all this work has been the importance of working at a local level by finding ways of engaging smaller community groups. Very often, these groups are helping people who are hidden from mainstream services or who are anxious about accessing more formal support. Another key learning point has been the need to create stepping-stone opportunities for people who need extra support before moving into labour market. With their experience of providing wrap-around support, voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations are ideally placed to create these intermediary roles.



# PROJECT HEADLINES



Targets reached  
is way beyond  
**100%**  
on every criteria!



**382 -  
190%**

people supported to  
overcome barriers

Total SME's  
from the VCSE  
& Private Sector  
supported

**62**

**£307,309**

of new  
investment  
secured for  
the local area



**31**

people supported  
into employment



**40**

people and  
businesses supported  
with carbon reduction

**CO<sub>2</sub>** 

**33**

jobs safeguarded



# HOW WE SPEND LOCALLY...

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## INCLUSIVE ECONOMY PROJECT

90% of frontline support provided by local organisations.

£162,000 of grants allocated to help local SMEs develop and grow.

100% of marketing budget spent with local suppliers.

Referral gateway systems created by a local charity.

6 new entry level 'Green Ambassador' roles created for local people.

Co-locating in local venues to support community groups.

# WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES

Working with community groups and venues has enabled the project to reach out to people who are hidden from mainstream support.



## GREEN AMBASSADORS

Over the course of the year, the Green Ambassadors have supported people and businesses to complete 40 decarbonisation plans with SMEs and 73 energy reduction action plans for local householders. The Ambassadors' work has been timely because of the rising cost of living faced by households and businesses, and part of their success can be attributed to their connection with the communities they serve. Both factors have enabled them to hit the ground running in building relationships with community groups and businesses.



## THE WARM HUB

In Great Yarmouth, the project has supported the development of a warm hub by bringing voluntary groups together. The 'Café Refresh' project has been supported with a project plan and funding strategy, which has helped it to secure £10,000 to launch a warm hub in South Yarmouth. The project is a partnership involving St George's Theatre Trust, who are providing the venue, working alongside DIAL Great Yarmouth, Future Projects, and Top Banana CIC. As well as teas and coffees, the project will offer cooking sessions and access to money and debt advice.

# IMPROVING ACCESS TO SERVICES

Bringing partners together has helped people and community groups to access the right employment services including essential wrap around support.



## EMPLOYMENT GATEWAY

From the outset, the project recognised that there were several employment-related services being delivered in Norfolk. This included very effective and targeted support delivered by community and voluntary groups. At the same time, some people were becoming disconnected from services with the pandemic and cost of living leading to worsening mental health. To help people reach the support they need, the project worked with other employment support services to set up an electronic gateway. This has been promoted as a resource to smaller organisations, who are skilled in reaching out to people who are not accessing mainstream support.



## MEETING DEMAND

Over the lifetime of the Project it has seen an increasing number of people who are accessing support for the first time. In many cases, the causes of this can be traced back to rising cost of living. The project was able to respond to these external pressures by retaining some flexibility in its delivery model. This provided the opportunity to mobilise resources to meet the needs of specific neighbourhoods and communities. To keep up with rising demand, the project needed to find ways of engaging people who had little or no knowledge of local services. One way of doing this was to co-locate with groups who are on the frontline of the current financial crisis. These include foodbanks and social supermarkets.

# CREATING STEPPING STONE OPPORTUNITIES

Supporting the development of the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector has provided much needed capacity to create new opportunities.



## SUPPORTING INNOVATION

The project launched a grant programme called Your Big Idea to help the voluntary, community, and social enterprise sector to develop and grow. This was done in recognition of their potential to create stepping stone opportunities for people who are furthest away from the labour market. Norfolk Community Foundation promoted the opportunity which received 79 applications. This high level of demand confirmed that the fund was meeting a gap with just over a quarter of applicants receiving a grant. In less than six months, these applicants had created 10 new business plans and safeguarded 33 jobs.



## ATTRACTING NEW INVESTMENT

A beneficiary of the Your Big Idea grant scheme was The Holt Youth Project which received funding to develop a business plan in order to grow the organisation. This was instrumental in helping them to secure an additional £125,000 of capital funding to provide a new resource centre and a storage outbuilding. The long-term social value and impact of this work is that an improved community hub is now available for local people and groups, and the local community now has access to a shop selling affordable provisions including fruit and veg.



# CONNECTING WITH LOCAL JOBS

Working with local employers including anchor institutions has helped to bring communities and the labour market closer together.



## THE ANCHOR INSTITUTION PROJECT

The project supported the development of an anchor institution pilot with the James Paget University Hospital and the NHS Integrated Care Board for Norfolk and Waveney. This work was supported by personnel from a range of departments including Human Resources and Procurement. The partnership considered ways for the voluntary and health sectors to work together with the Inclusive Economy Project providing £10,000 to test their ideas. This resulted in a grant awarded to the Bread Kitchen CIC. They are supporting volunteers to develop the confidence and skills needed to work on a ground maintenance project at the hospital.



## WORKING WITH EMPLOYERS

With funding from the Project, The Norfolk Community Foundation produced a series of films called 'Be Ready 2' covering a range of careers and employment topics. This work featured a number of leading Norfolk based employers including Aviva, Flagship Housing and Warren Services. The projects goal was to improve ease of access to a range of workfocused support and training guides, and by producing films that could be accessed online and at home it removed barriers that many faced. This approach piloted a new way of collaborating with businesses as people accessed employer insight in areas such as preparing for a job interview, applying for an apprenticeships and writing a CV at their convenience.

# VALUE FOR MONEY

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## Our Approach

- > The way we think about value for money has been shaped by the pandemic and cost of living. These have led to rising demand from people who are facing complex challenges. This includes people struggling to find work because of worsening mental health.
- > These trends have helped us to think about value for money in a more holistic way by replacing unit cost with community value.
- > Examples of this community value include building resilience by supporting the voluntary, community, and social enterprise sector to create stepping stone jobs.
- > Based upon our learning, services achieve better value for money when they work with communities to meet local need.
- > We have drawn on this learning to develop some key principles and steps. We will use these to guide the next phase of our inclusive economy work.

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## Principles of Sustainable Working

**1** Recognise the role of communities in driving forward sustainable growth.

**2** Support communities and employers to be resilient by working together.

**3** Give projects the capacity to respond to local events and to decarbonise.

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## Steps to Achieving Community Value

**1** Work with local communities to remove the need for expensive marketing.

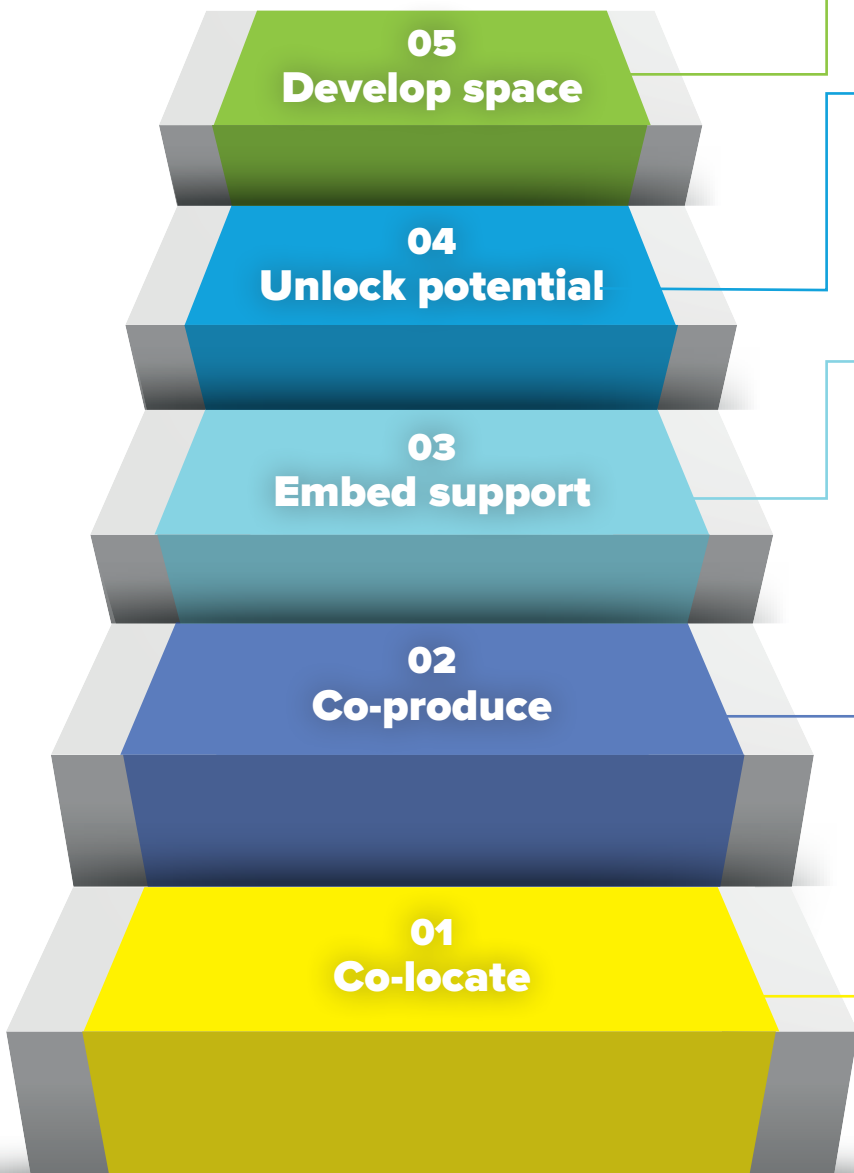
**2** Develop partnerships with providers who are trusted by local people.

**3** Embed wrap around support to avoid costly and disjointed referrals.

**4** Unlock the potential of the VCSE sector to create stepping stone jobs.

**5** Develop space for different sectors to come together to share ideas.

# VALUE FOR MONEY STEPS



- > Support the VCSE sector to develop its supply chain offer.
- > Support local people to become part of project governance.
- > Make time to develop relationships with local community groups.

- > Recognise the potential of the VCSE sector to drive growth.
- > Encourage innovation through development support and grants.
- > Support the VCSE sector to make the business case for its growth.

- > Understand the barriers faced by people when looking for work.
- > Provide wrap around support as part of employment services.
- > Tailor support by allowing time for warm handovers between services.

- > Work with organisations that are trusted by local people.
- > Encourage delivery partners to advertise and recruit locally.
- > Make grants and other resources available to respond to local events.

- > Enhance the local offer by aligning services that promote inclusive economic growth and skills.
- > Create a shared space with the public and private sector to connect VCSE groups and local communities.
- > Work with communities to identify gaps and to understand their priorities.

# KEY LEARNING POINTS

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## On People and Communities

- > Developing a service offer which embeds skills and employment with support can deliver an inclusive economy.
- > Employment services are having to try and provide more wrap around support in response to the pandemic and cost of living crisis.
- > There is an increasing need for people to access mental health support before they can begin looking for employment.
- > Employment services can help to meet rising demands by collocating and collaborating in community hubs including foodbanks and libraries.
- > Effective investment in skills should involve linking programmes directly to specific work based opportunities to those at greatest risk of economic exclusion, including regional anchor institutions and the local VCSE sector.
- > When designing employment services, resources should be made available for co-location. This will support the resilience of community groups.
- > Partnership working is key to help communities meet rising demand. However, VCSE organisations have little or not capacity to support this.

## On Organisations and Employers

- > Skills and economic interventions which are designed with the end users and locality in mind has the potential of being transformative for organisations and employers where inequality has been well-established over time
- > Journey to Net Zero can provide costs savings and enhanced economic and social outcomes.
- > Delivering services with locally trusted VCSE organisations helps to reduce the need for costly marketing and lead-in time.
- > The community value generated by local organisations can be reinvested in frontline services to meet rising demand.
- > The local VCSE sector has the appetite to create stepping stone jobs. However, investment is needed to unlock this potential.
- > To create enough stepping stone jobs there is a need to explore new types of commissioning including community budgets.
- > In the meantime, there might be scope to tilt existing business support programmes towards the needs of the VCSE sector.



**“The Inclusive Economy Project gave me the confidence and support to get back into work.”**

Chris

# MOVING FORWARD

## Supporting inclusive economy work in 2023

### Action 1:

- > We will facilitate an Inclusive Economy Network to support people and organisations to share their ideas and develop partnerships.

### Action 2:

- > We will continue to make the case for making stepping stone jobs an integral part of employment support services.

### Action 3:

- > We will share our ideas with funders and commissioners on how to bring different sectors together.

### Action 4:

- > We will pilot a meet the buyer event to explore the potential of the VCSE sector to market its offer.

### Action 5:

- > We will share the findings of our work with funders and commissioners to help unlock the growth potential of the VCSE sector.





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