



Evaluation of Hertfordshire STEM City

JANUARY 2023

North Hertfordshire College

Authors: Natasha Charlton and Philip Wilson

CONTENTS

	Page
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	1
1 INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY.....	1
2 PROJECT DESIGN.....	3
3 PROGRESS AGAINST TARGETS.....	8
4 NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE COLLEGE	11
5 YOUNG ENTERPRISE	14
6 THE NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE MINORITY ETHNIC FORUM (NHMEF)	18
7 IMPACTFUL GOVERNANCE (IG)	24
8 CONCLUSIONS	29

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. York Consulting LLP was commissioned by North Hertfordshire College (NHC) to undertake an evaluation of the Hertfordshire STEM City project – an initiative aimed at improving employability, promoting STEM careers, developing digital and financial literacy and upskilling the local workforce in Hertfordshire. The project was funded by the UK Community Renewal Fund (CRF) and received £554,012 in funding, with an additional £52,500 in match funding.
2. The project encompassed four separate strands, with NHC acting as the accountable organisation. Each delivery partner was responsible for delivering certain activities to encourage STEM-related upskilling and routes to employment in Hertfordshire. A summary of each strand and key findings are outlined below:
 - **North Hertfordshire College (NHC)** supported the delivery of interactive activities to engage young people in science and technology via the STEM Discovery Centre in Stevenage. The STEM Discovery Centre is an educational facility which was developed in partnership with NHC, Airbus and the Hertfordshire LEP to promote careers in science, technology, engineering and maths. The research revealed positive engagement among project participants, suggesting that the project successfully generated interest in STEM among young people.
 - **Young Enterprise (YE)** delivered a range of programmes with a STEM focus to schools in Hertfordshire with the aim of developing employability and entrepreneurial skills among young people. A total of 19 schools participated in the programmes and the research indicated that the activities were well received and that pupils generally responded positively to the sessions.
 - **The North Hertfordshire Minority Ethnic Forum (NHMEF)** delivered a range of activities and courses designed to support participants from ethnic minority backgrounds to gain life skills and find work. Some of these courses included accreditations or certifications designed to improve the employability of participants. The project was mostly successful in meeting and in some cases surpassing its target outcomes, for instance when it came to the number of people who gained qualifications or life skills. Feedback from participants was resoundingly positive, with many praising the supportive learning environment and the relevance of the courses that were offered.
 - **Impactful Governance CIC (IG)** provided mentoring sessions, employment/job searching support and environmental education to adults across four delivery centres in Hertfordshire. IG successfully engaged with all target groups and surpassed the majority of its output targets. Participants praised the flexible and bespoke nature of the delivery.
3. The project did not initially progress as quickly as anticipated due to a delayed issuing of the funding agreement. Some of the targets from the original bid were revised at the mid-term point to address variances across the different outcome categories.

4. The key target outputs were surpassed in terms of people, businesses/organisations engaged.
5. The project exceeded its outcome targets in some areas (in particular people engaged in life skills following support) and fell short in others (people supported to engage in job searching and people supported to gain employment). One of the challenges which impacted the number of outcomes being reported relates to the definition of some of the project outcomes, which required individuals to be economically inactive or unemployed for more than 18 months in order to be counted as an outcome. As a result, a further 404 individuals who were supported through the STEM City project ended up falling outside these definitions and could not be classed as outcomes, despite being indicative of the project's wider impact.
6. Some challenges were also revealed with regard to data collection, reporting frameworks and overall project 'identity'. Despite these challenges, and allowing for variances across the different outcome categories, the project was successful in achieving its targets in line with the target outcomes that were approved by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). This was despite a delayed start, as well as Covid-19 restrictions impacting engagement and delivery in the early stages.

1 INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

- 1.1 York Consulting LLP was commissioned by North Hertfordshire College (NHC) to undertake an evaluation of the Hertfordshire STEM City project – an initiative aimed at improving employability and skills among school-aged and adult residents in Hertfordshire. The project aimed to engage around 3,650 young people and adults between November 2021 and June 2022.
- 1.2 The project was funded by the UK Community Renewal Fund (CRF) and led by NHC – part of the Hart Learning Group. The delivery of the project was supported by three additional partners:
- Young Enterprise (YE).
 - The North Hertfordshire Minority Ethnic Forum (NHMEF).
 - Impactful Governance CIC (IG).
- 1.3 Each of the partners was responsible for delivering certain activities to encourage STEM-related upskilling and routes to employment in Hertfordshire.

Evaluation objectives

- 1.4 The objective of the evaluation was to assess the achievements of each of the four individual projects with regard to improving and enhancing STEM and enterprise skills in young people and providing upskilling and access to employment for adult participants.
- 1.5 The focus was on the effectiveness of each individual project as well as the overall effectiveness of the STEM City project.

Methodology

- 1.6 A summary of the key elements of the method is outlined below.

Review of key documents

- 1.7 A number of key documents were reviewed as part of the evaluation. These included bid applications, project expenditure profiles, marketing material and existing data collection mechanisms.

Stakeholder and delivery partner consultations

- 1.8 A total of eight stakeholders were interviewed to explore the strategic perspectives of how the project was managed and delivered. The following stakeholders were interviewed as part of the evaluation:
- Executive Director of Corporate Services, Hart Learning Group.
 - Project Manager, Young Enterprise.
 - Regional Manager (Hertfordshire), Young Enterprise.
 - Partnerships Manager (Hertfordshire), Young Enterprise.
 - Director of the NHMEF.

- CEO of IG.
- Manager, STEM Discovery Centre, NHC.
- Deputy Manager and Fundraising Officer, STEM Discovery Centre, NHC.

Focus groups and interviews with participants

1.9 Where it was possible to do so, interviews and focus groups were undertaken with a selection of project participants to explore their experience of the project and to understand the impact it has had on their lives. The following interviews and focus groups were conducted:

- Focus group with 10 project beneficiaries at the NHMEF.
- Interviews with two project beneficiaries at IG.
- Discussion and interactive dialogue with STEM Discovery Centre participants (approximately 50 young people).
- Focus group with 16 YE participants.

Observations of project delivery

1.10 In addition to the focus groups and interviews, observations of project activities were carried out, both virtually and in-person:

- Observation of a green jobs training session delivered by IG (observed six participants virtually via MS Teams).
- Observation of project delivery at the STEM Discovery Centre (approximately 50 young people in-person).
- Observation of activities for the home education cohort at the STEM Discovery Centre (observed 8 participants virtually via MS Teams).
- Observation of the YE Launch Pad programme being delivered to two Year 7 cohorts.

Project feedback

1.11 Data generated by IG was reviewed covering a survey of 33 participants who gave feedback about their experiences.

Project management information (MI) analysis

1.12 An analysis of key management information was carried out to understand the project's performance against targets. This involved reviewing mid-term reports and analysing outcomes data for all four delivery partner projects.

1.13 Plans to undertake unit cost analysis could not be implemented as projects were unable to separate out their expenditure relative to outcome categories.

2 PROJECT DESIGN

- 2.1 The Hertfordshire STEM City project involved the delivery of a range of activities to engage residents and school-aged children with the aim of improving employability, promoting STEM careers, developing digital and financial literacy and upskilling the local workforce.
- 2.2 The project was focused on two distinct pathways:
- Young people pathway – for those aged 5-24 in schools and colleges.
 - Adult learning pathways – for residents aged 16+.

Project partners

- 2.3 There were four partners involved in the delivery of the STEM City project:
- **North Hertfordshire College (NHC)** delivers science and technology-based activities and immersive learning experiences for young people via the STEM Discovery Centre.
 - **Young Enterprise (YE)** delivers a range of programmes with a STEM focus to schools in Hertfordshire to enhance young people's employability, financial capabilities and enterprise skills.
 - **The North Hertfordshire Minority Ethnic Forum (NHMEF)** provides employability and basic skills courses as well as vocational courses aimed at supporting members of minority ethnic communities into entry-level work.
 - **Impactful Governance (IG)** raises awareness of green jobs and provides adults with mentoring and one-to-one support to improve life skills and employability prospects.

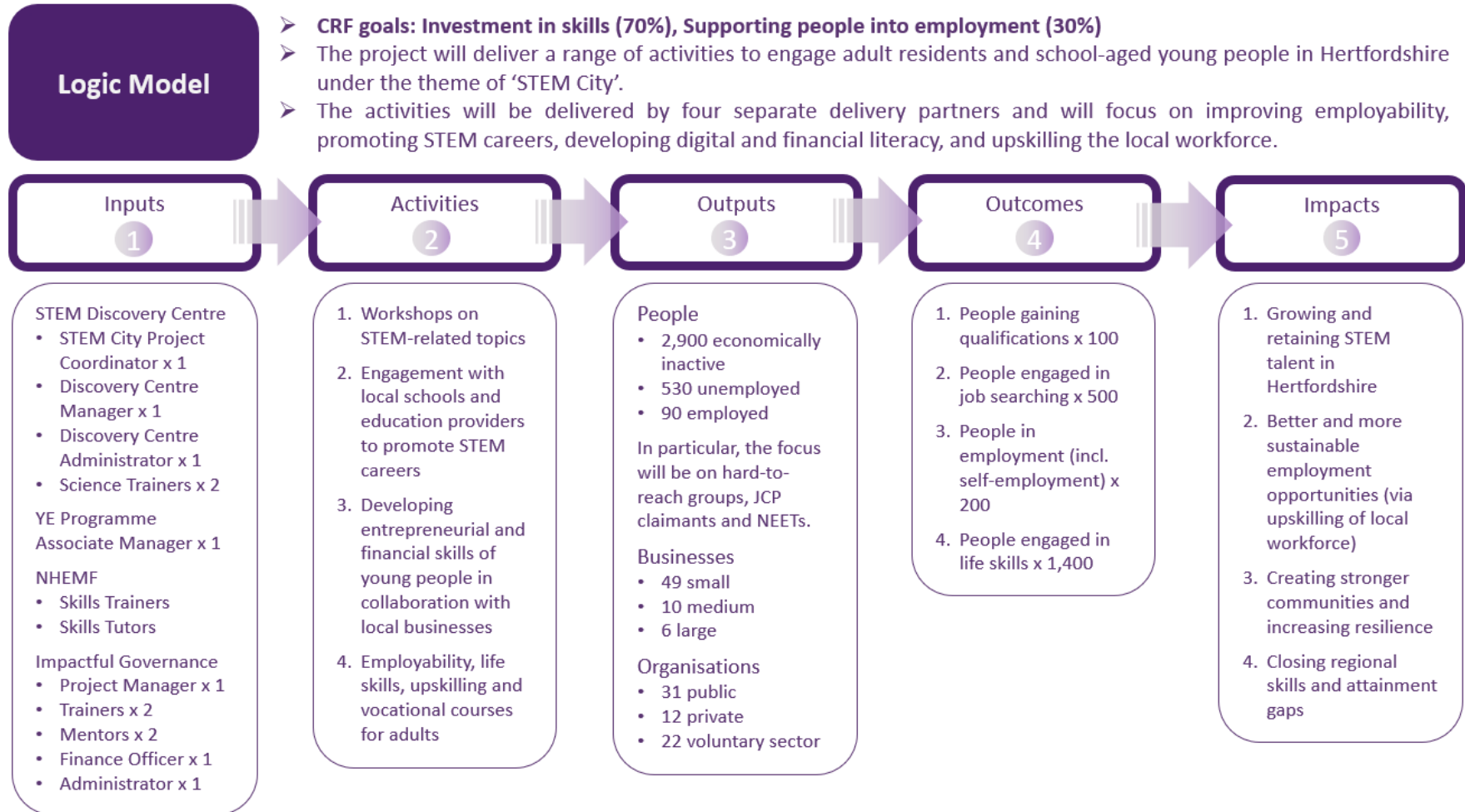
Project beneficiaries

- 2.4 The STEM City project was aimed at the following project beneficiaries:
- Young people aged 5-24 in schools and colleges.
 - Under-represented and hard-to-reach groups, including BAME and 50+ communities, as well as low-skilled, unemployed or economically inactive adults.
 - Jobcentre Plus claimants and people not in employment, education or training
 - Businesses and organisations gaining upskilled employees or recruiting new staff.

Logic model

- 2.5 The following logic model was developed by York Consulting by reference to the bid application. It sets out the activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts of the project.
- 2.6 The logic model was used to develop the evaluation questions used in the research tools and to explore any changes in consultations with project stakeholders.

CRF Evaluation of STEM City



Note: The logic model was developed at the start of the evaluation based on data provided in the STEM City CRF submission and as such does not reflect the actual outcomes/outputs that were ultimately achieved.

- 2.7 It is worth noting that the STEM City project consisted of four individual projects, which in and of themselves were not large enough to apply for CRF funding individually. As such, they were encouraged by the LEP to combine to form this overall project. However, delivery partners did not change their plans on content for delivery. This, coupled with the urgency to commence delivery quickly following the allocation of funding, limited the opportunity to create connections between the project strands and to relate all aspects to STEM activity.
- 2.8 The four projects met fortnightly to share information, update one another on progress and raise queries against targets set. The project manager reported back to the LEP on a monthly basis, as the LEP had oversight of the project from a funding and outcomes perspective.

Key indicators

- 2.9 The key indicators outlined in the bid are set out in the following tables. They include target outputs and outcomes, as well as project expenditure.
- 2.10 The following table comprises the target outputs from all the delivery partners involved in the STEM City project. The numbers on individual lines were revised part way through the project whilst retaining the same number of participants supported overall, due to the type of individuals being supported by the delivery partners on their programmes. The revision to outputs was coupled with an extension to the project agreed in April 2022.

Table 2.1: Planned outputs

	Outputs	Initial targets	Revised targets
People	Economically inactive	2,900	2,927
	Unemployed	530	519
	Employed	90	74
	TOTAL	3,520	3,520
Businesses	Small	49	93
	Medium	10	14
	Large	6	11
	TOTAL	65	118
Organisations	Public	31	26
	Private	12	45
	Voluntary	22	48
	TOTAL	65	119
Direct support	1 to 1	460	458
	1 to many	3,250	3,253
	TOTAL*	3,710	3,711

Source: CRF STEM City Mid Term Report, 24 March 2022. Note: variations to subtotals exist in revised target figures due to exceeding initial targets. Note *: total direct support exceeds subtotals due to some participants receiving both 1 to 1 and 1 to many support.

- 2.11 The following table shows the target outcomes as per the bid, as well as the revised targets and the CRF definition for each outcome.
- 2.12 The planned outcomes were approved by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) when project plans and funding agreements were signed off. There were challenges around the definition of some outcomes, such as the length of unemployment to qualify as unemployed for outcome purposes. In addition, the monitoring of school-age children in an outcome covering economically inactive or unemployed seems unusual. However, since this was approved, we are evaluating the project results as satisfying the funding criteria, as reported in the funding claims submitted by projects to date. As evaluators, we have no role in auditing the veracity of claims made to the funders. Hence, we are working to the assumption that these claims are considered by the funders as acceptable. Should this situation change then the data in this report would need to be revised.

Table 2.2: Planned outcomes

Outcome	Definition	Initial targets	Revised targets
People gaining a qualification following support	People who have received support and who gained a qualification following that support. Qualifications should be recognised by Ofqual's Regulated Qualification Framework (RQF).	100	50
People engaged in job-searching following support	Economically inactive people who have received support and who are newly engaged in job searching activities following support.	500	435
People gaining employment, including self-employment, following support	Economically inactive people or people who have been unemployed for over 18 months who have received support, and who have been in employment, including self-employment, for at least two weeks following that support.	200	78
People engaged in life skills following support	Economically inactive people or people who have been unemployed for over 18 months who have received support to be newly engaged in life skills activities following that support. Life skills support is defined as additional support which improves confidence, resilience or motivation around the process of job searching and may include communication skills, presentation skills, and activities which reduce social isolation or encourage appropriate employment-related behaviours.	1,400	1,637
TOTAL		2,200	2,200

Source: STEM City data and UK Community Renewal Fund: Technical note for project applicants and deliverers, February 2022.

Project budget

- 2.13 The project was awarded £554,012 in CRF funding, with an additional £52,500 in match funding provided by North Hertfordshire College and the NHMEF. Table 2.3 outlines how the planned project budget was profiled.

Table 2.3: Planned project funding

Item	Awarded
Staffing	£318,984
Project management*	£42,270
Overheads	£42,158
Staff travel and accommodation	£22,150
Volunteer training and DBS checks	£500
Marketing and publicity	£31,650
Non-pay programme delivery resources	£43,300
Capital	£53,000
Match funding	£52,500
TOTAL	£606,512

Source: CRF STEM City Mid Term Report, 24 March 2022.

*The whole project management cost of £42,270 has been distributed across each of the four projects equally (including the overall management and project evaluation).

- 2.14 The planned expenditure breakdown by project strand is as follows:

Table 2.4: Planned allocation of funding across project strands

Item	NHC	Young Enterprise	NHMEF	Impactful Governance	Total
Staffing	£80,919	£71,000	£62,065	£105,000	£318,984
Project management*	£10,568	£10,568	£10,568	£10,568	£42,270
Overheads	£12,771	£7,650	£5,987	£15,750	£42,158
Staff travel and accommodation		£4,500	£5,150	£12,500	£22,150
Volunteer training/DBS		£500			£500
Marketing and publicity	£30,000	£1,650			£31,650
Non-pay programme delivery resources	£20,000	£18,300	£2,500	£2,500	£43,300
Capital	£35,000		£7,500	£10,500	£53,000
Match funding	£40,000		£12,500		£52,500
TOTAL	£229,258	£114,168	£106,270	£156,818	£606,512

*The whole project management cost of £42,270 has been distributed across each of the four projects equally (including the overall management and project evaluation).

Note: Totals may not sum due to rounding.

3 PROGRESS AGAINST TARGETS

- 3.1 The project did not initially progress as quickly as anticipated due to a delayed announcement of the funding and delays to issuing the funding agreement. In addition, some of the targets were revised at the mid-term point to address variances across the different outcome categories.
- 3.2 The key target outputs were surpassed in terms of people, businesses/organisations engaged, with direct support just under its target level. Whilst the targets for some outcomes were surpassed, the project struggled to achieve its targets against the job search and employment outcomes. This was largely due to the CRF definitions limiting the volume of outcomes that could be claimed due to the length of unemployment for individuals being supported not exceeding 18 months. Outcomes for these individuals have been captured and reported separately throughout the project.

Outputs

- 3.3 The following table shows the target outputs against the project's final outputs.

Table 3.1: Target outputs and actuals

	Outputs	Revised targets	Actual
People	Economically inactive	2,927	2,927
	Unemployed	519	515
	Employed	74	176
	TOTAL	3,520	3,618
Businesses	Small	93	122
	Medium	14	13
	Large	11	21
	TOTAL	118	156
Organisations	Public	26	28
	Private	45	66
	Voluntary	48	62
	TOTAL	125	156
Direct support	1 to 1	458	389
	1 to many	3,253	3,271
	TOTAL	3,711	3,660

Source: STEM City/Hart Learning Group

- 3.4 The project also included a wider target group including younger school age individuals to ensure STEM was embedded in the mindset of young people linked to growth of science jobs within Stevenage. When the CRF funding was approved, these individuals could not all be included as outputs due to their age, however it

was agreed that the project could continue to support individuals within this workstream to deliver STEM skills development locally. Therefore, in addition to the above output figures, 4,384 young people under the age of 16 have been supported through the STEM City project to gain STEM related life skills.

Outcomes

- 3.5 The following outcomes were reported by STEM City against the initial targets outlined in the bid document.

Table 3.3: Target outcomes and actuals

Outcome	Initial targets	Revised targets	Actual
Number of people supported to gain a qualification	100	50	62
Number of people supported to engage in job searching	500	435	238
Number of people supported to gain employment (incl. self-employment)	200	78	59
Number of people supported to engage in life skills	1,400	1,637	2,389
Number of decarbonisation plans developed as a result of support	0	0	15

Source: STEM City project

- 3.6 The project exceeded its outcome targets in some areas (in particular people engaged in life skills following support) and fell short in others (people supported to engage in job searching and people supported to gain employment). Actual outcomes exceeded the revised target by 46% (752) for life skills but fell short by 45% (197) for people engaged in job searching.
- 3.7 One of the challenges which impacted the number of outcomes being reported relates to the definition of three of the four project outcomes, which required individuals to be economically inactive or unemployed for more than 18 months in order to be counted as an outcome. As a result, a further 404 individuals who were supported through the STEM City project ended up falling outside the definitions for outcomes (Table 3.4).

Table 3.4: Additional outcomes

Outcome	Number of people
People engaged in job-searching following support	209
People gaining employment (incl. self-employment) following support	66
People engaged in life skills following support	129
TOTAL	404

Source: STEM City project

- 3.8 The following chapters look at each of the delivery partners in more detail, to assess their individual progress against the project outputs and outcomes.

4 NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE COLLEGE

Introduction

- 4.1 North Hertfordshire College is supporting the delivery of interactive activities to engage young people in science and technology via the STEM Discovery Centre in Stevenage. The STEM Discovery Centre is an educational facility which was developed in partnership with North Hertfordshire College, Airbus and the Hertfordshire LEP to promote careers in science, technology, engineering and maths.
- 4.2 North Hertfordshire College was awarded £178,690 in CRF funding as part of the STEM City project and contributed £40,000 in match funding, taking the total funding amount to £218,690 (excluding the project management and evaluation costs £10,568).

Delivery and management

- 4.3 The STEM Discovery Centre delivers a range of interactive and immersive STEM activities and experience days for schools, home education groups and local community groups. They mainly cater for Key Stage 2-3 (7-13 years) but also work with Key Stage 1 and early years, as well as college students, ESOL students and some overseas students. Subjects and activities include basic programming and computer animation, exploring how magnetism works, learning about light and sound, building 3D models of celestial bodies, learning about genetics and DNA, exploring the solar system, learning how to use AutoCAD software, and learning about electrical circuits and currents through interactive tasks and team-based learning.
- 4.4 The schools are charged a fee, but the pricing and activity options are staggered, which allows all schools to benefit from the offer, not just those who are well-funded. This increases accessibility and allows STEM aspirations to be developed across the board. There are 45-50 STEM activities which participating groups can select from, and in some instances, the centre also arranges bespoke activities for groups. Example activities include:

<p style="text-align: center;">Rocket Man</p> <p>The participants learn about structure, design and aerodynamics by building their own paper rockets to launch outside from the centre's pressure cylinder launchers.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Build a Bridge</p> <p>The challenge is to design and create a bridge that will span a certain distance and hold as much weight as possible, using minimal materials.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Coding Keyring</p> <p>This activity offers an introduction to the subject of genetics and inheritance. It explores the structure of DNA and the concept of base pairing. Participants can take the genetic code from an organism of their choice and use this code to create a keyring or a bracelet.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Earth Orbit</p> <p>Participants can build a moving 3D model of the sun, earth and moon to learn about the concept of orbits. This activity provides a visual and kinaesthetic understanding of orbital patterns and explains the importance of gravitational pull.</p>

- 4.5 During a visit to the STEM Discovery Centre by YCL, a group of participants were observed undertaking an activity involving electrical circuits and conductivity. The participants demonstrated positive engagement and an eagerness to get involved, suggesting that the project is successfully generating interest in STEM among young people.
- 4.6 The centre also offers learning experiences for home-educated children, with two days a week dedicated to this cohort. The majority of these children have special educational needs (e.g. autism, dyslexia) or other challenges which means they need to be home-schooled. These children typically attend twice a week as part of a 10-week course. The centre currently has around 700 families on their books who are registered for home education.
- 4.7 The CRF funding supported the following employees:
- Discovery Centre Manager (full-time).
 - Deputy Manager & Fundraising Officer (full-time).
 - Administrative Assistant (part-time).
 - Delivery staff/trainer x 1 (full-time).
 - Delivery staff/trainer x 2 (job share/part-time – together they work 37.5 hours/week).
- 4.8 The project enjoyed high levels of demand. There was a lot of interest from schools and the activities tended to be oversubscribed. The CRF funding enabled the centre to develop promotional materials to secure bookings and seek advice on Google search engine optimisation, as well as apps and technologies that could be implemented to improve efficiency and maximise the STEM Discovery Centre offer.
- 4.9 Evidence indicates that the STEM Discovery Centre offers a unique learning experience for school-aged children in the region. In addition, its links with industry allow young people to experience STEM careers first-hand (e.g. by watching engineers testing ExoMars rovers). The aerospace focus and the collaboration with Airbus adds a further unique selling point to the offer. The centre has aspirations to expand on these collaborations and work with other STEM companies in the area going forward given recent and planned growth within the region's science industry.
- 4.10 Whilst the delivery of the project was largely successful, some challenges were reported when it came to capturing and recording data. This was found to be very time-consuming, and in some instances, it was difficult for the delivery team to capture certain data points (e.g. ethnicity of pupils).

Outcomes and impact

- 4.11 Due to the nature of the project, the STEM Discovery Centre reported more loosely against the CRF outcomes. The focus was on developing science and technology skills and inspiring careers in STEM.
- 4.12 Over the course of the project, the centre engaged more than 4,384 school pupils and home-educated individuals. This involved cumulative, multiple interventions with Key Stage 2, 3 and 4 students to develop employability skills, as well as

communication skills, confidence, financial capability, creativity, organisational skills, problem-solving skills, adaptability and teamwork.

- 4.13 In the long term, it is envisaged that these interventions will lead to the creation of a strong talent pipeline for key Hertfordshire sectors and industries.

5 YOUNG ENTERPRISE

Introduction

- 5.1 Young Enterprise (YE) is a national charity that provides business and financial education to young people in schools. YE received a total of £103,600 in CRF funding as part of the STEM City project. The aim of the project was to develop employability and entrepreneurial skills among young people via a range of flexible programmes with a STEM focus.
- 5.2 The project initially set out to target 2,900 young people aged 9-19 years who were economically inactive or unemployed. This included young people impacted by poverty, those whose educational attainment had been affected due to the pandemic, those from generationally unemployed households, as well as those lacking confidence or access to enriching opportunities outside school.
- 5.3 The project included a range of different programmes and activities:
 - **Company programmes:** These programmes provide opportunities for young people to develop a business idea and work together over a period of time to gain entrepreneurial skills and experience running a business.
 - **Day programmes:** These involve half-day or full-day sessions at schools focusing on work readiness topics and employability skills (e.g. Launch Pad, Learn to Earn, etc.).
 - **Digital programmes:** These courses are delivered virtually and include adaptations of the day programmes as well as financial education.
 - **Fiver and 10X Challenges:** One-week business and entrepreneurship challenges for primary and secondary schools.
 - **Young Money Challenge (YMC) and My Money Week (MMW):** Raising awareness of money management and personal finance among young people aged 4-19.
- 5.4 The project initially planned to reach 1,600 young people via day programmes, 1,000 via 10X/Fiver/MMW/YMC programmes, 310 via company programmes and 80 via other programmes. However, due to the delayed start of the project as well as the impact of Covid-19, these targets were later revised to a total of 2,555, which involved the number of day programmes being increased and the number of company programmes being reduced (without setting specific revised targets per programme type).
- 5.5 As part of the evaluation, a consultation with the Regional Manager, the Partnerships Manager and the Project Manager was carried out to gauge how the delivery of the project is progressing against targets and to identify examples of best practice, challenges and lessons learned.
- 5.6 Additionally, an in-person observation and focus group with Year 7 pupils undertaking a Launch Pad session was carried out to capture the beneficiary perspective. The session was delivered to two year groups, with 11 groups of approximately 8 students in each. The focus groups was held with 16 students in two groups of 8.

Delivery and management

- 5.7 The project aimed to target schools that had not previously engaged with YE, as well as schools in deprived areas. YE also engaged schools via their existing database, e.g. by contacting schools who have undertaken company programmes in the past to gauge their interest in day programmes. A total of 19 unique schools participated in the programmes.
- 5.8 Engaging schools tended to work best when a flexible approach to programme delivery was adopted, e.g. adjusting programmes where needed. The inclusion of a STEM component was generally well received by the schools.
- 5.9 The project initially planned to reach 1,600 young people via day programmes, 1,000 via 10X/Fiver/MMW/YMC programmes, 310 via company programmes and 80 via other programmes. However, due to the delayed start of the project as well as the impact of Covid-19, the company programme offer saw less take-up than originally anticipated. A company programme would typically run from September through to the end of the academic year in July, but due to the reasons detailed above, many schools opted against it or requested rescheduled dates. As a result, the project targets had to be adjusted, which involved the number of day programmes being increased. There was also very little interest in digitally delivered programmes, so these were not pursued.

Table 5.1: Programme delivery

Type	No. of programmes	No. of students
Company programme	9	113
Day programme	28	2,702
SUB TOTAL	37	2,815
10X / Fiver / MMW / YMC	7	1,050
Other	0	0
TOTAL	44	3,865

Source: Young Enterprise, Hertfordshire

- 5.10 The following roles were involved in delivering the project:
- Area Managers x 2 (one part-time, one full-time).
 - Regional Manager.
 - Delivery Officer.
 - Project Manager.
- 5.11 For most of these roles, internal resources were used on a percentage basis, i.e. an existing member of staff had a certain proportion of their working time dedicated to the YE Hertfordshire element. The project manager was recruited for all three YE

areas (Hertfordshire, Worcester and Dorset) and a certain percentage of their time was allocated to the YE Hertfordshire element.

- 5.12 The fieldwork indicated that the activities were generally well received by participating schools. A deputy head, interviewed as part of the observation of the Launch Pad programme, highlighted the importance of these types of activities, in particular following Covid-19.

“Events like these are really good. I’ve observed a really good level of engagement. It’s great for them [the students] to be in this environment.”

Deputy Head

- 5.13 The activities also appeared to suit students who struggle with conventional learning environments. For instance, adaptations to group sizes were made to facilitate the participation of pupils with autism. It was also suggested by teaching staff that students who *“struggle in classroom environments are thriving today.”*
- 5.14 The pupils generally responded positively to the sessions, stating that they enjoyed the different activities, which wouldn’t normally form part of their curriculum. They also praised the interactive and engaging nature of the delivery.

“I’ve learnt more than in normal lessons.”

Year 7 student

“It was good to learn about yourself.”

Year 7 student

“It was fun to work with others.”

Year 7 student

- 5.15 Many of the programmes were delivered as full-day activities, however it was suggested by some YE delivery staff that half days may be more suitable, as concentration levels can drop off in the afternoon and engagement tends to be better over shorter periods of time.
- 5.16 The project faced some challenges with regard to data collection. Once the YE sessions had ended, pupils were unlikely to provide feedback unless prompted. It was suggested that having a process in place with the school to formalise the collection of feedback would likely resolve this issue.

Progress against targets

- 5.17 The following tables (5.2 and 5.3) show the revised target outputs and outcomes against actual figures reported by YE. Only day programmes and company programmes were included, meaning that the 1,050 pupils who were engaged via 10X/Fiver/MMW/YMC programmes were not incorporated in the final outputs.

Table 5.2: Target outputs and actuals

	Outputs	Initial target	Revised target	Actual
People	Economically inactive	2,645	2,555	2,815
	Unemployed	345	0	0
	Employed	0	0	0
	TOTAL	2,990	2,555	2,815
Businesses	Small	9	6	4
	Medium	5	3	0
	Large	6	5	0
	TOTAL	20	14	4
Organisations	Public	22	15	18
	Private	2	1	1
	Voluntary	2	2	0
	TOTAL	26	18	19
Direct support	1 to 1	310	0	0
	1 to many	2,680	2,555	2,815
	TOTAL	2,990	2,555	2,815

Source: STEM City data.

Outcomes

- 5.18 The following outcomes were reported by YE against the revised targets. The project exceeded its outcome targets across the board, in particular when it comes to the number of people engaged in job-searching.

Table 5.3: Target outcomes and actuals

Outcome	Target	Actual
People in education/training following support	2,555	2,815
People engaged in job-searching following support	300	1,232
People engaged in life skills following support	1,200	2,815

Source: STEM City data.

6 THE NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE MINORITY ETHNIC FORUM (NHMEF)

Introduction

- 6.1 The North Hertfordshire Minority Ethnic Forum (NHMEF) delivers employability, basic skills and vocational training courses aimed at supporting ethnic minorities into entry-level work. The NHMEF is a registered charity with multiple funding streams. It received a total of £83,202 in CRF funding as part of the STEM City project and contributed £12,500 in match funding, taking the total funding amount to £95,702.
- 6.2 The forum runs a range of activities and courses designed to support participants from ethnic minority backgrounds into gaining life skills and work. Some of these courses include accreditations or certifications designed to improve the employability of participants. The activities undertaken as part of the STEM City project included the following:
- EAL/ESOL classes.
 - Basic IT skills.
 - Food hygiene and safety.
 - Customer service.
 - GDPR/data protection.
 - Digital image editing.
 - Sewing/garment alteration classes.
 - Beauty/make-up/hair and nails (incl. Henna).
 - Job Club & Employment Café (CV support, interview tips, job searching).

Delivery and management

- 6.3 The project was designed to meet the needs of various ethnic minority groups in the county. During the evaluation, it also became clear that the NHMEF was focused on aligning its support offer with local employment needs. For instance, the forum holds regular community events to gather views on what type of provision is needed and liaises with local businesses to determine which types of skills and qualifications are in demand (e.g. liaising with local restaurants revealed that food hygiene accreditations were highly sought after).
- 6.4 The project was managed by three NHMEF staff members (Director, Community Development Officer and an administrative assistant) with support from 26 volunteers. Existing training providers were used to deliver the courses.
- 6.5 As an established organisation, there was less of a need for the NHMEF to undertake extensive marketing and engagement activities to attract participants. They primarily made use of existing channels of communication to generate interest in the project. These channels included:

- **Working with local community groups:** This involved trustees of the NHMEF acting as representatives for the different ethnic minority groups in the region. This was deemed a highly effective way of recruiting participants.
- **Adverts in local newspapers:** The NHMEF paid for adverts in a local newspaper, however, this ended up being an expensive and ineffective way of attracting participants, with only three of the beneficiaries engaging with the project via this route.
- **Strong partnerships with Jobcentre Plus and Citizens Advice:** A number of referrals were made via these routes and it was found to be a highly effective means of engaging participants.
- **Facebook and WhatsApp groups:** These groups were designed as a means of communicating upcoming opportunities and courses with individuals who had expressed an interest in the project. This was also deemed a very effective way of engaging beneficiaries.

6.6 Many participants heard about the project through friends and family or via social media. They praised the communication via WhatsApp and Facebook, stating that it helped them stay up-to-date with regard to courses and other support services that are offered by the NHMEF.

“The WhatsApp and Facebook groups are very well organised. All the courses and times are put on there, so we can see what is coming up and tell our friends.”

Project beneficiary

6.7 As was the case with other projects, Covid-19 impacted the delivery of NHMEF activities towards the latter part of 2021 and early 2022. Many community venues that had been earmarked for the delivery of activities were closed to the public during this time. This resulted in service delivery being limited to certain locations, which ultimately led to reduced engagement.

6.8 Despite this, the project was very successful at engaging participants and generating tangible outcomes and impacts. Beneficiaries demonstrated high levels of engagement, with food hygiene, sewing and GDPR/data protection courses experiencing particularly high demand. Several courses were run as initial one-day taster sessions to gauge interest and were subsequently followed by 5-week courses if demand was high enough. This suggests that the NHMEF has adopted a considered approach and is delivering activities that are in line with both the needs of its target group and the demands of local businesses.

6.9 The activities were generally well received by the project beneficiaries. Participants highlighted the professionalism of the instructors and the fact that the courses provided them with accredited skills and certifications. Many also mentioned that running activities during the day made them more accessible to those with childcare responsibilities.

“We drop our children off at school and come here to do our courses which is very helpful because I could not afford after-school activities or childcare.”

Project beneficiary

- 6.10 One of the key challenges faced by the NHMEF was a lack of financial resources due to underbudgeting in the initial bid application. This resulted in a need to provide additional funding to continue with the delivery of the project. It also impacted the support that the NHMEF was able to provide to project beneficiaries, e.g. funding to support participants with travel costs.
- 6.11 It was also felt that the monitoring and evaluation framework could have been adapted to better suit smaller organisations. The current framework was considered “bureaucratically burdensome” and a lot of administrative resources had to be allocated towards it.
- 6.12 Some challenges were also noted with regard to the eligibility criteria of participants. In order to participate in CRF-funded activities, the project beneficiaries had to have the right to work in the UK. This was not always the case and meant that the NHMEF was forced to reject applicants who would have benefitted from accessing support.
- 6.13 Despite these challenges, the NHMEF was able to demonstrate an ability to successfully deliver and manage a project of significant scale. This in turn has led to an appetite for delivering similar work.

“We wouldn’t hesitate to deliver a project like this again.”

Director of the NHMEF

Progress against targets

- 6.14 The following tables show the target outputs against the actual figures achieved by the NHMEF. The project has successfully engaged with all target groups and exceeded its output targets in relation to economically inactive participants. However, engaging unemployed people in line with CRF definitions proved to be slightly more challenging.

Table 6.1: Target outputs and actuals

	Outputs	Target	Actual
People	Economically inactive	325	387
	Unemployed	125	76
	Employed	42	30
	TOTAL	492	493
Direct support	1 to 1	49	49
	1 to many	450	444
	TOTAL	499	493

Source: STEM City data.

Outcomes and impact

6.15 The project was broadly successful in meeting its target outcomes. In some cases, targets were surpassed, for instance when it came to the number of people who gained qualifications or life skills. The following table shows the outcomes that were reported by the NHMEF against the revised targets.

Table 6.2: Target outcomes and actuals

Outcome	Target	Actual
People gaining qualifications following support	50	62
People engaged in job-searching following support	80	75
People gaining employment (incl. self-employment) following support	30	28
People engaged in life skills following support	300	309

Source: STEM City data.

6.16 In addition to the above outcomes, the following project impacts were observed during the fieldwork:

- **Reduction in social isolation:** Cultural and language barriers faced by ethnic minority groups were often found to cause social isolation and loneliness. The project enabled individuals to engage more with their local community and make friends.
- **Increased confidence:** Having taken part in one or more courses, many participants reported an increase in confidence when it came to searching and applying for jobs.
- **Further education/training:** Nine participants were supported into further education, e.g. one woman who attended an ESOL course enrolled on a Level 3 Teaching Assistant course.

6.17 The project also benefitted individuals who were already in employment and who gained better jobs or improved their skillset as a result of the training, e.g. one participant who previously worked as a cleaner now has a job as a security guard at a supermarket and an individual who runs an online business was able to better market her products after attending the digital image editing course. Other examples include members of the Asian community starting their own businesses in garment alteration after attending sewing classes.

6.18 It was felt that the above outcomes were in large part attributable to the activities and support provided by the NHMEF. The following table provides more detail on the courses that were delivered, the number of beneficiaries engaged and the outcomes that resulted from the delivery:

Table 6.3: Participant numbers and outcomes by course

Course	No. of participants	Outcomes
Sewing & dressmaking	212	Some individuals are now engaged in paid garment alteration work on a freelance/self-employed basis.
English language courses	162	Participants improved their English language skills.
IT course	145	Improvement of basic IT skills, including Microsoft programmes.
Beauty/make-up/hair and nails (incl. Henna art)	83	Of these participants, seven secured jobs at beauty salons and four have started their own businesses from home. Research conducted by the NHMEF revealed that there aren't currently any services offering Henna tattooing in Hertfordshire – this could present a potential area of work/business.
Food hygiene	55	Of the 55 participants, 11 have gained employment in the food industry.
Job Club & Employment Café	54	Thirty-four unemployed participants reportedly improved their job searching techniques and interview skills. Seventeen participants secured new jobs.
Personal Development	33	Five participants from this course reportedly moved to better jobs.
Digital image editing	21	A one-day course was delivered as an initial taster. This was well received and was subsequently followed by a 5-week course.
GDPR training	21	Some participants gained employment, others reported that the course has benefitted them in their current role (e.g. one participant who works in an administrative role at a GP surgery has gained a much better understanding of GDPR and how it relates to her job).
First Aid training	12	Participants gained a first aid at work certification.
Customer service	10	Seven individuals who took part in this course now have jobs in supermarkets.

Source: NHMEF data.

6.19 Many of the participants started by doing an English-language course and then progressed from there. The support provided by NHMEF staff was praised across the board, with participants claiming they received helpful guidance on what courses to enrol on and where to go for additional support. The accredited courses were particularly well received and some participants reported that the certifications made them more attractive to prospective employers.

"They are very helpful here. They recommend things that suit us. I was introduced to Job Club after my English course to help translate my CV and learn interview skills."

Project beneficiary

"I really like that we get certificates after some courses because I can take them to my interviews. I recently did an interview where they were happy that I had these [certificates] because they normally would have to pay to train people to get them."

Project beneficiary

"The interview I did recently went well because I showed them my GDPR certificate and it helped me get through to the next stage of the interview."

Project beneficiary

"I have done food safety before, but it was a long time ago and it is not really recognised anymore, so it was good for me to get a new [qualification] in the UK. This has helped me get a job in a restaurant with better pay."

Project beneficiary

6.20 It is also worth noting that the majority of project beneficiaries would not have been able to gain these accreditations had the courses not been available to them via the NHMEF.

"I think we would all agree that if these sessions weren't free [project funded], we wouldn't be able to do them because we can't afford it. It helps us so much."

Project beneficiary

6.21 As was the case for other projects, the definition of 'unemployed' as someone who has been out of work for 18 months was considered problematic, as was the criteria for claiming outcomes for people who have been offered jobs. This outcome could only be claimed if the person was 'unemployed' (i.e. out of work for 18 months) and the job was offered within two weeks of participation in the project, which presented a very narrow window within which a participant gaining employment could be classed as an outcome in line with CRF definitions.

7 IMPACTFUL GOVERNANCE (IG)

Introduction

- 7.1 Impactful Governance (IG) is a community interest company which provides mentoring sessions, employment/job searching support and environmental education to adults across four delivery centres in Hertfordshire – the Wellspring Church & Community Centre, the Meriden Community Centre, the Holywell Community Centre and the Old Free School. It received £146,250 in CRF funding as part of the STEM City project.
- 7.2 The project activities are designed to support economically inactive or unemployed individuals, with a particular focus on those aged 16-24 and the 50+ age group. IG has also been working with pensioners, who were classed as economically inactive for the purposes of this evaluation and the project overall.

Delivery and management

- 7.3 The project was underpinned by a person-centred approach and provided support that was tailored to the needs of the individual. Evaluation evidence indicates that the services provided by IG are not prescriptive and that the well-being of the project beneficiaries is prioritised over the achievement of targets or outcomes. In some cases, this meant not putting an individual forward for work, as it was felt that underlying issues (e.g. mental health concerns) needed to be addressed first.
- 7.4 The funding that was allocated to IG did not include a marketing budget. As such, internal resources were used to engage prospective beneficiaries. The engagement activities included:
- Dropping off flyers at community centres, festivals, events, people’s homes, venues, etc.
 - Engaging with individuals at the Jobcentre.
 - Ad-hoc marketing with other groups using the same delivery venues.
 - Drop-in sessions around environmental engagement.
 - Presentation at Pensioner’s Forum (80 people in attendance).
 - Engaging potential beneficiaries via existing databases of contacts (e.g. U3A and the Women’s Institute).
- 7.5 There were some initial challenges associated with marketing and engagement due to various locations being closed as a result of Covid-19, which will likely have impacted engagement and uptake during the early stages of the project. In addition, the delayed project start meant there was less time to engage and access certain audiences, in particular the 16-24 age group. This also impacted access to Kickstart individuals as the scheme was due to end in December and the CRF funding was not confirmed until 3 November 2021 when a number of participants had ended their Kickstart placement. Had timings been different, these individuals could have been supported into employment through the CRF project and claimed accordingly as outcomes.

- 7.6 A blended approach was taken when it came to staffing and recruitment, with existing resources being used to manage the project, whilst new employees were recruited to assist with the delivery. The consultation revealed a reliance on part-time employees, with challenges arising as a result of certain staff members working fewer than two days a week. It was felt that a minimum number of working hours per week was necessary going forward to ensure operational efficiency.
- 7.7 The following roles were involved in delivering the project:
- Project Manager (internal).
 - Finance Officer (internal).
 - Environmental Officers x 2 (internal).
 - Trainer (part-time).
 - Mentors x 4 (various part-time working arrangements).
 - IT support.
- 7.8 Existing resources were used to fill the roles of the project manager, finance officer and two environmental officers. The trainer, mentors and IT support technician were recruited externally.
- 7.9 The project was based on a long-standing relationship with the Jobcentre. A lot of referrals came via this route and the collaboration generally worked very well. However, despite the largely positive nature of the relationship, there were some challenges, in particular with regard to engaging participants. In some instances, it was felt that the Jobcentre adopted a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to participant engagement, which resulted in unsuitable referrals being made or potential participants being double booked across multiple projects.

Progress against targets

- 7.10 The following table shows the revised target outputs against the outputs achieved by IG, which demonstrates that the project was very successful at engaging its target groups, in particular when it came to engaging unemployed individuals.

Table 7.1: Target outputs and actuals

	Outputs	Target	Actual
People	Economically inactive	20	33
	Unemployed	60	194
	Employed	32	8
	TOTAL	112	235
Businesses	Small	84	121
	Medium	9	13
	Large	5	21
	TOTAL	98	155
Organisations	Public	4	28
	Private	43	65
	Voluntary	46	62
	TOTAL	93	155
Direct support	1 to 1	100	137
	1 to many	120	118
	TOTAL	220	255

Source: STEM City data.

- 7.11 In addition to the above outputs, a further 262 people were engaged in the project who did not meet the CRF criteria for inclusion, as they had been unemployed for less than 18 months.
- 7.12 IG successfully engaged with all target groups and surpassed all but one of its output targets. There was also more engagement with local businesses than originally anticipated.

Outcomes and impact

- 7.13 Table 7.2 shows the outcomes that were reported by IG against the revised targets. It is evident that IG has successfully supported a significant number of participants to engage in job searching, far surpassing the revised target of 60, due to a higher number of unemployed people participating than originally anticipated. However, the number of people who gained employment following support was somewhat below target, despite IG engaging with many unemployed people (some did not meet the outcome definition and are referenced below). This can partly be attributed to IG's holistic, person-centred approach, which prioritised participant well-being over the achievement of outcomes. This means participants were not urged into employment if it was felt that they were not ready or the opportunity was not suitable for them.

Table 7.2: Target outcomes and actuals

Outcome	Target	Actual
People engaged in job-searching following support	60	167
People gaining employment (incl. self-employment) following support	48	33
People engaged in life skills following support	Not specified*	35
Decarbonisation plans developed as a result of support	0	14

*No targets reported against this outcome in the bid documentation.

Source: STEM City data.

7.14 The project also supported the following additional outcomes:

- 59 into employment.
- 179 job search.
- 25 life skills.

7.15 These could not be classed as outcomes under the CRF definition, for example, due to being unemployed for less than 18 months. Also, some beneficiaries who were already employed were supported into additional paid work by IG. Due to these beneficiaries not being classed as economically inactive or unemployed, they could not be counted as outcomes under the CRF definition either. This means that, in addition to the above outcomes, IG supported a number of additional project participants into paid work, demonstrating notable impact beyond the project outcome targets.

7.16 The project also had a number of other positive impacts:

- People were reintegrated into society (reduction in social isolation).
- People were supported into education (e.g. apprenticeship interviews).
- People acquired life skills (e.g. learning about the environment, volunteering).
- People acquired digital skills (e.g. IG bought one of the project beneficiaries a phone so they could access the Internet).

7.17 The feedback from project beneficiaries was generally very positive. The participants clearly appreciated the tailored nature of the support they received and praised the mentoring and guidance, as well as the quality of the trainers. For example, one participant highlighted the fact that her personal needs were assessed prior to identifying employment opportunities and that she was provided with one-to-one mentoring, including CV guidance, interview tips and advice on where to search for jobs. She has since interviewed for a secretary role and feels that the support she received from IG was instrumental in securing the interview and presenting herself in a more confident way.

"I'm so happy that I have had this opportunity."

Project beneficiary

“The training and mentorship is fantastic, and I enjoyed every bit of it.”

Project beneficiary

- 7.18 Whilst the feedback on the mentoring sessions was very positive across the board, one participant did note that it was slightly off-putting that the sessions were videoed and suggested considering alternative ways of recording participation.

“I was put off by the requirement for one-to-one mentoring to be videoed. Others may feel the same, so perhaps other options to prove participation would be helpful in the future.”

Project beneficiary

- 7.19 Many of the project beneficiaries also attended the green jobs training session. There was a general consensus among the participants that the session was highly informative and educational, and that it broadened their knowledge of job opportunities in the sector. Some felt compelled to reduce their carbon footprint as a result. One participant suggested that the green jobs session would benefit from more specific information on tangible routes to employment.
- 7.20 Whilst the project’s target outputs were all achieved or exceeded, there were challenges with the CRF definition of some of the project’s outcome indicators, in particular with regard to the definition of unemployment (i.e. being out of work for at least 18 months). For IG, this presented a particular issue, due to the number of referrals they received from the Jobcentre. Given that many of these referrals were unemployed for a much shorter duration of time, it was not possible to record them as outcomes in line with the UK CRF definition. They have, however, been included to demonstrate the impact and social value of the work IG has been doing.
- 7.21 In addition to the evidence gathered by YCL, some survey work was undertaken by IG, which provides further evidence for how some participants progressed into employment as a result of the support they received. In the survey, a total of 33 participants were asked whether they had gained paid work. Of these, 15 claimed to have done so (eight in full-time roles, seven in part-time roles), 17 respondents stated they were still looking for work and one respondent indicated they were volunteering. Of those who gained paid employment, two respondents claimed to have found green jobs.

8 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The evaluation has shown that STEM City was a multi-faceted project with several different strands of activity and multiple stakeholders, remits and delivery streams. From immersive STEM learning days for school age young people, through to vocational training for ethnic minorities, the project encompassed a wide range of different activities, with its target groups representing a broad segment of the Hertfordshire population, including under-represented and hard-to-reach groups, members of minority ethnic communities, pensioners and school-age children.
- 8.2 Whilst the four delivery partners all had different remits and pursued a wide range of agendas as part of the STEM City project, this has ultimately resulted in new partnership opportunities being formed. This has the potential to positively impact the Hertfordshire region going forward.
- 8.3 It was clear that efforts were made to ensure that upskilling and vocational training activities were aligned with regional skills and employment demands, thus ensuring that the projects delivered skills that are also in demand locally. Not only does this create better employment opportunities for individuals in the region, but it also ensures that skills gaps are addressed, which in turn has the potential to generate a positive economic impact.
- 8.4 The projects have trialled some different forms of delivery (e.g. virtual workshops, interactive STEM activities for school-age participants) and engagement (community-based reach). They have also demonstrated demand for particular types of support (e.g. employability support for harder-to-reach individuals).
- 8.5 Delivery against outputs and outcomes achieved and surpassed most revised targets. In addition, further outputs and outcomes were achieved which were not aligned to the precise definition of outcomes, thus generating further results from the funding.
- 8.6 Some challenges were revealed with regard to data collection, reporting frameworks, overall project 'identity' and how to report achievements that could not be classed as outcomes in line with CRF definitions. Going forward, there could be more structured processes and mechanisms in place for data collection and project activities should be scrutinised more closely to determine whether they truly have a STEM focus. The precise definition of the outputs and outcomes that the projects are expected to deliver should also be more clearly communicated from central government so that stakeholders are fully aware of what they are being measured against.
- 8.7 Despite these challenges, and allowing for variances across the different outcome categories, the project has been successful in achieving its targets in line with the target outcomes that were approved by the DLUHC. This was despite a delayed start, as well as Covid-19 restrictions impacting engagement and delivery in the early stages.
- 8.8 In summary, the STEM City project has successfully enabled the delivery of a wide range of activities in the Hertfordshire region, demonstrating effective partnership

working and a focus on upskilling the local workforce, developing a regional talent base and creating a stronger community.