

Newcastle Enterprise Package – Evaluation

What our client wanted

The Newcastle Enterprise Package (NEP) was a two year, £3.4m programme of 13 enterprise support initiatives aimed at encouraging and raising entrepreneurial activity, and the vibrancy of the small business sector in Newcastle. Funded by ERDF and regeneration funding, it supported schools, youth and community groups, students and graduates, individuals and businesses located in Newcastle's disadvantaged areas. Newcastle City Council (NCC) wanted a robust evaluation that captured the full benefits of NEP for reporting to Europe, and for decision-making on future NEP design and funding.

What Frontline did

We worked closely with our client, providing long-term evaluation, impact assessment, capacity building and 'critical friend' support. This gave them full ownership of the evaluation process. We conducted two rounds of evaluation through electronic and phone surveys, focus groups with 300 individuals and business clients, and discussions with service deliverers and other stakeholders. We analysed the findings by programme and theme, and presented at three gatherings of NEP deliverers. We worked closely with the team, discussing the implications of the evidence and reduced future budgets on the design of a follow on NEP.

What difference we made

We gave our client confidence in the evaluation process and the evidence we generated. Our insight from this evaluation, and other enterprise support programme evaluations, helped our client to develop a successor NEP to a much reduced budget. This involved assessing the value returned from different elements of NEP, focusing future investment in the areas of greatest need and most benefit delivered, as well as finding ways to work smarter using other NCC resources to deliver NEP services. Our client valued the fact that we were always available to 'bounce' ideas off.

What our client said

"Throughout the contract, Frontline was first-class. We built up a strong relationship with the team at Frontline and found them very accommodating and easy to work with. The final written report was of a high standard and their recommendations for taking this area of work forward in the future have proved most valuable in securing further ERDF funding to continue these activities. I would recommend Frontline to anyone looking to carry out research or evaluation work within the sphere of enterprise/business support."

John Musham, Principal Economic Development Office, Newcastle City Council