

Aims

To identify and support e-entrepreneurs from within Neighbourhood Renewal Fund targeted wards in the Derwentside Local Strategic Partnership area.

To put in place a "roll-on, roll-off" support mechanism that allows entrepreneurs to build sustainable e-businesses, such that individuals may access elements of extant training provision as required without complete course attendance.

To assess the feasibility of mainstreaming similar activities between business support partners.

Location

The service is based at Derwentside District Council in Consett, County Durham.

Derwentside District Council area is a mix of rural, past heavy industry (steel-making) and small ex-coal mining settlements.

The population numbered 85,074 (2001 Census)

The service is delivered within those wards targeted for Neighbourhood Renewal Funding support as stated in the Derwentside Local Strategic Partnership Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy Report

The Intervention Strategy

Staffing

A Derwentside District Council officer leads the initiative with support from mainstream and non-mainstream providers. These include: Job Centre Plus, DIDA, Business Link, DTIU, and Anchor Training.

Funding

The intervention received an initial allocation of £80,000 NRF (including additional allocation). A further £40,000 was subsequently allocated from NRF

Operating method

Individuals enter the initiative through referral from JobCentre Plus, DIDA and Anchor Training. The level of IT understanding amongst the potential e-entrepreneurs who use this service is varied. Some individuals need significant support as their skill base is low, while others have more specific support needs in relation to, for example, the identification and use of specialist software. A key issue at the interview stage is to assess

whether the company's business plan is viable with its existing skill level.

A needs analysis process assesses the support requirements of the individual and funding is profiled accordingly. Once an e-enterprise has been selected, Derwentside District Council provides an official offer letter stating terms and conditions for funding support and the expected requirements of the new business. This forms the contract for funding defrayment including timescales. The offer letter informs the individual a) how much money they will receive b) conditions of the funding, c) that the individual must establish a website within six months using Emerge or private funding, and d) a funding breakdown. In addition they receive a payment of £500 which should be ideally utilised for IT related activity, for example, for additional training needs, software/hardware purchases etc.

Once support and funding defrayment is complete the new businesses filter into the additional support mechanisms available from business support organisations in Derwentside.

It is not a pre-requisite that e-entrepreneurs make a personal or company investment into this initiative but the initiative manager seeks to identify clear potential for added value within Derwentside District as there are only ten places available per year on the initiative.

One key feature of the intervention which has given rise to the success of the awareness seminars is its use of training for business awareness and IT skills development in web use. 'The Power of the Web' programme is delivered over four to five week periods. The principal focus in these courses is on 'hands-on' development of skills so that by the end of the programme fledgling companies will have developed a web-site. These free seminars are run in cohorts of 30 individuals. There is a waiting list of 70 to join the programmes.

In addition the initiative operates an IT loan facility so that companies can borrow a whole range of equipment including telephones, fax machines, laptops, digital cameras, mobile phones with video capability and personal computers, the equipment continues to be owned and maintained by Derwentside District Council.



Achievements of the Intervention

Main achievements

This intervention directly addresses the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy employment objectives to increase employment through business start-ups in the Derwentside area. The business awareness and IT training seminars have been fully subscribed. To date, 18 new businesses have been created which make extensive use of e-entrepreneurship tools introduced by the intervention team. These include: a wrought iron craft product manufacturer, international antiques trading, a smart card developer, a media release organisation, a call centre and a draughtsman/detailing business, a total of 28 jobs have been created. Furthermore, ten new companies have benefited from the IT loan equipment scheme that Emerge operates.

Mainstreaming Strategy

Derwentside District Council uses Officer time to assist the initiative alongside Job Centre Plus and Business Link. If the measure continues to be successful partners have provisionally committed to mainstreaming the service beyond NRF funding support.

The Learning Curve

At the outset, it was expected the initiative would work with e-entrepreneurs who shared certain characteristics. However as the initiative developed, it became clear that there was a wide variety of potential e-entrepreneurs who could utilise the web in different ways to improve their business potential.

A number of individuals who used the service had not developed clear ideas on the business potential to be gained from the web. In order to address this concern individuals attended training courses to extend their understanding of the issues involved. One example of the success of the intervention was web development for a wrought iron craftsman whose export market has now expanded world-wide.



Emerge

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NRF Priority:

Employment

NRF Authority:

Derwentside Local Strategic Partnership

NRF Funding Level:

Medium

We're putting even more money where your mouse is!

Further support for e-entrepreneurs!

If you have a new business idea that harnesses the power of the internet, you too can emerge from the pack!

Further funding is now available for residents of Derwentside wanting to start a business and to harness the potential of trading online.

To be eligible you must:

1. Be a resident of Derwentside
2. Have an idea for a business, which has a business potential

Both employed and unemployed individuals can apply.

Call Maria Antoniou on (01207) 218237 or email: emerge@derwentside.gov.uk to see how we can support you.

Individuals previously supported by the Emerge project are not eligible for new funding.

emerge

Taking real ideas to virtual success

PTO for additional information

Lead Agent:

Derwentside District Council

Main Partners:

Business Link, Job Centre Plus, Derwentside Industrial Development Agency (DIDA), Derwentside Training for Industry Unit (DTIU), Anchor Trading

Location:

Derwentside District Council, Consett, County Durham

Main achievements:

Fully subscribed training and business awareness seminars

18 new businesses created

28 new jobs created

10 companies using IT equipment loan system

Examples of companies assisted through the Emerge initiative may be seen at the following websites:

<http://www.bluemore.com/>
(smartcard development)

<http://www.allnumbers.com/main.php>
(mobile phone number directory)

<http://www.voicentric.co.uk/>
(specialist marketing)

<http://www.hallamantiques.co.uk/>
(antiques and collectables)

<http://www.boomerang-webs.co.uk/>
(website design)

Key Lessons

The greatest strength of the initiative is the “roll-on, roll-off” training mechanism which minimises the loss of business trading time.

A lack of bureaucracy within the initiative allows individuals to progress quickly the start-up of their new businesses.

Co-ordinating partners into working as a single group to support new businesses has required work at times.

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