



Evaluation Report

Client: The NewBridge Project

Project Title: Interim Evaluation of the Collaborate project

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I. Executive Summary

The *Collaborate* Project is an artist development project funded by the North of Tyne Combined Authority through its Investment Fund. It began in July 2022 and runs to September 2025, focusing on:

- Growing the creative arts sector across the North of Tyne region - attracting, retaining and developing talent through skills and business development.
- Creating a stronger and more diverse workforce: enhancing access, opportunity and skills pathways for under-represented groups.
- Creating a sector-leading skills/talent development programme for creative arts: targeting advanced skills, linking to FE/HE with blended delivery.

In early 2024, The NewBridge Project appointed Ortus Economic Research to undertake an evaluation of the *Collaborate* Project. The evaluation is at the interim stage, which focuses on assessing progress and impacts up to Autumn 2024. This report presents the findings of the interim evaluation. A final evaluation report will be delivered in late 2025.

Key findings of the interim evaluation are:

- The *Collaborate* Project aligns strongly with strategic ambitions established under the North of Tyne Combined Authority, and which have been adopted by the North East Combined Authority. The Project fits within the Culture and Creative project theme and makes a direct contribution to goals under 'Creative People: Skills for the Culture and Creative Sector' investment strand. The Combined Authority's strategic ambitions are expressed within the North East Combined Authority Corporate Plan¹ across 5 key missions. The relevant ambitions fall within Mission 3 (that the North East will be 'home to a growing and vibrant economy for all'). This includes a commitment to "Invest in our creative industries, both in their physical infrastructure and access to skills training, in line with our Local Growth Plan²".
- The Project is making very good progress toward achieving its KPIs:
 1. Two of the five have already been exceeded – the number of residents supported, and the number of apprenticeships/training opportunities achieved
 2. The remaining three are at least 50% delivered and are expected to be achieved by the end of the delivery period. These outputs are typically those that occur towards the end of the participation period, such as going on to take up formal education, and are therefore more likely to occur towards the end of (or beyond) the delivery period).
- Feedback from participants demonstrates that the *Collaborate* Project, across its three strands, is delivering important outcomes and impacts for individual artists and the wider artistic community in the North of Tyne area.
- The project is assessed as being particularly effective in supporting the following:
 - The sharing of knowledge and/or experience with other artists (95% of respondents agreed that the *Collaborate* Project was effective in delivering this)
 - Helping establish or further develop careers in the arts (82%)
 - Improving professional skills or developing new ones (82%)
 - Improving artistic skills or developing new ones (80%)

¹ North East Combined Authority (2024), Corporate Plan 2024-28, Available at: <https://www.northeast-ca.gov.uk/downloads/3281/neca-draftcorporateplan-2024-28.pdf>. Accessed December 2024

² In preparation

- There was strong agreement from participants that the Collaborate Project was delivering the following outcomes:
 - Making an important contribution to artistic development in the region (96% agree)
 - Strengthening the region's artistic community (96%)
 - Improving the retention of artists in the region (84%)
 - Improving long-term sustainability of careers (74%)
- It is clear that the programme directly supports the sustainability of artist careers. In *The Collective Studio (TCS)* programme, 78% of participants have already acquired new commission or creative work income as a result of the outcomes achieved on the programme, with a further 8% expecting to do so in the future. For participants on *Practice Makes Practice (PMP)*, just under one-half of participants (48%) indicated that they had already earned additional income through participation in the programme, and a further 27% expect to do so in the future.
- Satisfaction levels are high; 92% of artists were satisfied with the Project, and over three-quarters (77%) were either very or extremely satisfied.
- Impacts are still emerging as the Project continues delivery, but early evidence demonstrates that the project is helping artists gain employment, set themselves up in self-employment, go on to further training, and also provides artists with the skills they need to work with other communities and organisations, and generally supports retention of artists within the region.
- Attribution levels are high, with 87% of participants indicating that some of the outcomes would not have been achieved without the programme, or they would have taken longer to achieve.
- The evaluation has captured evidence that the *Collaborate* Project stimulates a wider benefit beyond that felt within the confines of The NewBridge Project studios and other locations where participants practice their art. For example, almost 90% of artists work with some form of external organisation (such as another arts organisation, a school, a university or a voluntary sector organisation). The Project's impact therefore extends significantly beyond the direct benefit felt by participant artists.
- Evidence also indicates that many participants go on to work in regional and national organisations, with several establishing their own initiatives and Community Interest Companies.
- The *Collaborate* Project is having a positive effect on historically under-represented groups in the sector. For example, qualitative evidence indicates how important the Project has been in influencing career trajectories and to breaking down barriers to entry, such as barriers faced by artists without an art degree.
- When open responses have been analysed, they provide important evidence of the range and nature of benefits and impact that the *Collaborate* programme has delivered. The key areas of impact that the interim evaluation has found evidence to support, therefore, are as follows:
 - The provision of a space to make art, and unlocking opportunity in the process
 - Providing a career path post-graduation, providing a bridge from education into an artistic career
 - Specific skills development opportunities – artistic and professional – to support sustainable careers
 - Making connections between organisations and artists and building networks
 - Creating a community of artists and linking that to the local community

- Generating new economic entities within the arts and delivering economic and other benefits as a result
- Broadening the understanding of career paths in the arts and providing guidance on how to advance
- Creating economic opportunity through being an anchor institution, lending credibility to resident artists and providing support that leads to new commissions and income.
- The following key lessons emerge from the interim evaluation:
 - For The NewBridge Project
 - Where delivery is below target, ensure that adequate resources are assigned, and that project plans will address shortfalls.
 - Take a proactive role in managing any risk in the relationship with Newcastle University, driven by changes in key personnel at the University.
 - Plan suitable communication of evaluation findings with programme stakeholders and seek advice and guidance on maximising the impact of the programme.
 - Consider how future *PMP* events might achieve improved satisfaction ratings from participants.
 - For the evaluation team:
 - Consider how feedback from *Create/Disrupt (CD)* participants can be best gathered and incorporated into the final evaluation round.
 - Ensure that any feedback on survey tools is accommodated when these are recycled in 2025.
 - Collaborate with The NewBridge Project on consultation exercises to ensure efficient deployment of evaluation resources.
 - For the funder:
 - Clarify with NewBridge how future investment in the creative and cultural sector is likely to be focused, and the areas in which it might encourage future bids from NewBridge.
 - Consider the interim evaluation findings and highlight any particularly important questions to be addressed in the final round.

I. Introduction

This short report communicates the headline findings of the interim evaluation of the *Collaborate* project, a NTCA-funded skills development project delivered by The NewBridge Project.

I.1 The Collaborate Project

The NewBridge Project is working with Newcastle University and the North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA) to provide an inclusive and needs-led pathway for freelancers to develop high-level skills in creative arts practice.

The NewBridge Project is an active artist-led organisation that supports artists, curators, and communities through the provision of space for creative practice, curatorial opportunities, and an ambitious programme of exhibitions, commissions, artist development and events. The NewBridge Project delivers this socially conscious programme in consultation with artists and community members. Artist and skills development is a vital and longstanding part of NewBridge's programme.

The *Collaborate* project builds and expands on artist development initiatives developed by The NewBridge Project in partnership with Newcastle University – *The Collective Studio (TCS)*, *Practice Makes Practice (PMP)* and *Create/Disrupt (C/D)*³. It seeks to develop, consolidate, and scale up these opportunities to provide an accessible skills pathway for young people and people seeking to up/reskill.

The core objectives of the *Collaborate* project are to:

- Grow the creative arts sector across NTCA: attract, retain, and develop talent through skills and business development.
- Create a stronger and more diverse workforce: enhance access, opportunity, and skills pathways for under-represented groups.
- Create a sector-leading skills/talent development programme for creative arts: targeting advanced skills, linking to FE/HE with blended delivery.

The project was originally funded to run from July 2022 to May 2025. However, in 2024, a no-cost extension is in the process of being negotiated, with the project expected to complete in late 2025.

The core aim of the evaluation is to assess and evidence the impacts and achievements of *Collaborate*. It is structured into two phases – an interim evaluation in Autumn 2024, and a final evaluation in late 2025. The interim evaluation aims to report emerging findings focused on the overall progress towards KPI targets and evidence of the impact that the project is having on its beneficiaries and the wider creative industries in the North East.

I.2 Evaluation aims

The evaluation has the key aim of accurately assessing the impacts and achievements of the programme of activities developed as part of *Collaborate*.

The evaluation intends to situate the achievements and impact of *Collaborate* in the wider context of artist development, career pathways and career sustainability in the cultural sector in the North of Tyne region. Specific objectives for the evaluation include identifying:

- Programme successes and achievements in line with the original objectives.
- The economic and social impact of the programme, demonstrated via three or more case studies.
- Any additional benefits the programme has achieved.

³ Further details about the three project strands can be found in the Appendix

- The impact of the programme in the wider context of artist development and career sustainability in the cultural sector in the region.
- Alignment and support of any wider strategic objectives of both NTCA and The NewBridge Project
- Any gaps in the potential achievement of programme objectives
- Any current challenges within the programme
- Any future opportunities for The NewBridge Project's artist development strand of work to expand/continue.

1.3 Methodology

The methodology pursued for this interim evaluation is formed of two elements:

- an analysis of monitoring and reporting data provided by The NewBridge Project
- a survey of beneficiaries of the programme, seeking feedback on their experience and outcomes achieved

The survey was conducted in October 2024 via a digital survey platform. Email invitations were circulated by The NewBridge Project. A total of 68 complete responses were received. Only a single response was received concerning the Create/Disrupt strand due to the delivery timeline, meaning this strand is not directly commented upon within the survey analysis. However, evidence from Create/Disrupt participants in the 2023 cohort⁴ has been included within the review of outcomes (see section 2.2.4).

The final evaluation will seek to generate a larger sample of responses from beneficiaries and will include in-depth interviews to explore key issues and impacts in greater detail.

⁴ This evidence was captured in an evaluation workshop managed by The NewBridge Project staff

2. Interim evaluation findings

The interim evaluation relies on two key sources of evidence: quarterly progress reports prepared by The NewBridge Project for submission to the funder⁵, and a survey of current and past participants in *Collaborate*, seeking feedback on their experience of taking part and the outcomes and benefits that have followed. Monitoring data relates to the period up to end September 2024, whilst the survey data was collected in October and November 2024.

2.1 Progress to KPI targets

Table 1 sets out progress to date (end September 2024) and shows that in two key output areas (residents supported and apprenticeships/training opportunities achieved), the Project has already significantly exceeded targets, and has drawn participants from a wide geographic area.

Furthermore, *Collaborate* is proving to be very successful in facilitating access to formal and informal training opportunities.

The data also indicates that good progress has been made towards the achievement of the three remaining KPIs, whilst also acknowledging that there is some work to be done over the coming year to ensure that targets around education/training, employment/self-employment, and the gaining of level 3 qualifications are met. That said, the nature of the project is such that these outcomes are likely to be backloaded, as they represent benefits that are achieved after participation in *Collaborate*.

Table 1: Progress to KPI targets

KPI	Achieved	Target	% Target Achieved
007 - Number of residents supported	3,375	1,974	171%
008 - Participants in education / training	16	30	53%
009 - Participants in employment/self-employment upon leaving	683	990	69%
0012 - Participants gaining level 3 qualification and above	11	20	55%
0015 - Number of apprenticeship / traineeship opportunities achieved	16	12	133%

Source: NewBridge Project Monitoring data

2.2 Beneficiary feedback

A total of 79 artists responded to the survey. Once incomplete responses were removed, this provided a sample of 68 completed surveys.

The questionnaire covered numerous topics, from participation in each of the three *Collaborate* strands (TCS, C/D, PMP), objectives when joining, their experience of taking part, views of the effectiveness of the support and outcomes achieved as a result.

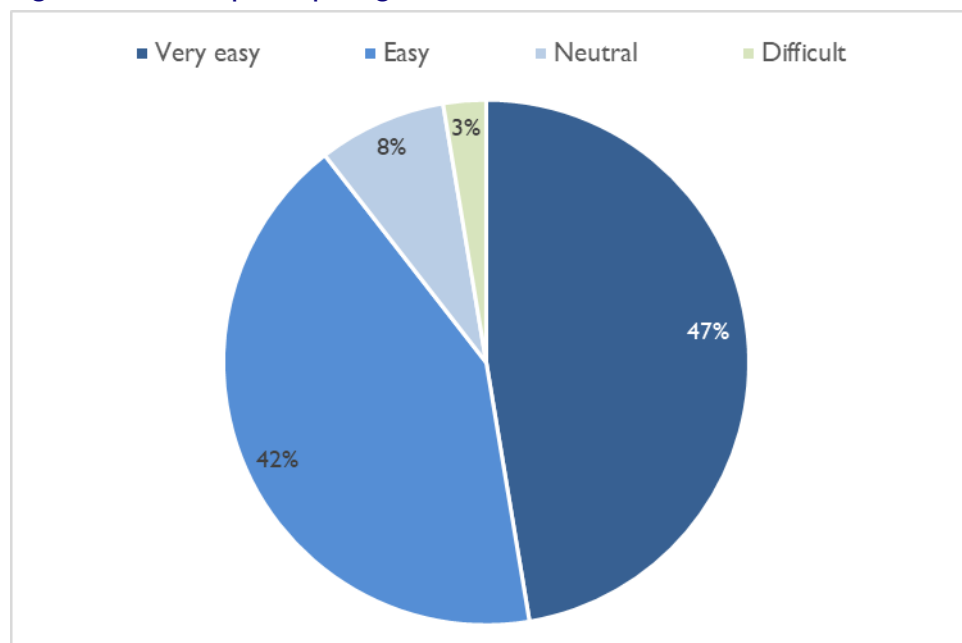
This report provides feedback on the following themes: ease of participating, objectives when taking up support, effectiveness of support, outcomes, impact, and satisfaction.

⁵ Originally NTCA, now the North East Combined Authority

2.2.1 Ease of participating

The programme has proven to be very accessible to participants, with 89% indicating that it was ‘easy’ to get involved (very easy = 47%, easy = 42%). Only 3% of participants described the process of getting involved as difficult and, as shown in Table 2 below, all of these were participants in The Collective Studio. Qualitative evidence collated through the survey does not elucidate the issues behind the difficulties experienced.

Figure 1: Ease of participating in Collaborate



Source: Collaborate Project participant survey (Base: 68)

Table 2 sets out the findings differentiated by the two larger programmes – The Collective Studio (TCS) and Practice Makes Practice (PMP). The feedback shows that participants in PMP found it easier to participate than those in TCS, with 97% of the beneficiaries of PMP stating that participation was ‘easy’ or ‘very easy’ compared to 82% of TCS participants. The difference is likely driven by the nature of each programme, with PMP being a collection of connected and disparate events which are designed to be easy to dip in and out of, whereas TCS is designed as an ongoing support programme requiring an application to join and longer term regular commitment for a cohort of participants.

Table 2: Ease of participating – by programme

Rating	% TCS	% PMP
Very easy	35%	63%
Easy	48%	34%
Neutral	13%	3%
Difficult	5%	0%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Collaborate Project participant survey (Base: 67)

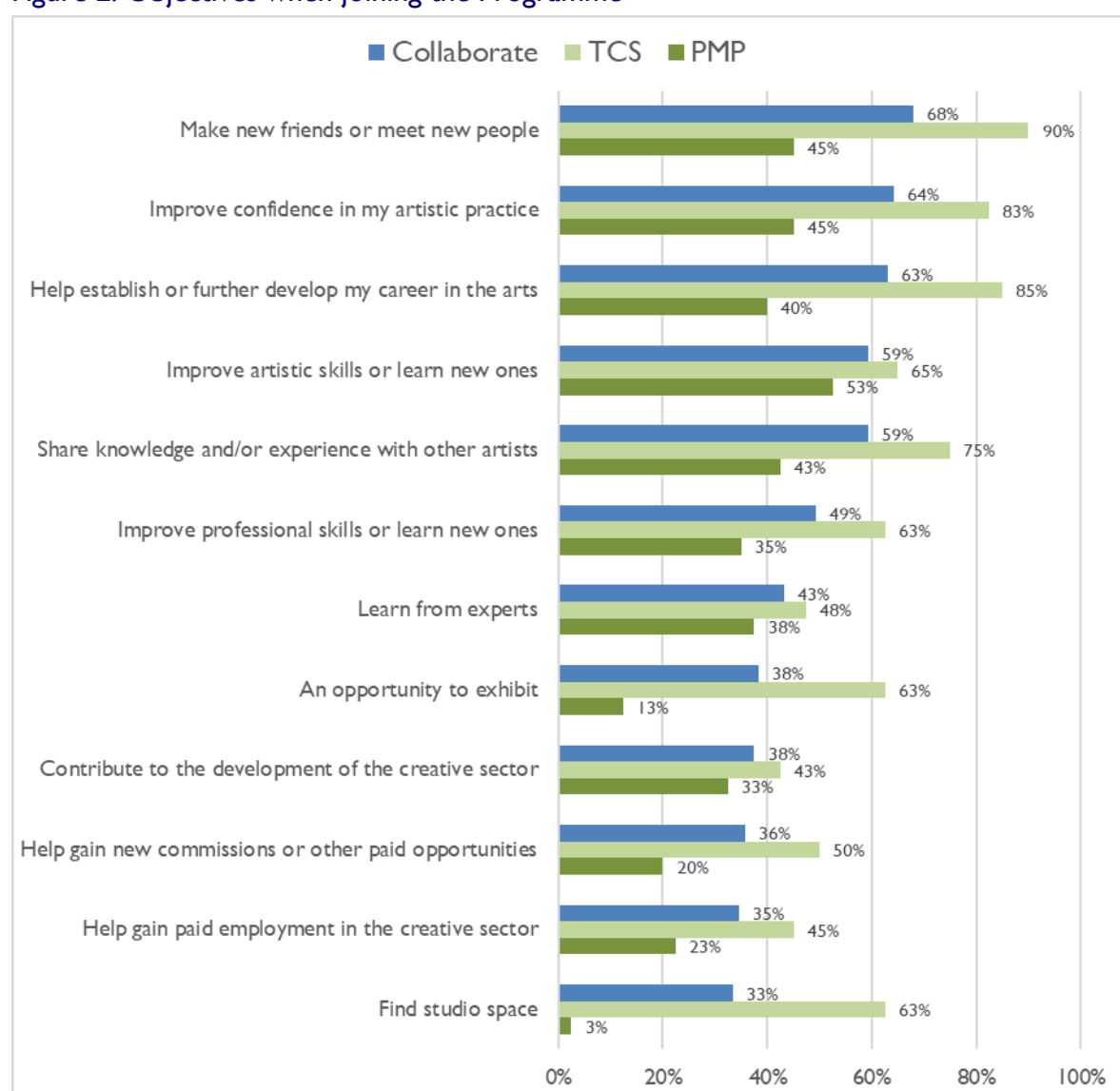
2.2.2 Objectives when joining

Figure 2 provides feedback on the objectives that participants were seeking to achieve when they joined the programme, and therefore helps identify motivations of the artists as they embarked on the support. Findings for the *Collaborate* programme overall and the two sub-programmes – TCS and PMP - are represented by the three blue and green bars.

The differences in focus and nature of the TCS and PMP programmes are evident in the results. Whilst 68% of *Collaborate* participants stated the objectives of making new friends, this rises to 90% for TCS participants compared to 45% of PMP participants. It should be recalled that these groups are not mutually exclusive. This was the most prevalent objective for participants of TCS. The most prevalent for participants of PMP was to improve artistic skills or learn new ones, an objective shared by 68% of TCS participants.

Studio and exhibition-related objectives were also very important to TCS participants (both 63%) but unsurprisingly these were unimportant for PMP participants as they did not form part of the support offer.

Figure 2: Objectives when joining the Programme



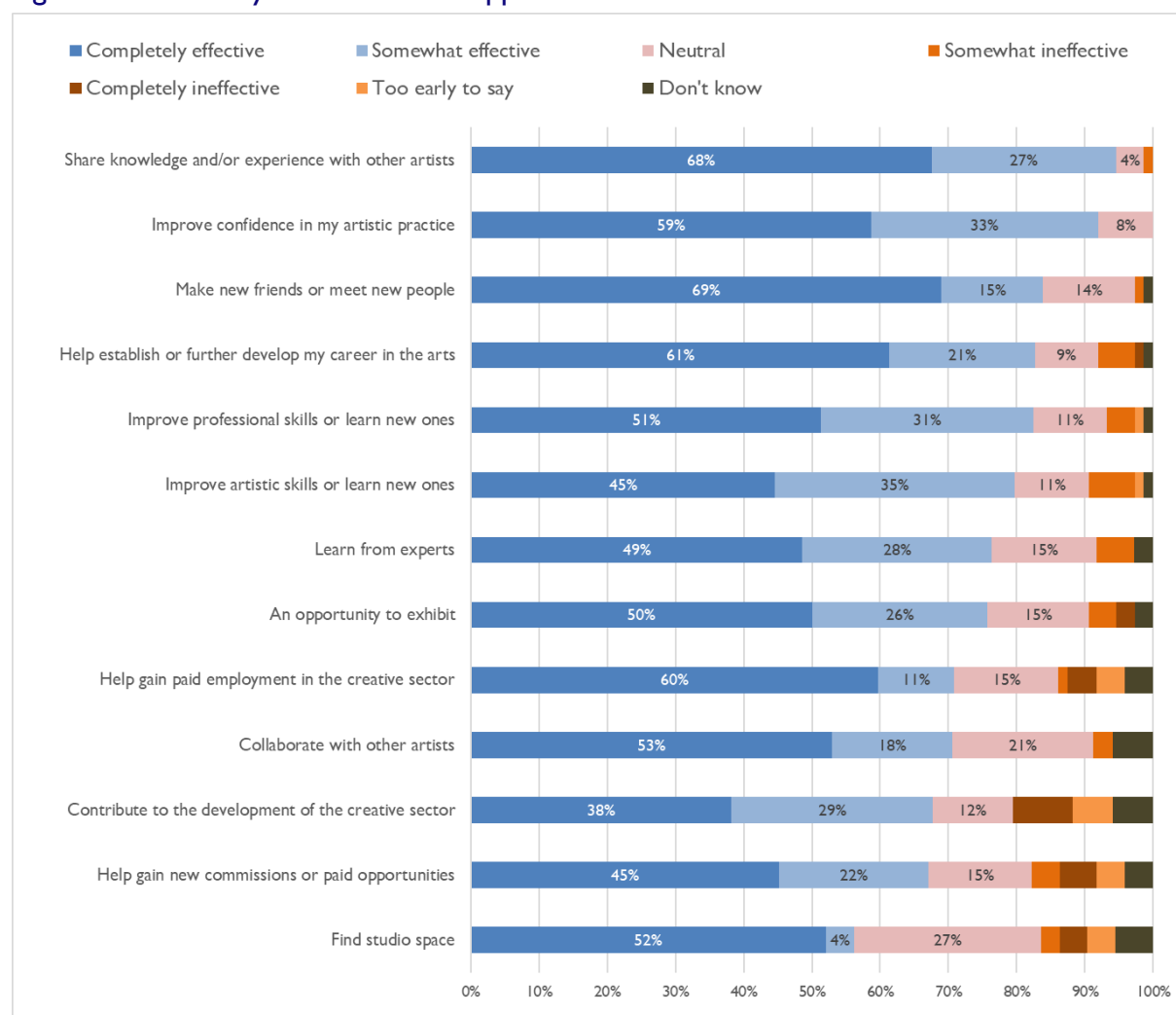
Source: Collaborate Project participant survey (Base: 68)

2.2.3 Effectiveness of support

Figure 3 sets out an analysis of the effectiveness of the support provided through *Collaborate*. In reviewing this feedback, it is important to recognise that the primary objectives of *Collaborate* are to develop professional and artistic skill, to build a stronger community of artists and to improve artist retention in the region.

The feedback indicates that *Collaborate* is viewed as effective in all the areas examined (since greater than 50% of respondents assessed the project as either completely effective or somewhat effective against all criteria).

Figure 3: Beneficiary assessment of support effectiveness - Collaborate



Source: Collaborate Project participant survey (Base: 68)

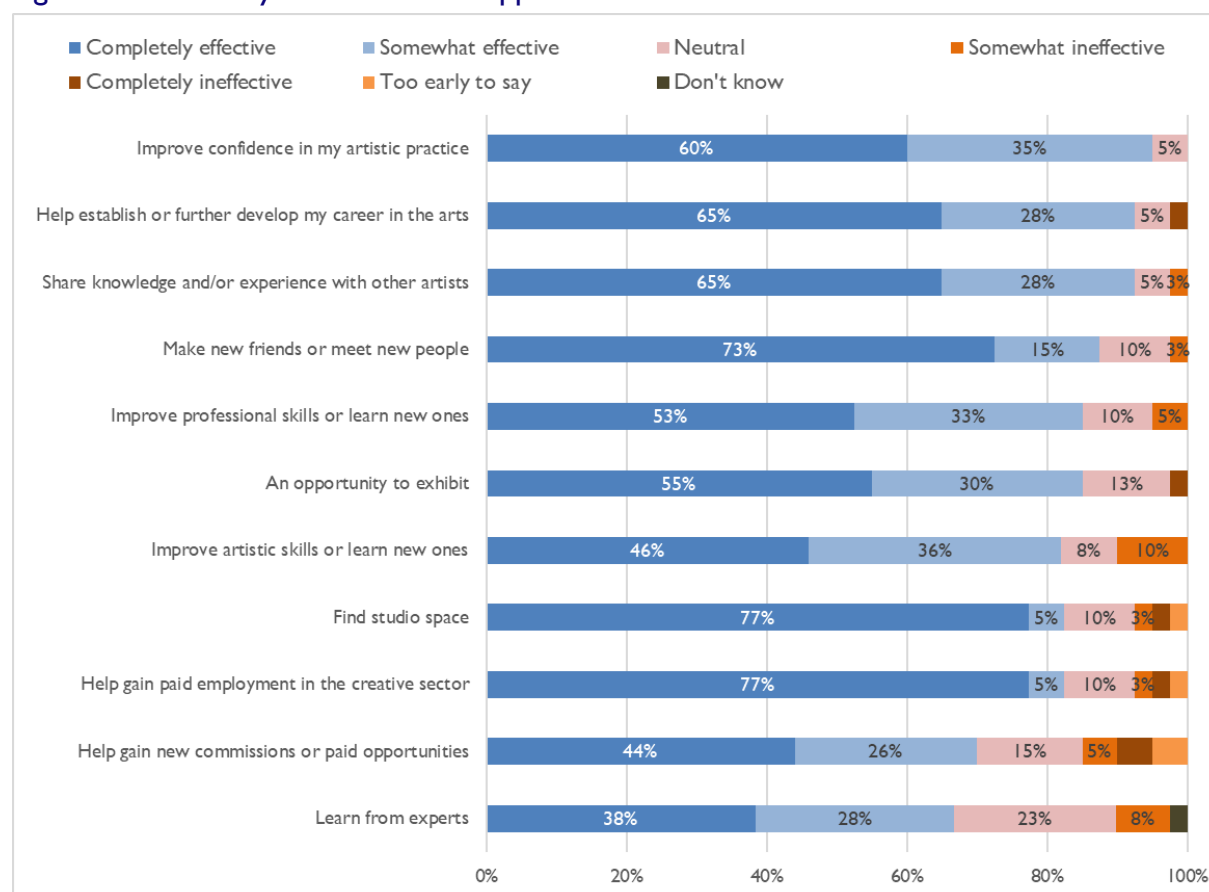
Using the proportion of respondents that rated the outcomes as effective (i.e. completely or somewhat effective) as the main benchmark, the feedback indicates that *Collaborate* (set out in Figure 3) was seen as particularly effective in facilitating:

- The sharing of knowledge and/or experience with other artists (95%)
- Improving confidence in artistic practice (92%)
- Making new friends or meeting new people (85%)
- Helping establish or further develop careers in the arts (82%)
- Improving professional skills or developing new ones (82%)
- Improving artistic skills or developing new ones (80%)

When the results for TCS participants are analysed in Figure 4, they show that effectiveness was highest for:

- Improving confidence in artistic practice (95%)
- Helping establish or further develop careers in the arts (93%)
- The sharing of knowledge and/or experience with other artists (93%)
- Making new friends or meeting new people (88%)
- Improving professional skills or developing new ones (86%)
- An opportunity to exhibit (85%)

Figure 4: Beneficiary assessment of support effectiveness – The Collective Studio



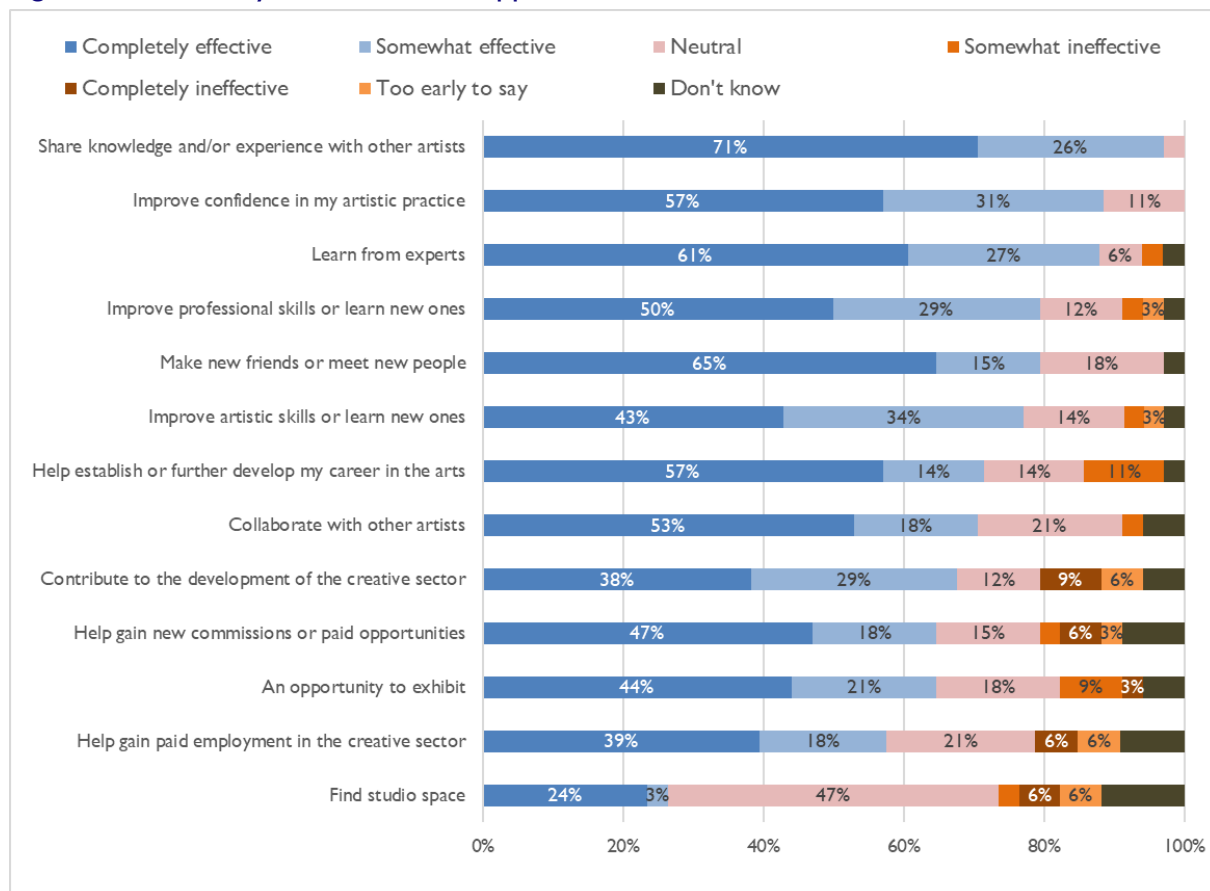
Source: Collaborate Project participant survey (Base: 40)

When the results for PMP participants are analysed in

Figure 5, they show that effectiveness was highest for:

- The sharing of knowledge and/or experience with other artists (97%)
- Improving confidence in artistic practice (88%)
- Learn from experts (88%)
- Improving professional skills or developing new ones (79%)
- Making new friends or meeting new people (80%)
- Improving artistic skills or learning new ones (77%)

Figure 5: Beneficiary assessment of support effectiveness – Practice Makes Practice

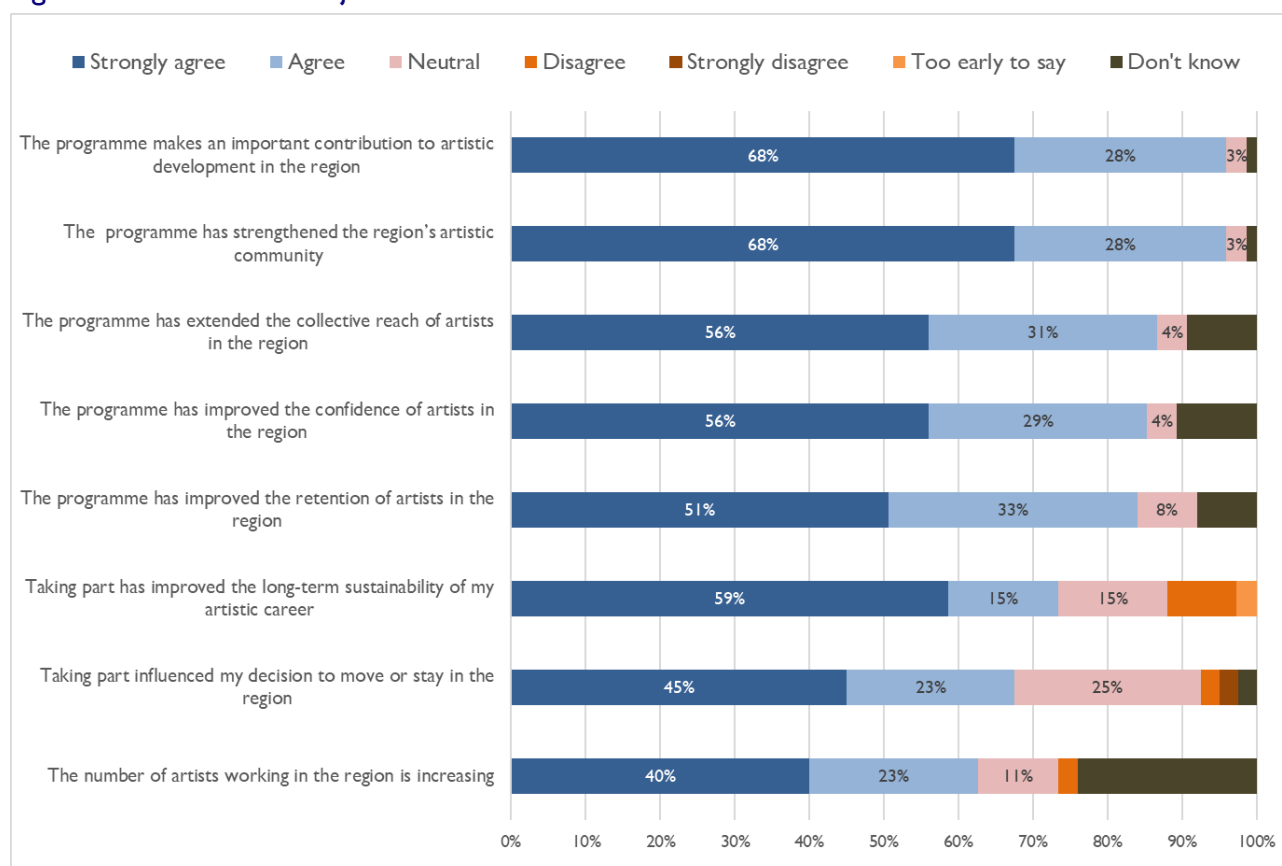


Source: Collaborate Project participant survey (Base: 40)

2.2.4 Outcomes

The survey explored the perceptions and experience of project participants in relation to a number of important outcomes related to skills and confidence development, supporting the wider artistic community and influencing artist retention. The results are shown in Figure 6 below and show that the majority of beneficiaries agree that the project is delivering important outcomes.

Figure 6: Collaborate Project Outcomes



Source: Collaborate Project participant survey (Base: 68)

Using the proportion of participants that either strongly agreed or agreed with the outcome statements as the key indicator of whether an outcome is being achieved, the evidence indicates that *Collaborate* is particularly effective at delivering the following outcomes:

1. Making an important contribution to artistic development in the region (96% agree)
2. Strengthening the region's artistic community (96%)
3. Extending the collective reach of artists in the region (87%)
4. Improving the confidence of artists in the region (85%)
5. Improving the retention of artists in the region (84%)
6. Improving long-term sustainability of careers (74%)

The only area where there was a noticeable difference in opinion between PMP participants and TCS participants was around the statement regarding the number of artists in the region is increasing. This was agreed with by 54% of PMP participants, whilst participants of TCS were more likely to agree (70%).

Participants were asked to comment about the types of objectives that they had achieved through an open text question. This elicited feedback on a wide range of themes, such as:

- Provision of a space to make art:

- “Provided a warm space outside of my home for me to focus on making work”
- “The whole programme has been amazing but meeting other artists and doing our show at NewBridge were highlights for me. I also really loved the trip to Glasgow and having our own studio. Over the summer I loved having a space that was mine to work from and make art and not have to worry about it taking up space in my house that I share with other people. Materials can be so expensive, and I have loved being able to make anything I want while I am on Create/Disrupt.”
- Providing a career path (post-graduation, or without an art degree):
 - “The Collective Studio was key in helping me to develop my creative practice, keep involved in the arts after graduation and meet like-minded people who I still call my friends. I am very grateful for the experience and know my involvement with The NewBridge Project overall has helped me get to where I am today”
 - “The Collective Studio helped me to maintain a studio practice beyond graduation and gave me the determination as well as the reality of having a career as an artist (which art school did not)”
 - “It helped a lot with the adjustment from being a student to graduating, where I was able to be in a social setting/space to create and collaborate with others.”
 - “Helped the transition from student to practicing artist”
 - “The trip to Glasgow [as part of Create/Disrupt] was such a game changer. Hearing all of those folk talk about having other jobs... was so reassuring! As soon as I got back I started putting together work for an online portfolio. I just really appreciated that opportunity and left feeling so inspired.”
 - “The best thing about being on Create/Disrupt has been realising I want to be a music therapist, meeting Tim and getting to shadow him and finding the courage to apply and then be accepted on the music therapy masters!”
- Specific skills and education development opportunities:
 - “It has given me experience devising and delivering art workshops”
 - “Supported skills in dealing with disagreement or conflict in a professional manner.”
 - “The Masters in Fine Art (MFA) bursary is an incredible gift of time, space and resources. Starting the course has felt like an exciting and expanding opening, with so much potential in every direction! The experience of pursuing my creative practice with seriousness and conviction (and time), already feels transformative and I am excited to see what is ahead. Without the bursary, I would not be undertaking this course and I feel very lucky to have this opportunity to explore and develop.”
 - “Entering third level education [through the MFA bursary] as a mature student felt beyond out of reach for me so I’m very grateful for this phenomenal opportunity. I’m still pinching myself.”
- Making connections between organisations and artists:
 - “I was able through Collective Studio to invite an artist from London to lead a workshop and artist talk at NewBridge in Gateshead. Great connections were made and the workshop was really successful and different to other activity on offer at the time.”
 - “The exchange between Rotterdam and Newcastle has led me to meet people in the Netherlands and elsewhere that have affected my practice incredibly: NewBridge’s support in Springtime when everyone came to visit was amazing. I have also been recommended for workshops both internally and out of the space with thanks to NewBridge/PMP staff which has been very helpful in this year of gaining momentum as a freelance artist.”
 - “Meeting other people [through Create/Disrupt], and getting to access so many events and workshops for free has been amazing, I feel like I am leaving with a wider network of contacts and artists and resources.”

- “Meeting so many established artists and hearing them talk about their practice in such a vulnerable way has been so valuable and has definitely informed how I approach being an artist now.”
- Creating a community:
 - “Something Collective Studio really helped me with personally was feeling a part of a community of artists and creatives on moving back to my home town, after being away for 3 years in London. In London at university I struggled to feel part of a community - but at NewBridge through Collective Studio I felt this so much more, and I've been a member ever since, and currently have a newly commissioned work on display in the current NewBridge gallery - the first time I've been paid to produce an artwork and has been an amazing experience.”
 - “It allowed me to enter a world where artists work and socialise, going from feeling like an outsider of the art world to feeling like a part of it.”
 - “It has given me access to a community of arts professionals and practitioners providing networking for both social wellbeing, peer support and professional opportunities.”
 - “Feel like part of a community, allow me to retain some connection to the wider art world even though my practice declined (ill health)”
- Generating new economic entities within art:
 - “I set up a business after a very inspiring professional workshop”
 - “It helped us establish several spin-off collectives and activities therein.”
 - “It has advanced my professional practice and assisted in the transition from [non-artistic] employment to [artistic] self-employment.”
 - “I have learned how to access, find and apply for more creative opportunities and have been successful with this while I have been on create/disrupt. I have also had my first paid work as an artist as a result of being a part of create/disrupt.”
- Broadening understanding of career paths in the arts:
 - “It provided a greater understanding of the creative industries, and potential career trajectories.”
 - “I am not from an art background - so membership of NewBridge has been really useful in gaining information and insights into how the arts scene functions.”
 - “Meeting Ash Willerton the professional sign writer was so cool because I have followed their work for ages and sign writing is something I really wanted to know more about but didn't think would happen. Ash giving us all the tools to take home after the session was incredible, all the artists we met were so generous with their time and how they gave us their details and said we could get in touch if we needed anything. I also loved Kate Sweeney talking to us about mistakes and how her style is always evolving. I have always worried my style isn't distinct enough but she made me feel like that way ok.”
- Creating economic opportunity through being an anchor institution:
 - “The Collective Studio programme has provided many of us with an anchor and headquarters in Newcastle, providing a launching pad for all kinds of other arts activity. I firmly believe that I have had several successful open call applications due to my participation and inclusion in the Collective Studio programme, and many artists and organisations I meet for the first time already know of The Newbridge Project. That reputation and public opinion of the project feels like a significant leg-up navigating arts opportunities as a working-class northerner that would otherwise be outside of the industry.”
 - “Through PMP I was able to acquire my first ever Arts Council England grant. The support and mentoring I received through PMP was pivotal to this.”
 - “I really struggle with meeting new people and putting myself out in social situations which I do think has held back my practice and ability to thrive as an artist. It was a big

deal for me to apply and then be accepted on create/disrupt. The social element of Create/Disrupt and the way we have been slowly guided by [C/D project lead] but also pushed when we needed to be has changed the way I think about my art but also how I put myself forward for opportunities.”

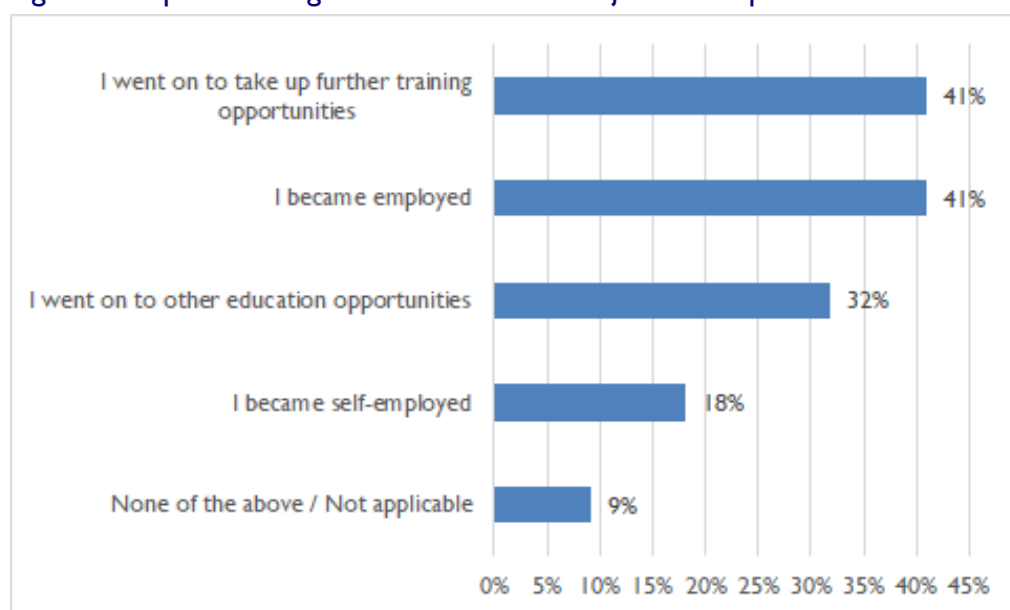
2.2.5 Impacts

This section focuses on the impact that *Collaborate* is having on artist development and careers through a question which explored which of a range of impacts had followed participation in the Project. This question was asked of both The Collective Studio and Create/Disrupt participants only, as this is where the more intensive support is focused.

Figure 7 sets out the results, and this shows that approximately two-fifths of participations (41%) had already taken up further training opportunities, and a similar proportion had become employed. Around one third of participants (32%) have gone on to other education opportunities and almost one fifth (18%) became self-employed.

This provides evidence of the important personal impact that *Collaborate* is having on the careers and prospects of individual artists. Given that the project is still in delivery with numerous programmes running and due to conclude over the coming months, unlocking further opportunities for impact for artists and the wider community, it is expected that the final evaluation will report even more significant benefits such as these.

Figure 7: Impacts arising from Collaborate Project Participation



Source: Collaborate Project participant survey (Base: 22)

The survey also provides us with evidence that *Collaborate* stimulates a wider benefit beyond that felt within the confines of The NewBridge Project studios and other locations where participants practice their art. *Collaborate* also provides artists with the skills they need to work with other communities, collaborators, and organisations across the region, nationally and internationally, which in turn expands the cultural, social and economic value of *Collaborate*. For example, the survey found that of current members and participants: 86% work with other art organisations, 64% work with community groups, 56% work with voluntary organisations, 50% work with universities/colleges and 42% work with schools. Evidence also indicates that many participants go on to work in regional and national organisations, and several have established their own initiatives and Community Interest Companies. This is supported by

a number of quotes below describing *Collaborate* (and The NewBridge Project) as a form of 'launchpad', for example:

- “There isn't an opportunity I have received as an artist or art worker which can't be linked back in some way to connections and experiences had at The NewBridge Project.”

Whilst the survey data for the Create/Disrupt programme is insufficient to draw any quantitative evidence about that strand in particular, qualitative evidence does show that *Collaborate* is having a positive effect on historically under-represented groups in the sector. For example, a number of quotes indicate how important the programme has been in influencing career trajectories and to breaking down barriers:

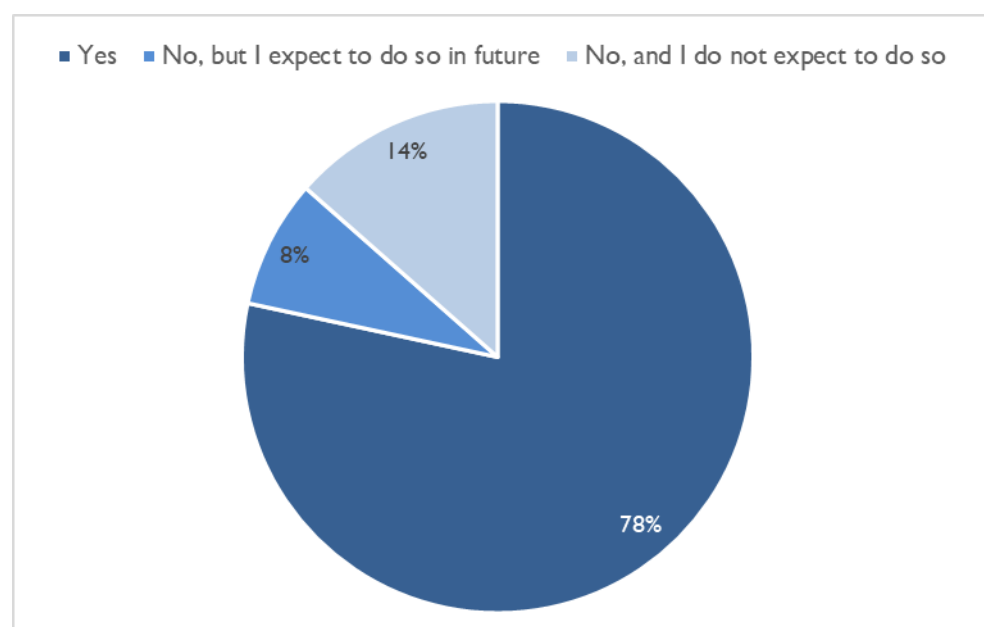
- “NewBridge has changed the trajectory of my life creatively, and personally, and I wouldn't have believed a career was possible as a working-class northern artist without it. The support it continues to provide is invaluable, and the community it supports is irreplaceable.”
- “The NewBridge Project has shaped my early career as an artist and has probably been the most valuable asset into igniting my career. Without it I feel I would not have pursued a career as a fine artist and I would have gone into the charity sector or worked in the organisational side of the arts industry. I continue to benefit from the reasonable cost of my studio, the creative community I'm surrounded by, my safe space (studio), and the support of staff and the network I have been able to and am still building through NewBridge.”

2.2.6 Income through commissions and paid creative work

For each strand of the programme, participants were asked whether the support had led to them earning additional income from commissions or paid creative work as a result of the skills, experience and confidence gained through the support.

For TCS, the results set out in Figure 8 show that 78% of artists had already earned additional income as a result of support from the programme, whilst a further 8% were expecting to do so in the future.

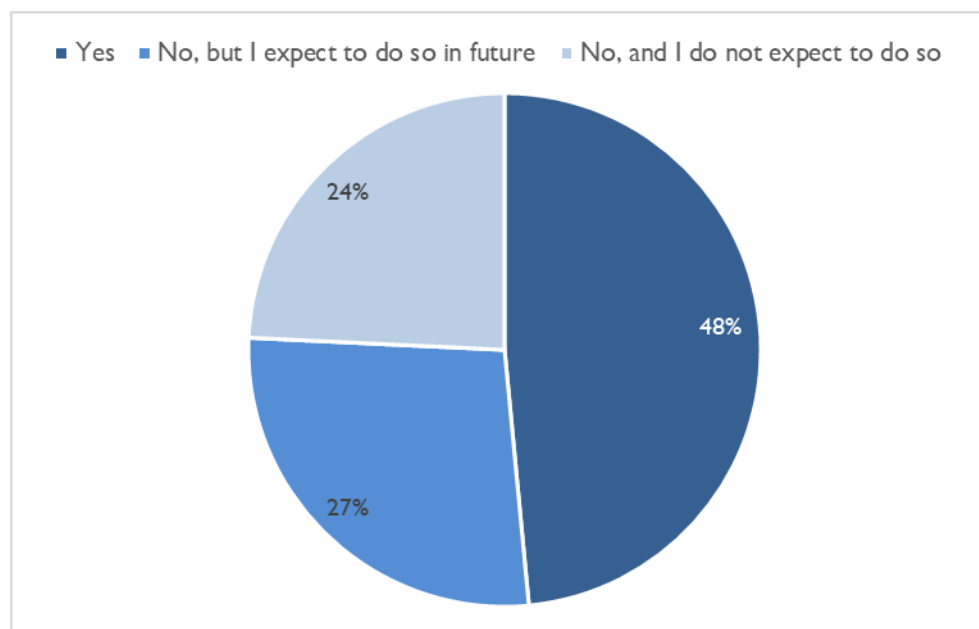
Figure 8: Expectations for additional commission/creative work income resulting from The Collective Studio



Source: Collaborate Project participant survey (Base: 39)

For participants on PMP, just under one half of participants (48%) indicated that they had already earned additional income through participation in the programme, and a further 27% expect to do so in the future.

Figure 9: Expectations for additional commission/creative work income resulting from Practice Makes Practice

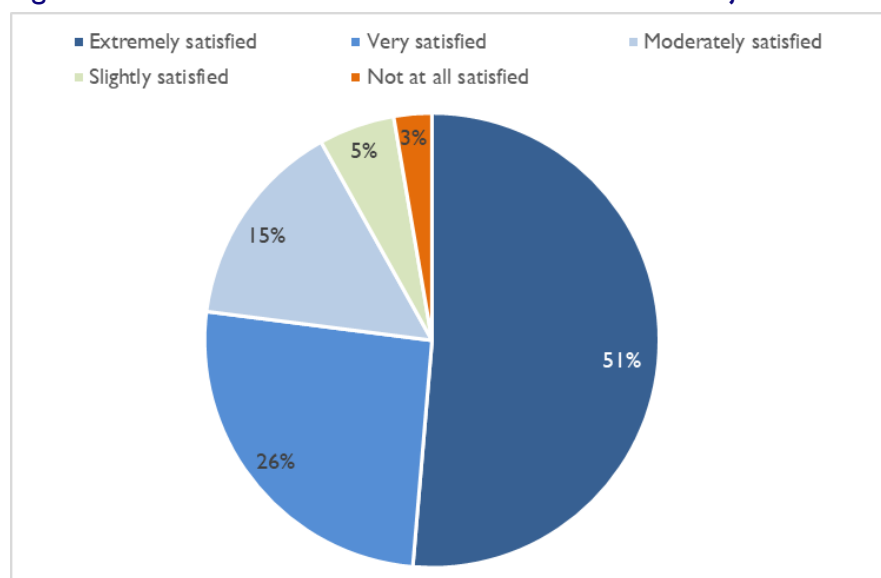


Source: Collaborate Project participant survey (Base: 33)

2.2.7 Satisfaction

This section focuses on the overall satisfaction artists felt towards *Collaborate*. Figure 10 shows that 92% of artists were satisfied with the project, and that over three-quarters (77%) were either very or extremely satisfied. The NewBridge Project continues its efforts to not only maintain these high standards, but also to understand the reasons for lower satisfaction where these are expressed, in order to not only tailor delivery of the *Collaborate* project over its final months, but to learn lessons for future programme development.

Figure 10: Overall satisfaction with the Collaborate Project

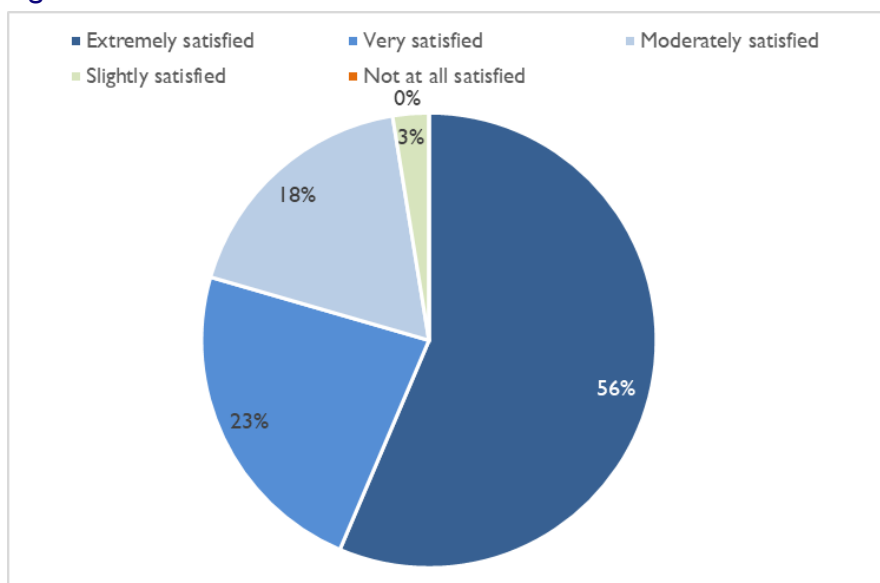


Source: Collaborate Project participant survey (Base: 66)

There are some small differences reported in satisfaction between TCS and PMP, as set out in Figure 11 and

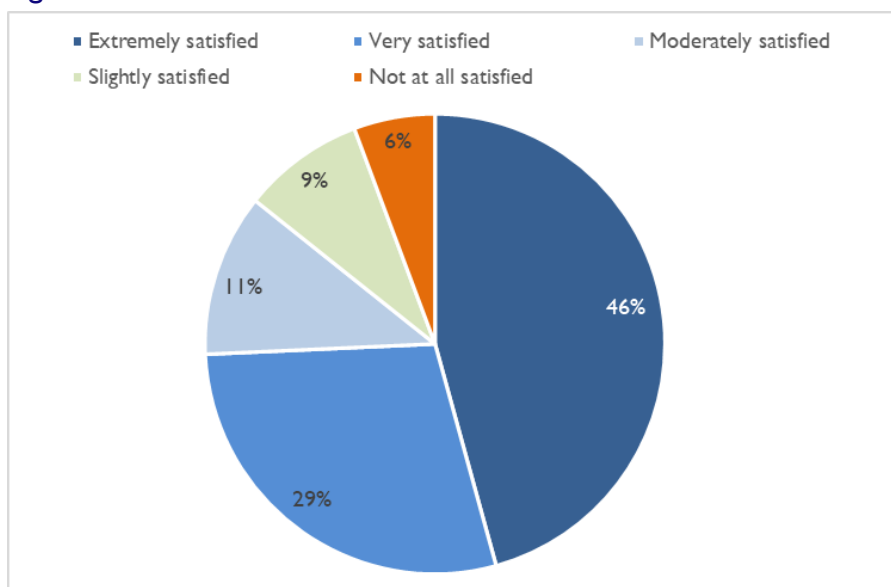
Figure 12. 79% of TCS participants are either extremely or very satisfied, compared to 75% of PMP participants, though the proportion that are extremely satisfied is larger for TCS. This likely reflects the more diverse content offered within the PMP programme, meaning that it is likely to 'land' differently with those that access the events, via the more informal participation model for that programme.

Figure 11: Overall satisfaction with The Collective Studio



Source: Collaborate Project participant survey (Base: 39)

Figure 12: Overall satisfaction with Practice Makes Practice



Source: Collaborate Project participant survey (Base: 35)

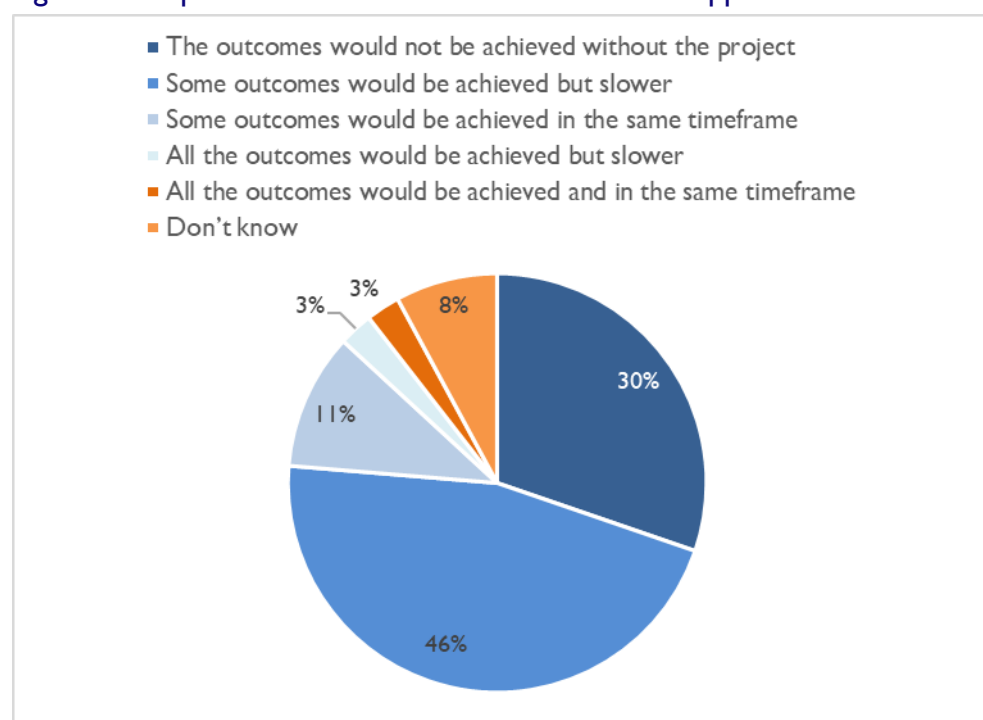
2.3 Assessing Attribution

The final section of the evaluation findings focused on attribution – the connection between the input (support through *Collaborate*) and outcome (the benefit achieved). This is explored through a question about whether the outcomes achieved would have accrued without the support (either at all, in their entirety or as quickly).

Figure 13 shows the results derived from the beneficiary survey. It shows that for the *Collaborate* project as a whole, 30% of beneficiaries thought that outcomes would not have been achieved at all without the support. These respondents are therefore attributing 100% of the benefit to the project. A further 46% felt that whilst some of the outcomes would have been achieved without the support, they would have taken longer to achieve. This demonstrates that the programme is accelerating participants' progress in their artistic careers. A further 11% indicated they could have achieved some of the benefits in the same time frame without support, and only 3% felt that they could have achieved all the outcomes without support."

The results demonstrate a significant level of attribution between the programme and the outcomes observed. For the vast majority of participants, the programme has either delivered benefits sooner, or more completely, than the counterfactual position of no support provided.

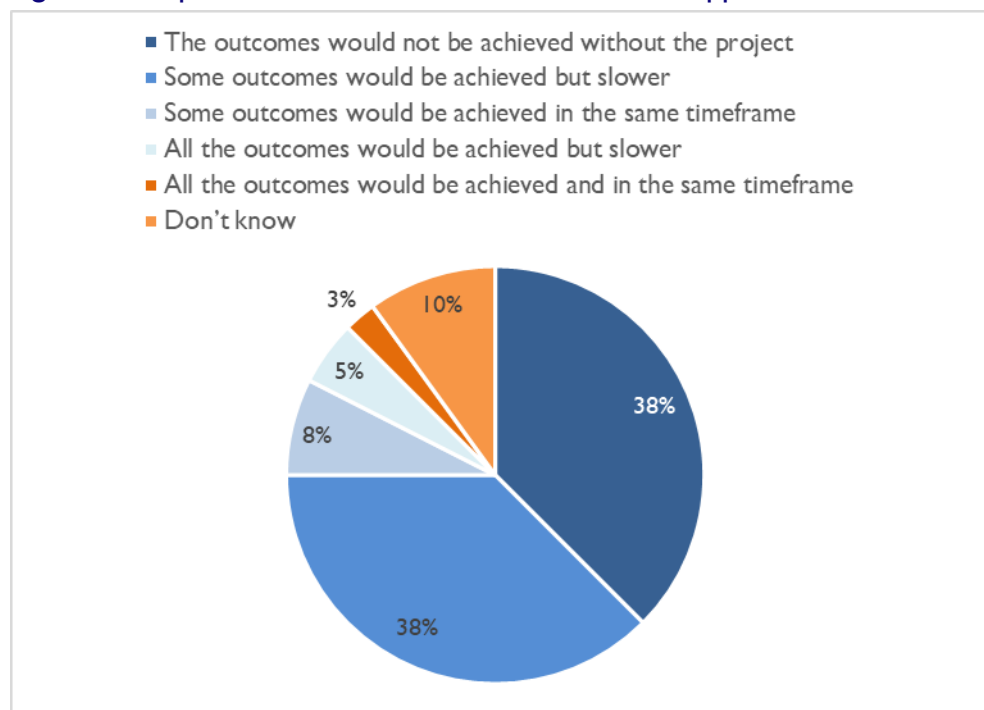
Figure 13: Expectations around Outcomes without support - Collaborate



Source: Collaborate Project participant survey (Base: 68)

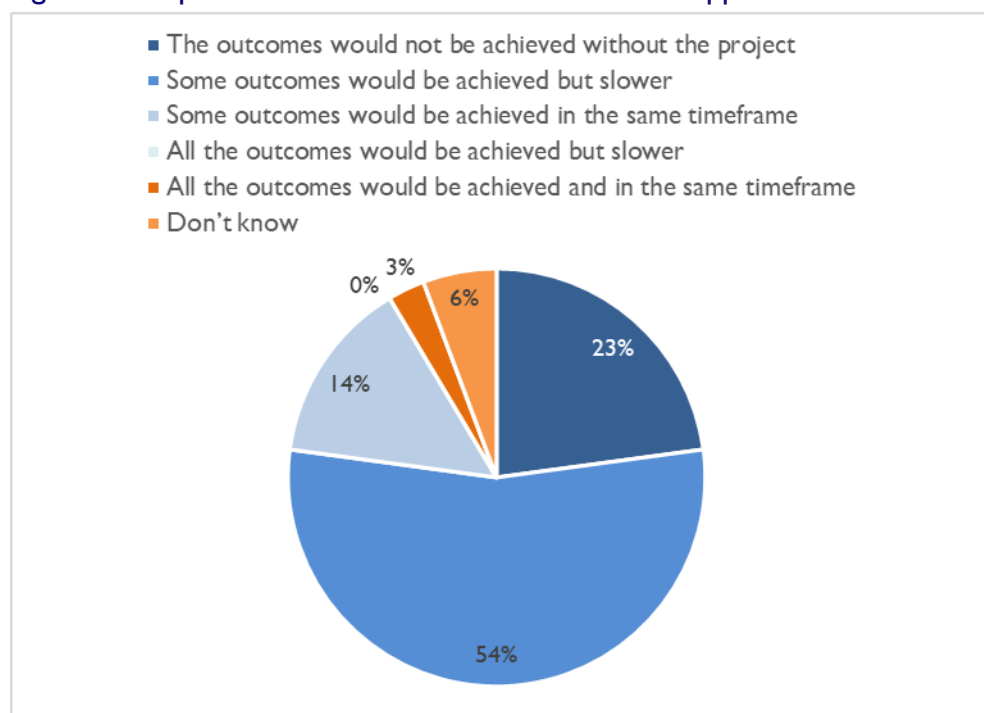
There are some notable differences between the TCS and PMP programmes, shown in Figure 14 and Figure 15. For TCS, 38% would completely attribute all outcomes to the programme, compared to 23% in PMP. Similarly for the TCS programme, 38% indicate that without support some outcomes would have been achieved but in a longer timeframe, compared to 54% of participants in PMP. Despite the different proportions, the feedback suggests that participants in both programmes recognise the unique and immediate nature of the programme benefits.

Figure 14: Expectations around Outcomes without support – The Collective Studio



Source: Collaborate Project participant survey (Base: 40)

Figure 15: Expectations around Outcomes without support – Practice Makes Practice



Source: Collaborate Project participant survey (Base: 35)

3. Key lessons from the interim evaluation

The following key lessons emerge from the interim evaluation:

For The NewBridge Project

- Where delivery is below target, ensure that adequate resources are assigned, and that project plans will address shortfalls.
- Take a proactive role in managing any risk in the relationship with Newcastle University, driven by changes in key personnel at the University.
- Plan suitable communication of evaluation findings with programme stakeholders and seek advice and guidance on maximising the impact of the programme.
- Consider how future PMP events might achieve improved satisfaction ratings from participants.

For the evaluation team:

- Consider how feedback from Create/Disrupt participants can be best gathered and incorporated into the final evaluation round.
- Ensure that any feedback on survey tools is accommodated when these are recycled in 2025.
- Collaborate with The NewBridge Project on consultation exercises to ensure efficient deployment or evaluation resources.

For the funder:

- Clarify with NewBridge how future investment in the creative and cultural sector is likely to be focused, and the areas in which it might encourage future bids from NewBridge.
- Consider the interim evaluation findings and highlight any particularly important questions to be addressed in the final round.

4. Appendix

4.1 Project strands

The three project strands are as follows:

1. **The Collective Studio (TCS):** Development programme for recent graduates and creatives with no formal education working at an equivalent standard. This programme is aimed at people working at graduate standard, particularly targeting the transition from the university or informal equivalent to workplace. It offers subsidised studio space alongside a series of tailored events and workshops to address knowledge and skills gaps. The programme also offers regular residency, exchange and/or exhibition opportunities. NTCA funding enables the development of a digital/hybrid programme with technical resources, upskilling staff and increasing capacity, and enabling more consolidated pathways through the three programmes and on to FE/HE where appropriate (e.g. for courses in Strategic Leadership; Innovation, Creativity and Entrepreneurship).
2. **Practice makes Practice (PMP):** An artist development programme for people at any stage in their career. PMP is already recognised as Newcastle's leading artist development programme that is open to all. It is developed by artists for artists, ensuring that it provides relevant learning opportunities to support a wide range of practices, interests, career stages and backgrounds. As well as workshops and events, the programme offers paid residency or exchange opportunities. Its tiered membership pricing enhances accessibility and ten memberships per year are offered free to artists and makers from low-income households and other under-represented groups. The four project strands within PMP are:
 1. **Curatorial and Project Management Skills (the 'Programme Committee'):** paid PT work experience placements/traineeships over 3 years through a hands-on professional development programme working as part of a programming committee. Involves on-the-job learning, collaboration, professional development events and mentoring.
 2. **Digital Skills (DIY Digital):** programme focused on the development of core digital skills and capability, supporting freelancers to develop a resilient and transferrable skill set.
 3. **Retraining/Upskilling for over 50s:** needs-led retraining and upskilling
 4. **Cultural Leadership:** NewBridge has a track record of supporting freelancers to set up creative enterprises or organisations through support and guidance. This strand will formalise and strengthen this through a programme of professional and personal development led by experts and aimed at supporting practitioners who want to become leaders.
3. **Create/Disrupt (CD):** For creatives and aspiring creatives with no formal education interested in pursuing a career in the arts. C/D aims to break down socio-economic barriers to pursuing a creative career and has been piloted over the last year to assess need and skills gaps. NTCA funding secures the future of this programme and enables it to grow into an accessible, long-term programme of support that promotes diversity and inclusion, and provides access to training, opportunities and networks. It is made up of three main activities: the core cohort, young people's development programme, and outreach workshops/talks.