EINA: DESIGN SPACE

Ref: **DE1012DS**
Date: **December 2010**
Programme Description: **The Design Space project will promote the sustainability of the Jewellery Quarter in Birmingham. It consists of 3 elements:**

- **New business creation**
- **Improving the sustainability of existing businesses through mentoring**
- **Identifying sustainable funding to support the future development of the Jewellery Quarter**

The main aims purposes and outcomes of the programme are detailed in the ERDF application, BCC FBC, the PDD and the Cabinet report.

Project Aims/Purpose

This project seeks to promote the sustainability of the Jewellery Quarter through new business creation; improving the sustainability of existing businesses through mentoring and particularly supporting businesses to generate new commissions (via Brilliantly Birmingham, the British Craft Fair and the Treasure exhibitions). It also seeks to identify mechanisms to generate sustainable funding streams to support the future development of the Jewellery Quarter in order to reduce the need for ongoing grant funding.

Outcomes:

New Business Creation ("Design Space")

In 2006 the Design Space incubator project was launched. The project was designed to create a platform from which start up businesses could grow and prosper. A fully equipped shared incubator unit, together with a package of business support was delivered. This aimed to stimulate high value jewellery designer maker businesses in the jewellery quarter, providing free workshop facilities, guidance and advice over the first 12 months from inception of their businesses. This programme proved to be a catalyst in terms of maintaining the presence of businesses in the Jewellery Quarter. Of the 30 jewellery designer makers businesses which took part in Design Space in 2006-2008, 15 have remained in the Jewellery Quarter, and now have their own workshops in the area. (*Source: D Space exit interview reports & end of placement evaluations).*

However, as with all business start ups, a large proportion of businesses fail. It is therefore necessary to start new businesses on a regular basis in order to maintain the Jewellery Quarter as a thriving and popular visitor attraction

Jewellery design maker entrepreneurs require some highly specialist needs, which are not covered currently under the current public sector provision provided through Business Link.

For example,

- specialist business and industry expertise in terms of the new innovations in jewellery design
- specialist knowledge of the jewellery markets, particularly the high end
- specialist expertise in the use of manufacturing tools to produce high-end hand made jewellery, which is a specialised art form
- provision of prototyping through loan/use of equipment
- opportunities for designers to trial a business, without incurring the initial financial burden

We know that the jewellery designer industry is predominantly made up of women, with men forming the minority sex. We also know that a higher proportion of women study jewellery

design at colleges and universities than men, and in turn, this impacts on the number of men and women recruited onto the Design Space programme.

In 2006/7, 90% of programme participants were women, however in 2007/8, the ratio of men improved to 31% *(source: Evaluation of Design Space Programme April 2008 Tribal Group).*

In the past two years, the programme has successfully attracted ethnic minority groups onto the programme, and exceeded forecast targets. In 2006/7, 40% of participants were from ethnic minority groups, and in 2007/8, 19% were from ethnic minorities. *(Source: Evaluation of Design Space Programme April 2008 Tribal Group).*

In submitting an application for ERDF funding through the Regional Development Agency AWM, we were able to demonstrate a continued commitment to ensuring that the programme would support the equality agenda.

Delivery of the current programme takes into accounts the above points and findings of the previous evaluations. Past experience has shown that the most successful route to market in terms of attracting start up businesses onto the programme is via mail shots to universities and colleges. Birmingham City Council will continue to market the programme to all major universities and colleges that deliver jewellery design courses. We will also seek referrals from a wide range of agencies and local organisations to promote the programme (Jewellery Industry & Innovation Centre, British Jewellery Association, Jewellery Quarter Regeneration Partnership), and we will use the informal network of previous Design Space businesses to spread the word.

The project will contribute to the equality agenda by encouraging the take up of support from more men and members of the ethnic minorities as well as young people

In managing delivery of the programme we will continue to monitor and report the beneficiary breakdown of participants. In addition, the Design Space project will be independently evaluated over the life of the programme and the evaluation will capture data relating to participating businesses, their ethnicity, gender, and age as part of the study into the impact of the programme on the Birmingham economy.