
North East Enterprise Bond Evaluation Report

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1. Introduction

1.1 The North East Enterprise Bond

(NEEB) is a North East based charitable organisation which develops and supports a range of different enterprise related activities throughout the north east region. Its charitable objects are *“The relief of unemployment for the public benefit and the relief of poverty in the north east region”*

The overall working goal of NEEB is *“to positively influence the culture and attitudes within the region towards enterprise and being entrepreneurial”*¹. The primary mechanism that NEEB uses to support its work is its Launch Pad vehicles. These vehicles are operated by trained staff who are able to support the partner organisations with whom they work.

The NEEB focus on working in partnership and engage with a wide range of development organisations from the public, private and third sectors to assist them in bringing enterprise to communities throughout the region. The Launch Pad Initiative has helped take the



enterprise message to the heart of the region’s communities, helping individuals from a wide range of backgrounds to become more enterprising. Launch Pad has been designed to be utilised in a wide range of locations including town and city centres, community venues, rural shows and events.

In this way NEEB has worked in all parts of the North East including the sub-regions of Tees Valley, County Durham, Tyne and Wear and Northumberland. A wide range of participants have engaged through the Launch Pads including young people; those not in education, employment or training (NEETs); those still in employment considering enterprise referred to as ‘organisational captives’; informal entrepreneurs; different groups of women including young mums and businesses.

Throughout the course of the last three years NEEB’s experience and expertise in engaging with some of the most hard-to-reach target groups has grown. Their role has developed from one of providing a mobile venue for their partners to becoming an active partner in shaping and developing programmes of activity aimed at addressing some of the gaps in provision geographically and demographically.

¹ See www.launchpadnortheast.org/index.html for further details.

1.2 The Assignment

The consultancy firm Richardson Howarth LLP have been working with NEEB since late 2007 assisting them to put in place a coherent monitoring and evaluation framework and processes for their work. They also undertook an external evaluation of the NEEB's Launch Pad work interviewing a sample of partners that had worked with Launch Pad throughout 2007/08 and 2008/09², and have been commissioned to undertake this evaluation for the period 2009/10.

The focus of this evaluation assignment building on the previous reviews was to help NEEB:

- Demonstrate to their funders and investors how Launch Pad adds value to the work of the organisations that make use of NEEB services;
- Better understand the impact of their work in helping their partners to deliver important services in ways which would otherwise not be possible;
- Gain an understanding of the extent to which they need to subsidise their costs to work with the organisations NEEB was created to help;
- Identify areas where there are gaps in provision which Launch Pad can help to address. And;
- Further develop their service to meet the needs of their partners in the region.

In this way it was agreed the evaluation should assess past performance, look at future partner needs and opportunities and recommend approaches and actions to meet these in a sustainable way. In undertaking the evaluation NEEB highlighted two inter-related themes for particular consideration.

Firstly issues surrounding **charging for Launch Pad Services**. Over the last two years NEEB has moved from a business model where partners were able to use Launch Pad for free to one where they charge. During this period there has been a turnover in the organisations making use of Launch Pad. There is a need to understand the influence of charging for the service, the extent to which NEEB should seek to subsidise charges for Launch Pad and what should be their pricing policy. So for example which organisations have curtailed or ceased their use of Launch Pad and why? Was cost for using Launch Pad a factor in their decision making and did they feel the costs outweighed the value of the service provided? What costs would such partners consider reasonable? Would partner organisations include Launch Pad costs in tender applications, have they done so and if not, why not?

Secondly, the **impact that Launch Pad work has had** on partners work. Previous external evaluations have tended to look mainly at the efficiency of the services provided. This information is of value and should be addressed by the current evaluation. However, this evaluation exercise also needs to examine to a greater extent outcomes and where possible

² A copy can be viewed and downloaded at:
www.launchpadnortheast.org/main_index/site.php?section=news_evaluation.

the impact of Launch Pad work. Each partner with whom NEEB works has unique requirements and therefore the service to each varies widely. NEEB want to understand when, how and why Launch Pad services have worked well and proved an asset to partner activity and any occasions when Launch Pad has proved less effective and why.

This document reports on the evaluation survey undertaken by the consultants with partners who have worked with NEEB throughout 2009/10, although also reflecting on their longer interaction with the team if they had used the Launch Pad in previous years.

1.3 The Evaluation Approach

A total of 20 organisations were selected and interviewed for the evaluation³. These included a range of partners, including schools, colleges, enterprise agencies and community development organisations, and reflected the spectrum of partners that have worked with the NEEB team and used Launch Pad. The NEEB team sent an email to the selected organisations informing them of the evaluation survey. The consultants then followed this up with an introductory email and then by a telephone call to arrange a time for the interview. Sixteen of the partners were interviewed by telephone and 4 face to face. In one case two people in the organisation were interviewed so that both strategic and operational issues around use of the Launch Pad use could be covered. Feedback from this interview has been recorded as a single unit so whilst 21 people were interviewed all of the feedback analysis in the report is given for the 20 organisations.

A semi structured questionnaire was used for both sets of interviews⁴. The questionnaire examined six broad areas of inquiry:

- *Use of Launch Pad* - How the organisations had heard about Launch Pad together with how they had used it.
- *The results of using Launch Pad* - what had the organisations achieved through using Launch Pad.
- *The impact of using Launch Pad* -what added value had Launch Pad brought to the partner organisations and client groups.
- *The issues surrounding payment for Launch Pad* –what partners have paid to use Launch Pad and the degree to which this covers the cost of supplying the service.
- *The efficiency and effectiveness of the NEEB team* in supporting use of Launch Pad.
- *Reflections on the future use of Launch Pad.*

The interviews took on average about 30 to 45 minutes to complete depending on the frequency and complexity of Launch Pad activities undertaken by the partner organisation being interviewed.

³ Annex 1 gives a list of those organisations and individuals consulted.

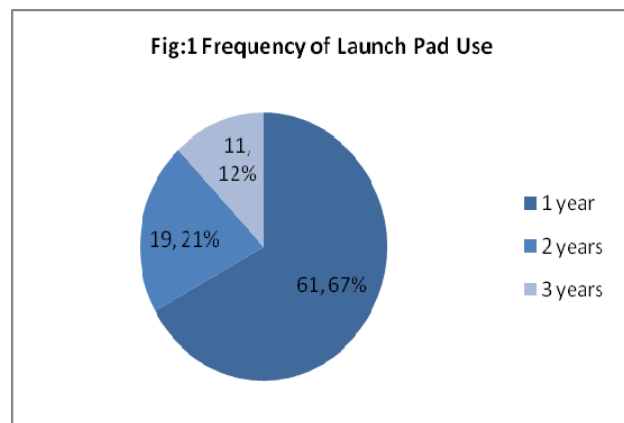
⁴ Annex 2 provides a copy of the questionnaire guide used.

2 Background to Launch Pad Delivery

To give a backcloth to the evaluation it is useful to briefly look at how Launch Pad facilities have been used since the project began focusing in particular on use over the past year. This review is based upon monitoring data provided by the NEEB team.

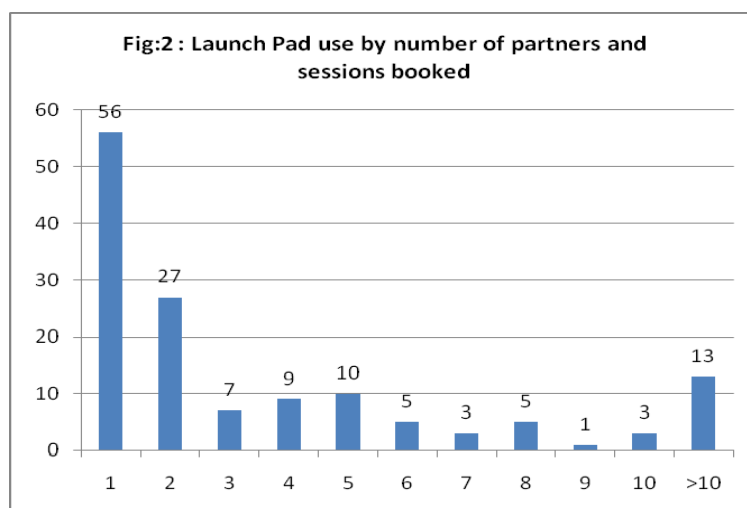
2.1 Frequency of use

NEEB have worked with 92 different partner organisations since 2007 with 57 partners using Launch Pad in 2007, 46 in 2008/09 and 36 in 2009/10. From this it is clear that some partners have worked with NEEB for more than one year. Figure 1 shows that the majority, some 67% (61), have been 'one year' Launch Pad users in the sense that they have used the service for only one of the three years. Some 21% (19) and 12% (11) using Launch Pad for two of the three years and all three years respectively



Looking at the number of times each

partner has used Launch Pad Figure 2 shows that the largest number, some 56 or 40%, have used Launch Pad as a one off experience with the second largest group (27 or 19%) of partners using Launch Pad twice and then a third group of 13 or 9% using the Launch Pad



more than 10 times. This profile of frequency of use is very much the same in each of the three years.

The top three users of Launch Pad over the three years has been Gateshead Council, with 62 bookings, Acumen with 55 bookings and then Be Enterprising with 46 bookings.

2.2 Who is using Launch Pad?

There has always been a wide mix of different type of partners using Launch Pad. In the three years of provision the main type of organisation using Launch Pad services have been enterprise focused organisations with some 40% of partners being classified in this way. A further 26% have come from the education sector, some 14% are Local Authorities and the remaining 15% are private sector organisations.

Location wise Launch Pad has been utilised throughout the region with a good spread of activity in each sub region each year. Over the three years overall for each year the rough spread of use has been similar. Each year the majority of use has typically between 45% and 50% has been in Tyne and Wear followed by around 20-25% in Durham with Northumberland or Teesside coming a third or fourth with levels of use around 15%.

2.3 How the Launch Pad is being used

In general terms Launch Pad users tend to utilise the vehicles and facilities in one of two ways. Firstly, there are those who run ‘open awareness raising’ type of events, where the target group is not defined beyond ‘the public’ or adults wanting to develop themselves in some way. In these open sessions the Launch Pad is used to attract people and engage their



interest so that the partner organisations can talk to them about how they might take up the development opportunities they offer. For these open type of events Launch Pad tends to be specifically positioned for the event. Either where it is the focus of activities such as high street type locations in cities or in a market place or centre of

smaller towns and villages or where it takes a pitch at a much larger event such as annual shows.

Secondly there are those partners that use Launch Pad to run ‘closed sessions’ with focused activities for pre-selected

groups such as running workshops and competitions for school pupils and teachers or college students. Alternatively Launch Pad has been used as a mobile office as well as training room for selected businesses to get support or people wanting to start a business. In these



instances typically, though not exclusively, Launch Pad was positioned on the partner organisation’s premises or on industrial estates and pitches close by to where the target client group operated.

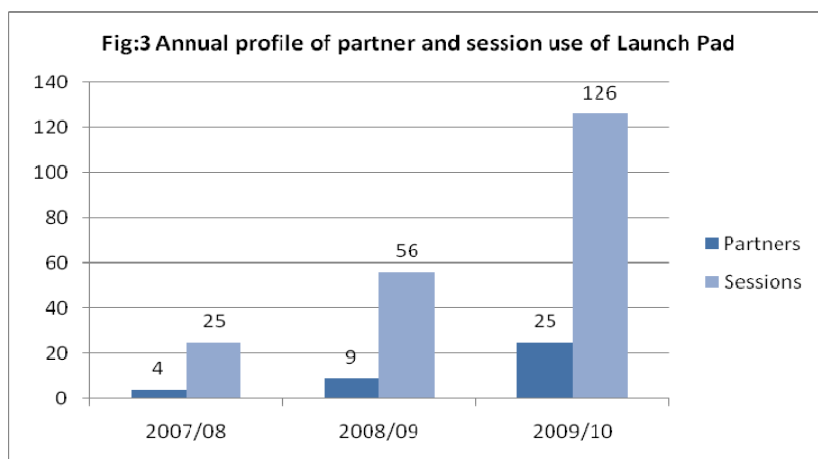
Since 2007 there has been no focus on any one particular use of Launch Pad and there has been a real mix of open and closed sessions.

The remit of Launch Pad is to promote and support enterprise in the region, the overall aim of NEEB being: *“to positively influence the culture and attitudes within the region towards enterprise and being entrepreneurial”*. Within this overarching goal the type of activities held on and or around Launch Pad can be grouped into one of four broad categories, although it should be noted that these groupings are very loosely defined.

- *‘Being Enterprising’* type of activities with what is termed a pre pre start focus – i.e. aimed at confidence building, getting people to take the first steps back into economic activity be this training, employment or self employment. A major element of this type of activity is about awareness raising and engagement of people.
- *‘Enterprise Activities’*- where the focus is about helping people to find out more about starting their own business. This includes activities aimed at ideas generation as well as business planning.
- *‘Business development’* activities which are aimed at existing businesses and looking at survival and growth as well as specialist input activities such as supporting business to access public procurement to raise awareness about new legislation and or new opportunities for specific sectors such as tourist businesses.
- *Other activities* are those are not necessarily enterprise focused – for example the Launch Pad has been used to support volunteer recruitment and training – for Newcastle Community Service Volunteers and Princes Trust respectively.

2.4 Payment for Launch Pad

A key issue affecting the long term sustainability of Launch Pad use is the degree to which partners pay for the service. In the initial year of delivery most users had access to the Launch Pad free of charge with only 4 of the 57 users that year contributing. The partners who paid were those delivering LEGI (Local Economic Growth Initiative) activities in Durham and South Tyneside and these users paid around £1000 per session.



As Figure 3 shows in the following two years both the number of partners and number of Launch Pad sessions paid for have increased although a significant number of users still do not pay for Launch Pad use. It is also important to note that the majority of those paying

are paying well below £1000 per session. The amounts paid range from £80 per session through to a one off payment in 2008/09 of £1600 by North Yorkshire Business Link.

2.5 Overview of 2009/10 Launch Pad Activity

The overall level of Launch Pad use has fallen in 2009/10 compared to previous years – perhaps a reflection of the tougher funding climate for the enterprise and employment development sector in the region. In 2009/2010 NEEB has seen less bookings overall, a smaller number of partners working with them and fewer partners making multiple bookings.

NEEB worked with 36 partner organisations which between them used Launch Pad for 157 sessions throughout the year which gives an average of just over 4 bookings per partner. However as in previous years the distribution of bookings is not evenly spread with 13 partners using it only once. At the other end of the spectrum 3 partners (One North East NEAL Ltd and Groundworks) each used Launch Pad more than 10 times. It is interesting that just over a third (14 or 39%) of the 36 partners using Launch Pad in 2009/10 were doing so for the first time. In 2009/10 the regional split of use session wise showed that 45% of all sessions were run in Tyne and Wear; 24% in Durham 16% in Teesside and 15% in Northumberland. The balance of type of organisations was also similar to previous years.

3 How the Evaluation Respondents' have used Launch Pad

This section describes the 20 partners who were interviewed for this evaluation and how they used Launch Pad.

3.1 Profile

As Table 1 shows the profile of the evaluation respondents represent a good selection of NEEB Launch Pad partners who in turn have been working throughout the region with a variety of client groups.

Table 1: Profile of Respondents and their Activities

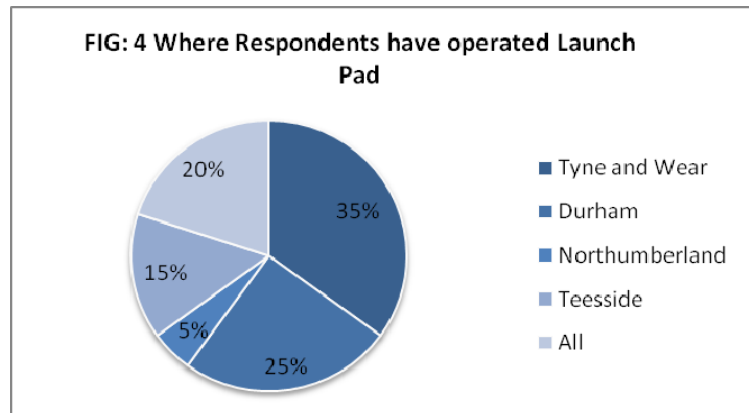
	Tyne and Wear	Durham	Northumberland	Teesside	All	Enterprise	Education	Local Authority	Other	Students	NEETS	Unemployed	Businesses	Not Targeted	Other
Organisation	Geography					Partner Type				Beneficiary Group					
Acumen		✓							✓			✓			
Be Enterprising		✓				✓					✓	✓	✓		
Derwentside Enterprise		✓				✓				✓					
Five Lamps				✓		✓					✓	✓	✓		
Go Wansbeck (LEGI)			✓			✓							✓		
Groundworks		✓							✓			✓			
Newcastle College	✓						✓								✓
Newcastle CSV	✓								✓						✓
Northumberland College			✓				✓			✓					
St Michaels School Billingham				✓			✓			✓					
TEDCO	✓					✓									✓
Visit Tees Valley				✓					✓				✓		
Gateshead Council	✓							✓				✓			
Entrepreneurs Forum	✓								✓	✓					
Newcastle Enterprise Package	✓							✓		✓			✓		
N.E Contact Centre Academy	✓						✓					✓			
N. E. Enterprise Agencies Ltd					✓	✓									✓
One North East					✓				✓		✓				
Princes Trust					✓	✓									✓
A4e					✓				✓			✓			

The largest group of respondents were enterprise focused (45%) including the enterprise agencies, and Be Enterprising followed by educational (25%) organisations such as schools and colleges. Some 20% are primarily third sector organisations such as Acumen and Groundworks that are more focused on supporting people into employment and

organisations such as Newcastle Community Service Volunteers which as the name suggests works across a wide range of activities and sectors

As has been in the case in the past, Launch Pad has been used to work with groups and within communities throughout all parts of the region.

Figure 4 shows that the largest group of partners were operating within Tyne and Wear, followed by those in Durham with the third largest group using the Launch Pad throughout the region.



3.2 First time users and frequency of use

The majority (65% or 13) of the respondents were repeat users of Launch Pad and of these 6 had used the facility every year since 2007 and the remaining 7 had used it during two of the years. Between them the 20 organisations had booked Launch Pad for a total of 115 slots throughout 2009/10. Of these 6 partners used Launch Pad only once; a further 11 booked it for between 2 and 10 slots and the remaining 3 organisations Groundworks, North East Enterprise Agencies (NEAL) Ltd and One North East booked it for 16, 15 and 24 slots respectively.

3.3 How did they hear about Launch Pad?

One of the questions that the annual evaluation addresses is how the partners had first heard about NEEB and Launch Pad facilities. In 2007/08 the evaluation found that some respondents had been involved in the initial setting up of NEEB and had heard of Launch Pad through that process, whilst others had heard by word of mouth through colleagues and those in the enterprise sector more broadly. In 2008/09 the feedback was that new users had mostly heard about Launch Pad through colleagues and others in the sector and that was very much the case for this round of evaluation.

Thirteen of the respondents were aware of Launch Pad through previous use. Of the remaining 7, most (5) had heard of Launch Pad through word of mouth from colleagues, 1 from attending a regional network meeting on enterprise and 1 had seen it being used at another event. The comments given below, back up these numbers giving examples of how partners sourced the Launch Pad.

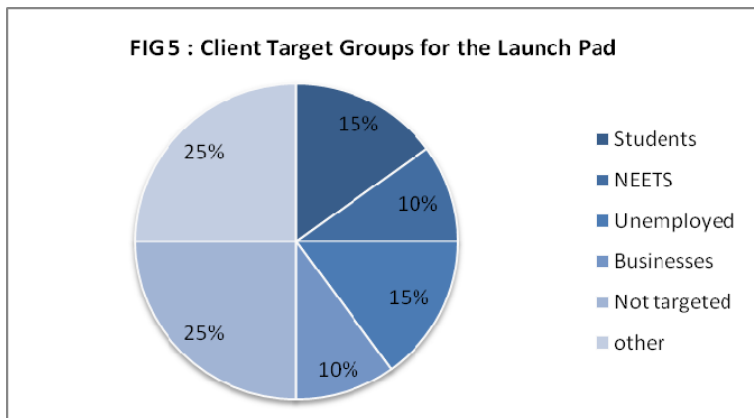
- *“A contact at Business Link told me about it and when I followed it up it seemed ideal.”*
- *“I used it in my last job and thought it would be good for this project.”*

- “One of our partner organisations had used it and recommended it to us”
- “I am quite new to this sector but the organisation had used Launch Pad previously and it had gone down well so I thought I would give it a go.”

No one said that they had heard about Launch Pad through the NEEB website or any formal marketing.

3.4 Target Groups

Figure 5 shows that Launch Pad partners have worked with a range of audience target groups from those taking their first steps from unemployment into economic activity through to owners developing their businesses. Launch Pad has also been engaged in a



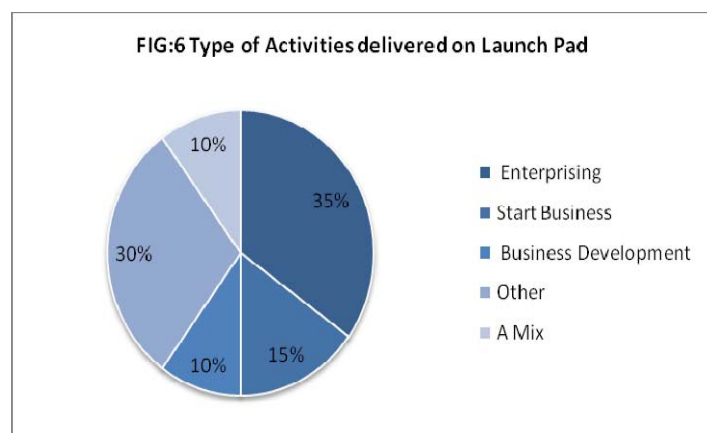
variety of educational experiences aimed at helping students and learners to become aware of enterprise and embrace becoming more enterprising and entrepreneurial. The category ‘other’ in this figure has been used to group those that have been working with a mix of

target groups. A quarter of respondents to the evaluation all said that they had not targeted a specific group but rather had used Launch Pad as a means of generating awareness about their support services amongst the adult population as a whole. This emphasis on raising awareness to wider audiences also comes through in feedback from the respondents about the type of activities and sessions they had run. This is discussed next.

3.5 Type of sessions and activities

The partner organisations were asked ‘what was the primary purpose of your Launch Pad activities?’ and offered the following options as answers.

- ‘Being enterprising’ type of activities in a broad sense – confidence building, back into employment etc.
- About enterprise ideas generation starting a business
- Business development
- Other

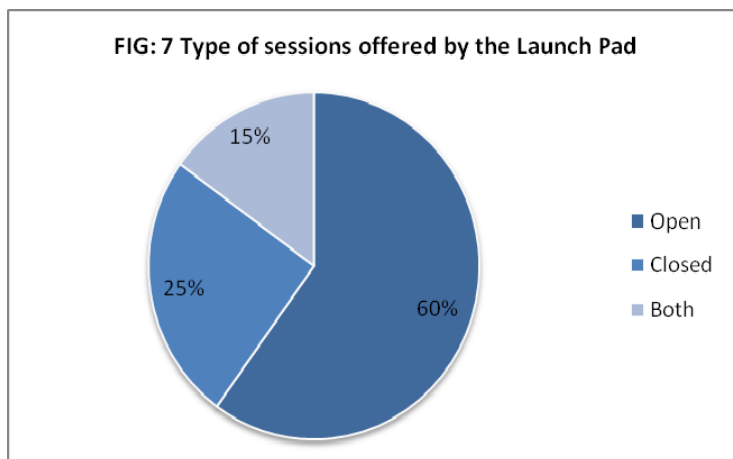


As Figure 6 shows the majority (60% or 12) of partners were involved in delivering enterprise related activities be this pre-start up type of support through to business growth and development. However it is interesting

to note that some 30% felt that they were not delivering enterprise related activities. These include organisations like One North East and the North East Contact Centre Academy who were focused on getting people into jobs and Newcastle Community Service Volunteers whose focus was on raising awareness about and recruiting people to volunteering.

The evaluation also asked the partners whether they had primarily ran open or closed sessions in their use of Launch Pad through 2009/10.

In 2009/10 the majority of partners had been running open sessions with Figure 7 showing that some 60% had focused on this with a further 15% running both open and closed



sessions in their use of Launch Pad.

Three partners – Visit Tees Valley, Be Enterprising and the Newcastle Enterprise Package – had used Launch Pad for both open and closed sessions. Visit Tees Valley had repeated the format it used last year and sent out open invitations for local

businesses to come and visit Launch Pad when it was in their area but had also pre-arranged business advice sessions for a certain number of businesses with business advisers on board Launch Pad at each venue.

The other two partners were both running a variety of enterprise related activities as part of their programmes and hence used Launch Pad in different ways for different activities.

In this past year there appears to have been a higher percentage of organisations using Launch Pad for open sessions than previously. This no doubt reflects, in part, the fact that a significant number were also running awareness raising type of activities for open audiences.

Table 2 overleaf illustrates examples of different types of open and closed sessions run by those responding to the evaluation survey.

3.6 Did they use LP staff to help design deliver activities?

Most (60%) responded that they did not use the LP team to design or deliver their activities. The remaining 40% said they had made use of the LP team to develop and deliver their activities and gave examples such as working with the LP team to explore and develop ideas and approaches for activities with the LP team coming up with examples of activities used

by other partners and then the LP team going on to deliver part of the activities at the event.

Table 2: Type of Sessions held on /with the Launch Pad

Type of session	Examples of use
Closed sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Princes Trust using LP as a space for training fundraisers as part of a programme of training using 'Go Ape' at Matfen Hall. ▪ St Michael's School using LP to run business start up and enterprise sessions with different year groups ▪ Northumberland college running being enterprise session for two groups of students on animal husbandry and child care courses ▪ Go Wansbeck running business advice sessions about public sector tendering for medium sized businesses ▪ Visit Tees Valley running 1 to 1 sessions for businesses to update on legislation and support services for Tourism related businesses
Open sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Awareness raising about starting your own business throughout South Tyneside and North Tyneside communities ▪ Used as an awareness raising tool to recruit people to a training course for enterprise ▪ Used to reach unemployed people to raise awareness on support for enhancing their employability ▪ Used to promote training that could lead to employment at call centre's ▪ Used to promote 'Real Help Campaign' to 'NEETS' focussed on providing career and employability advice and signposting ▪ Used in the high street to raise awareness about Volunteering in Newcastle ▪ Used in variety of locations to raise awareness about Newcastle College access courses and engage new students

3.7 Payment for Launch Pad Use

This year's evaluation had a specific aim to discuss issues surrounding payment for using Launch Pad, therefore the respondents were asked if they were aware of whether or not their organisation's had paid to use Launch Pad throughout 2009/10.

A total of 18 out of 20 of the respondents (90%) said that their organisations had paid to use the Launch Pad in the past year. Two of the respondents had paid £1000 per session which was the highest price paid with the rest paying between £80 and £500 per session the most common price being between £250 and £500 The average price paid by all users in 2009/2010 (average being the total amount paid divided by users) was £448 per session.

4 The Efficiency of Delivering Launch Pad

Before talking about the 'results' and 'benefits' they had experienced from their use of Launch Pad, the evaluation asked the partners about their experiences of working with the NEEB team in utilising the Launch Pad.

This had been a component of the previous annual evaluations and covered issues from the point of enquiring about and booking Launch Pad through to the prior planning and preparation for its use and finally the practicality of working on Launch Pad on the day.

4.1 Engagement with the NEEB team

The first step in this efficiency review was to build a picture of how the partners had engaged with the NEEB team. In past years some partners had simply contacted the NEEB team to book the Launch Pad and that was the only contact they had had. Other partners had worked very closely with the NEEB team and received support in designing and delivering their activities on the Launch Pad. Therefore the partners were asked if they had used LP staff /the NEEB team to help them design or deliver their Launch Pad activities in any way.

The majority (70%) 14 of the 20 respondents had not used the NEEB team beyond making the booking and agreeing sites. Of the remaining 6 respondents, 4 had used the team to help with design and promotion etc as illustrated by the comments below

- *"They helped us with ideas of how we could attract people to the LP - prizes , role models*
- *"Help re layout and location. The driver was excellent on the day very helpful"*
- *"Gave us lots of suggestions, helped us think it through, gave us examples of what others had done. Very helpful when it came to IT in particular as we wanted to use their laptops and TV".*
- *"Mary was excellent giving us lots of suggestions sorting out the dates and tying our events into other local events so we could get access to a wider number of people."*

The remaining two had a more in depth engagement with the team who had helped them to design and deliver of their activities as noted below:

- *"Yes they helped us to develop packages for training and help us to deliver all I do is coordinate within the college"*
- *"Yes we use the team to deliver the master class and Andrew is working with us on developing Trading Places as a new product".*

4.2 Respondents Feedback

Respondents were asked to rate the team supporting Launch Pad against 'quality of service', 'efficiency', 'the knowledge and experience' they brought and the partners 'overall Launch

Pad experience’. Tables 3 to 6 give both the rating and more qualitative feedback for each of these areas.

Quality of Work

Overall the respondents rated the quality of the work and services provided by the NEEB team very highly with 16 (80%) scoring it as either excellent or very good. Three respondents rated the quality as ‘Okay’ citing: lack of experience of the team, things going wrong or the team not delivering to the standard expected as the reasons for this lower score.

Table 3: Q How would you rate the quality of work/services provided by the NEEB team?

Excellent	10	(50%)
Very Good	6	(30%)
Okay	3	(15%)
Could not comment	1	(5%)
Comments		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>“Good professional and helpful came back quickly and overall very good”</i> ▪ <i>“Excellent – just got on with it and made our life simple”</i> ▪ <i>“They were very professional and used to dealing with our target market. On board they were good at engaging with people – it was not just about hiring a van.</i> ▪ <i>“Feel they could have been more proactive in helping us to use LP more innovatively at times so that we would have got more benefit from it.</i> ▪ <i>“I had very little to do with them other than the booking. The turned up and we did our event. The driver read the paper or looked at emails”</i> 		

Efficiency of the organisations around the Launch Pad

Respondents were asked to rate the efficiency of the organisation around Launch Pad. Overall there were high levels of satisfaction with the efficiency of the LP team and its services with 50% rating this as excellent and 35% scoring good or very good. Some did feel however that there had been some weaknesses in the service that had resulted in difficulties such as licenses not in place when they should have been; licenses restricting what could be done at the event and the partner not being aware of these restrictions at the planning stage; slow speed of response from the LP team over a range of issues.

Table 4: Q. How would you rate the efficiency of the organisation around the Launch Pad?

Excellent	10	(50%)
Very Good	4	(20%)
Good	3	(15%)
Okay	3	(15%)
Comments		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>“They were very good the first time and good the second time. There was a bit of a mess up the second time with a license not being in place. We sorted this ourselves”</i> ▪ <i>I get the impression there is a small team very busy but not proactive - slow with agreeing dates”</i> ▪ <i>One driver was very unhelpful he parked the van in a way that people couldn't get on easily and he would not move it to make this easier. There were no refreshments and he would not let us bring refreshments on board. The driver just sat in the small office and was unhelpful”</i> 		

Knowledge and experience of the NEEB Team

The partners were asked to rate the knowledge and experience that the NEEB team had brought to their project. In some cases this was interpreted as being the knowledge and experience the team had of managing the processes of booking, delivering and setting up the Launch Pad as that had been their main input to the project. Others talked more widely about the knowledge and experience that the team had of the specific projects the partners had delivered – knowledge and experience of enterprise, employability, training, education etc.

Table 5: Q How would you rate the knowledge & experience that NEEB staff brought?

Excellent	10	(50%)
Very Good	5	(25%)
Good	4	(20%)
Okay	1	(5%)
Could not comment	1	(5%)
One person said 1 and 4 against two separate uses of LP		
Comments		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>“very good overall although this time they didn’t know the estates and hadn’t researched them so the location sightings were not always the best”</i> ▪ <i>“Very good. I deal with a lot of external providers and Andrew is excellent. It helps that he has been a teacher he works well with students”</i> ▪ <i>“It was OK but there is a lack of experience in the team around enterprise.</i> ▪ <i>They are excellent when it comes to managing the LP but beyond that they sometimes say they will do things and they don’t or it takes an age.</i> ▪ <i>“They can provide practical examples of what others have done and come up with novel ideas but the hard data is missing so it is always hard to judge what success others have had”</i> ▪ <i>“Not sure what knowledge they have for us to use”</i> 		

Overall experience

Respondents were asked to rate their overall experience of working with the NEEB team and again there were high levels of satisfaction with 10 scoring excellent and 5 scoring ‘very good’. Three of the respondents scored ‘Okay’ .This reflected difficulties that they had experienced with the management and delivery of the Launch Pad.

Table 6: Q – How would you rate your overall experience of working with the NEEB team?

Excellent	10	(50%)
Very Good	5	(25%)
Good	2	(10%)
Okay	3	(15%)
Comments		

- *“they accommodate us in every way so I can’t blow their trumpet enough”*
- *“Excellent they helped right through from planning to running the day itself. They gave lots of advice. - a well oiled team”*
- *“The price is good they were very good at setting up easy to work with return calls the facility was clean worked etc*
- *“Couldn’t fault them”*
- *“They are a breath of fresh air easy to work with”*
- *“Mixed some excellent but some poor. We had a real issue with location. the team messed up one location and we had to move but by then we had printed leaflets told partners to be in the original site*
- *“Although they were generally very good we felt there was an element of them learning as well.*
- *“Really helpful at times and most things were no problem to them. Mary was our main contact”*

In summary feedback from the evaluation interviews showed good levels of satisfaction with how the NEEB team had managed and organised the reservation, planning and delivery of the Launch Pad facility. The proportion of those giving the team an excellent rating had fallen from past years where levels were around the upper 70s down to 50%.

5 Outputs, Outcomes and Added Value

The ‘contribution’ of Launch Pad is discussed in the following two sections. This section looks at immediate results that have come (or not) from the use of Launch Pad and section 5 focuses more specifically on the issue of impact.

Looking at the more immediate ‘results’ of using Launch Pad the evaluation asked respondents to reflect on why they had chosen to use Launch Pad and what they had achieved from using Launch Pad in terms of outputs, outcomes and added value.

5.1 Why did they choose to use Launch Pad?

The evaluation questionnaire asked this as an open question: *Why did you use or engage the LP in the first place? What added value did you think the LP would bring to your organisation/enterprise work?*

The responses were wide ranging as had been in the previous annual evaluations, however by and large three primary themes emerged as the reasons why the partners had chosen to use Launch Pad: it is something different that attracted people’s attention; it provides a mobile resource for outreach and it provides a flexible and interesting space in which to conduct activities.

The majority of partners (17) said that they had used Launch Pad for a combination of reasons usually a mix of it being something different combined with its mobility and or flexibility. As two respondents noted:

- *“we were looking at customer behaviour so having a facility in the centre of Durham was brilliant it gave us visibility; a chance to access real people; flexible timing meant it fitted in with school times and it is quirky so attracts lots of attention”*
- *“The LP is very visual and people notice it. It is flexible and it is somewhere people can come and sit. It gave us a base and some shelter as the weather was bad”.*

The comments made by the respondents under each of the three themes are follows.

Visually Striking / Different / Funky space

18 of the respondents mentioned this factor. Launch Pad is seen as an attractive, exciting, ‘funky’ and very different facility that attracts attention and generates interest from all age groups. It is seen as something different and this ‘difference’ links to themes that the users are trying to promote on the Launch Pad – about trying out new things, finding out about new opportunities, signing up for some new training etc. This was felt to be particularly important for those trying to raise awareness and attract attention and engagement through open style events in public places and at show events. It was also mentioned by

those trying to engage young people in schools and introducing new perspectives and enthusiasm into standard curriculum topics.

- *“Because it is a quirky thing to have on campus - a big shiny bus- it attracts attention from students and staff and helps to raise awareness about enterprise”*
- *“Something different and very flexible and mobile so we can get to small places we can brand it and let people know that we are doing things”*
- *“We wanted to have something that people would notice-it would give us high profile and promote us.*
- *We wanted something that was not scary and that people would feel happy to come onto”.*
- *“It gave us the hooks for publicity, we got some good photos and we were able to build the PR”*



Mobility Enables Outreach

Launch Pad allows organisations to reach directly into communities by giving them a presence in the centre of communities and the ability to bring services into the communities. This was a very important reason for just over half (11) of the respondents. Several organisations stated that their clients are reluctant to come to their offices/city centres and so taking ‘the office’ and staff out to them worked really well. The fact that Launch Pad is a vehicle that isn’t too bulky and can be set up almost anywhere within the region is a major plus.

- *“We are dealing with 'hard to reach communities ' the LP helps us to engage we can piggy back on community events we can get into communities”.*



- *“we need a mobile flexible resource to get out into very different communities very visible with easy access and functional yet relatively small so we can get to most places”*
- *“LP was a very cost effective way of getting staff out there talking with the public”*
- *“It offered us a mobile secure base no matter what the weather to get amongst the public”*
- *“It gave us the opportunity to deliver into areas where we have no physical base or there are few facilities available”*
- *“We needed something to get out into the communities in the NE”*

Provides additional / different facilities

Just over a third of respondents (8) noted that Launch Pad offers a different and flexible and yet professional high quality type of space when compared to a classroom, a counselling room or training venue. The sense of space that can be created internally and externally around the vehicle allows users to create a variety of 'venues' for different audiences.

This was seen as an important feature for the schools and colleges interviewed especially when the topics were about promoting and supporting creativity and being enterprising. It was also seen as important by some of the more business focused partners.

- *"We wanted to engage with medium businesses and had no connections with them on these estates so LP provided a mobile professional facility that gave us access and a resource"*
- *"I knew that the children would like something different an open classroom with computers- all shiny!"*
- *"It gave us a base and got us onto the street as we were reliant on passing trade".*
- *"It gave us another space and facility close to where we were working ...It gave us a space for a group to work in and be more comfortable as it was very cold and people could not be outside all the time."*



5.2 Outputs

Respondents were asked about what they had achieved in terms of outputs. Most of the respondents saw outputs as being related to the numbers of people they had engaged with at their Launch Pad events.

In past years many respondents found it difficult to recall precise numbers for their Launch Pad activities particularly those that had used Launch Pad several times and/or when some events had taken place at least 6 months prior to the evaluation interview.

This appeared to be even more of the case in this evaluation where many of the respondents were not able to give to give precise figures as shown by the responses given in Table 7 where nearly a third were not able to comment on numbers and referred the consultants back to the NEEB team for the numbers.

Table 7: Outputs from Launch Pad Events

Q9 What Outputs did you achieve for your enterprise work through using the LP?	As expected?
Mixed don't have precise numbers. We aim for 15- 20 per day and got 50 in Shotton which was great but very slow in other villages not even 15	?M
Not sure what our outputs were we rely on our suppliers to capture data and as I said we don't have it. I think we had mixed results	?
We aimed at getting 40 members of the public and we got 120 we had to print out more leaflets	✓
We were pleasantly surprised saw 700 - 800 people and got about 40 to 50 on the vehicle and then 10 to 15 came to a follow up session	✓
Got 27 new businesses on the books so that was very good.	✓
At Ferryhill we did get about 55 people – that was great and yet at Fishburn we got 5 - that was where the problems were re where the van was parked. Overall I think we got about 50% of what we expected	X
Don't have the figures but a mix some over performed beyond expectations and others underperformed	?M
About 300 people stopped, 150 put names in the draw and we did 60 guidance sessions -so very good outputs although we had no expectations	✓
We had a group of students 10-15 as planned	✓
Closed selected audience as planned with about 170 to 195 students	✓
Don't have great records - generally view is that numbers were lower than last time	?X
Gave business training on board and 2 hour 1 to 1 sessions with about 60 businesses	✓
We had very low numbers about 25 people coming on board over 5 days. This was very demoralising for the staff. From this we signed up 7 people onto our training which was good.	X
Fairly low numbers I think but I do not have the numbers.	?
Do not know - the information should be gathered by the partners and then fed into the European funding reports	?
Lots came on board for a look (I don't have a number) but we only got 6 people to sign up (hoped for 15)	X
Don't know as the partners were collecting their own numbers - I think LP should have these.	?
Don't know what the numbers are but the LP should know.	?
35 people from businesses received training and became a fundraising team for Princes Trust	✓
Don't know. I think we will have given the numbers to LP.	?

*Key: '✓' as expected , 'M' mixed results, 'X' less than expected and '?' not sure /don't know

5.3 Outcomes

Respondents were then asked what they felt were the 'immediate outcomes' they had achieved by using Launch Pad. The majority talked about being able to reach the people they wanted to reach as being a major outcome as well as helping to engage and move people through to further activity and actions.

Some who had recently completed their Launch Pad activity felt it was too early to have achieved outcomes as such. For example, one of the colleges interviewed felt that numbers on courses this coming September would be the real test for them in terms of people moving from access courses (which they saw as outputs) to those registering for full academic courses.

Table 8 summarises the main types of outcomes that the respondents reported with general awareness raising about services and attracting new clients being the main responses. This was particularly the case for those running open events.

Table 8: Outcomes from using Launch Pad

Outcomes	No. giving this example *
Tested /Experienced a new event	3
Raised awareness of enterprise/our activities	11
Attracted new clients	9
Developed/tested new ideas	2
New target group now engaged	7
Other	4
Total	36*

*The total is more than 20 because several organisations gave more than 1 example when asked this question.

The educational establishments had outcomes are more related to trying out new types of enterprise sessions with students or giving a different group of students a chance to experience a different type of enterprise session. St Michaels in Billingham are working with the NEEB team to develop a new schools enterprise product – ‘Trading Places’ that will be discussed further the next section on Impact. Table 9 presents some additional comments and elaboration about what the respondents felt they had achieved as outcomes.

Table 9: What outcomes did you achieve for your work through using the LP?

we did raise awareness about our work and got some new clients
We did raise awareness about our activities and I am sure that we attracted some new clients
in the curriculum there is a part in employability about customer awareness and you couldn't do this real live testing without something like LP it worked brilliantly
Tested new ideas and raised awareness about our services
We got some new clients which was our aim. Also the clients were able to access our services more quickly because we were on the spot for the day
New clients and tested new ideas out in different communities
we did get some feedback from the enrolment form last year that some people had come through after attending the LP but don't have numbers and we don't have feedback for this year as yet .
We got new volunteers. Of the 10 people who I spoke to personally 5 of them have come back and are now doing volunteer work.
Brings enterprise to the students and the college

went on to develop the new product 'trading places' in the school ; new staff engaged from technology and languages

Didn't feel that achieved an outcome because numbers were so low

Gave me an opportunity to re engage with businesses and bring new ones on board

We attracted new clients

We raised awareness

All of those because we have activities delivered by 11 partners across a wide range of activities

We attracted new clients

Some good partnerships developed between the enterprise agencies

We widened our campaign - previously it had just been through the media and this got us out to the community. It brought our partners together who helped make it successful.

Built 5 teams who were motivated & had tested their problem solving and communication skills.

Raised awareness we wanted to give people some fun while we engaged with them about employment advice and opportunities

5.4 Added Value

Having looked at outputs and outcomes the evaluation then asked the partners interviewed whether they felt that Launch Pad had brought about any specific 'added value' to their activities. Respondents were asked to consider two questions whether there had been 'added value' for their organisation and whether there had been 'added value' for those participating in their Launch Pad supported activities.

Organisational 'added value'

When asked about 'added value' for the organisation the respondents were very positive and enthusiastic with 18 of the 20 respondents stating that Launch Pad had added value to their work' 2 felt it hadn't and one was unsure. The latter three felt that their 'lack of added value' had arisen because of a mix up re the Launch Pad site location which had to be changed at the last minute and caused logistic and promotional problems.

Table 10: The 'Added Value' of using Launch Pad

Added value for the Organisation	No stating this
Provided a flexible resource /extra space	4
Extra resources new people and ideas into the org	3
Provided a mobile resource presence away from our base	2
Provided something different – fun and quirky	2
Enabled us to go out to clients in their communities	5
Gave them ideas of how to engage people in different ways	2
Helped to raise awareness about our organisation and services with different groups	2
Accessed us to additional resources from NEEB	1
Helped us to recruit – meet targets	3
Helped us to network with other partners/providers	4
Total	28*

*The total is more than 20 because several organisations gave more than 1 example when asked this question.

Table 10 provides a summary of the main forms of ‘added value’ reported followed by illustrative quotes from some of the respondents

- *“It gave us a presence and taken the brand to the community”*
- *“Helped with community engagement. This is a very cost effective way of engaging for us”.*
- *“Has really helped to raise the profile of volunteering in Newcastle”.*
- *“LP means that we can give children a different experience and don’t have to take them off site and do all the risk assessment”.*
- *“Gave us a promotional edge. We were highly visible and it brought people to us”*

Client ‘Added Value’

The consultants then asked the respondents if they felt that Launch Pad had brought added value to their clients.

Some found it difficult to answer this question as they had not followed up those attending their Launch Pad event – for example some had held general awareness-raising sessions that had no inbuilt follow through with those who had engaged on the day. Overall 1 (5%) felt they could not comment, 14 (70%) felt that Launch Pad activity had added value for their client group, and 5 (25%) felt that it had not added any value to their client group. The latter group felt that the value of Launch Pad for them had been raising their profile as an organisation rather than bringing specific value to any specific clients. For at least three they have experienced low numbers attending their Launch Pad events and hence felt that it hadn’t really added value because of this.

Those who used Launch Pad in a more focused way often through a closed session were more positive and enthusiastic about how Launch Pad had given value to those engaging. Some illustrative quotes from the respondents reflect the mix of feedback on this point.

-
- *“Absolutely- students got to speak to potential customers who were not their family or friends getting feedback from strangers - especially positive feedback really made them think - you could not do this in a class room”.*
 - *“Difficult to say definitely. Our clients tend to be people who wouldn’t come forward without a prompt”.*
 - *“They (businesses) could access us without an appointment informal atmosphere for their first step into finding out about us.”*
 - *“Gives the students a break from the class room – and feel that the groups learn very well on the LP”.*
 - *Not really because we had so small numbers, it was very frustrating and the problems in north Tyneside didn’t help”.*
 - *“They don’t have to travel and lose business time to access us - important in rural areas. They have a very focused 2 hour session on their door step and for those who drop in they can get immediate feedback and help”.*

6 Impact of using Launch Pad

Assessing the impact of any enterprise support activity is difficult because this involves examining additionality – did Launch Pad activity make a difference, assessing attribution and causality - did Launch Pad lead to any changes, can it ‘take credit’ and then proving this with the counterfactual of control and comparator groups. As well as these, methodological issues of ‘attribution of benefit’ is further complicated for Launch Pad users. Most of the organisations have used Launch Pad as a means of delivering *their* activities and so see the impact as coming primarily from their training and their awareness raising /engagement activities rather than that of Launch Pad per se.

In most cases the partners have used Launch Pad as a flexible mobile platform to deliver their work. Only in a few instances, have the partners actively utilised the expertise, materials and the NEEB staff team to help deliver the Launch Pad activities.

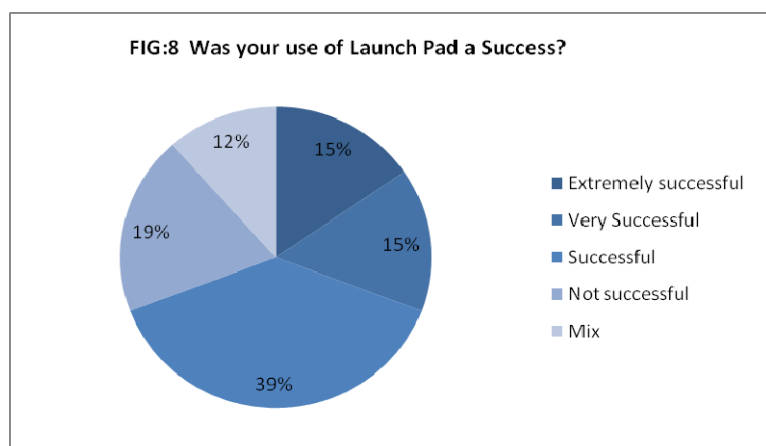
The consultants explained to those interviewed that the intention was not to ascribe *all* impact to Launch Pad per se, but rather to try to establish whether and how Launch Pad had added to the success or impact of the partner organisation’s work. Therefore this section presents a discussion based upon a very simple qualitative and subjective assessment of impact derived from, the respondent’s feedback to the following questions.

- *How would you rate the overall success of your use of LP?*
- *Would you have undertaken the activity we have discussed without LP?*
- *Do you think that you would have had the same success if you had not used LP?*
- *Do you continue to deliver the types of activities that you did with the LP?*
- *What if any has been the long term impact of working with LP on your activities?*

6.1 Was your use of LP Successful?

Respondents were asked to describe the success of their Launch Pad with a scale ranging from extremely successful through to not successful. Figure 8 shows that there were 23 responses to this question as 3 partners felt that some of their activities had been very successful and some had not been successful.

Overall the majority of partners felt that their use of the LP had been successful with some 40%



of the respondents rating their use as very or extremely successful. Some of this group described their success as follows:

- “Top marks- helped to give students a real market research experience. Andrew is an experienced education person and helped us to do a good day”.
- “It was very successful. A focal point in the city centre at a prime time very striking a huge presence so attracts attention”.
- *“Gave me a chance to explore the area and let people know what we are doing -it is difficult to engage businesses over a large patch and this helped greatly. It also helped me to develop relationships with other providers”.*
- “Met our objective to raise awareness and our profile felt it was less successful second time but that more to do with circumstances timing weather etc”.

Other described their mixed experiences as follows:

- *“Mixed success really some places it worked very well and in others it doesn’t.”*
- *“Some sites worked well others too quiet - hence comment about more guidance from NEEB team re sites. Also we need to think about having the right people on board”.*
- *“It was a bit hit and miss with some days very good and other days very poor. One day was excellent when Mary organised a day on a housing estate linking in with a housing association.”*

For those who felt that their Launch Pad experience had been less successful their comments included the following:

- “Because we haven't really used it well enough haven't got the numbers we needed it has raised awareness but not the extent that we hoped and we haven't captured output data so it is hard to judge”
- *“It was okay - but the location was poor on one place and we got low numbers – in small villages people won’t come out so need to piggy back on other activities in these type of communities. Also the driver did not help”.*

6.2 Additionality

Respondents were almost equally split on their feedback to the question *“Would you have undertaken the activity we have discussed without LP?”* Ten or 50% said that they would not have undertaken their activity without Launch Pad, with 9 (45%) saying they would have and 1 stating that they were not sure because on the first occasion they used Launch Pad they relied on it *“but on the second we could have done it without the LP”*. Typically those saying that they would have done an activity without Launch Pad also noted:

- *“We have run events on Blitz bus and in community halls.”*
- *“yes we do them all the time.”*
- *“yes we would have run these in hotels.”*

Many of those saying that they would have undertaken the activity without the Launch {Pad qualified their comments:

- *“Yes but would have had to hire space in CAB or community hall and this would be far less visible. Plus a lot more logistics to arrange for this option so a nightmare compared to the LP.”*
- *“Yes we would have run sessions in community centres”*
- *“Yes but wouldn’t have engaged the year 10 boys as much as LP work did. It is the vehicle and the staff that make it”.*
- *“Yes - but it would have been hard and required a lot of our resources.”*

Those who said they couldn’t have undertaken that activity without Launch Pad said

- *“Not possible because there aren’t the premises on these estates to run a one off service with internet facility .Internet is critical for us because our service is web based”.*
- *“No not initially but now we can probably do a range of other awareness things.”*
- *“No not for this activity - even a visible market stall would not have had the same impact I feel.”*
- *“No - we needed footfall and traffic so we needed something mobile. It would have been hard to find a facility in the places we needed to be.”*

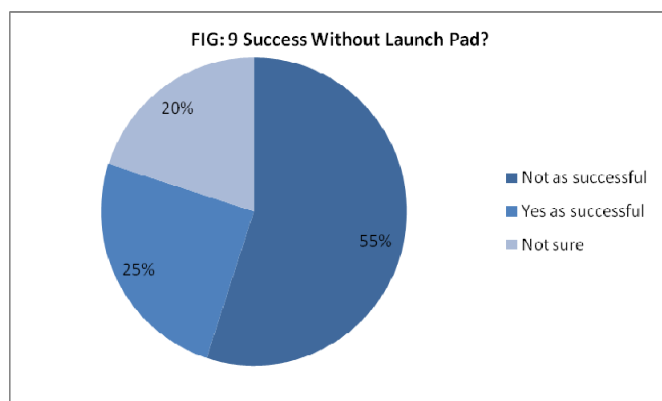
To help supplement the above question the evaluators also asked whether the partners continued to deliver the same type of activities that had been previously delivered using Launch Pad.

Ninety percent – 18 of the 20 respondents said they did so with some using other vehicles such as the Blitz bus to do their community engagement work and /or utilising local community and sports centres or using outreach workers to access new client groups. It is interesting to note that nearly half (8) of those that are continuing to deliver activities without Launch Pad noted that they felt they were having less impact – attracting and/or seeing less people using these other mechanisms

The two who responded no to this question said that they now asked people to come to their office because the community in general is more aware of what they do and the other said the Launch Pad use was for a one off campaign that is now finished.

6.3 Success without LP

The evaluators then asked the respondents a very direct question *“Do you think that you would have had the same success if you had not used LP?”* Once again the response was equally mixed as Figure 9 shows. Just over a half (55%) of the respondents felt that they would not have had the same success without Launch Pad with a further 4 or 20%



not being sure. Some illustrative comments from the former group of 11 respondents included:

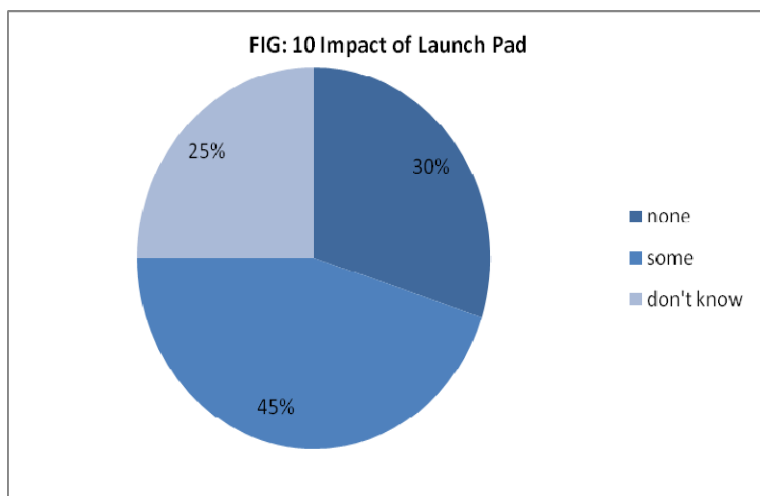
- *“No we would not have been able to carry out our activities - it got us right onto the sea front.”*
- *“Because they (NEEB) work hard to make it work. The branding advice they gave us was excellent - that made a real difference”.*
- *“Definitely not - we were there in front of main shops in a very accessible place on a Saturday what more could you want.”*

Some of the 5 (25%), who felt that they would have been as successful without Launch Pad, commented as follows:

- *“Probably - the LP has a strong brand of its own and that can conflict with our message”*
- *“Yes because in some places the community centres are well used and better than LP.*
- *“Probably - so far the take-up is very low so we would probably have achieved this or exceeded it.”*
- *“Yes we would have succeeded I feel but maybe being a little less comfortable!”*

6.4 Overall Impact

Finally the partners were asked *“What if any has been the long term impact of working with LP on your activities?”* with the phrase ‘long term’ meaning well beyond their Launch Pad experience.



As Figure 10 shows 5 (25%) of the respondents felt that they could not say what the impact had been because it was either too soon (2) after their use of the Launch Pad or they did not have the data to evidence impact. For example one enterprise organisation noted: *“it was only very recent so it’s hard to say about impact. Clearly it has helped us to raise awareness*

but this needs time to translate into action of people using services and then going on to start a business get a job etc- it is a long journey”.

Another said: *“I don’t really know - I would like to think that someone from each of the agencies has learned something from the experience that they can use in the future.”*

The remaining sets of respondents were split - 6 (30%) felt there had been no impact on their organisation from use of Launch Pad just stating no in response to this question and others added comments such as *“Not sure about long term - don’t think so”* or *“I would*

struggle to identify any impact". The remaining 9 (45%) who felt there had been some impact included comment such as:

- *"It has helped us to raise awareness of our services amongst hard to reach communities - has got people out and engaged with learning and development."*
- *"It took time to develop something that fits with their needs but it is great. It has worked so well that enterprise is taken seriously within the school."*
- *"Excellent offering a voluntary organisation like us to have that type of exposure on a main street- it will serve well for some time".*

Getting the respondents to reflect upon the overall success and the longer term impact of their Launch Pad experience has revealed mixed views. For some – usually around half of those interviewed the experience has been very successful and has impact whilst for others the experience has been mixed and for a minority it has just been okay.

Looking at this split and the type of organisation and activities in each group, the feedback would appear to suggest that those engaged in running closed session with selected or pre targeted clients have had a more successful or at least more positive experience than those that ran open awareness raising and engagement type of activities. This point is discussed further in section 8.

7 Future Use, Payment and Ideas

Having looked at their past experience of using Launch Pad the respondents were asked about the future. About their future use of Launch Pad; issues surrounding payment for Launch Pad and suggestions about what and how Launch Pad should operate in the future in particular whether there are any gaps in the market that a Launch Pad facility and service might address.

7.1 Using Launch Pad Again?

Looking to the future respondents were asked whether they would use Launch Pad again and the majority 12 (60%) said yes with 6 stating they would not and 2 saying they were not sure. In all cases the respondents were asked to elaborate on their answers

For the 6 who stated that they would not use Launch Pad in the future the primary issue was cost. For 4 respondents the situation was that their organisations were cutting back or were being funded in a different way and they simply did not have the money to spend on Launch Pad. As one organisation noted:

- *“Funding pure and simple we don’t get as much core funding. We are now output driven and paid as such and we cannot get short term outputs from awareness raising activities which is a longer term thing.”*

For one they had been offered the use of various local authority premises free of charge to run outreach work and so would be using those facilities. The issue for remaining person who had said ‘no’ together with those who were unsure about future use of Launch Pad the appeared to be about getting better value for money as the two quotes below illustrate.

- *“We would have to negotiate costs and what we get for our money. In reality what we had was the LP and a driver who read the paper all day.”*
- *“Its not to do with charging per se more about what we got out of it for the price”*

The 8 respondents who said that they wouldn’t use Launch Pad in the future or were unsure were asked if they would consider doing so if Launch Pad were to offer different things. All but one said that it wasn’t so much an issue of what was being offered but rather simply a funding matter and related to this feeling that you were getting good value for money.

For the 12 who said they would use Launch Pad in the future there was little clarity about the scale of when and how they would use it and several qualified their use. All said that they would use the Launch Pad for similar things that they had used it for in the past with 2 saying they had ideas of how they could use it with different groups. Only 2 of the 12 were

able to say how many sessions they would book in 2010 and both of these were running programmes that had Launch Pad use built into the Programme.

- *“We have booked 20 occasions as part of the contract. After that I’m not sure but we would consider it whenever we need mobile facilities”*
- *“We will use it for engagement work again. We will probably do less - about 5 to 6 sessions this year compared to 15 last year because of funding”.*

A quarter of those who said they would use it again qualified that future use saying it would depend on being able to negotiate price.

“If we use it will be for a similar programme but we would use it in a different format and we would have to negotiate costs.”

7.2 Payment for Launch Pad

As mentioned above a key aspect of this evaluation was to explore issues related to charging for Launch Pad and the partners understanding and appreciation of the cost of delivering Launch Pad and their attitudes towards costs being applied.

The overall annual expenditure for NEEB in 2008/09 was £384,985⁵. The NEEB team have determined that the maximum number of bookable days for Launch Pad is set at 220, therefore using a simple calculation the total cost of having the launch pad out being used in the last year was £1,750 per day. The NEEB team have calculated the direct operating costs of the Launch Pad vehicle as being:

Vehicle operating costs	£60,899
Staff costs (drivers)	£58,692
TOTAL	£119,591

The remaining £265,394 in the year was for other overheads including management, office costs etc. The NEEB team have set out their list of charges for the next year. Due to a grant from ONE North East the charges are subsidised and are as follows:

Standard Launch Pad – Monday to Friday	£600 per day
Weekends (allows for staff overtime costs)	£1,000 per day
Bank Holiday	£1,200 per day

All charges to exclude parking charges but does include a site survey, risk assessment, parking permissions, a Launch Pad operator to manage the vehicle, use of all standard equipment on board and tea and coffee for partners.

⁵ All figures supplied by NEEB

In addition the NEEB team will consider discounts for more than 10 bookings in a 2 month period.

Understanding the cost of Launch Pad

Partners were asked how much they thought it might cost to run Launch Pad on a daily basis. Although most said they did not know some did put forward some ideas on cost sometimes comparing launch Pad to costs of other vehicles or hotel space.

- *"I don't know £500 perhaps"*
- *"No idea but I expect it costs a lot"*
- *"Not sure, about £350"*
- *"Not sure, about £2000"*
- *"I have heard lots of figures thrown around 1000, 1500/1800 so I am not sure."*

When given the figure of £1,800 as a daily cost there was a mixture of responses to this including those who thought this was probably reasonable to those who expressed surprise at the cost. Comments included:

- *Not surprised it's that much*
- *I work in marketing so I can see how it could cost this much*
- *Seems an awful lot*
- *"I think the wage bill is very high so this would affect it"*
- *"Surprised it is so much are they building in all costs and capital costs? What about the money from the BOND?"*
- *Not surprised to hear that it costs a lot - but if you think that you can get a hotel room for £175 then it really does have to be very different to justify a high price"*

Building the cost of using Launch Pad into funding bids and budgets

The partners were asked whether they would consider building in the costs of using Launch Pad into any future tenders, applications/budgets and plans. For some this was a difficult question to answer in that they were not in control of the budgeting and did not make the financial decisions. However 6 said they definitely would and 2 saying no. The remaining respondents were unsure as much depended on the future of their projects, what work they might be involved and what they were trying to achieve. Cost and affordability within the budget was also clearly an issue for some.

Comments

- *"yes we would - but at £500 it would have to be a major day for us to use that amount of money"*
- *"yes have already done so and would do so in the future"*
- *"we have done this which is why we were using it in North Tyneside"*
- *"don't really so this, I am given a budget and so any LP payment needs to come out of that"*
- *"It was in our budget but we will not be able to do it again".*
- *"not sure - we are having problem getting any funds so not sure that we could even consider it - would have to ask the manager"*

- *“maybe but realistically we will only get funds if there is a shortfall in core budget/ LP is seen as a luxury not essential and if it is above £250 for a half day would be hard to justify including it even in a tender”*

How much would you be willing to pay for launch Pad?

Responses to the question of how much the partners would be willing to pay for each session of Launch Pad showed that the majority would be willing to pay £500 (8). One respondent said they would be willing to pay £1,500 and another said £750. Eight others gave figures at £250 or less - £250 (6), £150 (1), £100 (1) and 2 partners said they would not be able to pay.

Partners in general recognised that they must pay if they want to use Launch Pad in the future. Some highlighted the need for the NEEB team to be open and transparent about the charges and what partners would get for the money they paid – what is included in the package and what is not. There was a general expectation that if they are paying then they need a professional service that does not make mistakes and where they are getting the support they pay for. However with this said, on the current subsidised pricing of £600 per day for Launch Pad it is clear that few of the respondents are willing/able to pay even this subsidised rate.

7.3 Launch Pad Services in the Future

As in previous evaluations, the partners were asked to consider how the NEEB team might improve and or extend their use of Launch Pad in the future. Partners were asked whether they felt that the NEEB team should do anything differently with their current ‘offer’ to improve how people use and benefit from Launch Pad and then whether NEEB should be doing different things with Launch Pad by looking at other services other markets etc.

Doing things differently

Four of the respondents were satisfied and felt that the team did not need to improve. However some 16 or 80% of the 20 respondents felt that the team could improve their current offering in some way. The issues noted by the respondents included improving the licence process and agreeing sites; being proactive with support, clarity around pricing and conditions of use and better monitoring of results as well as a specific mention about the need for disabled access onto the launch Pad vehicles. The following quotes illustrate the 7 main points raised.

- I. **Having a more proactive approach.** Five of the respondents felt the NEEB team needed to be more proactive in general offering ideas and advice on where and how to use the Launch Pad to maximise impact. This would appear to be especially important if the user is not an enterprise or promotional expert.
 - *“Be more proactive with ideas of what to do how to use LP for certain target groups; if you are not a specialist you need help to maximise use of the LP”.*

- *"We would have benefited from more direction especially re the sites because 2 sites weren't that great."*
- *"I also think they should think about bringing organisations together to do thing - say orgs doing pre-employment training, or enterprise - we could share costs and staff time"*

II. **Systems need to be better /a 'slicker approach'.** There needs to be a review of the booking and management systems so that there is a smoother sorting of the licence issue and getting the location sorted (5 respondents).

- *"Location problems and last minute changes meant it cost us money to reorganise and we lost credibility with clients and partners - need to improve this!"*
- *"They need to really improve their systems and their approach especially if they are going to charge".*
- *"They need to be slicker and they need to sort out their marketing - I don't think we have been approached to use it"*
- *"It is a brilliant resource but the service with it is poor "They really need to step up their game if they are going to compete .people expect a different level of service especially if they are paying what they consider a premium rate"*

III. **Need for greater clarity about charging** (3 respondents) both in terms of a consistent message about what is the 'going rate' and what services/ equipment etc are included within the fee. This is seen as particularly important when users are having to fight for budget and there is alternative vehicles (albeit not always as good as launch Pad) as competition out in the market place

- *"They need to be clear about their pricing policy and what we get for the money we pay. We were charged additional costs for using equipment and thought this should have been in the overall fee. I don't understand their costings. We are seriously thinking about not using it again."*

IV. **Need for better monitoring systems** to capture outputs. It was felt that NEEB as a minimum need to advise users about how best they might monitor and evaluate their work on or with the Launch Pad. (4 respondents)

- *"I need help with monitoring. I need numbers and they don't come through until very late if at all."*
- *"Bit more procedures and better data collection. There need to be more controls in place - ticky boxes checking we have been told/shown everything and some basic briefing sheets would be good. The LP people could keep a record of numbers that would be helpful. Don't remember being asked to complete a monitoring form".*
- *"I have real respect for Mary and what she does and I am enthusiastic about the LP as a resource but there needs to be better monitoring and more hard facts out of each day - the LP could do this and feed it back."*

V. **Better promotion and selling.** (6 respondents)There is a general consensus that Launch Pad is operating in a very tough market place where funding is tight and that the team

needs to actively promote their services more widely and really sell it. Several respondents mentioned commercial competitors'

- *"I think that a lot of people don't know anything about LP need to do some more promotion as it is probably not used as much as it could be."*
- *"NEEB team need to be more dynamic we don't hear from them and they need to be pushier to be selling LP and telling us how we can get best value from it. Money is tight and people need to be convinced that they will get added value and value for money"*
- *"There are other competitors moving in and we are looking at a VW van tomorrow. LP seems to be more a mobile classroom for schools and they don't seem to market to us what they can do or offer."*
- *"I think they could market the events. So maybe have a newsletter going out to a wide range of people and organisations that would include details of where the LP is going to be and who is going to be on it and what they are doing. It would help us to market."*
- *It's an excellent service but whether outcomes from use give enough value for money to make £500 worthwhile that's the challenge. Slaley Hall will give a room and services for £700 and it is prestigious setting. Maybe LP has to sell its carbon footprint benefit - we come to you!"*

VI. **Need to refresh and revisit the branding on the vehicles** (3). One user felt that the Launch Pad vehicles could do with a 'spruce up' and this was seen as being an important issue especially if NEEB were to put up their prices for using Launch Pad. Two users mentioned the dominance of the Launch Pad on the vehicles and how this detracted from the users being able to badge and promote their own service on the vehicle. It was suggested that when the vehicles are updated then the main body of the vehicles could be painted a plain colour to act as a backcloth for users to badge.

- *"It is an excellent facility that could be used for a variety of different awareness engagement type of activities for different sectors but they could do better letting users have a more prominent branding than that of the LP itself. The blue and orange is a very strong image and tends to detract from our posters."*
- *"Think they have a great product but it will probably need an upgrade technology wise soon. Need more robust internet connection as people have more portable technology. Could attract people to the LP by offering wifi and perhaps get a wi or x box as part of kit to help with users with audience engagement".*

VII. **Unhelpful driver** Two respondents made specific mentions about a driver being unhelpful and two others made similar comments in passing so this did not appear to be a one off occurrence.

"That driver was very poor and needs to come with a different attitude".

Doing different things

Feedback to the question about whether NEEB should be doing different things was equally split. Half felt that Launch Pad was doing fine as it was and that there were no particular gaps in the market for Launch Pad to fill beyond the type of things that it was already doing.

The remaining half of respondents felt that the enterprise sector especially the pre start market was a tough market to be working in and that Launch Pad probably needed to be looking at other opportunities. The suggestions given mostly concerned targeting the existing business market either through government programmes for the small business market or directly to businesses themselves

The quotes given below outline the types of ideas that were put forward

“If the enterprise market is tough then should be looking at commercial users. I would have thought it (Launch Pad) was an ideal thing for small businesses to use to test their market”.

“I think the pre enterprise market is very tough with little funding. Perhaps look at post start and helping businesses to survive. Stockton Council is keen to help local businesses improve their tendering to local authorities- LP could help raise awareness amongst businesses and help inform them about this.”

“Looking for other uses - could LP be adapted to do cookery demos or food demos as these would be great for tourism type of businesses”

“Launch Pad could do different things for example look at test trading for business -the mobility means you could take a business to where there is footfall to test out a new product”.

One other suggestion related more to the education market where one respondent felt the Launch Pad could be used more for teacher training as well as helping to engage parents in enterprise at schools.

“Launch Pad could be used for training teachers after school on site. Again this would help to reduce off site costs for schools and travelling time for teachers.They could also do enterprise exhibitions in shopping areas to engage parents about enterprise at schools”

8 Conclusions and Reflections for the Future

This section summarises and concludes the findings from the evaluation exercise and then highlights the major points and issues that have emerged concerning the delivery of Launch Pad in the future. These points and issues are presented as a series of reflections for the NEEB team and their Board to consider.

8.1 Overview conclusions

This evaluation as with those in 2007/08 and 2008/09 shows that Launch Pad has been used by a wide range of organisations throughout the North East to deliver a variety of open and closed session to number of different client groups.

It is being used to engage different groups with activities ranging from information giving and awareness-raising about employment training and enterprise opportunities to providing very explicit inputs on how to start and run a business or improve your business through accessing public procurement or tourism opportunities.

Unlike in past years there seems to have been a larger proportion of partners using Launch Pad to run open public awareness raising and engagement type of activities as compared to closed targeted training type of session.

Feedback on use of Launch Pad and the support provided by the NEEB team was in general very good with around 50% of respondents rating delivery as 'excellent'. However this is lower when compared rating in the upper 60s and 70s in previous years. Users are becoming more critical and no doubt some of this is because they are now paying customers as opposed to user of a free service. A majority of respondents felt that the NEEB team could 'up their game' and improve how they delivered the Launch Pad 'offer'. Some of the more prominent themes highlighted by the feedback are discussed again below under the section on 'reflections'.

In terms of results and benefits the majority of respondents reported that they felt that Launch Pad had helped them to achieve outputs and generate positive outcomes or added value for both their organisations and their clients. However very few were able to articulate these achievements in hard numbers or to say whether or not they had met their targets. Whilst this has been raised issue in past evaluations it would appear that there has very little systematic monitoring of activities outputs and outcomes for Launch Pad use over the past year with very few users setting quantifiable targets for their Launch Pad activities or keeping accurate records of what they achieved on the day.

Whilst many respondents felt that their Launch Pad activity had had a positive impact on their organisation and work they were not able to provide any significant tangible evidence

of this to the evaluators. Therefore any assessment of impact has been a very simple qualitative, ex post and somewhat subjective exercise based on the reflections of those interviewed.

The majority of respondents felt that the NEEB team and Launch Pad are now in a saturated and increasingly competitive delivery market in the enterprise sector – especially that part which is supporting pre start up and educationally related enterprise activities. This is evidenced perhaps by the fall in bookings and number of partners utilising Launch Pad throughout 2009/10 when compared to previous years and the low levels of forward bookings that the team have for 2010/2011

There is less funding available for front end engagement work for enterprise and at the same time increased competition in the form of alternative mobile resources as well as pressure for delivery partners to maximise their use of local authority premises in an era of cuts in public spending. Consequently most respondents felt that Launch Pad would need to look to alternative partners especially if they were going to have to charge what they felt were market rates for the Launch Pad.

In terms of cost there are a significant minority of Launch Pad users who would not be able to pay for use in the future. The majority of respondents to this evaluation said they would be willing to pay to use Launch Pad. However the NEEB team face two challenges in this respect: first the maximum rates that most respondents said they would pay fall well under the subsidised daily rate set by NEEB and secondly the partners as paying customers now have higher expectations' of a much greater level of service and support alongside simply hiring the vehicles.

In light of the above findings the overall conclusion is that there could still be a place for Launch Pad services in the region but to deliver this on a relevant and sustainable basis will require some significant changes in both what and how the NEEB team deliver the service.

8.2 Reflections

Several points and issues about the future of Launch Pad were raised throughout the evaluation. The most prominent matters arising are outlined below. These include quite practical operational issues as well as broader strategic considerations.

Operational

A number of partners suggested ways in which the current work and use of Launch Pad could be improved.

- **More effective and efficient systems.** There is a sense that what were very high standards have slipped somewhat and now practices around the booking and

management systems need to be reviewed and refreshed so that there is a smoother and speedier sorting of licences and site location issues.

- **Clarity about the Launch Pad offer** – users what to be clear about what they are getting as part of the ‘Launch Pad Package’ and what it is going to cost so that they can compare it to the alternatives and they can ‘sell it’ to their organisations and funders. Moreover the ‘offer’ message needs to be a consistent for all concerned. It is a small region and people compare notes!
- **Better promotion and selling.** There is a general consensus that Launch Pad is operating in a very tough market place where funding is tight and that the team needs to actively promote the facility more widely and really sell it. At least two of the partners interviewed for this evaluation had not heard of Launch Pad until recently and some long standing users noted that there were potential users in the region especially those in the third sector and those working with existing businesses.
- **Less prominent Launch Pad branding.** Launch Pad is seen to have a very distinctive branding with the prominent blue and orange on the vehicles. Whilst this is strength in that it gets the vehicles noticed, it can also be a weakness from the partners view point in that the Launch Pad brand overwhelms or at least detracts from their attempts to badge and promote their own services on the vehicle. It was suggested that when the vehicles are updated that the main body of the vehicles could be painted a plain colour to act as a backcloth for users to badge. This would give them a greater sense of ownership to the partner and could be sold as one of the benefits that Launch Pad offers to paying customers.

Adding Value to the current Launch Pad Product

Other partners suggested ways in which the NEEB team could augment and add value to the existing Launch Pad product by:

- **Adopting a much more proactive and supportive approach.** The NEEB team need to be more proactive in how they work with partners – both in up front marketing and selling of Launch Pad -offering ideas and advice on where and how to use the Launch Pad to maximise impact but also with after care. For example several respondents felt that they would have made much better use of the Launch Pad if they had had more up front guidance from the NEEB team. The welcomed advice on how to promote their own brand, how to attract the public, what had worked for other users.
- **More effective monitoring.** The NEEB team need to revisit their monitoring systems and consider how they can best help their partners to set clear goals and targets for their use of Launch Pad and then capture delivery data on outputs and outcomes. This

not only provides impact evidence for NEEB itself to use but can be presented as integral Launch Pad service helping users to get the evidence they need to supply to their funders.

- **Need to refresh the vehicles.** There was minority view that Launch Pad vehicles could do with a 'spruce up' and this was seen as being an important issue especially if NEEB were to start charging for their use. Reviewing the Technology on board and the web connection capability was mentioned as was the suggestions to try and offer wifi connections and provide additional electronic equipment such as Wi and X Box for partners to use as part of their Launch Pad activities.

More Strategic points

- **Pricing /Costing the Launch Pad.** The current equation of what partners are willing to pay and what NEEB propose to charge in order to cover the already subsidised costs of Launch Pad do appear to add up on based on the evidence from this evaluation. The costing /pricing profile for the Launch Pad needs to be reviewed as a matter of some urgency.
- **Additional market segments.** Launch Pad is being offered in an increasingly competitive market. Whilst there may still be customers who can pay to use Launch Pad in the pre and start up enterprise sector, several respondents suggested that Launch Pad needs to explore other avenues for new customers. They key suggestions made concerned supporting the survival and growth of existing businesses either by selling Launch Pad to businesses directly or working with support agencies that are working with business similar to Launch Pad's existing partners - Go Wansbeck and Visit Tees Valley.
- **A Direct Deliverer of support.** Launch Pad is currently piloting a school focused educational product – Trading Places. This product seems to be well thought of by those involved in the pilot although they suggest that it needs to be re packaged and re priced – it is currently under costed and priced. This might prove to be a successful new product for Launch Pad but it marks a significant shift in the organisation's position and perceived role in the enterprise support sector. To date Launch Pad has emphasised that it is not a competitor with other enterprise support deliverers but rather a complementary facilitator working alongside them. With this new product Launch Pad be delivering and it needs to consider whether this will comprise its work with some of its partners /potential partners.

Annex 1: Those interviewed for the evaluation

Respondents

Organisation	Person interviewed
Newcastle College	Andrew Jarvis
Entrepreneurs Forum	Stephen Green
A4e	Judith Healey
Newcastle CSV	Karen Watson
Acumen	Kate Welch Trudy Wilkinson
Visit Tees Valley	Gemma Lawson
Prince's Trust	Chris Gray
Be Enterprising	Julia Thompson
North East Enterprise Agencies Ltd	Dawn Cranswick
ONE North East	Susan McFarlane
North East Contact Centre Academy	Hazel Storr
Groundworks	Linda Robinson
Gateshead Council	Helen Rochester
Enterprise Package	John Musham
Go Wansbeck	Sinead Moloney
St Michael's School	Ann Jones
Northumberland College	Mark Rossi
5 Lamps Stockton High Street	Chris Butler
Tedco	Alex Willey
Derwentside Enterprise	Louise Wilkinson

Annex 2: The Evaluation Questionnaire

This is a summarised form of the questionnaire that was used to guide the interviews for the evaluation

Enterprise BOND Partner evaluation interviews

Interviewer			
Organisation			
Contact person		Telephone	Email
Date of interview		Time of interview	

Section 1 use of LP

Tick as appropriate and add extra info

1. Is this the first time that you have used the LP? Yes/NO	
AND How did you hear about LP?	
At a regional network meeting	
From a colleague	
Saw it being used at another event	
Word of mouth in the sector	
From the NEEB website	
From an approach by the NEEB team	
Other	
2. How would you describe your use of the LP Open questions but check with prompts from Marys notes	
Who were the primary target audience?	Students
	Young people NEETS
	Unemployed/on benefits
	Businesses
	Not targeted
Other	
Open or closed audience?	Open audience <input type="checkbox"/> Closed audience <input type="checkbox"/>
What was the key purpose of the activity	'Being enterprising' type of activities in broader sense – confidence building back into employment etc
	About enterprise ideas generation starting a business
	Business development
	Other
3. Did you use LP staff to help you design /deliver your LP activity in any way? Yes /no if yes give some details about how	
4. Did you pay for use of the LP? cross check with info beforehand Yes /no If yes How much	

Section 2 Review of working with EB/LP

5 What was your experience of working with the EB/ LP team Tick as appropriate and add any comments made	
<i>The quality of work/services provided by EB</i> Comments	1 excellent
	2 very good
	3 good
	4 okay
<i>The efficiency of the organisation surrounding the use of the LP</i> Comments	1 excellent
	2 very good
	3 good
	4okay
<i>The knowledge and experience that EB staff bring to a project</i> Comments	1 excellent
	2 very good
	3 good
	4 okay
<i>Overall experience</i> Comments	1 excellent
	2 very good

	3 good
	4 okay
6 Thinking back on how the EB team worked with you. Do you think that there is anything they should be doing differently to improve how people use /benefit from the LP Yes /No/ say yes get reasons for saying this	

Section 3 Benefits from use of the LP – intro to talk about the results of working with LP/EB

7 Why did you use or engage the LP in the first place? What added value did you think the LP <u>would bring</u> to your organisation/enterprise work?	
8 In overall terms how would you rate the success of your use of LP	
Extremely successful	Please give reason for this choice
Very Successful	
successful	
Not successful	
9 What <u>outputs</u> did you achieve for your enterprise work through using the LP?	
Numbers engaged/attended event	
10 What <u>outcomes</u> did you achieve for your work through using the LP? Open question then prompt	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tested /Experienced a new event ▪ Raised Awareness of enterprise/our activities ▪ Attracted new clients ▪ Developed/tested new ideas ▪ Target group now engaged People now looking at starting a business etc 	
Tick one of the above or capture other comments	
11 Would you say that working with LP has 'added value' to <u>your work</u> ? Yes /no Comment	
12 Would you say that working with LP has 'added value' to <u>your clients</u> /members students? Yes/no comment	

Section 4: Impact of using LP

13 Would you have undertaken the activity we have discussed without the LP facility? YES /NO Ask as an open question then Prompt answer	
<i>Yes if answer yes prompt for more info No if answered no ask why not</i>	
14 Do you think that you would have had the same success if you had not used LP/ the EB team support? yes/no Prompt reasons for answer	
15 Do you continue to deliver the types of activities that you did with the LP? Yes /No Yes – examples No why not	
16 In summary What if any has been the long term impact of working with LP on your activities? Leave this open and explore	

Section 5 Future use of LP and EB team services

17 Will you use the LP facility again in the future Yes No <u>If no go to questions 18 and 19 then 21 and 22</u> <u>If yes go to questions 20 onwards</u>	
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18	
a) If No	Why not? Explore if anything to do with charging
b) Would you consider using the LP <u>if</u> EB delivered different things to what it is currently offering along with LP Yes /No	
If yes – what would that be	
c) Would you ever consider building in the costs for using LP into any of your future tender applications/budgeting plans? (details).yes /no details	
19 In the past the cost of using the LP has been subsidised, but now alongside many other service providers the NEEB team are looking to be more sustainable and work on a full cost recovery basis.	
a)	How much do you think it costs to run a LP on a full cost daily basis
b)	Yes know or not
c)	The full costs are £1800 per day – get their reaction
<u>If answer YES to Q 17</u>	

20 if say yes	
a) Explain how will use - How often for what use etc	
b) How much would you be willing to pay for daily use of the LP?	< £250
Prompt with reasons why and why not more	£250 to £500
	£500 - 750

	£1000
	£1000- £1800
c)How much do you think it costs to run a LP on a full cost daily basis Yes know or not The full costs are £1800 per day – get their reaction	
d) Would you ever consider building in the costs for using LP into any of your tender applications/budgeting plans? (details).yes /no Comment	
21 Looking at the type of service that LP/NEEB delivers. In the future should the EB be doing different things to what it is currently offering along with LP ?Yes /No If yes prompt for comments elaboration	
22 Do you have any other comments?	

Thank you very much for your time.