

Turning ideas into reality:

An Evaluation of Their
Work and Their Impact

May 2023



Social Impact Consulting
Bid Writing | Business Planning | Social Reporting



About the Community Enterprise Group

Community Enterprise is a leading social enterprise and community development consultancy and national support provider. They have provided support to third sector groups across Scotland and beyond for over 35 years. They are a social enterprise and re-invest 100% of their profits.

The organisation delivers a broad range of work focused on helping communities to be more sustainable and resilient. Their vision: “We will live in a society where places are vibrant and people feel good about their lives.”

They developed cross-fertilising teams that have their own autonomy but work to a single vision.

The different elements of their work

1

Their Development team builds sustainability through community capacity building, business support, strategic thinking, market and community research, community planning and help strengthening organisations.

2

They operate the UK's first and biggest social enterprise creative design and branding agency called Bold. Now in its twelfth year, its services include branding, brand strategy, design and print, website development and creative campaigning.

3

Breeze Digital is their relatively new digital agency that is preparing to be launched following a successful pilot phase.

4

They aim to create a strong enterprising third sector. They are founding members of Social Enterprise Scotland and founding subscribers of the Voluntary Code for Social Enterprise. They have a growing research arm, organise small events to build capacity and have designed the national social enterprise support map.

5

As well as direct support, they try new things. They established an e-commerce site for social enterprises and currently operate a project called Creative Natives which changes the lives of disadvantaged young people through creativity.



The Purpose of this Report

Community Enterprise has worked with well over a thousand organisations all over Scotland. They appear to have a positive reputation with great feedback from clients. However, this view was untested and largely anecdotal. In Spring 2022, Social Impact Consulting was commissioned to undertake an objective and independent evaluation of their work and their approach. We have looked back some distance to provide a snapshot of the organisation's performance over recent years. The purpose is to understand the difference they have made and to help them plan ahead.

The following pages set out a summary of what we found out about the organisation as a whole and about each of the teams, which contribute to the central vision.

“There are few organisations that I have come across from around the UK as effective as Community Enterprise in supporting people to improve their places and their lives.”

Firth Heritage

What We Did

**Inception meeting,
background reading
and document
analysis**

**Strategic session
with board and staff**

**Beneficiary and
client survey with
345 responses**

**9 site visits
to beneficiary
organisations**

**17 semi-structured
interviews with
beneficiary
organisations**

**A partner and
stakeholder survey
with 47 responses**

**8 structured
interviews with
stakeholders**

**Analysis of
Community
Enterprise's own
project evaluation
survey which has
been completed by
584 groups over a
13-year period**

**Visits to the Creative
Natives Studio**

What We Found Out About the Organisation as a Whole



£25m

in funding secured for their beneficiaries over the last three years.

Reputation

Community Enterprise is a highly-regarded organisation that provides work that makes a clear, obvious and evidenced difference to its clients.

90% of their partners and stakeholders say that Community Enterprise delivers social impact a lot or quite a lot.

92% of clients would recommend Community Enterprise to other organisations.

Engagement with clients elicited a common and striking view that the Community Enterprise teams were viewed with “love and affection”.

Community Enterprise stays the course until the task is done, even if this requires additional time. This can put pressure on an already busy staff team.

Staff are seen as committed to and expert at what they do.

82% of partners say that Community Enterprise provides value for money.

The public reputation of the organisation can be over-dependent on a small number of leaders in the organisation.

Community Enterprise is viewed by stakeholders and partners as honest and able to build bridges and connections.

Stakeholders appreciated their independence and flexibility. This should be protected as the organisation grows.

Values, ethics and approach

Community Enterprise has a strong values-base, which genuinely drives their work and the organisation is perceived by its clients, partners and stakeholders to live their values.

91% of Community Enterprise's clients and beneficiaries and 93% of partners agree that Community Enterprise lives its values a lot or quite a lot.

Just over 50% of clients and around 70% of partners were aware of their values.

Community Enterprise is widely perceived to be a listening organisation that responds flexibly.

A significant 34% of respondents had worked with Community Enterprise for over 10 years indicating the validity of its value of “relationship”.

90%

of CE partners and stakeholders say that Community Enterprise delivers social impact.

Added Value

Community Enterprise provides significant added value to its clients often well beyond what clients pay for. Clients consistently say that they “go the extra mile.”

Collaboration

Community Enterprise is well-networked, particularly through its Chief Executive and is seen by partners and stakeholders as a go-to organisations that can make a positive impact.

91% of partners and stakeholders say that Community Enterprise are good at partnership working.

Influencer

With over 35 years of activity at a grassroots level there is a wealth of data and intelligence. Stakeholders noted that Community Enterprise is well placed to develop a role as a strategic influencer but this is not happening as much as it could.

Variety

There is a substantial variety of work and range of support compared to other similar agencies.

Scale of work

“Going the extra mile” is highly valued but can result in the team being over stretched.

Communications

Community Enterprise’s profile does not reflect their work and reach and should be a key priority

Awareness of Programmes

Only 18% of clients and beneficiaries were a lot or quite a lot aware of Brand for Growth.

The Accelerate programme is the most well-known of all the Community Enterprise initiatives.

Only 21% were aware or very aware of the Social Enterprise Support Map.





***A consultant will borrow
your watch, and then sell
it back to you! This wasn't
Community Enterprise,
they have great integrity
and you never feel you're
on-the-meter, they really
want to help and want you
to succeed.***

King's Arms



What We Found Out about their Development Work

Satisfaction levels

The Development Team is well-regarded by its clients with high satisfaction rates.

94% of clients say that the Development Team's work met or exceeded their expectations and 86% of clients said that the Development Team had delivered what they had asked for.

The Development Team's work is viewed very positively, with 88% of clients saying the Development Team's work had a positive effect on their organisation.

The Development Team is also seen as providing good value for money.

83% of clients reported this.

A large proportion of clients (91%) said that they would recommend the Development Team to other organisations.

Community Enterprise's own data showed that of the 584 respondents to their project impact survey, the average rating was 9.23 out of 10 in relation to how much the service exceed expectations.

94% indicated that they were positive about having worked with Community Enterprise.

Direct impact

Clients reported significant positive impact on their organisation's financial performance and capabilities, although it was hard to quantify. Around a quarter of respondents to our survey were able to identify a clear financial impact and the average increase in turnover was 47%.

62% said the Development Team helped them achieve their social impact a lot or quite a lot.

Collaboration

A large proportion of clients valued the collaborative approach of the Development Team. This emerged strongly in the interviews and case studies.

90% of clients said they felt involved in the work with the Development Team.

I think they are essential to Scotland's communities and I have let many of our clients know of them in the three years since working together. They achieve for communities with an insight, experience and concern that other organisations don't bring to the same degree.

Vis-à-Vis Agency



IMPROVED CONFIDENCE TO DO THINGS THEMSELVES

INCREASED RESILIENCE & SUSTAINABILITY

**IMPROVED KNOWLEDGE OF SOCIAL ENTERPRISE
& THE THIRD SECTOR**

IMPROVED POSITION IN THE COMMUNITY

NETWORKING & SUPPORT OPPORTUNITIES

NEW ENTERPRISE DEVELOPED

**IMPROVED INFLUENCE AND POSITION WITH
PARTNERS & STAKEHOLDERS**

IMPROVED OPERATIONS

INCREASED THEIR ENTERPRISE ACTIVITY

IMPROVED GOVERNANCE

**WHAT
BENEFICIARIES
SAID WAS
THE MOST
IMPORTANT
IMPACT**

0%

100%

“

***Other consultants
refuse to understand
the chaos of start-
ups. Community
Enterprise made it
feel like a normal
process. I didn't feel
any judgement. They
were there for me.***

Repairer CIC

”





What We Found out about Bold

Satisfaction levels

Bold has high satisfaction rates from its clients.

All of Bold's clients responding said that their work met or exceeded their expectations. The studio is held in high regard by its clients and in the wider third sector, including by partners and stakeholders. It is providing innovative and impactful work in the sector.

94% said that Bold had delivered what they had asked for, 89% said that Bold's work had a positive effect on their organisation and 86% of clients said they would recommend Bold to other organisations.

74% of survey respondents thought that Bold provides value for money.

Bold did their work on time and to budget. Everyone was happy. It really boosted our visibility and was more engaging - we're proud of it.

Celia Compton - SWMID

Specific Impact

Only a few of Bold's clients were able to quantify the impact of Bold's work on their organisation, but when they did it was impressive, with an average increase of clients' turnover of 128%.

Answers from those who could not quantify the impact included:

No, but the quality and engagement of our reports has enabled us to better engage investors.

We have not yet rolled out the new brand but we expect it to play a key part in raising our public profile, forming new partnerships and gaining funding.

It's difficult to quantify, but our new brand has meant we have increased confidence in how we present our organisation

I love working with them, they align with our values, they want the best for our organisation and members, and they have a massive knowledge base.

Grassmarket Community Trust

Values, ethos and approach

Bold's purpose is **to provide top level design work and solid brand thinking to the third sector and to advance the social enterprise movement in Scotland.**

92% of clients say that Bold puts its purpose into practice.

We ended up with a really strong brand and solid thinking behind it. Bold encouraged us to step back and think about our aims, vision and mission and we were able to reflect that within our brand.

John Hinton, Move On

Bold.

Collaboration

86% of respondents said that they felt involved a lot or quite a lot in the work.

The building of personal relationships during a job was unique and vital.

There was a sense that they were very good at getting under the skin of our values. They got to know who we were and what we were. In terms of the creative process, everything they did was excellent. They are very relationship driven.

Mike Staples, Sosch

THE MOST NOTED IMPACT IDENTIFIED BY BENEFICIARIES

“**Bold understand the needs of the third sector really well.**”
Community Land Scotland



What We Found out about Creative Natives



Innovation

Creatives Natives is an exciting and innovative project that is addressing issues of isolation and social exclusion for a vulnerable cohort of young people in unique ways.

Approach

Creative Natives' work is highly inclusive, needs led, responsive and non-threatening in a way that empowers young people.

The relationship with Cyrenians is viewed as highly effective in complementing the skills that Community Enterprise brings.

Impact on individuals

Creative Natives' own data shows strong changes to young people with increasing confidence and the majority having positive destination routes.

Awareness of Creative Natives

Although highly effective for young people (as shown in the Outcome Star method), the project is not well known as part of the Community Enterprise family.

Only 7% of clients and beneficiaries were a lot or quite a lot aware of Creative Natives.





“

***Creative Natives is a
space to be yourself.***”

Creative Natives Participant

What We Recommend they Do



Enhancing Teams under a single Purpose

1

Community Enterprise has a strong vision under which all activity sits. Each team should have a high level of autonomy while also cross-fertilising with other teams under the single vision.

This unique model should be explored more consistently and more overtly.

Communicating the message

2

The impact data that is being gathered should be used to better communicate the difference Community Enterprise makes with clients, beneficiaries, partners and stakeholders and particularly with Creative Natives and the Social Enterprise Map. Community Enterprise should do more to raise awareness of what they are achieving through Creative Natives.

A Stronger Influencer

3

Community Enterprise should consider how it develops and builds its role as a strategic influencer and thought leader in the third sector in Scotland, bringing a particular specialist sensitivity and understanding of community based enterprise. A delineated research division would be a positive addition.

Improved Impact Measurement

4

Community Enterprise should, more consistently, capture and quantify its impact both economically and socially on the communities and organisations it serves with a bespoke impact measurement framework.

Positioning

6 Community Enterprise is recognised as working across sectors, both rural and urban but has a particular specialism in community and grass roots enterprise. It should consolidate and strengthen its position in this area that has direct relation to current policy directives such as Community Wealth Building, place based approaches and 20 minute neighbourhoods. This can relate to new work such as Place Planning.

In a focused and targeted way, Community Enterprise (all teams) should grow the work they do beyond Scotland with a particular focus on heritage and culture.

Accelerate is a prime example of a new programme pioneered by Community Enterprise to fill a significant gap that they identified. Community Enterprise should position itself as an organisation that has a strong eye to the future and works to fill gaps where they exist.

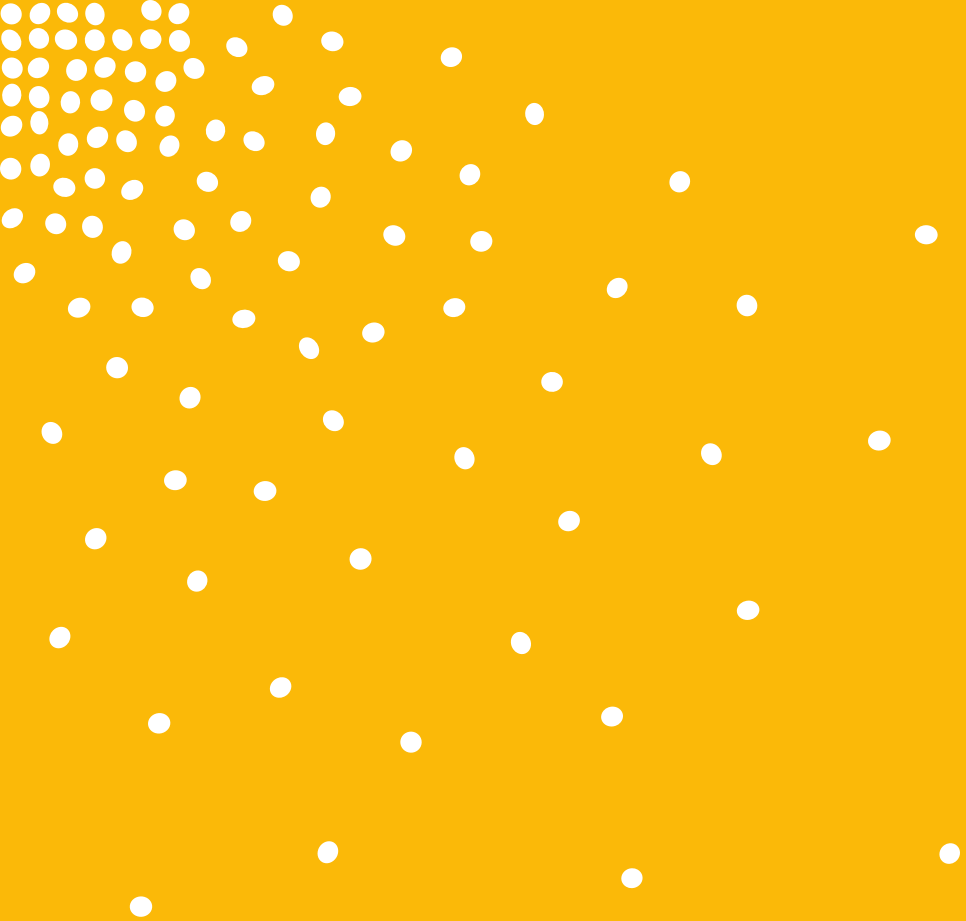
Delivering better

7 Over delivering and “going the extra mile” can result in the teams being over stretched. Care must be taken to plan work more effectively including monitoring the extent of re-invested pro bono support.

Sharing the load and building the team

8 Over-dependence on a small number of experienced leaders should be addressed by building the capacity and profile of all staff.





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**Creative
Natives**

Bold.

