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Review of the Fusion Challenge Grants Programme

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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Glossary

Acronym/Key word	Definition
ACW	Arts Council Wales
Amgueddfa Cymru	Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales
BAME	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
CF	Communities First
CfW	Communities for Work
CIB	Cultural Inclusion Board
ESF	Welsh Government European Funded programme
KAS	Knowledge and Analytical Services
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer
MALD	Museums, Archives and Libraries Division
NEET	Not in employment, education or training
TPAP	Tackling Poverty Action Plan
VARTE	Volunteering as a Route to Employment
WFG Act	Well-being of Future Generations Act
WG	Welsh Government

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report presents the findings from a review of Fusion Challenge Grants, a key aspect of the Fusion programme, a Welsh Government funded initiative aimed at increasing cultural access and participation in areas of disadvantage.
- 1.2 Amgueddfa Cymru was tasked by the Welsh Government to undertake the review. The findings from this review will contribute towards the evidence base on culture and tackling poverty in Wales which, in turn, will help inform the development of the Fusion programme.

About Fusion

- 1.3 The government views access to and participation in culture as an aspect of social justice itself. Culture is understood “as not just the arts, but also heritage and the historic environment, including the contribution of museums, libraries and the media” (Andrews 2014, p. 3).¹ Fusion aims to tackle poverty and disadvantage by encouraging people to take an active part in culture at a local community level, to empower those who have traditionally faced barriers.
- 1.4 Designed to help better align resources, services and programmes from a wide range of sectors and organisations, Fusion has been described as a “radical new way of focussing our cultural investment on those most in need” (Welsh Government 2016, p. 16).² A critical part of the programme has been establishing partnerships to design and implement activities at a local level. The anticipated outcomes focus on the potential benefits taking part in cultural activities could bring for individuals in participating areas.
- 1.5 Table 1.0 provides an overview of the participating Fusion areas from the pilot phase, which began in April 2015 to March 2017, to Fusion Challenge Grants (April 2017 to date). Further information on the background to Fusion is in Annex A.

¹ Andrews, K. (2014). [Culture and Poverty: Harnessing the Powers of the Arts, Culture and Heritage to Promote Social Justice in Wales](#). Cardiff: Welsh Government. [Online, accessed 2nd August 2019].

² Welsh Government, (2016). [Light Springs through Dark: A Vision for Culture in Wales](#). Cardiff: Welsh Government. [Online, Accessed 22 August 2019]

Table 1.0. Overview of the participating Fusion areas from the pilot phase, to Fusion Challenge Grants phase (April 2015 – to date)

Area	April 2015 – March 2016 (Pilot year one)	April 2016 – March 2017 (Pilot year two)	April 2017 – to date (challenge grants programme)
Cardiff ³			
Merthyr Tydfil*			
Gwynedd			
Newport			
Swansea			
Torfaen			
Wrexham			
Caerphilly** ⁴			
Carmarthenshire			
Conwy			
Flintshire			
Neath Port Talbot			

1.6 Fusion is managed by the Welsh Government’s Museums, Archives and Libraries Division (MALD) with support from other Welsh Government departments (Cadw, Knowledge and Analytical Services (KAS)) and government-sponsored cultural and heritage organisations (Arts Council Wales (ACW), National Museum Wales - Amgueddfa Cymru (Amgueddfa Cymru)). The on-going evaluation of Fusion is managed by a research

³ During the pilot phase, Cardiff and Merthyr Tydfil operated as one Fusion area. Merthyr Tydfil’s involvement in the programme as a Fusion area ceased upon the introduction of the Challenge Grants, whilst Cardiff’s involvement continued.

⁴ Caerphilly continues to be a Fusion area, but in partnership with Torfaen since April 2017

coordinator at Amgueddfa Cymru with support from social researchers based in KAS.

- 1.7 Fusion is now in its fifth year. Following the programme's pilot phase, in February 2017 MALD launched Fusion Challenge Grants. MALD invited funding proposals from lead bodies interested in delivering strategic cultural programmes aligned with Fusion objectives. The application guidance specified that grant funding should create capacity within participating areas by contributing towards the cost of coordinator roles (Welsh Government, 2017).⁵
- 1.8 Following a competitive grant process, the lead bodies listed below, based in eight partnership areas across Wales, were successful in their applications for funding; and since April 2017, Fusion Challenge Grants has funded the role of coordinators within these participating partnership areas:
- Torfaen County Borough Council & Caerphilly County Borough Council – Torfaen and Caerphilly
 - Cardiff Story Museum – Cardiff
 - City & County of Swansea – Swansea
 - Conwy County Borough Council – Conwy
 - Tai Tarian – Neath Port Talbot
 - City of Newport Council – Newport
 - Gwynedd Council - Gwynedd
 - Carmarthenshire County Council - Carmarthenshire
- 1.9 These eight lead bodies, based across Wales, have delivered strategic cultural programmes aimed at promoting and / or supporting the Fusion themes of:
- employability and skills, particularly through accredited skills and courses, Volunteering as a Route to Employment (VARTE) and training placements;
 - cultural programmes that support confidence, empowerment and attainment, particularly for young people;
 - culture as a tool to improve physical and mental health and wellbeing; and
 - the early years through literacy and family learning programmes.

⁵ Welsh Government, (2017). Fusion Challenge Grants 2017 – 18. Cardiff: Welsh Government.

Aims and Objectives of the Review

- 1.10 A key element of the ongoing evaluation of Fusion was to review Fusion Challenge Grants and the role of the coordinator as an integral part of this programme.
- 1.11 The overarching aim of this research was to obtain the views and experiences of both local coordinators and the partner organisations coordinators have worked with on the design and delivery of activities at a partnership area-level. The purpose of the research was to understand participant's views on Fusion in practice, so as to contribute to its development and improvement. The specific objectives were to:
- measure participants satisfaction with Fusion Challenge Grants;
 - ascertain what is working well;
 - identify areas which have not worked so well and could be improved, and
 - to help prioritise any areas for change.
- 1.12 This report is based on the findings from an online survey, sent to local coordinators and partner organisations. The research findings are also based on qualitative interviews with all eight coordinators, as well as interviews with representatives from partner organisations from some of the partnership-area level networks. Further information on the methodology is in Section Three.
- 1.13 The remainder of this report is structured as follows:
- **Section Two** outlines the background and operational context of the Fusion programme, including its delivery structure and the launch of Fusion Challenge Grants. This chapter also provides an overview of the research done to date as part of Fusion's on-going evaluation.
 - **Section Three** summarises the research methodology, its scope and the limitations, explain how this review was undertaken.
 - **Section Four** presents the findings from the online survey and the interviews with coordinators and a sample of representatives from participating partner organisations.
 - **Section Five** summarises the conclusions of the research.

2. Context

2.1 This section contextualises the review and summarises some of the research published on Fusion to date as part of its on-going evaluation.

The Launch of Fusion

2.2 In her seminal report *Culture and Poverty: Harnessing the Power of the Arts, Culture and Heritage to Promote Social Justice in Wales* (Andrews 2014, p. 1), Baroness Kay Andrews OBE identified access to and participation in culture “as an aspect of social justice itself and a powerful weapon against poverty, in all its manifest forms”. Andrew called for national and local government and cultural and community bodies across Wales to collaborate more effectively to maximise the benefits cultural participation could have for individuals living in some of Wales’ most deprived communities.

2.3 Andrews’ calls catalysed action; in response, the Welsh Government included amongst its proposals the intention to establish a small number of ‘Pioneer Areas’ across Wales. Within each Pioneer Area, cultural organisations, local community groups and education institutions would link with Communities First clusters to collaborate in developing opportunities for increasing participation in cultural activities; in particular, amongst those individuals, groups and communities who would not normally engage with these types of activities (WG, 2014, p. 5).

Fusion Challenge Grants

2.4 Fusion worked exclusively with Communities First clusters during its pilot phase (see Annex A; WG 2013, 2016, 2017), but was refreshed by the launch of its third year (April 2017) to reflect learning from both the on-going evaluation of the pilot phase (see WG 2016, 2017) and in light of the changed context of Communities First, which had been phased out by March 2018.

2.5 Fusion remains focussed on utilising culture to tackle the effects of deprivation. However whereas in the pilot phase, the programme worked exclusively within Communities First clusters, for the second phase, applicants could determine which communities of disadvantage they would work with. Applications of up to £25k per annum over two years were invited by MALD under a competitive

grants programme: *Fusion Challenge Grants*. Applications were invited from lead bodies to deliver strategic cultural projects linked to the Fusion themes listed in Section 1.9. Applicants were required to be local authorities, or bodies operated by, or with, strong links to local authorities (such as through a formal partnership or funding arrangement). In some areas, other community agencies (for example, housing associations) that could develop strong partnerships with cultural bodies were considered. The successful applicants are listed in Section 1.8.

Fusion and Wales' Wider Policy Context

- 2.6 More widely, tackling poverty and supporting people living in deprived communities remain key government priorities under the overarching framework of both the *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015* (WFG Act (2015))⁶ and the current programme of government, *Taking Wales Forward 2016-2021*,⁷ and strategy for delivery, *Prosperity for All*.⁸
- 2.7 The WFG Act (2015) is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by developing a more strategic approach to policy-making based on a framework of longer-term outcomes.⁹ In the same vein, *Prosperity for All* (WG 2017) takes the commitments from *Taking Wales Forward* and places them in a long-term strategic context aimed at addressing the causes of poverty in a more joined-up way. Under this overarching framework, well-being is understood as a key outcome of cultural activity: the WFG Act (2015) explicitly emphasise the relationship between culture and well-being under its goals of 'A Wales of vibrant culture and a thriving Welsh language' and 'A healthier Wales'; and Fusion's monitoring and reporting arrangements link to both the Act's well-being goals and goals listed under *Prosperity for All* to help evidence the contribution culture could make to people's well-being.

⁶ Welsh Government, (2015). [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#). Cardiff: Welsh Government. [Online, accessed 20 September 2019].

⁷ Welsh Government, (2016). [Taking Wales Forward 2016-2021](#). Cardiff: Welsh Government. [Online, accessed 20 September 2019].

⁸ Welsh Government, (2017). [Prosperity for All: the national strategy](#). Cardiff: Welsh Government. [Online, accessed 20 September 2019].

⁹ These are referred to as the "well-being goals", which are accompanied by high level "national indicators" used to measure Wales' progress against these goals. The Act provides the overarching national vision and strategic direction for policy-making in Wales. It establishes statutory Public Service Boards with greater responsibility for poverty prevention and cultural well-being according to local priorities at a strategic level.

- 2.8 More specifically, the government’s vision for culture, *Light Springs through Dark*, describes Fusion as a key delivery mechanism to help build communities and develop peoples “confidence, skills, and employability” (WG 2016, pp. 2 and 16).¹⁰

Fusion’s Delivery Structure

- 2.9 A Cultural Inclusion Board (CIB) comprising of key cultural bodies in Wales, as well as local authority representatives and departments leading on historic environment, community and education policy within the government, coordinates and drives forward the vision set out in the Andrews report.¹¹
- 2.10 Under the CIB, an Operational Group manages Fusion. The group is led by MALD with support from the national culture and heritage delivery bodies Amgueddfa Cymru and ACW and the government’s historic environment service, Cadw, who are also key delivery agents and partners at a local level. The group links between the cultural sector and other programmes and organisations, and develops, agrees and monitors a delivery plan and associated action and communications plans for Fusion. To help facilitate the on-going evaluation of Fusion, a research coordinator, based in Amgueddfa Cymru also sits on the group. Social researchers from KAS provide analytical support.
- 2.11 Under the Fusion Challenge Grants delivery model, lead bodies have each appointed a dedicated local Fusion Coordinator with the aim of enabling “more effective programmes and partnerships to be created and to link organisations together better” (WG 2018, p. 5) at a local level.¹²
- 2.12 Fusion should be connected to wider government objectives at a local level through partner organisations having aligned resources and delivered activities under the Fusion themes. These themes are reflected in a set of Fusion performance indicators, listed in Annex B, used to monitor the programme.
- 2.13 Each partnership area works with a range of cultural partners, such as arts organisations, museums, archives, libraries and heritage sites, as well as other

¹⁰ Welsh Government (2016). [Light Springs through Dark](#). Cardiff: Welsh Government. [Online, accessed 17 May 2019].

¹¹ A key focus of the Andrews report was on bringing together cultural organisations to enhance their impact in disadvantaged communities. The CIB’s remit is to drive forward this change by securing engagement with key stakeholders, adopting a strategic approach, maintaining momentum for Andrews’ vision and sharing learning.

¹² Welsh Government, (2018). [Fusion Delivery in 2018-19](#). Cardiff: Welsh Government. [Online, accessed 2 August 2019].

organisations - including volunteering bodies, housing associations, health services, schools and community agencies - and other government programmes such as, for example, *Communities for Work* and *Flying Start*.¹³

The On-going Evaluation of Fusion – A Summary of the Research to Date

2.14 Within her recommendations, Andrews called for greater collaboration on research amongst cultural organisations and other partners, to help consolidate existing research and identify gaps for further research around demography, access, participation and the impact of engagement (Andrews 2014, pp. 65 - 57). In response, Amgueddfa Cymru committed to provide leadership on the research agenda (WG 2014, p. 17).¹⁴ The on-going evaluation is coordinated by Amgueddfa Cymru with analytical oversight from the Sustainable Futures Research Team, in KAS.

2.15 Two research reports were published on the pilot phase: an *Evaluation of the Pioneer Areas Pilot Year* (WG 2016),¹⁵ and a review of Fusion's second year, titled *Research into the Fusion: Creating Opportunities through Culture programme* (WG 2017).¹⁶

Evaluation of the Pioneer Areas Pilot Year

2.16 The first report (WG 2016) focused on the implementation and impact of the pilot year. It presented the results of a process evaluation aimed at assessing the effectiveness of the programme's design and delivery and the extent to which cultural participation had increased under Fusion in ways that addressed anticipated programme outcomes.

2.17 The evaluation found partner organisations were beginning to align priorities around tackling poverty objectives. Lead organisations played a crucial role in this, by: making connections and supporting collaboration between partners; shaping strategy; coordinating partnerships; and providing guidance and ideas. The process aspect pointed to early evidence that partnerships had

¹³ Communities for Work (CfW) is a Welsh Government and European Funded (ESF) Programme co-sponsored by Department of Work and Pensions. It is a voluntary service to help people who live in a Communities First (CF) area and who need extra help and support to find work. Flying Start is the Welsh Government targeted Early Years programme for families with children under 4 years of age in some of the most disadvantaged areas of Wales.

¹⁴ Welsh Government, (2014). [Baroness Andrews' report culture and poverty: response by the Welsh Government. Welsh Government.](#) [Online, accessed 22 August 2019].

¹⁵ Welsh Government, (2016). [Pioneer Area Programme Pilot Year Evaluation Final Report.](#) Cardiff: Welsh Government. [Online, accessed 11 May 2019]

¹⁶ Welsh Government, (2016). [Fusion: Creating Opportunities through Culture Programme. Second Year Review. Cardiff: Welsh Government.](#) [Online, accessed 11 May 2019]

added value to existing projects and implemented new activities. There was also some qualitative evidence individuals had participated in cultural activities and might not have without Fusion support.

- 2.18 However, the short timeframe since the introduction of many activities, along with the varying approaches to monitoring across participating areas, meant the evaluation could not properly assess outcomes (WG 2016, pp. 84).

Research into the Fusion: Creating Opportunities through Culture programme

- 2.19 The second year review (WG 2017) was less ambitious in scope. It focussed on obtaining the views of cultural stakeholders, with the aim of assessing the impact of Fusion on their own organisations.

- 2.20 Overall, research participants were positive about Fusion. The benefits described were mostly perceived to outweigh any challenges, and included the opportunities partnerships provided for collaboration - raising the profile and highlighting the contribution of cultural stakeholders to tackling poverty in the process. Cultural organisations also felt they were targeting and engaging new groups in deprived communities more.

- 2.21 Areas for improvement were also identified. These included calls to improve how partnerships were coordinated at a lead organisation-level. This, it was felt, would encourage more collaboration between partners, and further embed Fusion across participating areas.

Taking the Findings from the Pilot Phase Forward

- 2.22 Both reports (WG 2016, 2017) highlighted the value of using culture to tackle poverty and disadvantage in communities across Wales and found that, by supporting strategic partnerships, Fusion had facilitated greater collaboration locally and helped clarify outcomes.

- 2.23 However, both reports also highlighted issues around the limited capacity and resources available for networking, collaboration and for the delivery of activities. According to the research, a lengthier reporting timeframe could enable longer-term planning and better delivery of activities, and also help facilitate greater collaboration across partnerships. The research also highlighted the difficulties of co-ordinating Fusion at a local level, which placed pressure on the capacity of lead delivery bodies to operate local partnerships and fund activities. Fusion Challenge Grants was designed in part to address

this, by specifying the recruitment of a coordinator and a two year funding and reporting time frame (since extended to three years as part of a transition period).

- 2.24 The two reports also pointed to multiple gaps within existing literatures and the wider evidence base around culture and well-being, including a lack of robust research on arts and cultural attendance and few large-scale research studies. These gaps were identified as particularly prevalent in Wales, where context specific large-scale research has been lacking.
- 2.25 As a result, separate analysis was commissioned to explore the potential relationship between culture and well-being using data from the National Survey for Wales. The final report will be published on the Welsh Government's social research webpages in autumn 2019.
- 2.26 As part of the on-going evaluation of Fusion, this research has been commissioned to review Fusion Challenge Grants, and the effectiveness of the role of the coordinator as a key aspect of the programme's development.

3. Methodology

3.1 This section sets out the research methods and scope, and summarises the strengths and limitations of the methodological approach adopted.

Methods

3.2 To address the aims and objectives of the research a mixed-methods research design was developed. Evidence was gathered between September 2018 and June 2019. The methodology comprised the following elements:

- An online survey sent in August 2018, which aimed to collect the personal perspectives and experiences of both coordinators and partner organisations.¹⁷ In line with data protection requirements, individuals from lead delivery bodies were invited to participate in this element of the research in the first instance.¹⁸ Lead delivery bodies were responsible for identifying and contacting the wider sample of Fusion partner organisations, and they forwarded the survey invite and link to contacts from their respective Fusion local area networks.¹⁹ The survey closed in September 2018. A total of 55 responses were received: nine responses across each of the eight Fusion areas from either a coordinator or someone responding on behalf of their lead body in areas where a coordinator was not in post at the time; and 46 from individuals responding on behalf of a partner organisation.²⁰

¹⁷ The survey was live between the 31st August and the 21st September 2018. A reminder email was sent to lead delivery bodies (for them to forward to partner organisations also) on the 12th and 19th September.

¹⁸ In two Fusion partnership areas, local Fusion coordinators weren't in post at the time. In these cases the survey was sent to their individual counterparts to complete on their behalf.

¹⁹ On receipt of the survey invite and link from the lead researcher at Amgueddfa Cymru, coordinators or representatives from lead bodies were asked to act as intermediaries and forward the survey and accompanying Privacy Notice to those organisations involved in the design and delivery of activities at a local Fusion partnership level.

²⁰ In terms of the composition of the online survey respondents, the highest number of individuals responding on behalf of a partner organisation identified themselves as being a partner in the Cardiff area (n. 11 out of a response of 48) or Swansea (n. 10 out of a response of 48). The lowest number of respondents from Fusion Partner organisations identified themselves as being a partner in the Neath Port Talbot (n. 1 out of a response of 48) or Newport area (n. 0 out of a response of 48). Some respondents identified themselves as being a partner in more than one area, which is why the total number of responses adds up to more than the partner organisation response rate (N=45).

- In-depth qualitative interviews were completed with all eight Fusion coordinators over January and February 2019.²¹
 - Qualitative interviews were also held with a small sample (n=8) of stakeholders from organisations participating in some of the partnership-area level networks. In line with data protection requirements, Fusion coordinators forwarded the interview invite to individuals from a sample of partner organisations identified by the researchers. The interviews were undertaken between March and June 2019.
- 3.3 The questions for this research drew on themes developed from the overarching aims and objectives of the review and focussed on gaining an insight into the following:
- Understandings of the Fusion programme and Fusion Challenge Grants, and the role of the coordinator
 - The design and delivery of Fusion Challenge Grants
 - Challenges and areas of improvement
- 3.4 Research tools were developed to gather evidence for the review. The tools comprised an online survey, administered through the survey software Questback, which contained a series of closed and open-ended questions with routed accordingly for coordinators and partner organisations. Two semi-structured interview guides were also developed: one for coordinators and another for partner organisations. Privacy notices and explanatory materials with information about the review were also developed, to ensure data protection and ethical requirements were met. The survey questions and the interview guides are listed at Annexes C, D and E respectively. The Privacy Notices are attached as a separate document to the main report on the Welsh Government's social research webpages.
- 3.5 The survey included questions on: respondent's awareness of and involvement in Fusion; their perceptions of the programme's process and impact; the strengths and weaknesses of the approach; and any areas for improvement.

²¹ Where there had previously been vacancies in coordinator role in some of areas at the time that the survey was sent, individuals had been appointed to these roles by the time the interviews were conducted.

- 3.6 Building on the headline results of the survey, a semi-structured interview guide for coordinators was developed to further explore their views and experiences. The guide aimed to probe more fully the topic areas and emerging themes from the survey, and included additional questions around: the delivery and partnership context within local Fusion networks; what was viewed to be working well and not so well within networks, including perceptions of the key successes and any benefits, challenges or limitations with the Fusion approach; and suggestions on what improvements could be made to the programme at a local-area partnership level. Telephone interviews were conducted with all eight Fusion coordinators; seven in English and one in Welsh. See Annex D for a copy of the coordinators interview guide.
- 3.7 An interview guide was also developed for interviews with partner organisations. The fieldwork with partner organisations was less in-depth than for coordinators because the interviews were limited to around half an hour. The interviews however gathered evidence on similar question areas. More emphasis was placed on evidence related to participation in local-area networks and the delivery of activities. Telephone interviews were conducted with eight partner organisations across four of the eight partnership areas; two in Welsh and six in English. See Annex E for a copy of the partner organisations interview guide.
- 3.8 Informed consent was received from all survey respondent and interviewees; all necessary information about their contribution to the review and the use of their personal data was provided in briefing materials and associated privacy notices prior to their participation.
- 3.9 The first interviews from each stakeholder group were treated as a pilot to test and improve the guide, particularly the interview questions. Varying degrees of focus were given to each area of the guide at interview, depending on stakeholder's experiences. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis purposes. A coding system was developed during the fieldwork and analysis phases of the research, based on a combination of the thematic areas developed in the research design and the headline findings from the survey. The themes and sub-themes identified are discussed in the finding section of this report. Charts and example quotes have been included to help illustrate and evidence the findings.

Limitations of the methodology

- 3.10 There are some limitations to the research methodology. These include:
- Issues with the sampling strategy for the online survey: the survey sample was dependent on the details provided to coordinators by the wider Fusion network within their local area, which could not be shared with the researchers due to data protection requirements. Because coordinators forwarded the invite and link to partner organisations, it was not possible to collect information on the number sampled and identify the response rate for partner organisations. The results provide a snapshot of a single point in time, and a dependency on coordinators identifying stakeholders with whom they had worked with could have resulted in potential selection bias; with those partner organisations who have worked more closely with the coordinator and areas with more established partnerships likely to be over-represented in the sample. The research aimed to mitigate this through identifying the sample of partner organisations to be interviewed during the qualitative fieldwork and including different types of partner organisations.
 - Low number of responses to the survey: based on reporting information submitted by coordinators to MALD, overall, there was a low response to the survey. For some of the Fusion areas, there were no responses from partner organisations. However, the time available for both stakeholder groups to respond was limited and feedback from some of the coordinators suggests this impacted on the response rate for their areas. Care has been taken not to overstate the survey findings, especially given the particularly small number of responses to some of the questions.
 - Inability to generalise the survey results: the views of respondents may differ from those who did not participate in the survey, therefore generalisations cannot be made about the results and care should be taken in their interpretation. The findings are indicative and not necessarily representative of the wider stakeholder group.
 - Potential biases within the self-reported data: interviewees were asked to comment on their experiences of participating in Fusion Challenge Grants. This often involved gathering feedback from individuals in roles funded by the programme. The review focussed on perceptions of impact based on the views of research participants rather than on the outcomes data

collected as part of the monitoring of the Fusion programme. A summary of the outcomes data, with caveats, is in Annex F.

- Fairly small sample of partner organisations: this limits the extent to which findings can be considered robust, particularly with regards to specific sectors and types of organisation and the gaps in responses for some Fusion areas. The review did not seek the views of organisations who have not engaged with Fusion. The review also did not explore the views of those who have participated in Fusion activities.

3.11 The above limitations should be considered when reading the findings of this review, which are presented in the next section.

4. Findings

4.1 This section presents the findings from the online survey and the qualitative interviews with Fusion coordinators and representatives from partner organisations. In addressing the objectives of the review, this section first explores views on the aims and objectives of the Fusion programme, before providing an overview of the design, implementation and delivery of Fusion Challenge Grants through a focus on its processes and the Fusion Coordinator role. It concludes with an overview of the challenges facing local area partnership networks, along with an overview on suggestions on how the Fusion programme, and more specifically, Fusion Challenge Grants and the partnership networks it supports, could be improved.

4.2 The survey and interview data were analysed separately as distinct tasks before the results were drawn together to inform the analysis presented below. This section describes those individuals who participated in the online survey as 'respondents'. To differentiate between participants from the two stakeholder groups interviewed, Fusion coordinators are described as 'coordinator interviewees', and stakeholders from partner organisations are described as 'partner organisation interviewees'.

Online Survey

4.3 A total of 55 survey responses were obtained. However, not all survey questions were compulsory, the questions were routed depending on whether the respondent identified as a Fusion coordinator or partner organisation, and many of the questions were multiple response option. The survey results for individual questions therefore do not always reflect the overall response rate. For clarity, the total number of responses to a question are stated in full when survey findings are discussed.

Fusion Coordinator Interviews

4.4 Semi structured interviews were conducted with each of the eight local Fusion coordinators. It should be noted that between them the local Fusion coordinators interviewed had been in post for varying degrees of time; and that several of the lead Fusion areas had experienced periods without a coordinator post, while the post was being recruited or re-recruited.

- 4.5 The 8 Fusion lead bodies length of involvement in the Fusion programme varies, with 5 having being involved since Fusions inception in 2015, one since 2016 (pilot year 2), and one since 2017 (year 3). In terms of governance, 7 of the lead bodies are local authority run, whilst one is run by a housing association.

Partner Organisation Interviews

- 4.6 The sampling strategy aimed to interview representatives from a partner organisation across each of the eight Fusion networks listed in Section 1.8. The strategy was developed to include organisations involved in Fusion to varying levels and for different amounts of time, and which operated across more than one partnership area. Interviewee's were recruited from a range of cultural organisations, including government-sponsored agencies and local government-based, third sector and private organisations. In total, eight representatives from Fusion network partners were interviewed.
- 4.7 The following paragraphs present the findings of the review against the objectives listed in Section 3.4.

Understandings of the Fusion programme and Fusion Challenge Grants and the role of the coordinator

- 4.8 During its pilot years, the Welsh Government's approach to linking community and cultural partners through Fusion was described as a "unique and radical" approach to tackling poverty; and correspondingly, there was no existing approach or framework available to guide the programme. So that policy makers and delivery partners could learn from and refine and adapt the programme's design, implementation and delivery processes, the pilot years were conceptualised as an iterative process (WGb 2016, p. 29). Fusion Challenge Grants were launched in February 2017 with the intention of creating capacity within participating areas by contributing towards the cost of coordinator roles which could help facilitate a more structured approach towards the design and delivery of activities at a local level. Nonetheless, the programme does recognise the need to take local context and knowledge into account and aims to recognise the different needs of participating areas. Multiple factors inform and contribute to the make-up of each participating area; and the characteristics of partnership areas, its residents and agencies,

and the external factors that affect it, vary. These factors will have shaped stakeholders understandings and experiences of the Fusion programme.

Composition of local partnership networks

- 4.9 In terms of the structure of local area partnerships, each network was managed by a dedicated coordinator from within a Lead Delivery Body; in most cases, from a department in the participating Local Authority, with the exception of Neath Port Talbot, which has been led by a Housing Association. Membership of each partnership was determined locally. Lead bodies and coordinators already had relationships with some partners; many of these relations because of previous experiences of participating in the Fusion programme.
- 4.10 Despite the limited number of interviews conducted with partner organisations for this review, interviewee's were recruited from a range of sectors (e.g. the film, arts, libraries, museum, music, education and third sector). Each of those interviewed had experience of working within one partnership area only. However, although most interviewee's were based at a specific site (e.g. art centre, library, cinema), the majority operated across different locations within their respective local network areas. Some partner organisation interviewee's also described their remit as a combination of more formalised site-based tasks and more out-reach or community-based networking activities. There was a mix of interviewee's whose organisations had participated in Fusion to some degree from the outset and others relatively new to the programme, who had experience of Fusion Challenge Grants (and the role of the coordinator as an integral part of this) only.
- 4.11 Both coordinators and partner organisation interviewees reflected on the composition of their respective partnership networks. To varying degrees, each of the coordinators pointed to representation from a broad spectrum of sectors on their network. Rather than being limited to those organisations traditionally understood or categorised as belonging to the arts, heritage and culture sectors, membership went wider to include, for example: organisations from the education, employability and housing sectors. Coordinators also described partners as ranging from statutory, commercial, and voluntary sectors, as well as including government-funded programmes (e.g. Flying

Start, Communities for Work). Between them, coordinators provided examples of representation from, but not limited to, those categorised as:

- Arts, e.g. galleries, theatres, art centres, independent artists
- Heritage organisations, e.g. Archives, archaeological bodies
- Libraries
- Educational establishments or programmes, e.g. universities, colleges, schools
- National Fusion partners, e.g. Flying Start, Amgueddfa Cymru, Arts Council Wales, Kids in Museums, Cadw, Literature Wales
- Employability programmes, e.g. Communities for Work, DWP Job Centre+
- Specific council departments, e.g. learning, cultural services
- Music industry, e.g. Musicians, festival organisers
- Housing, e.g. housing associations
- Youth Services
- Sports, e.g. recreational and leisure centres
- And those representing commercial, voluntary, charitable and statutory bodies and community groups

4.12 Partner organisation interviewees described the make-up of their partnerships very positively, viewing there to be a good mix of organisation types and sectors evident as well as representation from, what they saw as, the key players. When asked, none of the interviewees thought any sectors were underrepresented or that there were any obvious gaps in the make-up of their partnerships. Some interviewees talked about common goals across organisations, though they may be based in different sectors. Others described their network as varied and including organisations they would not have originally have thought of as cultural partners (e.g. rugby, football and sailing clubs), or as a focal point for developing ideas. One interviewee put the diversity of their network down to *“the fact that [members] see it as being something very relevant...”*, whilst another pointed to common aims around improving the local area and opportunities for shared learning: *“...nearly everybody that you’ve worked with, there’s something that can be taken from*

each one". For this individual, the multiplicity of actors involved in their network made it successful. Others saw their partnership as almost a hub for third sector organisations in their area, and viewed the breadth of activities they saw the coordinator involved in, aimed at different groups and ranging across cultural provision, as evidence of a diverse network within their local partnership area. Indeed, two coordinators described having deliberately invited organisations that might not necessarily be immediately associated with the Fusion programme (e.g. wildlife organisations, sports clubs, youth clubs) to join their partnership because they felt these organisation might have additional insights on the design and delivery of activities at a more localised level.

- 4.13 Most coordinator interviewees mentioned that there were some organisations or sectors they weren't working with, or would like to do more work with. Notably, half of coordinators said that they had done little or no work with Flying Start, with some discussing that making contact with or hearing back from them had been a challenge. All attributed this to a lack of resource within their local Flying Start office, rather than an unwillingness to participate. One coordinator discussed how Flying Start was working well in some of their local areas, and that they wanted to replicate this work in other areas - but again that a lack of capacity within Flying Start had challenged this. Other organisations that coordinators referenced as wanting to do more work with included: universities, libraries, Peoples Collections Wales, or specific council departments or teams.
- 4.14 For one partner organisation interviewee, although overall they were positive about their partnerships mix and the organisations and sectors involved, some potential partners they felt should be engaging in their network were not and had not, as far as they were aware, responded to invitations to participate. According to them, although the network was open to all, participation depended on whether people picked-up on the work, and this was a wider issue around the resource and capacity of individual organisations.

Perceptions of Fusion and its aims

- 4.15 Interviews with both coordinators and partner organisations included questions around interviewees' perceptions of Fusion's aims. Across both groups of stakeholders there was a consistent understanding of what the programme

was seeking to achieve. Coordinators described it as a project seeking to engage underrepresented people by trying to find ways of making culture more accessible and encouraging greater involvement amongst those facing barriers to participation; and of using participation in culture-based activities to achieve wider outcomes-focused objectives around, for example, improving education. Several coordinator interviewees also emphasised Fusions focus on ensuring the cultural sectors are made more accessible in themselves. Fusion's overarching objectives were often described by reference to the specific contexts or communities coordinators were operating within.

"...the Fusion programme has been working to try to enable people from the more deprived areas of our communities to be able to access arts, culture and heritage; but also for arts, culture, heritage to be able to actually support those people on their journeys, either into work, to improve their life chances, to improve their education and attainment..." [Coordinator interviewee].

- 4.16 Partner organisation interviewee's also had a strong sense of Fusion's overarching vision. All interviewees framed the programme around tackling poverty. But rather than referring to outcomes-focused objectives, most explicitly referred in the first instance to targeting activities at deprived communities to engage and create opportunities for individuals or groups who had not previously participated in culture or who had difficulties in accessing facilities and resources:

"...it's trying to engage people who otherwise wouldn't be engaged... people who for whatever reason, whether it's financial or family background or status, don't have access to the arts." [Partner organisation interviewee]

"...it's a programme to increase access to culture for those that are probably the hardest to reach. So, anything from black and ethnic minorities, to disabled people, to young people, single parent families... anyone that finds it hard to access things like art or music or film, or anything like that, and giving them the opportunity to get involved." [Partner organisation interviewee]

- 4.17 One partner organisation interviewee saw a Fusion objective as aiming to shift people's perceptions of culture and changing *"...the attitudes and opinions of people who maybe don't think culture's for them or that it's relevant to them, so that those people get to see that culture is for everybody"*. Another interviewee

described people's difficulties in engaging with and accessing culture in terms of physical barriers, such as a lack of access to transport and childcare.

- 4.18 Coordinator interviewees strongly highlighted Fusion's focus on encouraging partnership or collaborative working across and within sectors, which they felt aimed to: harness and enhance organisational strengths; identify duplication and gaps in provision; and better serve the community. The first two points are illustrated in this quote:

"It's about joining-up the thinking and joining-up the organisations primarily... we've got lots of activities going on. It's just bringing together partners to ensure that we're not duplicating and that we're working effectively together."

[Coordinator interviewee]

- 4.19 Most coordinator interviewees touched upon the various health and economic benefits associated with cultural participation. One coordinator specifically mentioned Baroness Kay Andrews' 2014 report on Culture and Poverty. A few of those interviewed from partner organisations described partnership-working as a key Fusion objective, aimed at bringing sectors, organisations and individuals together to create cultural opportunities for disadvantaged or disengaged groups within communities *"...to make sure that they have those opportunities, which are not limited just to those who can afford it or are in particular areas..."*. Unprompted, a few partner organisation interviewees described specific outcomes (e.g. around health and well-being, education and employment) as an objective of this partnership working; and saw partners as having a key role in helping people achieve these outcomes. For example, this interviewee thought Fusion was about:

"...improving health and wellbeing, avenues into work, and for us, it's to engage with young people ... the cultural, heritage and arts organisations involved in Fusion are in a position to do that, especially if they work together."

[Partner organisation interviewee]

- 4.20 In contrast to the other coordinators, one coordinator felt that Fusion in their area operated differently to others in terms of its delivery. This coordinator described how most Fusion-supported activity in their area focused on projects aimed at improving financial literacy and digital skills, and they worked closely with teachers to target activities at pupils.

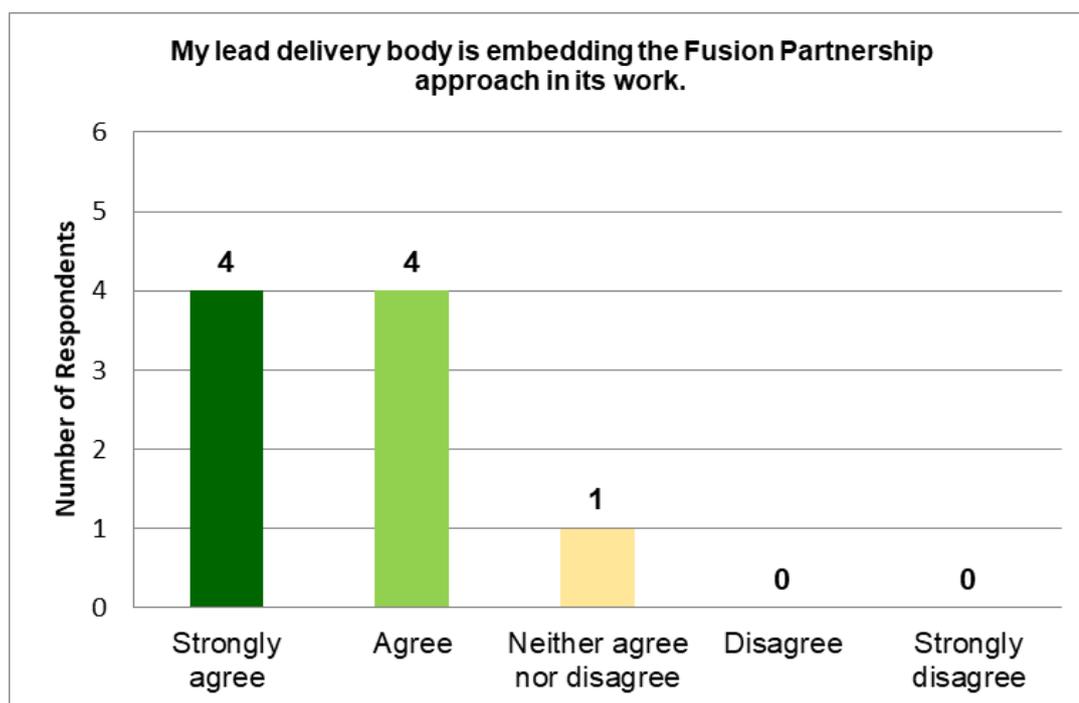
4.21 Some coordinators interviewees also suggested that they felt Fusion partners had a better understanding of the role of Fusion now that it had been established for a number of years. A few coordinators touched on the idea that partner organisations had more trust or confidence in the programme now that they were able to observe examples of successful participation.

“You’ve got to go out there and make those links and, and persuade them why it’s important...which is easier now that the programme’s up and running because they can see how it works... but if you’re starting from scratch it’s a bit of a hard sell, to begin with.” [Coordinator interviewee]

“Certainly, people have grasped it now. I think in the first few months of Fusion, perhaps people didn’t necessarily really understand what it was.... But once it’s established, I think people go, “Okay, I kind of get what that is...they can see evidence of projects that I’m doing with other people. And they can go, “Okay, I see what that is now.” [Coordinator interviewee]

4.22 In line with the above finding, when asked to comment on whether they felt their lead body was embedding the Fusion partnership approach in its work, nearly all coordinator survey respondents either *strongly agreed* (N=4) or *agreed* (N=4) with this statement. The results from this survey question can be seen in chart 4.1.

Chart 4. 1. Views on the leadership of Fusion - embedding Fusion



Total number of responses (9)

Motivations for joining local partnership networks

4.23 During interviews, coordinators shared their views on why organisations might join local partnership networks. Many thought a motivation for joining was the opportunities the network offered members to make links with organisations from a range of sectors, and the potential for partners to lessen the strain on their organisation, through opening-up opportunities to pool skills and knowledge.

“...it’s an opportunity really to sometimes share the burden of the resources... to work collaboratively and to make new contacts.” [Coordinator interviewee]

4.24 Some coordinator interviewees described their network as an opportunity for organisations to showcase what they were doing, and to see what other projects were being developed in their area. Networks were described by a number of coordinators as mutually supportive, with partners often publicising each other’s events, via social media for example. Fusion was also described by one coordinator as a *“support network”* for individuals or organisations who had expertise in a particular area (e.g. the arts), but who may not have worked

with certain communities (e.g. people with autism, those out of the labour market). For this coordinator, their local area network helped organisations with different skill-sets build links and learn from each other, *“rather than trying to start from scratch”*. From the offset, some coordinators felt they had had access to a cohort of organisations willing to work collaboratively because they were already bought in to the idea of working with others, making it easier for them to establish their networks.

“When I came into post...there was actually quite a lot of sort of rhetoric around the fact that we needed to work more in partnership. I think that was actually quite a good launch for me to be able to go, “Okay, well, if they want to do this, we should work together. Come talk to me and let’s see what we can do.” [Coordinator interviewee].

“...there’s this really great buzz at the moment... more and more people are looking to showcase not only what they’re doing but the other opportunities that are available within the city. And I think that that sort of support within the network is fantastic.” [Coordinator interviewee].

- 4.25 When partner organisation interviewees were asked about their motivations for joining a network, most focussed on perceptions around shared values between Fusion’s overarching aim of tackling poverty and disadvantage through encouraging cultural participation, and the aims and objectives of their own organisations. Interviewees, for example, referred to *“common outcomes and goals”*, or a shared *“ethos”*. Many referred to particular work streams or agendas (e.g. well-being, mental health, work placements) common to both partners and Fusion:

“...there are agendas we all need to [work towards], about well-being, and particularly on mental health. That’s a huge one for us. And I’m sure [the coordinator] has some ideas... it’s a common goal. Fusion’s goal is to have this well-being and it’s ours as well.” [Partner organisation interviewee]

- 4.26 A number of partner organisation interviewees also spoke of the mutual benefits working together could bring for those involved. This was often phrased in terms of getting something back from the network, such as access to different groups of people or an exchange of information or knowledge. An emphasis here was on the specific role interviewee’s felt their organisation could play within a wider network working towards the same objectives.

Interviewees described the resources their organisation had to offer, such as facilities or expertise, and how organisations working in partnership could achieve more working together than separately. In addition, this group of interviewee's felt partnership working supported more ambitious goals.

"...we have something to offer to the network... we've got a bank of facilities here, we've got lots of expertise, and a lot to offer for people who are part of the network. But equally, they've got a lot to offer us, and it's enabled us to partner up with other organisations, to be able to make experiences even more valuable." [Partner organisation interviewee]

"...we're a quite successful service... And I think we've managed to get this fantastic result by working with partners. We can't do it on our own... our working partnerships are so important." [Partner organisation interviewee]

4.27 One partner organisation interviewee also described the importance of participating in a local-area network from a more strategic perspective, referring to a synergy with Fusion "*values*" partly in terms of how their organisation would "*give discounts to people that maybe don't have quite as much money / bod ni'n rhoi discounts i bobl sydd ella ddim hefo cweit gymaint o bres*". Increasing footfall and consequently revenue was a key motivating factor behind their participation.

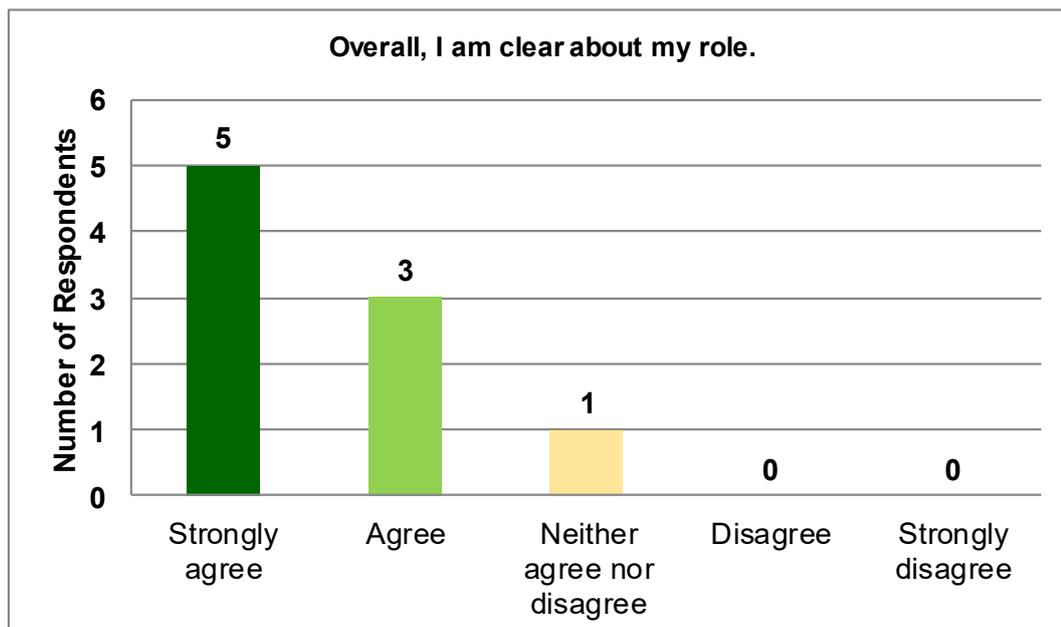
"...be' dach chi'n trio neud ydy cael bums on seats, ag unwaith mae nhw 'di profi theatr mae nhw fwy likely o ddod yn ôl wedyn 'de."

"...what you're trying to do is to get bums on seats. And once people have experienced theatre, they're more likely to come back." [Partner organisation interviewee]

Understandings of the Fusion Coordinator role

4.28 The survey included a question for coordinators on whether they felt clear about their role. The vast majority who responded either *strongly agreed* (N=5) or *agreed* (N=3) that they did; whilst one respondent *neither agreed nor disagreed*. The results to this question can be found in Chart 4.2. below:

Chart 4. 2. Experiences of coordinators - clarity on role



Total number of responses (9)

4.29 Both groups of interviewees were asked to describe the Fusion coordinator role and its purpose. All interviewees reported a broadly similar description which suggests coordinators are operating in a comparable and largely consistent way across the participating partnership areas, despite the different contexts within which coordinators are operating. The interview responses did however highlight the varied nature of the role, as detailed below.

Brokerage role

4.30 Both groups of interviewees emphasised the 'brokerage' role played by the coordinator in growing and fostering their local Fusion network, by identifying and making links with potential partners, and signposting organisations to each other. The regular networking meetings facilitated by each of the coordinators within their respective partnership areas were seen as key to building relations

between organisations. Some coordinators saw the facilitation of these networking opportunities as key to encouraging partners together to work collaboratively on the design and delivery of activities. A few other coordinators noted how, through the network, they had found organisations to deliver activities and groups who could attend activities; others described how they actively went about identifying the needs of groups through community engagement work and relayed these back to the network to see if any organisations could meet the demand and deliver specific cultural activities.

“I’ve more been about brokering relationships and then letting the organisations do the rest themselves... if one of them said to me, “I’m doing this project,” then I’ll just say, “Oh, have you spoken to so and so?””
[Coordinator interviewee].”

“I’m the conduit in that way... I’ll go and meet a group of young people and go, “What are you into? What are we not doing that you would like us to do?” And then at the network, I can go, “Okay, well, who between us could possibly deliver that?”” [Coordinator interviewee]

Project management role

- 4.31 Several coordinator interviewees also described their role like that of a project manager, in terms of maintaining a strategic and detailed knowledge of local communities and the cultural offer within their area to help make sure projects could happen. Coordinators described working to identify any gaps or limitations in cultural provision; consulting with members of their local community; problem solving any issues encountered during projects, sometimes with the help of partners; collating monitoring and evaluation information from Fusion partners; as well as identifying duplication in the implementation and delivery of activities. One coordinator for example referred to how they mapped what was going on locally, before asking themselves *“...who are we engaging with? Who are we not engaging with? What projects are taking place? Where are the gaps?”* Another coordinator felt her role was *“...sometimes just knowing what is out there and what’s going on in the communities”*.

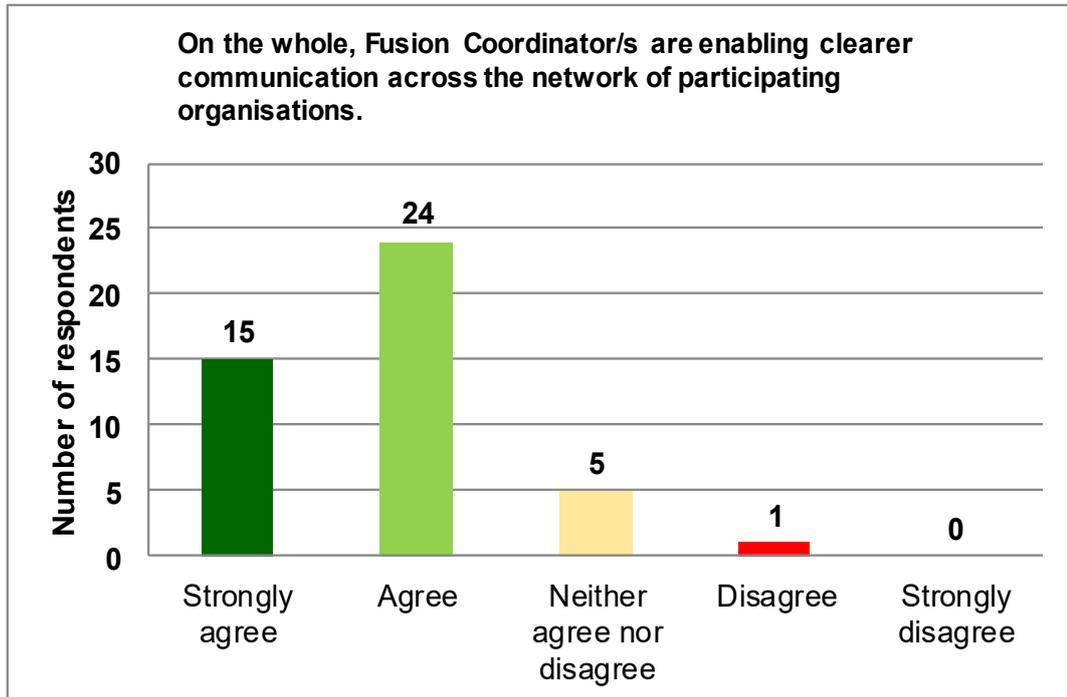
Communications role

4.32 Interviews with both groups of interviewees suggested that a key aspect of the coordinator role focused upon communications. At interview, coordinators described how they maintained regular one-to-one and network-wide contact with partners, through email, telephone and face-to-face meetings; and also how they raised awareness of local partners' cultural offers within their local area. A number of coordinators would promote activities in their area through social media (e.g. twitter), and by designing and distributing materials (e.g. leaflets, posters). Some coordinators also viewed their role to include consulting directly with hard to reach groups, to support people's engagement with activities, and acting as a point of contact and support for many of these individuals. Some coordinators also felt they raised the profile of Fusion more generally within their lead body, through engaging with different internal departments. One coordinator strongly emphasised the high volume of work involved in the communications aspect of the role:

"...I'm trying to maintain relationships with 40 or 50 partners on a weekly basis... plus then also engaging with the clients or participants... [The coordinator role] is actually a lot of communication." [Coordinator interview]

4.33 Results from the online survey, illustrated at Chart 4.3, show that by some margin, most respondents either *strongly agreed* (N=15) or *agreed* (N=24) coordinators were enabling clearer communication across their local networks; whilst only one respondent disagreed with the statement.

Chart 4. 3. Views on the impact of Fusion and the coordinator role – communications



Total number of responses (45)

Delivery role

4.34 Each of the coordinators often fluctuated between facilitation and more of a delivery role. All on occasion had played a more hands on role in the design and delivery of partners’ activities, depending on: their capacity; the support they felt some partners needed; and the project’s complexity or how developed it was. Their level of involvement was approached on a project-by-project basis, informed by a consideration of some or all of the factors listed above, as illustrated by the following quote:

“It’s impossible to get involved heavily with everything that goes on. It’s just impossible...sometimes projects need a light touch, where the partners take the major responsibility for delivering it... I’ve had some involvement in all of them, but some more than others, depending on what’s needed.” [Coordinator interviewee]

4.35 One coordinator however felt they were consistently leading on the coordination and delivery of activities, rather than facilitating networking opportunities and linking partners within their local area. Another coordinator

described how they would regularly have to play a more hands on role in the delivery of projects with certain partners, and felt many activities would not occur without their direct input.

“...the partnerships depend on myself... I haven’t been a broker here. I’ve been direct delivery.” [Coordinator interviewee]

“...hardly anything would have happened if I wasn’t directly involved in it.”
[Coordinator interviewee]

The design and delivery of Fusion Challenge Grants

4.36 The following paragraphs provide an overview of the implementation and running of partnerships and the design and delivery of activities, focusing on the role played by coordinators. The findings draw together insights drawn from the views of coordinators and partner organisations, from both the semi-structured interviews and the online survey. The main messages and learning are presented in terms of:

- establishing partnerships
- partnership working
- the design and delivery of activities
- consideration given to the Welsh language at local partnership level
- the role of the coordinator; and
- the sustainability of local area networks.

Establishing partnerships

4.37 The interviews with coordinators and partners explored the approaches taken to establish collaborative partnerships. A number of factors helped coordinators establish their partnership. Some coordinators had worked on Fusion within their local area prior to the launch of Fusion Challenge Grants; and several had first-hand insights into the needs and interests of hard to reach groups (e.g. asylum seekers, refugees) and groups of interest (e.g. older people, children and young people) through working on projects in previous roles. Local partnerships were also continuing to expand, with each of the coordinators providing examples of recent partners who had joined.

- 4.38 Partners became involved in their local partnership network in a number of ways. Some were identified as a key strategic partner or sector (e.g. museums, libraries) or work programme (Communities First, Communities for Work) at Fusion programme-level. Others had been contacted directly by the coordinator at a local-area level, either with a direct invite, off the back of other projects, or as a result of pre-existing working relations.
- 4.39 Some coordinator interviewees also gave examples of partners who had initiated their own involvement in the programme, or who had been referred to the programme through existing Fusion partners. A few coordinators had also worked in collaboration with their network to identify gaps in the membership, suggesting an element of co-curation in the development of local partnerships. For many, the existing connections of their lead bodies (e.g. through Communities First) had acted as a springboard for them to build and then expand their partnership's membership. For coordinators based within local authorities, this brought specific benefits, as they could easily identify and establish, often close and mutually supportive, links with other departments.

Partnership working

- 4.40 Both partners and coordinators emphasised the value of Fusion Challenge Grants in facilitating a more strategic and coordinated approach for organisations to align their objectives towards helping to tackle poverty through culture. Overall, research participants valued the programme's focus on a partnership approach and how it encouraged collaborative working, which had brought organisations together. For coordinator interviewees, partners' support and their willingness to embrace the programme's ethos had enabled partnerships to create more opportunities for target groups or bring added value to existing projects or activities. Some coordinators described how local area partnerships had brought about positive changes in the way organisations approached the design and delivery of activities, in terms of embedding more joined-up thinking and shared understandings across the organisations and sectors represented in their partnership.

"Un o'r pethau sy'n gweithio'n dda yw parodwydd pawb i gwrdd, i drafod ac i gydweithio ... maen nhw'n gweld bod Cyfuno wedi creu cyfle iddyn nhw wybod beth mae pawb yn ei wneud o fewn y sefydliadau, ac mae'n rhoi lle iddyn nhw wedyn i feddwl, "o wel, rydyn ni'n gwneud rhywbeth sy'n debyg iawn, beth am

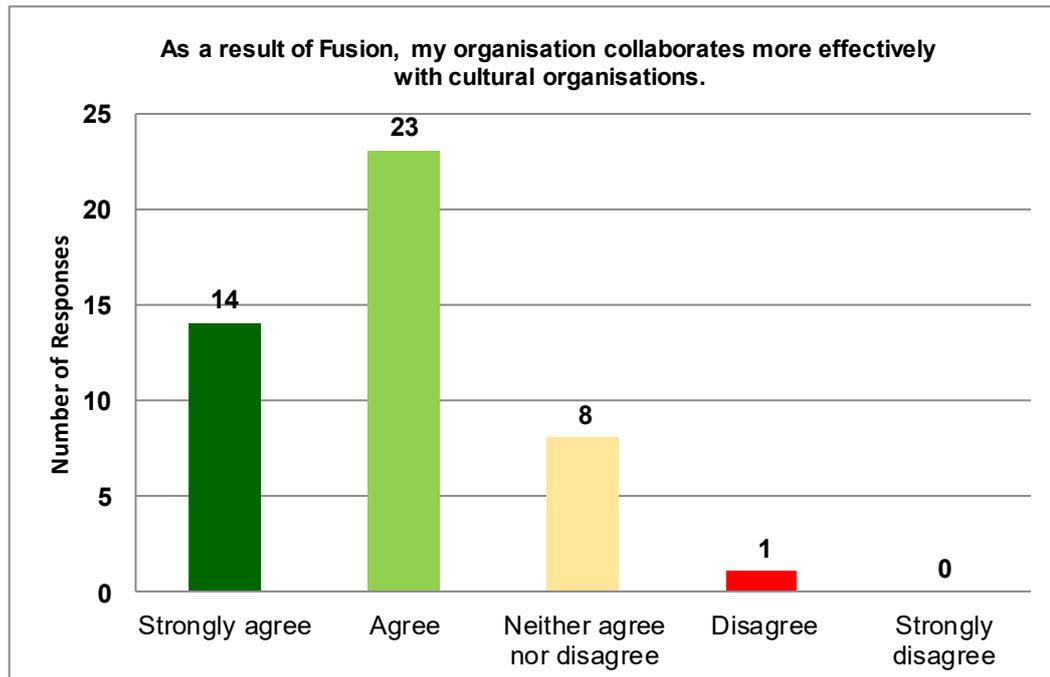
gydweithio"... maen nhw'n gefnogol iawn i'r cynllun yn yr ystyr ei fod wedi dod â nhw at ei gilydd."

"One of the things that works well is everyone's willingness to meet up, to discuss and to collaborate... they see that Fusion has created an opportunity for them to know what everyone does within the organisations, and it gives that space then to go, "oh well, we're doing something that's really similar, how about we collaborate"... they're really supportive of the scheme in the sense that it's brought them together." [Coordinator interviewee]

"They're very enthusiastic about trying to make things work for the benefit of the programme and are very good at listening...to see how they can do something a bit different to make something more appropriate for this target audience." [Coordinator interviewee]

- 4.41 As illustrated in Chart 4.4., the majority (80%; N=37) of partner survey respondents either *strongly agreed* (N=14) or *agreed* (N=23) that as a result of Fusion, their organisation collaborates more effectively with cultural organisations.

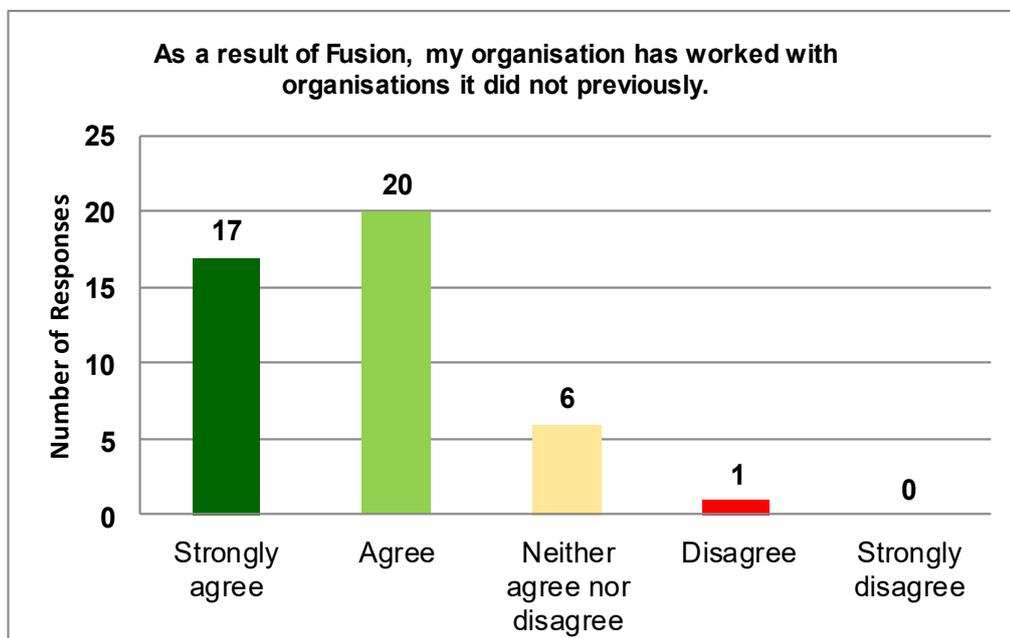
Chart 4. 4. Changes to organisation's ways of thinking and working – collaboration



Total number of responses (46)

4.42 Partners were also asked in the survey the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that as result of Fusion, their organisation has worked with organisations it did not previously. Again, the results were largely positive. Eighty percent (N=37) of respondents either *strongly agreed* (N=17) or *agreed* (N=20) with this statement. The results are illustrated below, in Chart 4.5.

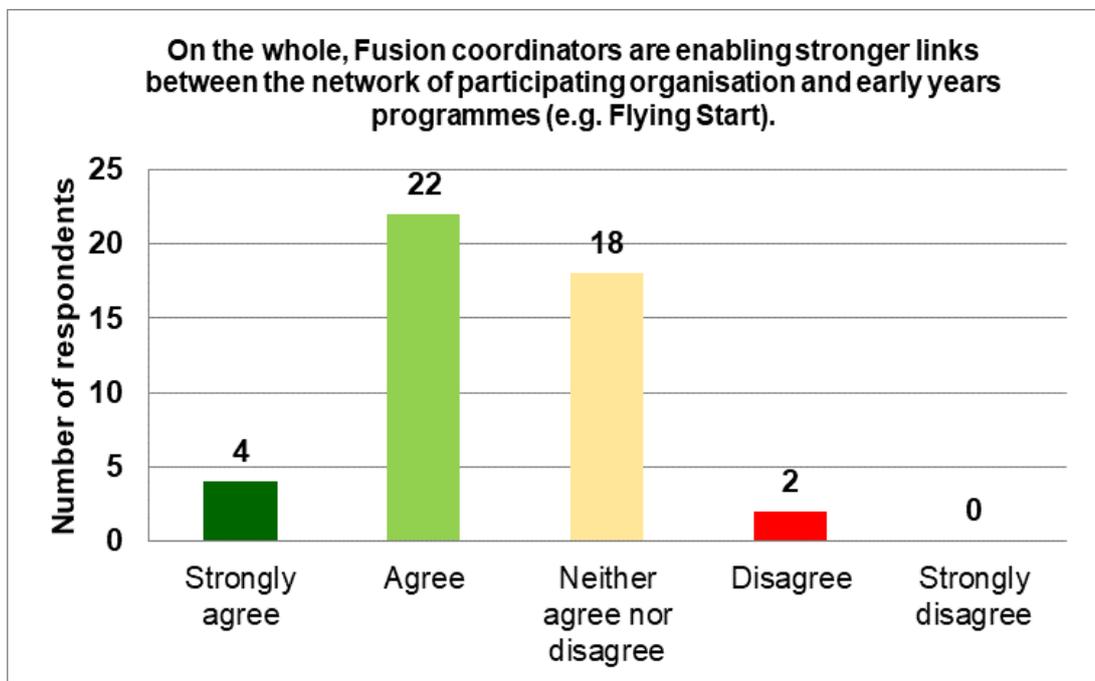
Chart 4. 5. Changes to organisation's ways of thinking and working - working with new organisations



Total number of responses (44)

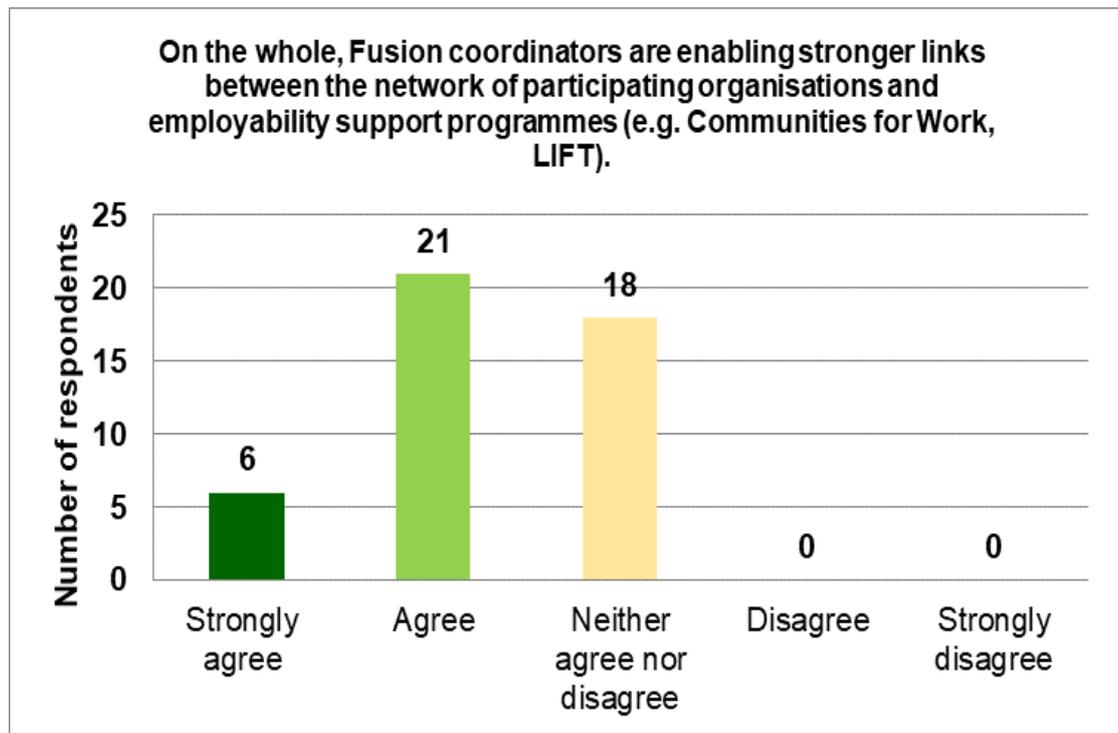
4.43 When asked specifically about Fusion themes, over half of the partner survey respondents (57%; N=26) either *strongly agreed* (N=4) or *agreed* (N=22) coordinators were enabling stronger links between partners and early years programmes; and 60% (N=27) either *strongly agreed* (N=6) or *agreed* (N=21) coordinators were enabling stronger links between partners and employability support programmes. Nearly two fifths of respondents (N=18 for both the ‘early years’ and the ‘employability support programmes’) to these questions however neither *agreed nor disagreed*. The findings are illustrated in Chart 4.6 and 4.7 respectively.

Chart 4. 6. Views on the impact of Fusion and the coordinator role - links with early years programmes



Total number of responses (46)

Chart 4. 7. Views on the impact of Fusion and the coordinator role - links with employability support programmes



Total number of responses (45)

4.44 A key benefit highlighted by many research participants was how partnerships had brought organisations together. This was viewed as a key success of Fusion Challenge Grants. When asked to share their views, some survey respondents focused on the programme’s successes in forging inter-sectoral links (e.g. between arts and heritage organisations and early years programmes (e.g. Flying Start)). This saw partners share best practice and co-deliver projects:

‘Forging partnerships and partnership working. Sharing work, ideas and having an inclusive approach to activities and events.’ [Survey respondent]

‘Providing and promoting opportunities for collaboration across organisations and different geographical areas; increased opportunities for co-delivery and development of projects; and dissemination of best practise to a broader area - this has been particularly powerful and key to the success of the programme.’ [Survey respondent]

4.45 Coordinators felt a key benefit of having a diverse partnership was being able to harness the skills and knowledge of a variety of organisations and individuals. The local area networks had provided a framework for bringing

different organisations together. The mix of organisations and sectors in partnerships was viewed as key, because it pulled together a range of experiences and meant that those able to design and deliver activities could meet with those who had a deeper understanding of the needs of target groups and how to engage them. Partners would then build on their different skill sets, working together to plan opportunities for culture to play more of a role in tackling poverty in local communities. Partners kept each other informed on their programmes of work, pooling resources and avoiding duplication where possible. Partners would also share invitations on upcoming events, such as training and funding opportunities. Coordinators emphasised the willingness of partners to collaborate and their keenness to maximise the opportunities available in their areas and to avoid working in silos.

“I think the attitude amongst a lot of the departments and as I said of external partners as well is that people really want to work to our strengths and support one another, and they want to know what’s happening. People don’t want to be stuck in their office and never know what other people are doing...”

[Coordinator interviewee]

“Everybody’s willing to work together...and everybody’s working towards the same goal... my job becomes a little bit easier when we’ve got partners on board who are eager and keen to do stuff.” [Coordinator interviewee]

“You’ve got have people within the network who are both providing opportunities, such as the arts organisations, but also who need to take those opportunities, such as the employability programme, the Flying Start and the people who support those communities that we most want to target. It’s important to have that mix there.” [Coordinator interviewee]

- 4.46 For one partner organisation interviewee, the programme was *“a lot better, a lot fairer... and more open”* since moving away from its focus on Communities First areas to a broader understanding of deprived areas and disadvantaged groups, partly defined by the lead body. They felt this made Fusion more adaptable and had enabled resources to be targeted in a fairer way: *“...instead of it being as the Communities First was and really specific to one area, it’s a lot more open and flexible, because the surrounding areas are equally poor”*.
- 4.47 Coordinators provided specific examples of partners supporting each other through: promoting each other’s offers; offering services or venues free of

charge; sharing their advice and knowledge; and working to enhance or change their own organisational offers to align more closely with Fusion objectives. This was directly put down to Fusion Challenge Grants.

“...I definitely think that there’s that sense of partnership working that definitely I didn’t see visible in the city two years ago.” [Coordinator interviewee]

Networking Meetings

- 4.48 The facilitation of regular networking meetings between partners at Fusion partnership level, by coordinators, were a key component of the coordinator role across each of the local partnership areas. Coordinators and partners broadly shared the view that these structured meetings were enabling a broad and diverse range of organisations to come together and, for example, collectively receive and deliver information and work together to identify and, where possible, address gaps in cultural provision. Having a forum where people could meet and engage with each other face-to-face and make connections and build relationships was cited as a key benefit in itself. A few coordinators had themed meetings or invited key note speakers, sometimes from organisations outside of their partnership, to cover particular topic areas and felt this worked well as a way to share information and learning and stimulate further discussions amongst partners.

“I get a lot of really positive feedback from everyone, saying how useful it is for them to find out who’s doing what. Because I think for a lot of people, they kind of look to me to be able to do that networking for them because they’re sat in their office doing their job, quite often, and they don’t have the flexibility necessarily that I have within my role to be able to do that.” [Coordinator, interviewee].

“Quite often partners will say to me, “God, if I hadn’t come to that meeting, I wouldn’t have met...”. Like art gallery groups, if they hadn’t come to the wider partnership meeting, they wouldn’t have realised what they could get from the Arts Council... that’s [networking meeting] worth doing, just getting partners to talk to partners.” [Coordinator interviewee]

“We have two or three other people who will come in and talk about things they’ve done that have been really successful within that team. So you have the conversation in the room about why it’s successful, what made it

successful, so there's always that sharing experience, and that continues as well outside the room." [Coordinator interviewee]

'Bringing partners together - the network meetings are great opportunities to start new conversations with new people (or to put faces to the names you have been communicating with via email already).' [Survey respondent, commenting on the programme successes]

- 4.49 Coordinator interviewees described how these regular networking meetings helped them to forge and maintain contact and relationships with and between partners, as well as enabled them to facilitate group discussions aimed at collectively generating ideas and new projects appropriate to the contexts within which they were operating. They felt that without someone with the specific remit to manage these meetings, they could lose momentum and would likely cease altogether, as partners had other responsibilities and competing priorities which prevented them from leading on this work.

"It needs somebody to coordinate it... Obviously, you could say to everyone, "Okay, here's everyone's emails addresses. You email each other." But that doesn't really feel like something that's cared for and fostered... it needs somebody at the helm of it..." [Coordinator interviewee]

The design and delivery of activities

Engaging with target groups

- 4.50 Coordinators were working with a broad range of groups across each of their partnerships areas (e.g. people living with dementia, parent networks, school and college pupils, members of the BAME community, local veterans). The coordinators also identified groups they wanted to work or do more work with (e.g. LGBTQ+ community; victims of domestic abuse; asylum seekers; young carers; looked after children; travellers; homeless people; people not in employment, education or training (NEETs)). All coordinators offered examples of working to address the gaps in provision they had identified, some in collaboration with either other partners or target groups; but most emphasised the particular challenges they had faced in trying to engage individuals with diverse and complex needs, as illustrated in the following quote:

"I went and had a chat with them and said, "Right, girls, what are you into?" You know, "What could we do to help you? Is there anything that I can do to

support you?” And one of the young girls is going to go and do art and design in September at the college. And I said, “Well, what about doing a bit of work experience, volunteering in the [art gallery]?” So last week we arranged for me, her and her support worker to go to the [art gallery]. We did a little very informal tour, had a bit of a laugh and just put her at ease so that potentially then she’ll come along and do some volunteering. But it’s a bit of a longer road, you know, than just, “Here you go. Here’s an opportunity.”...these are the people furthest away from the labour market, perhaps people that have never had work and are very nervous and not very high in confidence. So it takes longer, it’s a bit more effort, but it’s definitely worth it.” [Coordinator interviewee]

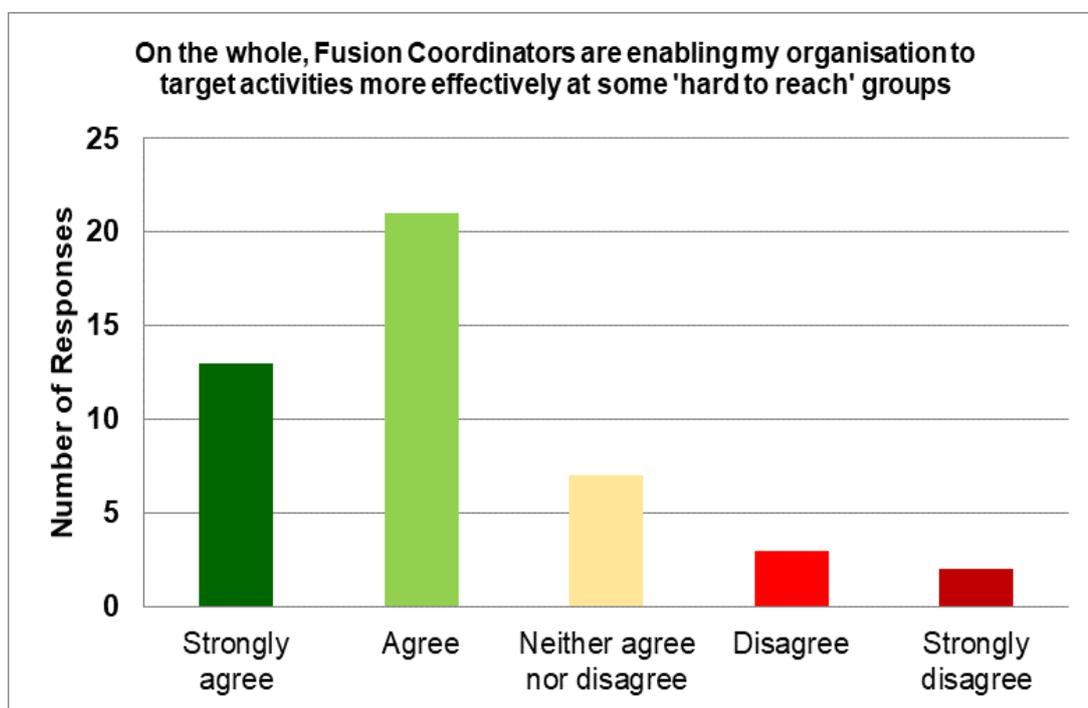
- 4.51 A key benefit highlighted by coordinators and partners in the research was on how coordinators were bringing together organisations’ resources and ideas together in a more coherent and structured way, so that communities and individuals were being targeted more effectively. Partners appreciated the wider range of organisations they worked with as a result of the coordinated networks. There was evidence this had resulted in either the delivery of new activities or an increased engagement in existing activities from target groups.
- “I think it’s a great way of linking different arts organisations together, it allows us to coordinate and act as a focal point. Although we have just joined, [the network] has allowed us to recruit some students from areas we struggled to reach to. This was done by organisations recommending us to their participants.” [Survey respondent]*

‘Creating a network for cultural and community groups to work together. Collecting data and analysing the communities served and not served. Helping to design new work and set new targets. Supporting partnerships. Promoting work and information sharing. Breaking down barriers to inclusion.’ [Survey, Q15]

- 4.52 Partner survey respondents were asked the extent to which coordinators were enabling their organisation to target activities more effectively at some ‘hard to reach’ groups. Nearly three quarters (N=34) of respondents either *strongly agreed* (N=13) or *agreed* (N=21) coordinators were allowing their organisation to target activities better, fifteen percent (N=7) *neither agreed nor disagreed*, while eleven percent (N=6) either *disagreed* (N=3) or *strongly disagreed* (N=3)

with the statement asked. The findings for this survey question are illustrated in Chart 4.8, below.

Chart 4. 8. Views on the role of Fusion Coordinators - targeting activities



Total number of responses (46)

4.53 One partner survey respondent did comment however that they felt they would be delivering activities at some hard to reach groups regardless of Fusion Challenge Grants and the role of the coordinator.

'...We have been able to continue delivery for those living in poverty and brought in various cultural opportunities but this was not due to the Fusion project.' [Survey respondent]

Geographical remit

4.54 By reference to their local area, a couple of the coordinator interviewees felt Fusion Challenge Grants disproportionately focussed on the old Communities First clusters (see Section Two) at the expense of communities identified as areas of rural deprivation and the individuals living there, who “...*maybe feel they don't get as much*”. In their view, some communities were neglected because Communities First areas had been and continued to be prioritised, and this issue was exacerbated by the large area their partnership covered. Despite the large geography of the area they were covering, cultural opportunities tended to be targeted at individuals based in the former Community First clusters. A partner also described some confusion within their network on which localities and groups of individuals based within these areas could participate in activities:

“...does ‘na neb yn siŵr iawn ynglŷn â ffiniau Fusion, fel pa mor bell dan i'n cael mynd hefo'r ardaloedd ‘ma. Mae hanner y bobl yn meddwl bod o'n [ardal awdurdod lleol] i gyd, ac wedyn mae ‘na hanner arall yn meddwl na mae o'n pocedi o fewn... pam oedden ni mewn cyfarfod yn trafod yr ysgolion oedd gallu cymryd rhan... roedd yna ychydig o drafodaeth – ‘a yw ysgolion y tu allan i'r pocedi yn cael cymryd rhan?’ Ac wedyn roedd rhai yn dweud, ‘Wel, dwi 'n cymryd bod pawb yn [yr awdurdod lleol] yn cael cymryd rhan’...”

“...nobody's completely sure about Fusion's boundaries, like how far we're able to go with these areas. Half the people seem to think that it's all [of the local authority area], and then the other half thinks ‘no’, its pockets within... I remember when we were discussing the schools that were allowed to take part... there was a little bit of discussion there – ‘are schools outside of the pockets allowed to take part?’ And then some were saying, ‘Well, I take it that everybody in [the local authority] is allowed to take part’...” [Partner organisation interviewee]

Consideration of the Welsh language at local partnership level

- 4.55 During interviews, coordinators were also asked to comment on how the Welsh language had been considered in their partnership area, in terms of both communications with and between local partners, and during the design and delivery of activities.
- 4.56 Most coordinators based within local authorities referenced their commitment to adhere to Welsh language standards, and that as a result all their public facing (such as posters, social media posts) or mass communications (e.g. emails) were bilingual. Only one coordinator commented that most of their external communications tended to be in English, but that there *'was the option for bilingual'*. In terms of one-to-one communications with partners, coordinators described how these depended on the language preference of who they were communicating with. Several coordinators commented how, upon request, partners in their local partnership area had opted for communications to be provided in English, while one acknowledged that this could be *"a case of not speaking to the right people"*. In terms of partner organisations communications, some coordinators commented that for smaller organisations, without the resource, or necessarily the same Welsh language requirements as their lead body, their communications tended to be in English only.
- 4.57 All coordinators also made reference to activities in their areas that were designed and delivered through the medium of Welsh in their areas (e.g. choirs, play groups, school workshops), although these were much more common in some areas than others. For example, one coordinator commented that the majority of people in their area were Welsh speaking, and that nearly all communications and activities in their area were delivered in Welsh. Another coordinator commented that there was a possible gap in their area in the provision of Welsh language Fusion activities, partly due to a perceived lack of demand for this in their area. This coordinator, along with one other, noted that the communities they were working with often weren't first or second language Welsh, with one commenting for example on the many other languages used in their area; *"so I guess, if people are looking at translation,*

they wouldn't necessarily look at translating it into Welsh because there'd be another language that would be more beneficial."

The role of the Coordinator

- 4.58 Fusion Challenge Grants has funded the post of coordinators within participating partnership areas and this review sought to explore views on the effectiveness of the role and the extent to which it is helping to deliver Fusion objectives at a local-area level. The following paragraphs summarise these findings.

Strategic oversight

- 4.59 Both coordinators and partners valued the role as a resource for facilitating a holistic oversight of local partnership areas; in terms of the roles concern with identifying partners, streamlining resources and reducing duplication, and supporting partners to work in a more efficient and coordinated way. The strategic oversight of partnerships by coordinators was particularly valued and continually emphasised as key to the successful facilitation of local area networks. Several research participants referred to the importance of having a named individual as the central point of contact with an overarching understanding of the local cultural and tackling poverty context. Some coordinators and partners specifically referenced the need to have an individual with overall responsibility for coordinating and quality assuring the monitoring and reporting data submitted by partners, and mapping and identifying any gaps and opportunities in the provision of activities.

"...with someone in the coordinator role, it obviously makes it a lot easier, just because that person then is the point of contact all the time... And they're the ones keeping up with knowledge about what's going on in the area and looking at it holistically..." [Coordinator interviewee]

"...having somebody to collect all of the data from everyone and say, "Right, who are we working with? Who have we been working with?" As a city, rather than as a venue. So we get a better picture...who are we not working with that we could be? What could we do to deliver accredited learning for those that are engaged? How do we increase people's digital learning? So that's, that's been really useful... And also looking at who is engaging with sort of certain areas." [Coordinator interviewee]

One survey respondent however was unclear on the value of the coordinator role beyond relaying information on training and grant opportunities to their partnership.

Coordinators offering support

4.60 Participation in Fusion Challenge Grants had supported a greater understanding of the support available for partners. Some partners described how coordinators had signposted to training and funding opportunities. There were also examples provided of more involved one-to-one or tailored support between coordinators and organisations, with coordinators providing advice and support on, for example: grant applications; setting-up new activities; working with new groups; and establishing programmes of work around Fusion themes (e.g. volunteering).

“...They were getting a little bit nervous because they didn’t have funding to put anything on themselves and didn’t have the confidence to put it on themselves. But as soon as I went there and said, “What about doing it like this?” they straight away said “yes”, and now it’s happening.” [Coordinator interviewee].

4.61 This review also explored the types of support provided by coordinators. The responses pointed to a number of areas where the assistance provided by coordinators was particularly valued by some partners, namely: providing or signposting to training; and support in hosting volunteering opportunities for individuals. Each of these areas are discussed separately below.

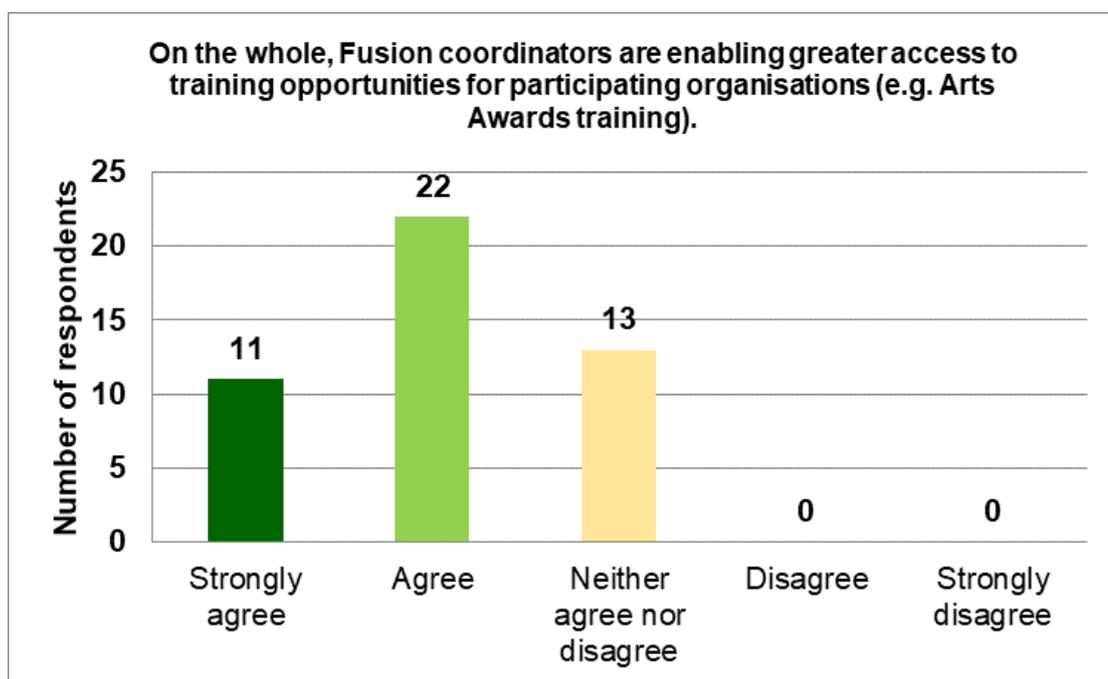
○ *Training*

4.62 When commenting on their experience of working with their local coordinator, reference was made by a number of online survey respondents to Coordinators supporting with the provision of training opportunities within their local network. Similarly, when survey respondents were given the opportunity to comment openly on the key successes of the Fusion programme, reference was made to the programme’s success in highlighting training opportunities among the networks of Fusion partners, with one respondent specifically commenting on the coordinators ‘skills’ in identifying training opportunities for the network.

‘The training and development opportunities have been fantastic and would not have been possible to meet without this programme’ [Survey respondent]

4.63 Chart 4.9, below, also illustrates a strong consensus among partner organisation survey respondents that coordinators are enabling greater access to training opportunities for partner organisations, with nearly three quarters of stakeholders from partner organisations (N=33), either *strongly agreeing* (N=11) or *agreeing* (N=22) with this statement.

Chart 4. 9. Views on the impact of Fusion and the coordinator role - access to training



Total number of responses (46)

4.64 Again, when discussing the successes of their local partnership area, one partner interviewee also described the training opportunities they had accessed as a result of their involvement in a working group:

“...there’s training linked to the [family learning programme]. There is training for the partners, training for teachers for them to be able to be agents in their schools. And then there are planning meetings for activities, pitching meetings, where the partners pitch their ideas about activities to the schools or to the head teachers or school’s representatives. And then there are data meetings later on in the year.” Partner organisation interviewee]

- *Volunteering*

4.65 A number of coordinator interviewees also attributed increased numbers of volunteers in their partnership area or improvements in partner's capacity and confidence to pursue volunteering, to their support in this area, in terms of offering training or identifying and recruiting volunteers themselves.

“Organisations who have not previously had volunteers, we've done training with them so that they have a really good grasp of how to step that up and take it forward within their own organisations without sort of falling into it...so it's been really, really positive to help the organisation push that forward.”

[Coordinator interviewee]

- *Accreditation*

4.66 Additionally, when discussing the successes of the programme, several coordinator interviewees also mentioned having seen increased opportunities for accreditation being offered by their network, or changed attitudes towards offering accreditation among Fusion partners. A number of coordinators mentioned Fusion, or their role specifically, in having helped push these changes forward.

“Everyone else is sort of delivering really great stuff but not accrediting any of it...So that's something I've been working on, to change... I brought Adult Learning Wales in as a new partner, and they've been great. So they're paying for all of our sort of accreditations going forward. We have to, obviously, pay for the tutor, but then they're covering the administrative costs and the accreditation costs. So that's really positive.” [Coordinator interviewee]

“I think some of the key successes really have been around the Arts Awards, getting that integrated into the Young Promoters projects for part of the Night-Out Scheme...I think we've done like 103 this year of the Arts Awards, which is just huge, far more than I thought we'd do...And loads of organisations have really taken that on as a really positive way to develop the young people's skills in a variety of different ways, and a nice alternative accreditation for them as well. So that's been really, really beneficial.” [Coordinator interviewee]

“33 people have, have done an Agored thing. Only two of them would have happened if Fusion wasn't involved.” [Coordinator interviewee]

○ *Funding*

4.67 Interviews with coordinators also highlighted the support they offer partners to become aware of funding opportunities, as well as in many cases working with partners on funding applications, with several referencing successful funding applications they had been involved in.

“If I’m going into schools, I’ll be making them aware of the Arts Council funding that they could apply for, which many schools simply don’t know about. And if it’s other organisations, making them aware of Heritage Lottery funding and Arts Council funding that they can apply for to achieve their aims.”

[Coordinator interviewee]

“We’ve helped quite a lot of different organisations to secure additional funding, so with [Arts organisation] and their [Fusion activity], then they received funding in kind from the Council, but they had funding from [educational programme], and they had Heritage Lottery Funding and Arts Council funding.” [Coordinator interviewee]

This finding was echoed by some online partner survey respondents, who specifically mentioned coordinators support with signposting them towards funding opportunities.

‘As a community group, we have worked with and been well supported by two fusion co-ordinators in past 3-4 years. Each has been incredibly supportive in signposting us to opportunities for funding and introducing us to people in other organisations that could offer mutual support. This has resulted in us being able to offer a range of exciting events in our local area...we wouldn’t have easily been able to do this without the help, guidance & support of the fusion co-ordinator’ [Survey respondent]

4.68 One Coordinator acknowledged that a successful grant application often requires specialist knowledge of certain key phrases, or of the changing priorities of the arts, culture and heritage sector; something which many partner organisations aren’t used to, particularly smaller charitable organisations that are often most often reliant on external funding. This Coordinator went on to emphasise the value of having someone with expertise in applying for funding to support local organisations and community groups:

“I just think it’s just a role that we need. Whether that’s in the Fusion network or within the wider remit of communities. We just need someone to help with funding.” [Coordinator interviewee]

- 4.69 Partners involvement in Fusion had been evidenced in bids for grant funding, which had included letters of support from their local area coordinator.

The sustainability of local area networks

- 4.70 The research also explored stakeholder’s views on the sustainability of local area networks and the extent to which they attributed any changes to the ways participating organisations worked to Fusion. The research presented promising evidence of the continued engagement of Fusion partner organisations and the growth of local Fusion partnership networks. However, when given the opportunity to comment on the sustainability of their local Fusion partnerships, it is important to note that both coordinators and stakeholders interviewees routinely, and unprompted, expressed that they felt their local network wouldn’t be sustainable without coordination or facilitation.

“Mae angen rhywun sy’n gatalydd, a dweud y gwir. Wn i ddim a allai hynny weithio drwy'r partneriaid, ond yr hyn sy'n digwydd fel rheol yw bod pethau'n mynd yn fflat, a hyd yn oed os ydych chi'n dweud, “iawn, fy nhro i yw trefnu'r tro hwn”, dyw e ddim yn mynd i weithio, mae angen rhywun sydd â'r momentwm i gadw pethau i fynd.”

“There needs to be a person who is a catalyst, really. I don’t know if that could work through the partners, but what happens normally is that things go flat, and even if you say, “okay, it’s my turn to organise this time”, it isn’t quite going to work, you need a person with the momentum to keep things going.”

[Coordinator interviewee]

- 4.71 When discussing the sustainability of local Fusion activities, the value of having someone in a Coordinating role was again referenced by coordinator interviewees, in terms of supporting partners to focus and align their resources within the remit of the Fusion programmes aims, and challenging partners to work in new ways and target their activities more effectively.

“In terms of the network, if it’s sustainable, I think you would lose some, and I think that projects would even slow down and you’d eventually end up with just a few little pockets of people working together, which would be sustainable.”

But in terms of broader, more challenging work, I think that wouldn't happen without the intervention of a Fusion coordinator.” [Coordinator interviewee].”

Challenges and areas of improvement

- 4.72 Research participants identified a number of challenges around their local area partnership networks and suggested improvements. Each of those interviewed wanted both their network and their lead body or organisations involvement in Fusion to continue. Most interviewees identified issues and suggested refinements or changes to the programme, as detailed below.

Communications

- 4.73 Factors relating to communications were consistently raised as an area for improvement by research participants, in both the interviews and within the online survey. Most responses from partner interviewees focussed on the need for consistent interactions between the coordinator and partners, and clear messaging from Fusion programme-level, to continue improving partnerships at a local-area level. Coordinators also highlighted some communications-related issues they felt could be addressed, from: top-down, Fusion programme level; internally, within lead bodies; across individual local-area partnership networks; and between coordinators. Other issues were identified around increasing the profile of Fusion, by improving how key messages and impacts were publicised; in part by developing the branding and marketing of the programme, and targeting activities more effectively at individuals and groups at a local-area through advertising opportunities to participate in cultural activities more effectively within communities.

Communication between Welsh Government and coordinators

- 4.74 Some coordinators felt the information about Fusion from top-down programme level could be clearer and happen more regularly. One coordinator described a lack of clarity from MALD about the remit of their role; and many called for more concise messaging around the programmes aims. Whilst one coordinator described Fusion's aims as “lofty”, others focussed on how its broad definition of culture, a lack of conceptual clarity over tackling poverty, and the breadth of activities which could be delivered under its banner, made it difficult to summarise to partners what the programme was about. Coordinators often found it challenging to break programme-level objectives

down. Consequently, drawing-out the relevance of Fusion in concrete and tangible ways for potential partners at a local-area level could be difficult. This sometimes resulted in coordinators describing the programme in their own words which risked going off-message. One coordinator also described a situation where they felt they had received clarity on the programme from their local network of Fusion partners, rather than from Fusion programme level:

“...Dysgais lawer gan y partneriaid...fe wnaethant egluro llawer am yr hyn y mae'n rhaid i Cyfuno fod, ac roedd yn teimlo ychydig yn rhyfedd oherwydd roeddwn i yno yn cynrychioli Cyfuno, ond roedd yn teimlo fel mai nhw oedd yn fy nysgu fi braidd yn y cyfarfodydd.”

“...I learned a lot from the partners... they explained a lot about what Fusion has to be, and it felt a bit odd because I was there representing Fusion, but it felt a bit like they were teaching me at the meetings.” [Coordinator interviewee]

“It’s always good to know where Welsh Government are coming from in terms of how they sort of see the future of Fusion and in terms of what we can do as coordinators to help, aside from giving the evidence that we collate... are there any sort of key messages that we should be delivering consistently that would help their case?” [Coordinator interviewee]

- 4.75 One partner called for better communications around the outcomes and potential impact of the programme; and more specifically, of the activities they helped facilitate, “so we can feed it back corporately” or more widely within their organisation and identify learning points or share best practice more effectively. For this interviewee, the ways in which information was shared between officials at a programme level, the lead delivery body and other partners on the network could be improved. A coordinator also raised this as an issue within the context set by Fusion’s monitoring requirements; describing how the number of performance measures made it difficult to pinpoint and summarise the main points: “Because you’ve got so many performance indicators it’s difficult to just have, like, three key messages...”. In particular, the same partner referenced earlier in this paragraph felt the mechanisms in place to share Fusion related monitoring and reporting information needed strengthened, so they could be more responsive to local needs and tailor activities more effectively:

“...it feels like we’ve working in a bit of a vacuum, because the families come here for an ‘intervention’, as we call it, and go from there and we don’t really know about the impact, maybe for months after.” [Partner organisation interviewee]

Communication between coordinators

4.76 This review also explored the extent and the ways in which coordinators were communicating and collaborating with the other coordinators across their respective local area partnerships. All coordinators wanted more communication between themselves and their counterparts, to trouble shoot and share ideas, best practice and learning, as well as helping them identify activities to run in their own areas. However, when communications between coordinators did occur, it was relatively light touch, ranging from: signposting partner contacts to neighbouring coordinators; ‘buddying up’ to pay for training opportunities; and meeting at events.

4.77 For the most part, communication between coordinators tended to be sporadic, and also largely geography dependent, with those working in adjacent areas more likely to communicate with each other than in the structured Coordinator Networking Meetings.²² A couple of the coordinators described how they collaborated with the coordinator in their region, but how outside of this, there was little communication with the others as *“everyone else is really far away from us”*. One of the newer coordinators also raised how an introduction to their fellow coordinators, either by email or at an event, would have been helpful.

4.78 However, the isolated nature of the role was not always discussed in negative terms by coordinators; with one in particular commenting favourably on the flexibility the independent nature of the role gave them in terms of it simplifying getting things done:

“We all kind of act alone. That’s just the way it works. But then that’s the flexibility of our role as well, which I quite like. So I know that if I needed support, then I could ask for it. But I’ve just tended to do it as a bit of a, a lone ranger, I guess, just because it’s easier.” [Coordinator interviewee]

²² Coordinators Networking Meetings are facilitated by MALD, and aim to bring Fusion coordinators, Fusion programme leads, and key partners together to discuss the delivery of the programme at both a national and local level.

4.79 Most coordinator interviewees thought the regular Fusion coordinator Networking Meetings were a useful opportunity to come together and share best practise. However, all felt the format of these meetings needed revising to be less formal, to allow for more un-facilitated discussions and less-structured networking, perhaps away from policy officials. For several coordinators, the meetings mostly focused on information sharing bordering on advocacy, and they could be quite intense. Some coordinators suggested having more round table discussions, which could also make it easier to collaborate between each other on a more day-to-day basis.

“...the way it’s structured in the beginning, when we do the updates, we’re all using that opportunity to shout about how good we are, because we’ve got the Fusion team there. Whereas what would be better for us at times is to talk about some of the difficulties we’re encountering.” [Coordinator interviewee]

“...more time for conversations between coordinators might be useful within [the networking meeting] schedule... Because reeling off a list of things that you’ve done is interesting, but it’s not that helpful if you’re unable to interrogate and discuss those topics a bit more fully.” [Coordinator interviewee]

“...mae angen mwy o rwydweithio. Efallai pe bai’n digwydd yn fwy rheolaidd byddai pobl yn adnabod ei gilydd yn well ac efallai y byddai ganddyn nhw fwy o hyder i gychwyn sgwrs.”

“...there needs to be more networking. Maybe if it happened more regularly people would know each other better and maybe would have more confidence to strike-up a conversation.” [Coordinator interviewee]

Communication within local area networks – marketing and targeting activities

4.80 Research participants also had practical suggestions on how to improve communications between stakeholders within local area partnership networks. Most ideas were around marketing the programme more effectively. Communicating events more effectively to target audiences was raised by several coordinators; with one commenting for example that the programme needed to be “*more known to the public*” and another describing how better branding could help with this:

“...I was surprised that we didn’t have proper branding for the project... just having a Welsh Government logo is not really good enough... that doesn’t say

Fusion. It doesn't say what we do. It doesn't reach out to people... with any other project you're like 'who is my audience?', and you design something appropriately. [Coordinator interviewee]

- 4.81 Some coordinators were using the tools available to the lead delivery body (e.g. social media posts, flyers) to target activities at particular groups, which had helped increase awareness of and participation in Fusion-supported activities. This was raised by one partner organisation interviewee as an effective way to increase engagement amongst target audiences:

"...if we're going back to the initial problem of getting audiences engaged and aware, we found that video advertising has really worked well. So, we've done posts for social media, but also things like using the big screen in the city centre... that's been really useful in terms of getting the word out about what it is, and what the workshops are, and who it's for... just creative ways about getting the word out, really, getting maximum uptake..." [Partner organisation interviewee]

- 4.82 One coordinator thought providing marketing materials (e.g. business cards, pop-up banners) would make Fusion more visible and look more professional at outward-facing events; another called for using more creative and engaging methods of communicating the programmes aims, objectives and achievements, to make the key messages more accessible for both potential partners and the public.

"If we're going to show the validity of what we're doing... the medium of film or photography is much more engaging for the general public and for partners to go, "Oh, cool. Yeah, that looks great"... no one's going to read a big dossier about what we did, and it's just boring for people, and it doesn't bring it to life..." [Coordinator interviewee]

- 4.83 Partner interviewees also had suggestions on how to improve communications within their partnerships. Within the context of work placements, one interviewee suggested developing a directory which outlined who was who in the network, and the types of activities or support their organisation could provide through the partnership which went beyond general knowledge sharing, guidance or feedback: *"...such as 'we can offer placements with our activities which some of the young people you work with could attend, or*

adults that you work with could attend’... so a list of what we could offer each other over and above advice and support.”

- 4.84 When asked what, if any, improvements could be made to Fusion, one survey respondent suggested developing a newsletter or bulletin to advertise the cultural opportunities available within local area partnerships:

“Perhaps a weekly internal bulletin for Fusion members about opportunities within the partnership and events coming up; but also a newsletter that goes out to communities, perhaps via social media, so there is a one-stop shop for people to find out about cultural opportunities for them.” [Survey respondent].

Monitoring and evaluation

- 4.85 The evidence collected from interviews revealed coordinators were experiencing some challenges in collecting monitoring and evaluation information from partners. Most coordinators described having to prompt and chase for this material and highlighted variability amongst partners around the design and successful implementation of monitoring processes. Whilst one coordinators described an improvement in this area, in terms of partners understanding the requirements more and submitting better quality data as a result, many raised concerns. A common complaint was the lack of financial and human resource allocated towards monitoring and evaluation by partners. A number of coordinators described a reluctance from some organisations to forward information to them, and felt that financial incentives, such as only allocating funding to activities once organisations had agreed to share data could help.

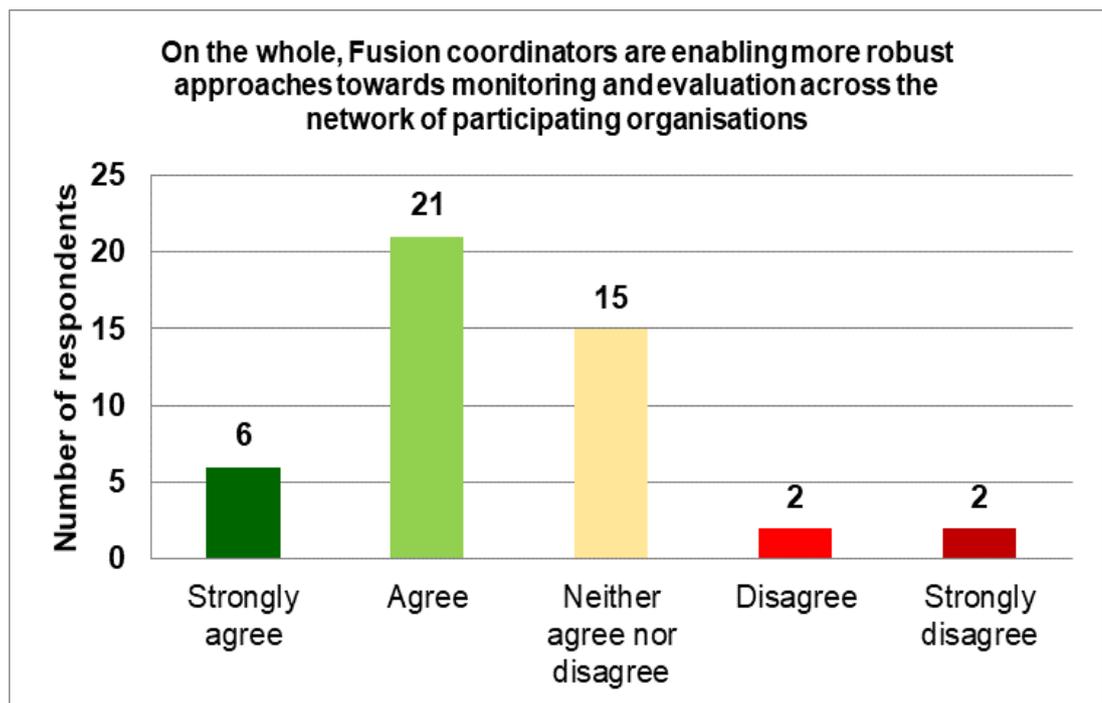
“...mae a wnelo llawer o hyn â'r ffaith nad oes gennym yr arian i'w gynnig, nad ydym wedi bod yn rhan ganolog o'r hyn maen nhw wedi bod yn ei wneud, felly efallai eu bod yn teimlo, 'pam y dylem roi'r wybodaeth i chi?”

“...a lot of it has to do with the fact that we don't have the money to offer, that we haven't been a central part of what they've been doing, so they maybe feel, 'why should we give you the information?’ [Coordinator interviewee]

“Maybe, you know, again, if I had money, I could maybe pull the strings a bit more by sort of saying, “Right, I’m going to fund this and this is what you have to do”. [Coordinator interviewee]

4.86 The survey included a question on the extent to which they agreed or disagreed coordinators were enabling more robust approaches towards monitoring and evaluation across local area partnerships. There was more polarity across the range of response options with this question when compared to most of the other survey questions. Over half of respondents (N=27), either *strongly agreed* (N=6) or *agreed* (N=21) with this statement. More than a quarter of respondents however neither *agreed nor disagreed* (N=15), while four *disagreed* (N=2) or 2 *strongly disagreed* (N=2). The results to this survey question are at Chart 4.10.

Chart 4. 10. Views on the impact of Fusion and the coordinator role - monitoring and evaluation



Total number of responses (46)

4.87 A key challenge for a number of partners was the insufficient resource and limited capacity within their organisation to monitor activities themselves and the difficulties they encountered as a result in trying to meet Fusion’s requirements; in particular because the focus of partners was often on delivering activities, which left little time for collecting and analysing data.

4.88 Several research participants acknowledged the difficulties of measuring the impact of culture in general and the types of activities supported through Fusion, such as more one-off activities. They called for different research tools and methods or approaches to evaluation; for Fusion to draw more explicitly from the wider evidence base when making its case on the value of culture and on making the importance of partners collecting and disseminating information clearer. A number of research participants were critical of Fusion's focus on particular thematic areas and on an evaluation approach they viewed as concerned with collecting monitoring data rather than with more in-depth explorations of the potential impact of activities on participants, who were often amongst their communities' most vulnerable or disadvantaged groups. Research participants also recognised the difficulties in attributing specific activities to an outcome or impact. A couple emphasised that the application of more in-depth or longer-term evaluative techniques would enable a more thorough exploration of the programme's potential impacts

'I don't want to be critical of the Fusion co-ordinators because they evidently have an extremely challenging role to deliver. My perception is that the pressures of Fusion targets drive behaviours that possibly work against the overarching purpose and goal of the programme. There is a preoccupation with numbers and high level of activity delivered without appropriate resources, rather than a deep engagement designed for lasting change. There are evidently some individual success stories but the whole thrust of the programme seems a significant backward step when years of deep evaluation of engagement programmes in cultural and heritage settings indicates what does and what doesn't work.' [Survey respondent]

'Heritage and culture can regenerate communities suffering from social and economic challenges and create opportunities and build confidence and opportunity & change people's life chances for the better. But this SHOULD not be driven by 'getting people back in to work' employment metrics. The problems are MUCH greater and more complex than that - moreover getting people back in to work does not in itself address poverty anyhow as we have high levels of poverty in work in many of our most deprived communities. Fusion needs serious investment and a much more flexible, less top-down

approach to evaluation IF it is to achieve real and meaningful change.’ [Survey respondent]

‘Datblygu rhaglen werthuso hir-dymor fyddai’n tracio teuluoedd sydd wedi cymryd rhan yn y Llofnod Dysgu i weld a ydyn nhw’n ymwneud mwy â diwylliant / ymweld â mwy o leoedd diwylliannol fel teulu / a ydy’r Llofnod wedi arwain at ddiddordeb mewn magu sgiliau neu ddewisiadau o ran gyrfa / addysg.Challenges - Gwerthuso impact ein gweithgareddau.’

‘Develop a long term evaluation programme that would track families who took part in the Learning Signature to see if they interact more with culture / visit more cultural places as a family / has the Signature led to an interest in developing skills or career / education choices. Challenges - Evaluate impact of our activities.’ [Survey respondent]

Inconsistent buy-in

- 4.89 For some coordinators, whilst they felt there was support within their lead body for Fusion, this was often from their direct team or management level, rather than from executive level, which made them question the level of buy-in further-up in their organisational structure. According to one coordinator for example:

“I’ve got support to a certain point, as in two levels above my line manager... But in terms of anything higher, then I’m not sure about the profile the Fusion programme has...” [Coordinator interviewee]

- 4.90 One coordinator found it difficult to engage some internal departments of their lead body due to a lack of *“mandate from above”*, and suggested that for these departments, top-down dissemination of the benefits of participating in Fusion was needed from higher-levels, including the Welsh Government. For this coordinator, the vast majority of communications came from them personally, and this was often challenging.

“A lot of people higher up the chain don’t see, see the benefits, and then you have to persuade in order to enable things to happen at the level where we want things to happen....” [Coordinator interviewee]

4.91 Some partners also questioned the motivations of other organisations within their partnership; viewing their interest in collaborative working to be motivated by organisational self-interest rather than a genuine concern with specific target groups or interest in particular venues. There were also calls for some partners to contribute in less superficial and more substantive ways which reflected more fully the notion of partnership working, other than simply attending networking meetings.

“As a community partner, we have found that some cultural partners just want to work with us just to tick the box of working with a certain type of patient group...” [Survey respondent]

“A bit more buy in from partners, rather than just being present, or making suggestions that are then expected to be pulled together by someone else. A true belief in the collaborative approach.” [Survey respondent, discussing improvement the programme]

Eligibility for support

4.92 One partner organisation interviewee also called for a clearer steer from Fusion programme-level on which geographical areas were eligible for support. This interviewee saw both rural and urban poverty as an issue for their lead delivery body, and an issue which could perhaps be more explicitly acknowledged within the communications they had received around the design and delivery of activities.

Resource constraints

Longer-term investment

4.93 Interviewees and respondents to the online survey called for longer-term investment for Fusion. Many felt such a funding commitment would help them deliver more activities over a sustained period, which would further embed the programme at a local partnership level. According to some, access to such funding would build on Fusion’s successes to date. Several thought longer-term investment would create more meaningful opportunities for target groups, and mean that the impacts of projects could be explored properly.

“...with Fusion, it’s investing in certain communities and opportunities, and if it’s over a much longer period of time, I think the impact of that could be far greater than one-off little random events.” [Coordinator interviewee]

4.94 There were fears that without a longer-term commitment from Welsh Government, it would not be possible to meaningfully direct resources at target groups. When commenting on challenges, participants in both the online survey and coordinator interviews referred to a lack of communication on the future of Fusion Challenge Grants. For coordinators, this created uncertainty over the future of their role and meant they could not commit to some activities. Some coordinators described how the uncertainty over funding meant they could not fully participate in discussions with partners on the design and delivery of activities.

“...all of the other partners are planning a year in advance... if you’re looking at your education programme, your community programme, events that you’re going to be hosting... all of that’s planned way in advance. Fusion needs to be going along on that journey with the partners, not appearing halfway through and going, “Oh, by the way, you’ve got to deliver this, this and this.”...I think we need to probably sort of invest, if we can, a little bit more money into the programme, and I think if people knew that they had sort of a couple of years to work on something then you could really get some really quality results.”

[Coordinator interviewee]

4.95 Partner interviewees also called for sustained funding. One, for example called for *“more of the same”* from Fusion, but described how government stopped funding initiatives once success had been demonstrated. Instead, they called for Fusion Challenge Grants and the coordinator role to continue so their partnership could keep improving and deliver more activities:

“I’ve worked in the third sector for quite some time. The pattern of the third sector is when something’s successful, that often tends to be when the funding’s pulled from it, because it’s ‘oh, well, you’ve achieved something now’, and without ever realising that it needs to be sustained. It doesn’t just stop there. There was always going to be more people that we could involve. So ... moving to the future, I would lend my voice to having more money, more hours for the coordinator... because that helps deliver more results.” [Partner organisation interviewee]

4.96 Another partner suggested more funding to develop longer-term opportunities for target groups under the Fusion themes of *employability and skills* and

training placements (see Section 1.8), pointing to the challenges many individuals out of work faced in gaining experience:

“...it would be a good step forward if we offer work placements instead of just interventions or a half day here and there - that there is something more long-term, but something funded. Because in the long-term, people who have been out of work, they need money.” [Partner organisation interviewee]

Limited budget

Having either a limited or non-existent budget was also challenging for coordinators, making it difficult for them to support their respective partnership. Some activities could not be delivered because of budget constraints; other activities were delivered in a reduced format. Specific issues were identified by coordinator interviewees around the costs of funding travel to activities; running training and accreditation sessions; managing events; and developing marketing materials. Several survey respondents thought additional funding within local partnership networks would improve community participation in activities, supporting for example: transport and entrance fees; resources for events; and professional fees. Several coordinators suggested setting-up a *“pot of money”* to help fund these areas and in some cases, strengthen projects. A couple of coordinators also thought access to a pooled budget would incentivise partners’ involvement in their local network, help to recognise the resource they were investing in Fusion, or make it easier for partners to meet programme objectives.

“There’s a lot of goodwill...there’s a lot of people putting in time and effort that they’re not getting paid for. And I think we need to be able to sort of at least play our part. I can’t just ask people to do things for nothing.” [Coordinator interviewee]

“...mae angen rhyw fath o gronfa o arian...er mwyn i ni allu cynnig gweithgareddau, i helpu ein partneriaid i gyrraedd y targedau.”

“...some kind of pot of money is needed... for us to be able offer activities, to help our partners to reach the targets.” [Coordinator interviewee]

- 4.97 Some coordinators described the positive impact when their lead body had provided a small budget for activities. Benefits were identified around enabling individuals to participate in activities by removing transport barriers and advertising and targeting activities more effectively.

“These small...pots of funding are helping people to engage, and it’s giving them something to look forward to. So for me, that really brings it home to me how little things can go a long way.” [Coordinator interviewee]

“The council have given me a small budget for marketing and transport which has been really helpful...the people that are most in need probably wouldn’t be able to attend if we didn’t have that little pot of money...” [Coordinator interviewee]

Gaps in provision

Coordinators not in post

- 4.98 A number of Fusion partnership areas had experienced periods where there was no coordinator in post. This made establishing and maintaining relations with partners problematic for lead bodies. Survey respondents for example pointed to the difficulties this had created within their respective partnership area(s), because there was limited or no capacity within lead bodies to facilitate the network and develop collaborative activities without a coordinator in post. This was a view shared by the coordinators interviewed who were newer to their role, who felt that the gap in provision within their respective partnership areas had seen their networks adjourn until they were available to re-establish them. Without the role of the coordinator, their view was that local area partnerships could not be sustained, because there would be no one available to identify and bring together partners and sectors, or to help partners work together on the successful design and delivery of projects. In particular, these newer coordinators identified the time it would take to build rapport with partners and communities and to understand the cultural offer of their area as challenges.

Capacity of coordinators

- 4.99 Several coordinator interviewees raised the responsibilities of their role (e.g. setting up and managing networks, monitoring and reporting tasks), and the limited time and resource available to them to deliver against these. Some

coordinators pointed to the isolated nature of their roles within their respective lead bodies; and often found it difficult to manage the demands of occupying multiple roles (e.g. networker, facilitator, delivering activities, monitoring and responsibilities) and balancing these often competing priority areas. Several research participants thought the role could be improved either with additional staff to support partnerships, or with a full-time dedicated resource.

“...that’s been a little bit frustrating sometimes. Being that one person explaining [Fusion] and pushing it forward, and although you’ve got support within your department, you are kind of alone getting it going.” [Coordinator interviewee]

“A stressful bit is just trying to be everywhere and being all things to all people.” [Coordinator interviewee]

“I’ve delivered everything myself. And it’s been, it’s been challenging... so juggling all of these project...I’ve really enjoyed it. But it’s been really hard as well because you’re kind of lone working as such. I would like to think that there could be more funding and that there could be a team.” [Coordinator interviewee]

Access to cultural resources

- 4.100 Coordinator interviewees who operated in areas with less cultural venues or organisations based in the vicinity found this challenging. One coordinator felt this had resulted in them absorbing a heavier workload, in that to make up for the limited cultural resource within their local partnership area, they played a more hands on role in the coordination, design and delivery of many activities.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 Overall, stakeholders expressed largely positive attitudes towards the Fusion programme, and Fusion partners interviewed were keen to continue participating in the programme. The research demonstrated that on the whole, Fusion partners were embracing the partnership led approach of the programme, and made regular reference to the benefits this offered, in terms of opportunities for skills sharing, pooling expertise and resources, and working collectively towards the same goals. For coordinators, partners support and their willingness to embrace the programmes ethos had enabled partnerships to create more opportunities to target groups or bring added value to existing projects or activities.
- 5.2 The research highlighted the integral role of the coordinator, in terms sustaining a targeted and coordinated approach among partners when delivering activities – enabled through the strategic oversight coordinators have of their local partnership areas, and the added support and advice they are able to offer within their local partnerships networks.
- 5.3 The research did however highlight that certain factors could be helping or challenging the delivery of the coordinator role, and participating stakeholders more generally, in terms of their involvement in the Fusion programme. For example, while the research highlighted that a key aspect of the coordinator role is focused on communicating the aims and outcomes of the Fusion programme at a local partnership level, the research consistently highlighted that there was room for improvement in relation to the top down communications of the programme (e.g. at Fusion programme level and lead delivery body level), which in turn could better equip coordinators to consistently communicate Fusion's aims and outcomes locally. It was also suggested by stakeholders that greater resource could be allocated to the programme, for example in terms of long term investment in the programme, and financial resource available to coordinators. It was felt that this could help to support and incentivise partner's involvement in the programme, as well as support the long term planning of activities and measurement of the programmes outcomes and impact.

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Annex A - Background

The role culture can play in building people's capacity and skills, and in helping to address tackling poverty objectives and support community regeneration, was recognised in the Welsh Government's *Tackling Poverty Action Plan 2012- 2016* (TPAP) (Welsh Government 2013, p. 16, 19).²³ Published in July 2013, the TPAP provided the overarching framework for coordinating anti-poverty action and programmes across Wales.

To further examine the connection between access to culture and social justice, in July 2013 the then Minister for Culture and Sport invited Baroness Kay Andrews OBE to explore with cultural and heritage bodies across Wales how they "could contribute more effectively to reducing poverty and raising ambition" (Andrews 2014, p. 1).²⁴ The remit for Andrews' review was "to recommend ways in which culture and heritage bodies can work more closely together to broaden access to, appreciation of and participation in culture in ways that contribute to reducing poverty" (Andrews 2014, p. 3).²⁵ The review included the perspectives of people and organisations actively involved in Wales' tackling poverty agenda, and drew from and complemented research undertaken for Professor Dai Smith's report *An independent report for the Welsh Government into Arts in Education in the Schools of Wales* (2013).²⁶

Using the framework provided by the 33 recommendation listed in the Andrews report (Andrews 2014, pp 4-6), the Welsh Government published its response (Welsh Government, November 2014).²⁷ In it, they described how achieving more effective collaboration across organisations would require "focussed effort to trial new approaches, and learn lessons, before it can be extended". The Welsh Government included amongst its proposals therefore the intention to establish a small number of 'Pioneer Areas' across Wales.

²³ Welsh Government, (2013). [Tackling Poverty Action Plan 2012-2016](#). Cardiff: Welsh Government. [Online, accessed 23 August 2019].

²⁴ The review was commissioned by the then Minister for Culture and Sport in consultation with the then Ministers for Communities and Tackling Poverty, for Housing and Regeneration and for Education and Skills.

²⁵ Welsh Government, (2014). [Culture and Poverty: Harnessing the Power of the Arts, Culture and Heritage to Promote Social Justice in Wales](#). Cardiff: Welsh Government. [Online, accessed 8 May 2019].

²⁶ The agenda for providing greater opportunities to utilise culture within the school day has been taken forward via the Welsh Government's Creative Learning through the Arts programme.

²⁷ Welsh Government (2014). [Baroness Andrews' report: Culture and Poverty – Response by the Welsh Government](#). Cardiff: Welsh Government. [Online, accessed 11 May 2019].

The six pilot 'Pioneer Areas' were announced in 2014.²⁸ Within each Pioneer Area, cultural organisations, local community groups and education institutions would link with Communities First clusters to collaborate in developing opportunities for increasing participation in cultural activities; in particular, amongst those individuals, groups and communities who would not normally engage with these types of activities (Welsh Government, 2014, p. 5).

The Pioneer Areas pilot was established as a fundamental element of Fusion.

²⁸ The establishment of six 'Pioneer Areas' across Wales were announced by the then Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism, in a plenary statement dated 11th November 2014.

Annex B - Fusion: Performance Measurement Framework 2019-20

Performance measure	WFG Goals	Definition	Examples of Cultural Activity supporting outcome
F1 Supporting the Early Years and Family Learning	A more equal Wales	Participants attend structured cultural activities promoting learning and development from birth through school age. Delivered with a range of community and other partners, including childcare providers, programmes such as Families First and Flying Start, and schools. Outcomes are developed to benefit both child and parents/carers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schemes to encourage parents and carers to be more willing to read / undertake cultural activity with children • Using cultural activity as part of the Family Learning Signature tool • Dedicated family learning sessions at cultural venues • Cultural organisations delivering family learning activities in community settings
	A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language		
F2 Gaining a qualification	A prosperous Wales	The client attains a recognised qualification which is primarily intended to develop the client's employability. This includes CQFW qualifications and related awards e.g. Agored Units, NOCN.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through participation organised by cultural body, client receives a recognised accreditation / qualification. Can include Arts Award Bronze, Silver and Gold levels and units such as Agored, OCN and others.
	A more equal Wales		
	A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language		
F3 Regular volunteering - ideally as a	A prosperous Wales	The client undertakes volunteering within a cultural setting or as part	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural body provides volunteering opportunity for clients, and works with employability support

route to work	A more equal Wales	of a cultural or heritage body on a regular basis. This is ideally but not only, as a route to work.	<p>programmes, community agencies and other partners to identify and support suitable participants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural bodies reward volunteering for example through time-banking initiatives and also recognise time-banking credits as payment.
	A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language		
F4 Completing a work experience placement	A prosperous Wales	The client completes a work experience placement within a cultural setting and/or as part of a cultural or heritage body for a specified time. Client to have attended at least 75% of the time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural body work with employability support programmes or other referral programmes to identify participants and provide placements.
	A more equal Wales		
	A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language		
F5 Improved digital skills	A prosperous Wales	Client has been supported to develop their digital skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accredited, recognised ICT training (mainly through public libraries) • Participation in accredited or structured digital heritage programmes (e.g. People's Collection Wales) • Participating in a cultural project of which the primary focus is to improve digital skills
	A more equal Wales		
	A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language		

F6 Improved attitude to formal learning	A more equal Wales	The client demonstrates a measurable improvement in their attitude to formal learning, and potentially attainment, through engagement with culture. Evidence should be provided by the school or agency rather than being self-reported.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural bodies work with schools and community agencies and other bodies (e.g. referral units) to offer structured activities designed to support young people to improve motivation, confidence and skills and result in an improved attitude to learning. Improved academic performance may in some cases also be evidenced and reported.
	A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language		
F7 Better able to manage their mental well being and physical health	A healthier Wales	Clients report having better management strategies for their mental well being and/or receives support to help them improve their physical health, through taking part in cultural and heritage activities of which the primary focus is to improve their health and wellbeing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GP referral / prescription schemes using cultural activity • Volunteer programmes • Reminiscence / care home work using cultural activity • Practical cultural participation such as arts and crafts as a therapeutic activity – as evidenced in Mind Body Spirit • Participation in physical arts and performance activity with clear health benefits (e.g. dance, singing) • Cultural activities that contribute to the 'Five ways to wellbeing' (New Economics Foundation).
	A more equal Wales		
	A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language		
F8 Improved community cohesion	A more equal Wales	Clients report feeling a greater sense of belonging to and integration within wider society. Minority groups and clients report that they	<p>Cultural projects where the primary aim is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore and celebrate cultural diversity, working to break down feelings of fear and mistrust between people from different racial, religious or cultural backgrounds. • Break down barriers to participation by people
	A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language		

	<p>A Wales of cohesive communities</p>	<p>found activities at cultural and heritage venues relevant to themselves and their communities.</p>	<p>from different cultural, racial, religious and disabled backgrounds.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers and settled communities during the integration process.
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Annex C - Survey

Fusion: Creating Opportunities through Culture.

Your views on the Welsh Government's Fusion Programme

1. Are you a Fusion Coordinator?

- Yes If yes, route to question 2.
- No If no, route to question 3

2. Which Fusion area do you coordinate?

- Caerphilly & Torfaen
- Carmarthenshire
- Cardiff
- Conwy
- Gwynedd
- Newport
- Neath Port Talbot
- Swansea

3. My organisation is a partner in the following Fusion area/s:

- Caerphilly & Torfaen
- Carmarthenshire
- Cardiff
- Conwy
- Gwynedd
- Newport
- Neath Port Talbot
- Swansea

4. How did you first hear about the Fusion Programme?

- Through a Fusion Co-ordinator
- Other, please specify

5. On the whole, how far do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

The Fusion programme is effective in supporting...

(Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree; Strongly disagree)

- ...a higher profile for the work of participating organisations.
- ...a deeper understanding of the role culture can play in tackling poverty within key local authority departments.
- ...positive changes to the way in which the issue of tackling poverty is being approached.
- ...positive perceptions of the arts, culture and heritage within the participating Fusion area/s.
- ...more ambitious visions of local cultural provision within Fusion area/s.

[The following questions were only directed to those who answered 'No' to question 1 - Partner Organisations]

6. We would like to ask you about the Fusion Programme and any changes to your organisation's ways of thinking and working.

Thinking about your organisation's involvement in the Fusion Programme, how far do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

As a result of Fusion, my organisation...

(Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree; Strongly disagree)

- ...has improved its understanding of the role culture can play in tackling poverty.
- ...has improved how it targets activities at some 'hard to reach' groups.
- ...knows more about the cultural activities taking place in my Fusion area/s.
- ...delivers activities within economically deprived communities.
- ...collaborates more effectively with cultural organisations.
- ...has worked with organisations it did not previously.

7. We would like to learn from your views on the role of Fusion Coordinators. An opportunity to give us a more detailed response will come at the end of the section if you would like to tell us more.

Thinking about your organisation's experiences of participating in Fusion, how far do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

On the whole, Fusion Co-ordinator/s are enabling...

(Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree; Strongly disagree)

- ...a higher profile for the work of my organisation.
 - ...more collaboration between my organisation and other organisations participating in Fusion on the design of activities
 - ...more collaboration between my organisation and other organisations participating in Fusion on the delivery of activities
 - ...my organisation to target activities more effectively at some 'hard to reach' groups
8. **We are interested in your views on any impact Fusion has had generally on the range of cultural and other partner organisations participating in the programme within your area/s.**

How far do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

On the whole, Fusion Co-ordinator/s are enabling...

(Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree; Strongly disagree)

- ...clearer communication across the network of participating organisations.
- ...more robust approaches towards monitoring and evaluation across the network of participating organisations.
- ...greater access to training opportunities for participating organisations (e.g. Arts Awards training).
- ...stronger links between the network of participating organisation and early years programmes (e.g. Flying Start).
- ...stronger links between the network of participating organisations and employability support programmes (e.g. Communities for Work, LIFT).

- ...increased opportunities for organisations to provide discounted or free transport to individuals when delivering activities.
- ...increased opportunities for organisations to access a range of venues for Fusion-related activities.

9. If you would like to provide any comments about your experiences with Fusion Co-ordinators, please write them here:

(Open text box)

[The following questions were only directed to those who answered 'Yes' to question 1 - Fusion Co-ordinators]

10. We would like to learn from your experiences as a Fusion Coordinator. An opportunity to give us a more detailed response will come at the end of the section if you would like to tell us more. The following question is aimed at gaining an insight into your role as a Fusion Coordinator.

Thinking about your experiences as a Fusion Coordinator, how far do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

(Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree; Strongly disagree)

- It has been easy to identify partner organisations.
- The network of participating organisations has been easy to sustain.
- Partner organisations regularly update me on their activities.
- Collecting monitoring and evaluation information from partner organisations has been easy.
- I am making best use of the communication channels available to share my learning with the other coordinators.
- I am working in partnership with other coordinators on activities.
- Overall, I am clear about my role.

11. We would like to ask you about your views on the leadership of the Fusion programme.

Thinking about your experiences as a Fusion Coordinator, how far do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

(Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree; Strongly disagree)

- The Welsh Government has provided clear strategic direction.
- My lead delivery body is embedding the Fusion Partnership approach in its work.
- Overall, there has been strong leadership for the Fusion Partnership approach from my lead delivery body.
- Overall, there has been strong leadership for the Fusion Partnership approach from the Welsh Government.

12. We would like to gain a broader understanding of some of the issues raised by Fusion Coordinators during the on-going evaluation of the Fusion programme.

Thinking about your experiences as a Fusion Coordinator, how far would you agree or disagree that the following are particularly challenging?

(Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree; Strongly disagree)

- Building the network of partners from cultural sectors and a wide range of other organisations and programmes
- Developing a coordinated approach with partner organisations towards tackling poverty objectives within my local Fusion area.
- Evidencing the outcomes of Fusion activities.
- Collecting monitoring and reporting data from partner organisations to feedback to the Welsh Government.
- Building links with the other Fusion Coordinators.

13. If you have any information about challenges not listed, or any comments about your answers above, please write here:

(Open text box)

[Question 14 was only directed to Partner Organisations]

14. What, if anything, have you found particularly challenging about your involvement in the Fusion programme?

(Open text box)

[The final 3 questions were directed to all respondents]

15. What do you think the key successes of the Fusion programme are?

(Open text box)

16. What, if any, improvements could be made to Fusion programme?

(Open text box)

17. If you have any other comments, ideas or suggestions regarding Fusion, please use the space below.

(Open text box)

Annex D - Coordinator interview Guide

Introduction

1. To start off - could you tell me where you're based as Fusion Coordinator, and how long you have been working in this role?
 - *Department / org?*

Perceptions of the Fusion Programme

2. Now briefly, could you tell me what you think the Fusion Programme is trying to achieve?

Organisational / individual context

3. Could you now talk to me about your main responsibilities as a Fusion Coordinator?
4. What is helping/or has helped you to deliver this role?
 - *Department based in?*
 - *Does your organisation work with a range of other cultural/heritage/arts orgs?*
 - *Are you able to collaborate with other Fusion coordinators?*
 - *Due to proximity?*
 - *Would it be helpful to collaborate more?*
 - *What could facilitate this?*
 - *Has there been continuity of staff in your organisation who have been involved in Fusion?*
 - *Support networks within your department/organisation?*
 - *Does support from different levels? Management? Directors?*
 - *Handover period?*
 - *Part time / full time?*
 - *Previous experience / background?*

Fusion partnership context

I'd now like to talk to you a bit about your experience of your Fusion partnership area more specifically.

5. So, could you tell me a bit about your Fusion Partnership Network? How would you describe it?
6. Do you think you work with a wide range of partners?
 - *Are they new partners? Or existing?*
 - *Was there a Communities First network in place already?*
7. How are partnerships identified?
8. How do you communicate with partners?
9. How engaged do you find your Fusion partners?
10. Why do you think organisations get involved in the Fusion partnership area?
11. Any examples of organisations who have taken a bit more time / convincing to join the Network?
 - *Examples?*
 - *Your role in this?*
 - *Reasons for this?*
12. Are new activities being delivered as a result of the Fusion partnership?
 - *Or existing activities? Added value?*
 - *One-off or repeated activities?*
13. Do your partners work together on the co-production of activities?
 - *Your role in this?*
14. Are activities being targeted more effectively as a result of your Fusion partnership?

- *At what groups?*
 - *Harder to reach groups?*
15. Any groups you'd like to work with but you're not?
- *Why is that?*
 - *Is there anything that you / your organisation be done about this?*
16. Do you think your Fusion partnership Network is sustainable?
17. Are any partnerships strengthening? Changing?
- *Your role in this...?*
18. Are partners securing additional funding?
- *Your role in this...?*
19. Partners learning from each other? Sharing best practise?
- *Your role in this...?*
20. Have you experience any drop-off of partners?
- *If yes, why do you think this is?*
21. Have any perceptions of partners changed as a result of working within the Fusion network?
22. Are there any organisations you would like to be working with that you aren't currently?
- *Any underrepresented sectors?*
 - *Why do you think this is?*
 - *Is there anything that you / your organisation be done about this?*

Welsh language

23. In what ways do you consider the Welsh language within your Fusion partnership area?

- *E.g. through communication of Fusion activities*
- *During the design and delivery of Fusion activities?*

24. If not – why not?

Successes

Now it would be great to hear from you what...

25. ...You think the key successes have been within your Fusion partnership area?

26. What went well? What most proud of?

- *What was your role in this?*

Challenges

We're also interested in hearing more about what might not be working well, where improvements might be needed...

27. What have you found more challenging about your partnership area?

- *Identifying partner organisations?*
- *Sustaining the network of participating organisations?*
- *Partner organisations regularly updating on activities?*
- *Collecting monitoring and evaluation information from partner organisations*
- *Sharing learning with the other coordinators?*

28. Are these challenges ongoing...resolved?

29. Thinking about your role as Fusion Coordinator specifically – is there anything in particular that has made delivering this role challenging?

- *Department based in?*
- *Does your organisation work with a range of other cultural/heritage/arts orgs?*
- *Do you collaborate with other Fusion coordinators?*
 - *Due to proximity?*
- *Has there been continuity of staff in your organisation involved in Fusion?*
- *Support networks within your department/organisation?*
- *Does support for Fusion come from different levels? Management? Directors?*
- *Handover period*
- *Part time / full time?*
- *Previous experience?*

30. Are these challenges resolved...ongoing?

Improvements

31. We're also interested in hearing your suggestions on what improvements could be made in your Fusion partnership area. What suggestions do you have?

- *How? Why?*

Close

32. Are there any other comments or feedback do you have?

Annex E - Partner organisation interview guide

Introduction / Factual Questions

1. What organisation do you work for?
2. What is your role in this organisation?
3. Which Fusion area does your organisation work in?
4. Is your organisation involved in more than one partnership area?
5. How long has your organisation participated in Fusion?
6. How long have you specifically been involved in Fusion / partnership area?
7. How did you find out about Fusion / partnership area?
 - *How did your organisation join the partnership?*

Perceptions of the programme / Fusion in practice

8. Briefly, what do you think the Fusion programme is trying to achieve?
9. Why did your organisation join Fusion / partnership area?
 - *Motivation for joining?*
 - *How regularly does your organisation participate in the partnership?*
10. In what ways does your organisation participate in your partnership area?
 - *Attend meetings?*
 - *Keep informed of developments?*
 - *Signposting to contacts and / or activities?*
 - *Design activities?*
 - *Deliver activities?*

- *What kind of activities?*
- *New and / or existing activities?*
- *One off / repeated activities?*
- *New participants? – From hard to reach groups / communities?*

11. Are there a range of organisations represented in the partnership?

- *Are any sectors underrepresented? – Which sectors / why do you think this?*

12. Does your organisation collaborate with others in the partnership? –

- *If yes, who / how?*
- *Design / deliver activities in Welsh?*

What works well

13. What – if anything – works well about your partnership area?

- *Expectations met?*
- *Any changes to your organisation, as a result of participating in Fusion?*
- *Does your organisation find the partnership network helpful?*
 - *if yes, in what ways?*

14. What do you think the main benefits of participating in the partnership have been / are for your organisation?

Fusion Coordinator Role

We'd also like to talk to you about the role of the Fusion coordinator. As you know, the Fusion programme has focussed its resource on funding the Fusion coordinator posts across the partnership areas and we'd like to hear your views on how this has worked in practice.

15. What is the role of the coordinator in your partnership?

- *Specific examples?*

16. How would you describe your organisations relationship with your Fusion Coordinator?

17. How important do you think the role of the coordinator is?

- *In terms of how the partnership works?*
- *Specific examples?*

18. Is there anything that could be done to improve the coordinators role?

19. Would any of these activities that you described earlier have happened without...

....Fusion?

...the role of the Fusion Coordinator?

Impact and sustainability

20. Has Fusion impacted on your organisation's ways of...

...thinking?

...working?

21. If yes, specific examples?

- *Would this have happened without a Fusion Coordinator? – Why do you think this?*

22. Are these changes likely to be sustained in the future?

- *If no, where are the gaps?*

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS:

23. What should Fusion look like beyond 2020 to ensure it is sustainable?

24. If you leave the role tomorrow, what will happen to the fusion work?

Limitations / challenges

25. What – if anything – doesn't work so well in your partnership area?

- *...specific examples?*

26. Thinking about your organisations participation in the partnership, what have been the main challenges?

- *Specific examples?*
- *Are these ongoing...? Resolved? Addressable?*
- *Any gaps in provision? Any gaps in support from the coordinator?*

- *Gaps in provisions from Fusion host organisation?*

Improvements

Finally, we're interested in understanding any improvements which could be made to Fusion. We would really like your ideas in this. Thinking about any challenges you've encountered, do you have any suggestions on...

27 ...how could your partnership be improved?

28 ...how could the Fusion Programme be improved?

Conclusions

29 Do you have any other comments or feedback you would like to share with us?

Annex F - Summary of outcomes data²⁹



²⁹ The above infographic provides an illustration of the contribution made by the programme in 2018-19, against the Fusion programmes performance measurement framework. For some Fusion activities, more than one outcome was reported against an individual for the same activity. The partnerships collected and reported the monitoring information in different ways. These limitations should be borne in mind when interpreting the data.