



# The Lens Shared Programme

Evaluation - Executive Summary  
October 2017





***I felt the programme was a very positive experience and encouraged people to come forward with ideas and work together.***

**Front-line staff member**

# The Lens Shared Programme



***The benefits of being in it with others generated learning, and energy, and motivation- that we wouldn't have got if it was just us.***

**Enabler/Lens Champion**

**The Lens** is a workplace innovation programme that enables organisations to build an empowering, entrepreneurial culture. It does so by inviting innovative ideas, primarily from front-line staff. It then uses a proven process to overcome barriers and build the confidence and skills necessary for ideas to be put into action.

The Lens has been run successfully in two local authorities and a range of larger charities. The Lens Shared Programme was designed to allow medium-sized charities to take part.

In the Shared Programme there is one investment pot of £20,000 available across winners from all partners; the judging panel is chaired by The Lens and comprises one judge from each organisation; and there are joint workshops with participants from all organisations, for judges, enablers and finalists.

The charities participating in the first Shared Programme were Alcohol and Drugs Action, Beatson Cancer Charity, CLAN Cancer Support and Includem.

## Benefits of working together in the Shared Programme

Intrapreneurs from each of the four partners worked closely together through the programme. Participants highlighted the benefits to them of participating alongside colleagues from other organisations, including networking, learning from others and constructive challenge. Indeed, 85% of respondents thought a shared programme would be preferable because of these benefits. The team spirit created by skilled facilitation of The Lens meant that competition for a single investment fund was a positive feature rather than a problem:

***Getting different perspectives was excellent; you could be more constructively critical of each other when we were working for different organisations. We had such a supportive group and you really did want everyone to win investment; it never, ever, felt like a competition.***

### Finalist

## The impact of the Lens Shared Programme:

### a) For individuals

The programme developed the Finalists' capacity for innovation, confidence, resilience, and their transferrable skills.

***The difference The Lens has made to me has been amazing. Now I am not afraid to get involved in things and put my point across.***

### Finalist

***Things will fail, but that should not deter you. Rather we should look at what has failed and how to improve on it for next time.***

### Finalist

### b) For partner organisations

Taking part in The Lens Shared Programme is a unique opportunity for organisations to achieve three things at once, as evidenced on subsequent pages:

1. To develop their workforce by widening participation in innovation.
2. To unlock latent innovative ideas to create a pipeline of relevant ideas.
3. To enhance a culture of empowerment in innovation.

Such "workplace innovation" has been shown to deliver positive outcomes like employee retention (Findlay et al, 2015), and ultimately to improve productivity, longevity and performance.

### c) For the Scottish economy

The Lens Shared Programme is aimed at organisations with fewer than 250 staff, which are less likely to be "innovation active" (BIS, 2016). Charities of this size also often face dual pressures of increasing demand and reduced public funding (NCVO, 2016). Shared Programme organisations moved from being "innovation aware" to "innovation active" in the first cycle. Therefore, expanding this programme has the potential to make a significant contribution to the Scottish Government's economic strategy on innovation and inclusive growth. Intrapreneurship is a specific aim of Scotland's Social Enterprise Strategy (Scottish Government, 2016). The Lens achieves inclusive intrapreneurship, where it is not just senior managers who are involved. The Lens also contributes to the Social Enterprise Strategy by growing entrepreneurial leaders from the front-line, fostering an entrepreneurial mindset in senior managers, and nurturing ideas that will generate income in consumer and public markets. Some of the ideas could operate as independent social enterprises.

***The winning ideas are (in) areas that we've been very aware of for development and we haven't been able to nail down what to do.***

### CEO

**Confidence, I think it's great for confidence. They've learnt skills at the workshops that will be with them forever.**

**Line Manager**



**Evidence of the difference The Lens makes**

**1. Developing the workforce by widening participation**

The Lens enabled staff at less senior levels, especially those working on the front-line, to get involved in developing improvement and innovation in the partner organisations. All respondents said that they would have previously thought that the Finalists were unlikely to be the first to be involved in something new.

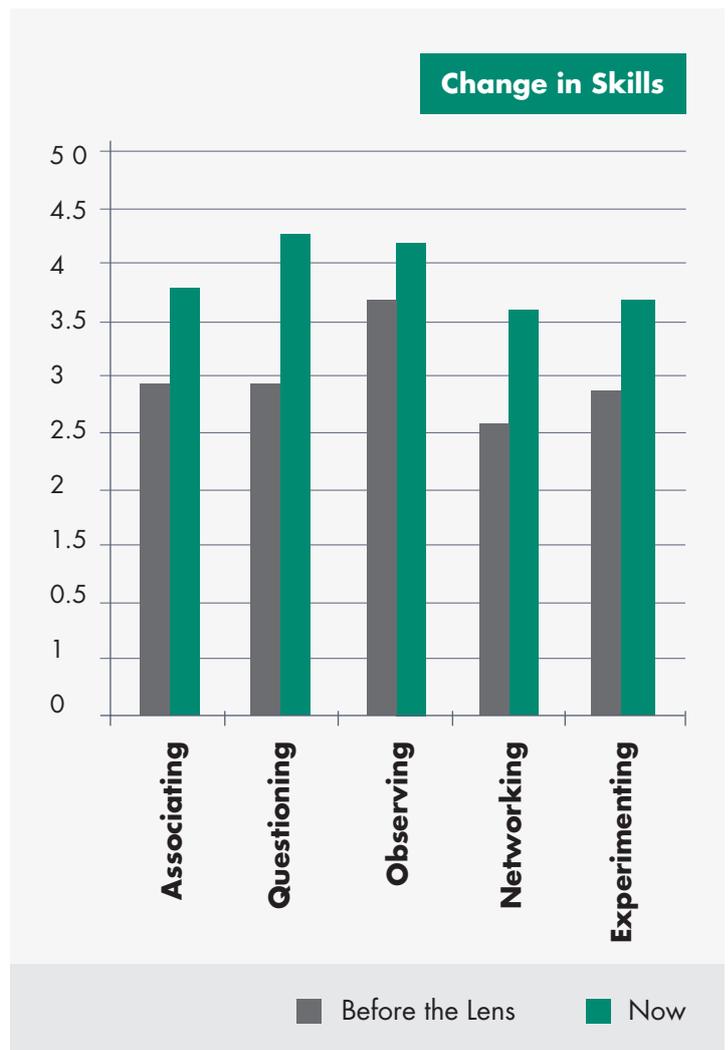
The Lens developed Finalists' confidence, resilience, and transferable skills. Line managers verified this and gave examples of how skills had been used.

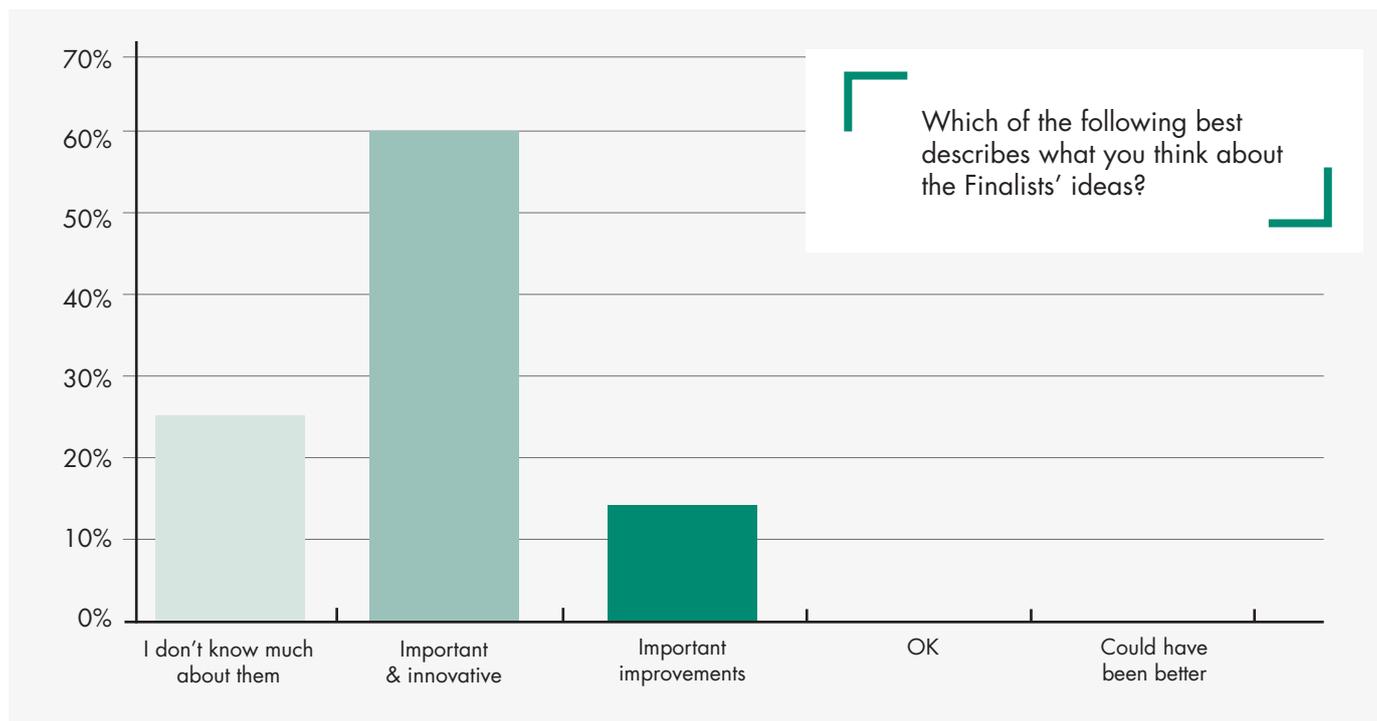
Finalists reported an increase in the five skills that have been shown to be important to innovation (Dyer et al., 2009), as can be seen in the graph.

Furthermore, The Lens addresses a gap in available staff development opportunities since it enables ideas to be put into practice, rather than simply delivering a training course that doesn't change practice.

***There's a lot of training for the front line on doing good assessments etc. but nothing about creating leaders from within the organisation. The Lens is about developing front-line staff.***

**CEO**





## 2. Unlocking latent ideas to create a pipeline of innovative ideas

Most of the shortlisted ideas had been around for years before The Lens, without progress. The Lens made them implementable; all had made progress in the first three months after the Final. By this stage, three of the ideas that did not receive investment at the Final had received investment by other means and the remaining one had received in-kind support. The Lens could invite other relevant funders to attend future shared programme finals, to further enhance the chances of success.

The Lens process invites innovative ideas. However, it wasn't just the Judges in the Lens process who thought the ideas were innovative. CEOs all rated the ideas as innovative, as did the majority of other colleagues, as shown in the graph.

Finalists' ideas were aimed at a range of objectives including improving outcomes for existing clients, achieving earlier action or meeting unmet need in the wider population. One of the ideas was specifically aimed at generating increased funds for the relevant charity on a sustainable basis and one idea has potential to be self-sustaining from sales.

## 3. Enhancing an innovation culture

There are many examples of how The Lens had already started to affect organisations' culture, however changes in culture take time. Further cycles of The Lens are expected to further improve each organisation's innovation capacity, as self-rated against six dimensions of innovation capacity (IDEO, 2017). This is expected to be most noticeable in the areas of experimentation, empowerment and collaboration.

*It has helped people to see that their ideas are valued. What we've been really keen to do is that all of the applications, all of the ideas, have been kept.*

### Enabler/Lens Champion

*Staff feel that their ideas are relevant and can be put into practice. This will also encourage staff who did not participate to put forward and develop ideas/services.*

### Line Manager

# Review of The Lens Process



***Being part of The Lens initiative was genuinely one of the best things I've been a part of in my working life.***

**Finalist**



## **Highlights of The Lens Shared Programme process include:**

- The whole package of Developing Intrapreneurship workshops, which were rated as enjoyable, challenging and useful.
- The Ideas Station posters, Enablers support and Studios, which all created a buzz and supported applicants well.
- The Final, which gave a platform to Finalists' ideas and was important to each making progress, regardless of the investment awarded on the day.

**The Lens Shared Programme incorporated learning from the previous evaluation of The Lens (Inglis, 2016). The following elements may benefit from further iteration:**

- The series of Flashbulb emails, with which many people found it hard to engage. However, the embedded videos were well received and another method of delivery might be found for these.
- Support for planning between Finalists and Line Managers to enable attendance at workshops.
- The judging process; judging is more complex and challenging than in an individual programme.
- Support for internal communications between the selection of Finalists and the Final.
- Geography and scheduling, which should naturally become easier to manage as the pool of organisations wishing to participate in a Lens Shared Programme expands.

## **Acknowledgements and references**

Thank you to the staff of the first Shared Programme partners who made time to participate in the evaluation, allowing the views of over 70 staff to be taken into account. Thank you also to the William Grant Foundation and The Scottish Government, who made the Shared Programme and its evaluation possible.

This is an executive summary of the evaluation by VIE [www.vieforlife.co.uk](http://www.vieforlife.co.uk).

The full evaluation and references can be found at [www.lensperspectives.co.uk](http://www.lensperspectives.co.uk)

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