



SCREEN BERKSHIRE

IMPACT REPORT

MARCH 2023 - SEPTEMBER 2024

Led by



With thanks to our partners



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The writing team thanks core partners of the Screen Berkshire cluster and Board members for sharing data, inputs and feedback that made this report possible.

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Executive Summary

This is an interim report on the impact and successes of the Screen Berkshire cluster for the first six quarters (April 2023 – September 2024).

Based on the overall assessment of performance against key performance indicators as well as beneficiary case studies, it can be concluded that the cluster has been successful in achieving set targets for its activities and has had a positive impact on the economy, workforce development and employment so far. It has successfully engaged beneficiaries across different levels of experience, from new entrants and trainees to returners to work and higher-level Berkshire-based industry professionals. In the process, it has prioritised approaches that ensure a diverse cohort of beneficiaries. It has also demonstrated a nationally significant model for collaboration, cross-sector partnerships, beneficiary engagement and training.

The cluster has performed well, and in some cases exceeded expectations vis-a-vis KPIs in Year 1 and available data for Year 2 Quarters 1 and 2 and current contexts of production indicate that it is on track to achieve targets for Year 2. In the first six quarters, the cluster has engaged over 268,565 Berkshire residents through cluster activities, offered skills training, mentoring and support to over 1600 beneficiaries, and developed and strengthened a wide range of partnerships.

Reflections and key takeaways include continuing clear communication, transparency and knowledge sharing between existing partners, building robust new partnerships, and increasing awareness among under-served communities to further strengthen local participation.

I. Introduction

The BFI-funded cluster Screen Berkshire has played a significant role in facilitating film production in the Berkshire region, engaging beneficiaries in skills training and employment, and stimulating the local and regional economy. Berkshire-based communities, industry professionals, businesses and training providers were brought together under the cluster to develop a skilled workforce and talent pipeline for the screen industries via a 3-year grant.

This report discusses the achievements, challenges, and reflections of the Screen Berkshire cluster (funded via the BFI's National Lottery Skills Cluster Fund and match funders) within the first one and a half years of its inception, i.e., the first six quarters (Year 1 Quarter 1 to Year 2 Quarter 2). The years and months for each quarter are:

Year 1 - 2023-24

Quarter 1 (April – June 2023)

Quarter 2 (July - September 2023)

Quarter 3 (October - December 2023)

Quarter 4 (January - March 2024)

Year 2 - 2024-25

Quarter 1 (April - June 2024)

Quarter 2 (July - September 2024)

Section II provides an overview and introduction to the cluster, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and targets, as well as a quantitative summary of its performance against KPIs. It also delves into qualitative data such as case studies to demonstrate the cluster's impact on beneficiaries and businesses.

Section III offers insights into the cluster's best practices, its strategy and USPs that have shaped the delivery of activities. The aim behind this section is to share the cluster's model for developing partnerships, communication and collaboration and successful engagement of beneficiaries, so that other clusters may benefit from this knowledge to develop a local workforce and talent pipeline.

Section IV presents reflections on working practices across partners, key learnings, and ways forward to change practices where required to enhance the collaborative experience. It also expands on reflections, where relevant, to highlight next steps for further impact, sustainability and longevity of the cluster.

II.i. An Overview of the Cluster

Screen Berkshire (originally named the Berkshire Skills for Screen Cluster) was formed in April 2023. Officially launched October 2023 at Shinfield Studios, it is a strong cluster of industry, education, training, community, and governmental partners at the heart of burgeoning as well as well-established production facilities in Berkshire. The county of Berkshire includes Slough, Reading, Wokingham, Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead, Bracknell Forest and West Berkshire.

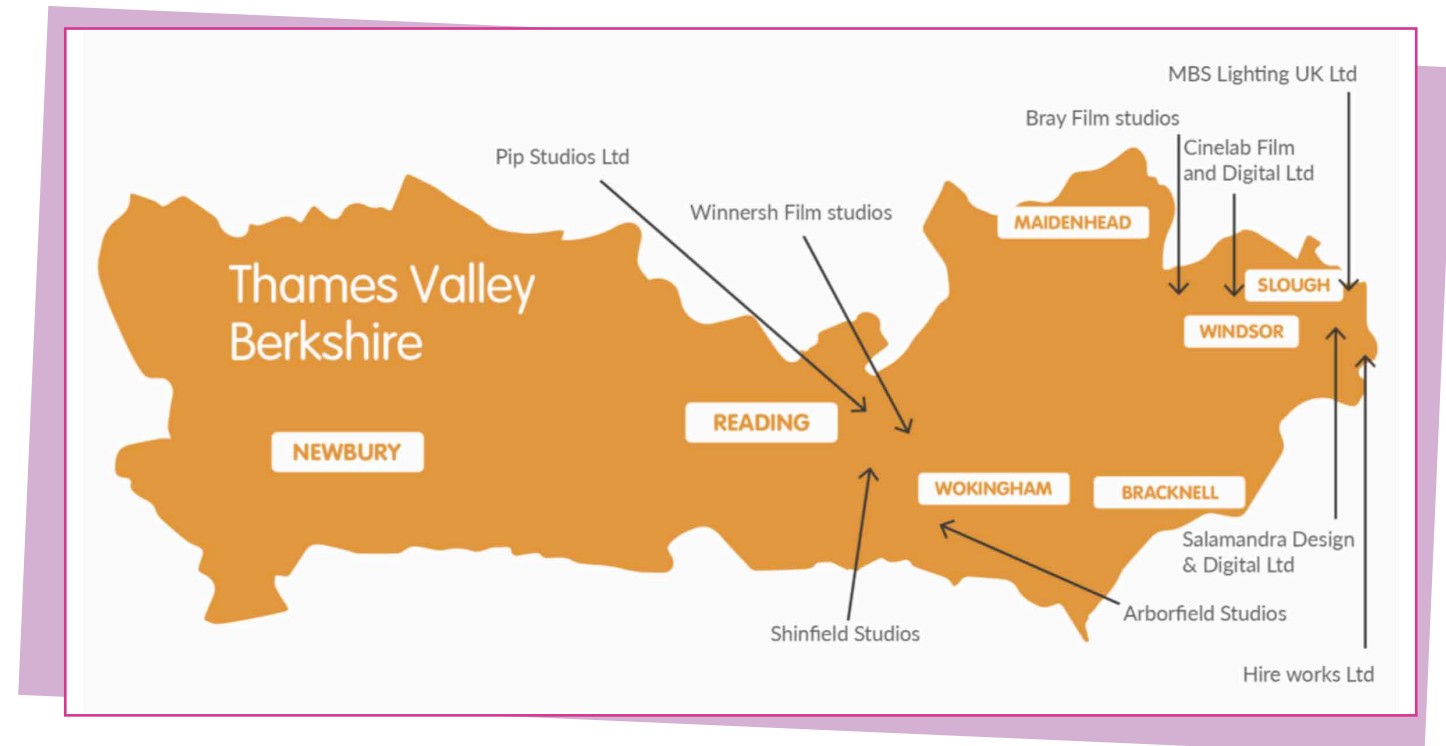


Figure 1: An overview of Thames Valley Berkshire (image from REDA Report, 2023)

II. Screen Berkshire 2023 - 2024

Slough-based CIC Resource Productions leads the cluster, working closely with founding partners University of Reading, Shinfield Studios, Bedlam Film Productions. Since its launch, the cluster has also formalised its relationship with Amazon Ascend, Amazon MGM Studios' training programme, as a core partner of Screen Berkshire. Activities of Berkshire Film Office have been aligned with the remit of the cluster since Year 1 as well.

Other key partners include Bray Film Studios, Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce Local Skills Improvement Plan (TVCC LSIP), Reading's Economy and Destination Agency (REDA), Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (TVB LEP), Further Education (FE) partners, industry freelancers and independent training providers.

Partners across Screen Berkshire collaborate to identify skills gaps, facilitate training, and develop pathways to employment, bridging gaps between local residents, freelance crew, training providers, studios, suppliers, and content producers. Bordering West London, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Surrey, the cluster also collaborates with partners in these regions to develop a locally based workforce and talent pipeline that can be of benefit across neighbouring counties.

II.ii. Objectives, Activities & Deliverables



Figure 2: Camera, Lighting and Grip Bootcamp 2023

In response to the funding call, the Screen Berkshire cluster proposed a programme with four strands of activities, spreading out the delivery across different partners based on their respective strengths and resources. The programme of activity would be available to several stakeholders involved in the supply chain in Berkshire: from residents, businesses and educators to facilities, crew, and Heads of Department across a range of productions.

The four strands were:

Create and Credit

Train and Develop

Recruit and Retain

Reflect and Share

A key focus of BFI's skills cluster fund was to

“build local skills bases, leading to more people across the UK, especially those from underrepresented backgrounds, working in the screen industry” (BFI, 2023).

Objectives and deliverables for each strand are outlined below.

Create and Credit

Objectives: Support new entrants with on-set/on-location experience through placements, shadowing, or paid roles on independent films. Engage with under-represented potential freelancers and create opportunities to ‘step-up.’ Support beneficiaries to secure their first professional credit, or a credit in a new grade, or different kind of production credit as well a new reference and/or peer mentor to help them secure their next job. Activities and benefits for employers include:

- **Free support with recruiting locally based crew and finding locations & facilities.**
- **Paid local trainees available to book for shoots.**
- **Paid opportunities to ‘step up’ on productions by regional Indie filmmakers.**

Deliverables for Year 1: 20 days of practical on-set/on-location experience and/or paid work on independent productions all with IMDB credits, 10 work experience placements, 10 paid jobs, 1 Apprenticeship to support outreach, engagement and promotion.

Train and Develop

Objectives: Map non-accredited training pathways across Berkshire and freelancers connected to existing opportunities. Address widespread industry baseline skills needs (such as Art Dept, Costume, Electrical, Grip, Make-Up, and Production) by developing new courses, mentoring opportunities, placements and one to one support. Work closely with employers to accommodate placements, traineeships, and Apprenticeships. Diversify technical training and increase availability of high-quality apprenticeship training to ensure a clear technical training pipeline that addresses skills and occupational needs of the Film and TV sector. Activities and benefits for employers include:

- **Access for employers to a pool of diverse new talent, graduating from Screen Berkshire courses.**
- **Free 121 skills support for experienced freelancers from all grades/departments.**
- **Bespoke free training and peer mentoring for new and experienced crew.**

Deliverables for Year 1: 3 short courses created, 6 paid placements, 1 part-time audio technician role recruited.

Recruit and Retain

Objectives: Raise the profile of existing sector freelancers across Berkshire. Aid easier transfer into work as it arises. Support the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of the freelancer network to maximise skills, retention, and growth. Reskill and upskill existing workers across the county to tackle local skills gaps (lack of proficiency once in a role). Activities include:

- **Free networking events for Berkshire-based crew and HODs.**
- **Free job listings for and active support with recruiting freelancers.**
- **Support for any crew with access needs ranging from childcare to transport.**

Deliverables for Year 1: 1 screening & networking event, 1 tracking system set up and used, Ongoing One-to-one freelancer support

Reflect and Share

Objectives: Use learnings from above strands of activity to model the development of future courses, programmes and a physical skills hub. Gather and share employment data, case studies and evidence of impact. Reduce duplication, waste of public funds, increase value for money and clarify and promote pathways for education, employment, and training. Activities include:

- **Connections to local education and training providers.**
- **Sharing best practice.**

Deliverables for Year 1: 3 short courses created, 6 paid placements, 1 part-time audio technician role recruited.

II.iii. Measuring Progress against KPIs

This subsection demonstrates and discusses the cluster's performance on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Quantitative data has been presented as graphs and tables to visually demonstrate trends of growth, achievements, and areas for improvement.

Targets were set for years rather than quarters, and achievements/areas for improvement have been measured by comparing annual targets to annual performance. However, quarterly data for year 1 has been included so that an overall trend of performance and growth can be assessed for the year. Based on the figures for Quarters 1-4 of Year 1 and Quarters 1-2 of Year 2, we have made evidence-based conclusions regarding expected growth and achievement of targets by the end of Year 2. Where relevant, additional context on challenges and opportunities has been provided.

We will first look at the KPIs on beneficiary engagement (A1), wider engagement (A2) and partnerships (A3), followed by KPIs for diversity by beneficiary and by scheme. With the knowledge of KPIs for each indicator, we will then assess performance against set parameters for each KPI.

A1. Engagement KPIs

- Accredited Training (Structured, selective training programme to build specific, technical skills, that leads to accredited and certified training such as a qualification)
- Non-accredited Training (Structured, selective training programme to build specific, technical skills, that is unaccredited/informal): (23-24) DWP-SWAP programme, Arri Taster course, DFE Film & TV and Camera Lighting and Grip skills Bootcamps, (24-25) HOD Training, Lighting workshop, Getting into the Industry course, Location marshalling workshop, Business Skills for Creative Freelancers
- Work Experience Placements: Providing short term insights into a workplace, selected department(s), and/or a specific job role(s)
- Industry Placements (Direct, time limited on-the-job experience mandated as part of a formal programme of study): Paid Placements were secured in 23-24
- Internship / Traineeship: A short-term paid work opportunity that introduces an individual to a new role
- Apprenticeships (Beneficiary has been supported to undertake a formal government approved apprenticeship due to Skills Cluster support) - 1 apprentice employed
- Broader Skills Support (mentoring): 30 mentors and 30 mentees complete 3 sessions and achieve learning objective.

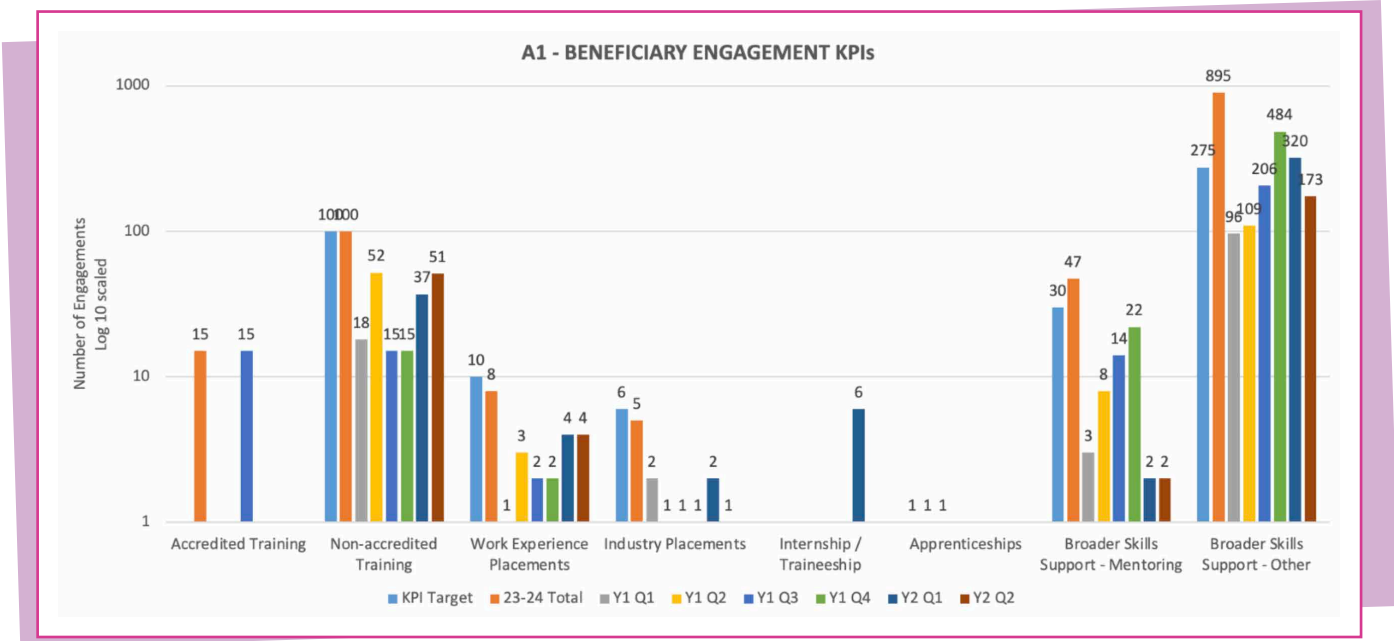


Figure 3: A1 Beneficiary Engagement

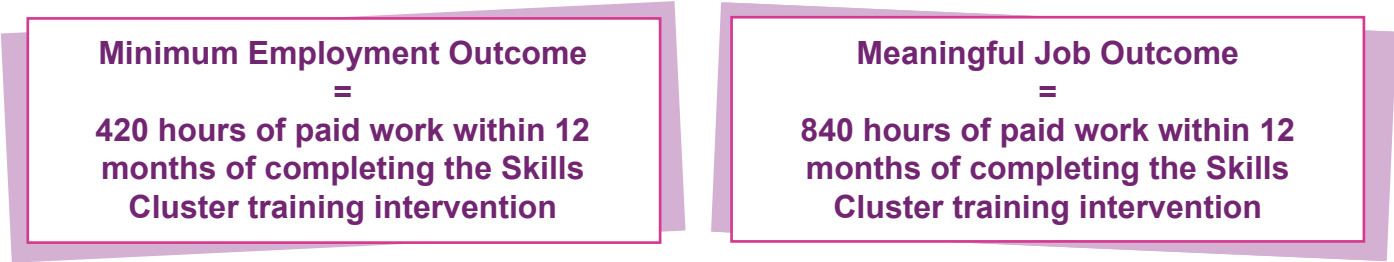
In each of the tables in this subsection, each bunched group represents one KPI. Bars in each bunched group represent the following from left to right:



As seen in Figure 3 above, targets were not set for KPIs such as Accredited training and Internship/Traineeship. In Year 1, the cluster has achieved or exceeded all targets for Beneficiary Engagement, except Work Experience Placements and Industry Placements, which missed the target very minimally (by 1). In Year 2, it is on track to so far to achieve most targets except the KPI 'Broader Skills Support – Mentoring'. This KPI target, however, is expected to be achieved soon; at the time of writing this report, there was a data backlog caused due to the delay in logging interactions on the reporting system, but this was already being addressed with additional efforts. For the 'Broader Skills Support – Other' KPI, which could include online masterclasses, talks, panels etc. and short term CPD activity, the target was far exceeded in Year 1 (by 620) and the cluster is on track to exceed this annual target in year 2 as well.

In 2023-24, the cluster undertook job matching to Berkshire opportunities with local partners & suppliers, freelancer one to one support, Provisions of job role information. In 2024-25, the cluster has so far undertaken more 1-1 sessions, contributed to two panels on film, facilitated meet up and support sessions for trainees placed on an Amazon production, attended and exhibited at events such as an Apprenticeship recruitment fair and Meet & Mingle for local suppliers and industry professionals.

A KPI was added to Engagement KPIs (A1) from June 2024 under KPI type 'Job outcome'. Activities and deliverables were:



Vis-a-vis this KPI, the cluster supported 23 trainees into a variety of roles on a HETV production, 18 of which meet the meaningful job outcome requirement. 6 trainees were supported into roles on a studio-based feature film, all with a period of 6-8 weeks. As evident from the figure below, the target for 2024-25 has been exceeded.

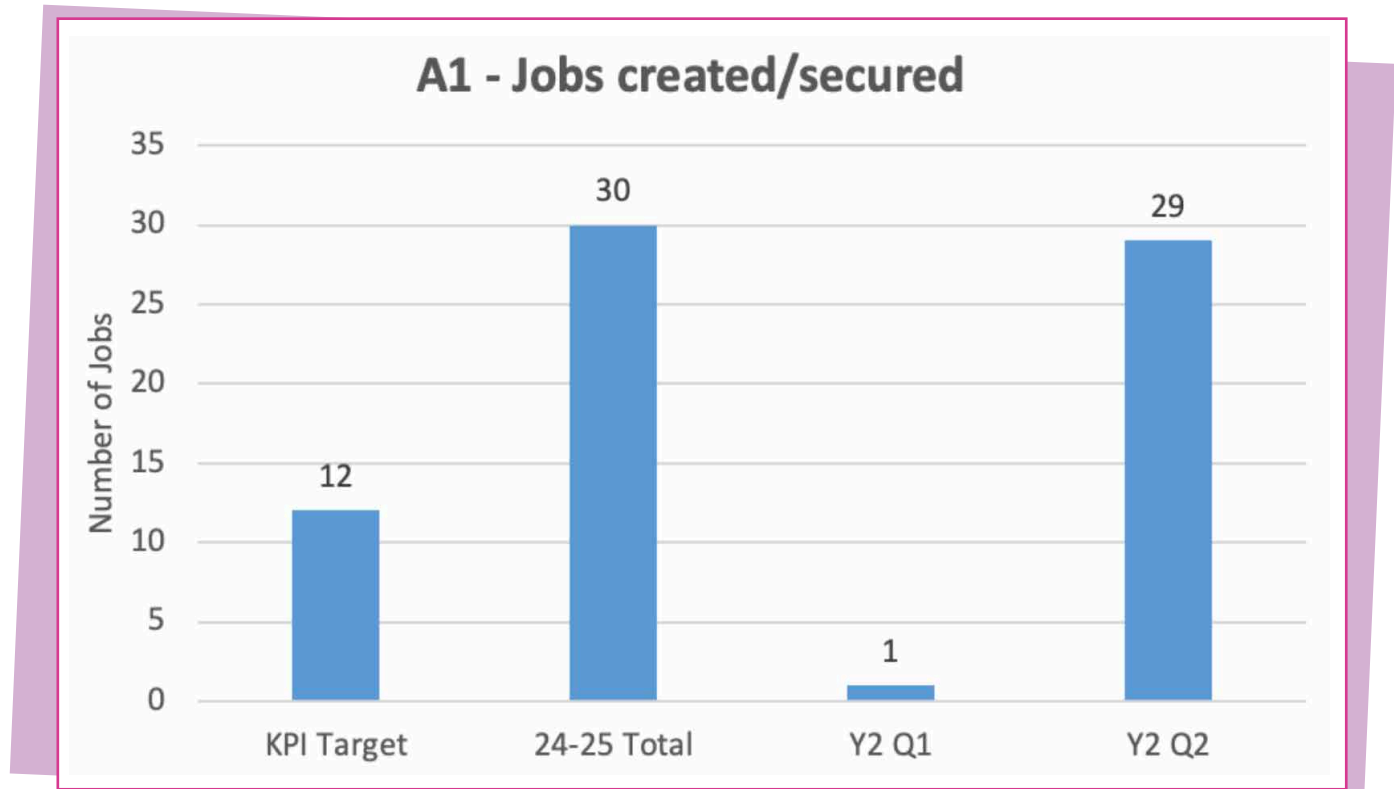


Figure 4: New Engagement KPI (A1): Job Outcome - Jobs created/secured

A2. Wider Engagement KPIs

Beneficiaries have engaged with the Skills Cluster through:

- Social media and newsletter, measured via total reach per quarter as well as new reach each quarter: (Total and New Online Engagement)
- Attending an information event, Networking events with freelancers (Individuals Attending Events)
- Skills cluster-specific Further Education and Higher Education activity (FE/HE Students Engaged)

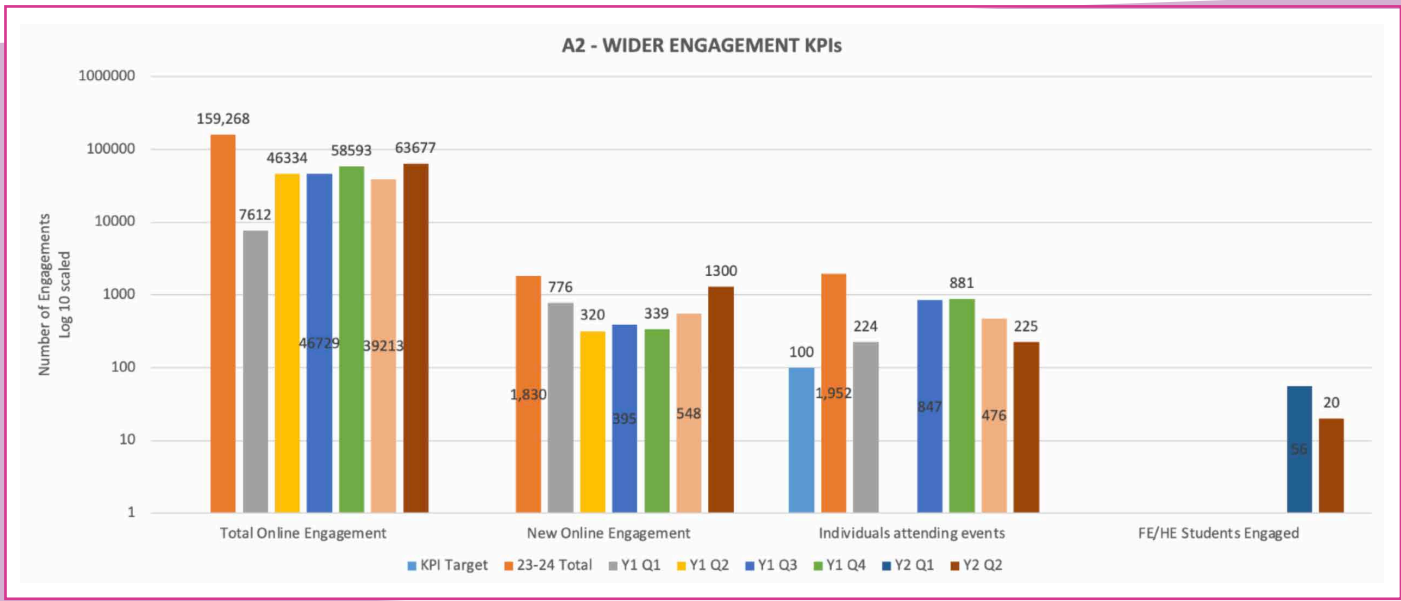


Figure 5: A2 Wider Engagement

As seen in Figure 5 above, the cluster has demonstrated resounding success against KPIs for Wider Engagement, with annual online engagement in 2023-24 of 159,268 beneficiaries. These numbers have largely been sustained in quarters 1 and 2 engagement of Year 2, indicating that the cluster is likely to deliver strongly on this KPI by the end of year 2 as well. In addition to this, there were a total of 76 beneficiaries reached in FE/HE institutions in Year 2, indicating that activities began to align better across cluster partners.

A3. Partnership KPIs:

Organisations working in partnership with the Skills Cluster to deliver/support skills activity in the region as well as new partnerships developed in the first six quarters are presented below in Figure 6.

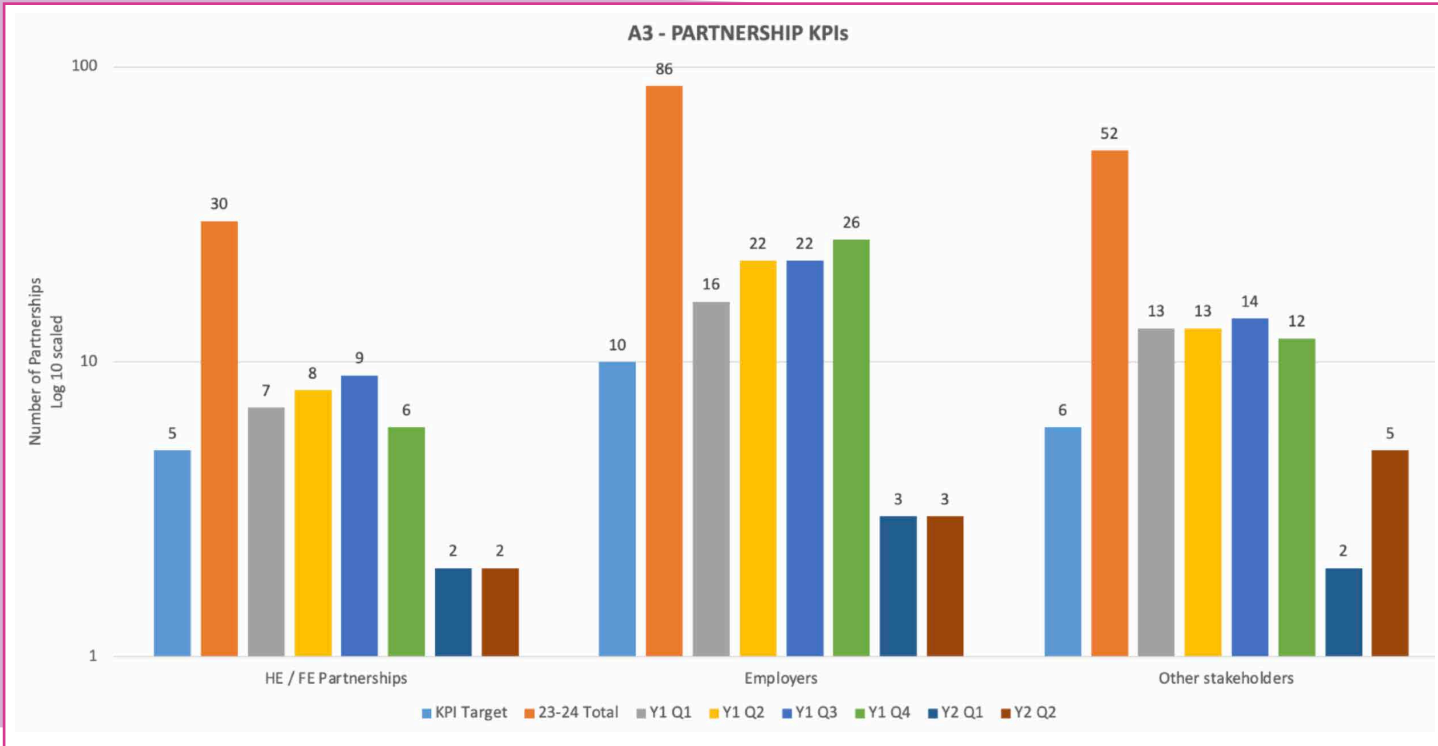


Figure 6: A3 Partnerships

HE/FE Partnerships: University of Reading, Windsor Forest Colleges Group (BCA, Windsor, Langley, Strodes), Activate Learning Group, Newbury College, Bucks New University, University of West London, NFTS, New directions Reading, Kennet School, Royal Holloway University London.

Industry: Cinelab (digital processing), MBSE UK (Lighting), Pip Studios (Audio Post), 80six (Virtual Production Studios), Hireworks, Salamandra, Bray Studios, Amazon MGM, Netflix, Disney, Shoot Aviation White Waltham, Version 2 Limited, Easthampstead Park Hotel, FLB accountants, Sonning Boats, Location One, Stage 50, Copper Connections, Cater Express, Academy Location Hire, Universal Creations, CUBE studios, NEP UK, Neal Street Productions, Giant Films, Prime Video Pathways, Shinfield Studios, Bedlam Productions, Creative England, FOCUS, GAP Film Festival, ScreenSkills.

Other stakeholders: Through A Different Lens, Super Sonic Startup. Through the work of the Berkshire Film Office, the cluster also engaged with 16 Berkshire based businesses (a mix of facilities and ancillary services supporting film production) with the aim of promoting local trade in the film sector. In collaboration with the 6 councils, the Berkshire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) and Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), the cluster worked on a linked project with Reading's Economy and Destination Agency (REDA), Activate Learning, Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) and Windsor College to develop the college curriculum and short courses in the trades and crafts to upskill production supply chains.

Most partners are now involved in the conception and delivery of activities for the cluster and more information on how partnerships have translated into impactful initiatives is discussed in Section III.

Additionally, the cluster has performed the role of connecting and facilitating meetings across a range of partners, from connecting Amazon and BAFTA to the BFI Director of Skills and Workforce Development, to connecting freelancers and industry professionals to training providers, as well as bringing together government, business, and academia.

B & C. Inclusion KPIs

For flagship training schemes (Create and Credit, Train and Develop, Recruit and Retain and Reflect and Share), Inclusion KPIs were B) Overall diversity of beneficiaries and C) Summary of how each individual scheme performed against the KPIs.

B. Available data on the overall diversity of beneficiaries is presented in Figure 7 below. The table indicates changes each quarter for target percentages for each parameter. In year 1, the cluster has been most consistently successful in achieving or exceeding targets for Gender: % male and female within the gender binary, % trans-identifying, sexual orientation and socio-economic background (School). Achievement against KPIs for Ethnic origin - % ethnically diverse has decreased steadily across quarters but increased for disability, demonstrating a shift in beneficiary profile. It is interesting to note this shift, as Resource Productions’ training and mentoring activities have historically had a remarkably high number of ethnically diverse beneficiaries. Reflections on this shift and potential ways forward have been discussed further in Section IV of this report.

C. Data from the above table has been distilled below for 7 diversity indicators in Figure 8 below to demonstrate the composition of beneficiary profiles across the four activity strands - Create and Credit, Train and Develop, Recruit and Retain and Reflect and Share.

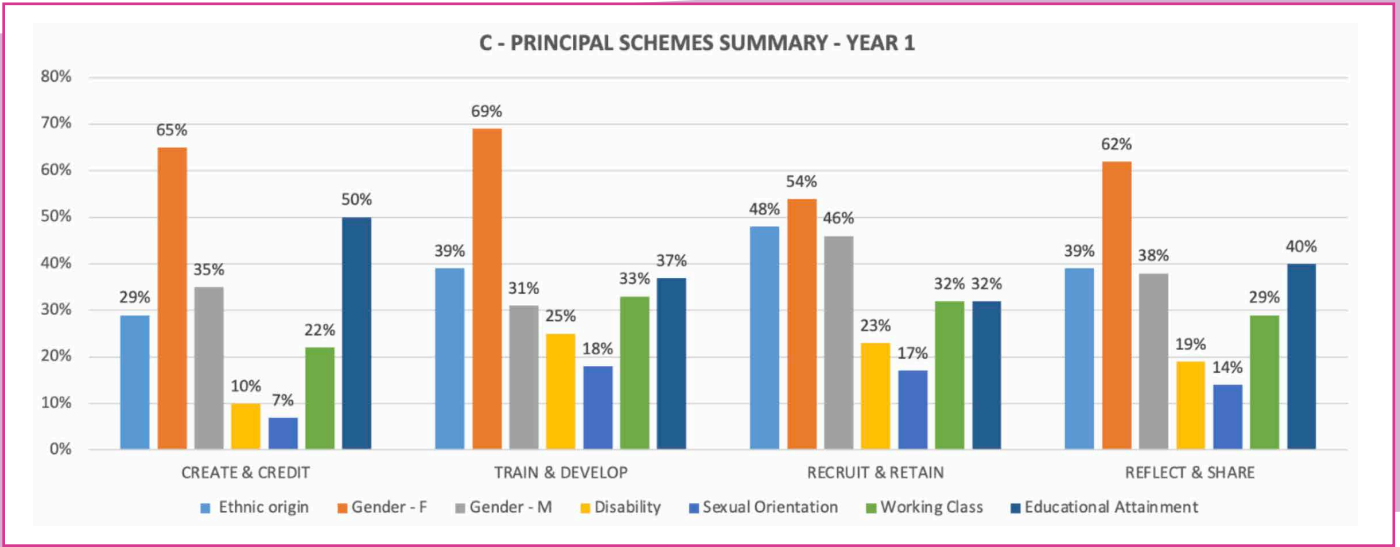


Figure 8: Inclusion KPIs (C)

OVERALL DIVERSITY OF BENEFICIARIES							
Target %		Y1 Q1	Y1 Q2	Y1 Q3	Y1 Q4	Y2 Q1	Y2 Q2
Ethnic origin - % ethnically diverse	35%	59	53	36	36	34.8	32.7
Gender: % male identifying within the gender binary	50%	40	57	58	48	46	58
Gender: % female identifying within the gender binary	50%	56	41	41	50	54	42
Gender: % trans identifying	-	0	1	1	2	0	0
Disability:	20%	17	15	13	20	30.4	29.1
Sexual Orientation	10%	9	13	27	17	21.7	27.5
Socio-economic background - School: % attending non-fee-paying school (*Data collected Q2 onwards)	40%	2	47	67	67	0	0
Returnship: % returning to work after a leave of absence	-	31	44	0	0	0	0

Female identifying, ethnically diverse, disabled as well as LGBTQ+ beneficiaries have participated most in the Train and Develop strand. Participation of male identifying beneficiaries is currently lower across all strands in comparison to female identifying beneficiaries and is represented most in the Recruit and Retain strand. Working class beneficiaries have engaged most with Train and Develop and Recruit and Retain activities, while those with higher qualifications/Educational Attainment have participated most in the Create and Credit strand. Overall, however, the profile of beneficiaries maps quite similarly to each strand of activity.

As discussed in this subsection, the cluster has in most cases performed well, and in some cases exceeded expectations vis-a-vis the KPIs in Year 1.

Available data for Year 2 Quarters 1 and 2 and current contexts of production also indicate that the cluster should be on track to achieve targets for Year 2.

Given the challenges of industry strikes and the consequent slowdown in production discussed in the next subsection, the achievement of these targets is hard won and demonstrates the depth of industry knowledge and networks as well as responsiveness to challenges of Resource Productions and all core partners. The cluster has demonstrated that its unique model of offering support at four levels and consolidating a range of stakeholders across the local community, academia and industry can deliver success in training and employment in the screen industries while addressing crucial challenges of diversity and inclusion.

II.iv. Key Outcomes, Successes & Challenges

The primary challenge facing Screen Berkshire in its first six quarters was the state of the film and television sector during this period. Purse, Philip and Byrne (2023: 4-5) suggest:

After a post-pandemic boom of inward investment into the UK film and television industries, a constellation of challenges emerged that threatened the economic sustainability of the industry and its workforce... The ensuing US Writers Guild (WGA) strike in May 2023, followed by industrial action by the US actors' union (SAG-AFTRA) a few months later, accelerated the slowdown in commissioning and inward investment that Bectu has described as a 'crisis' for the UK screen industries.

While the WGA strike ended in September 2023 and the SAG-AFTRA strike ended in November 2023, the slowdown in production coincided with Year 1 of Screen Berkshire (April 2023- March 2024) and a reasonable part of Year 2. Berkshire Film Office noted in their Year 1 Quarter 2 and 3 reports that nearly all production came to a halt, including streaming services, except productions led by national broadcasters.

Less filming in Berkshire meant a decrease in employment opportunities and the effect of the slowdown in production on industry professionals (many of whom are freelancers) and production-related services has been substantial. In this tumultuous time, Screen Berkshire stepped up to support employment and engagement of affected Berkshire-based crew as much as possible; the cluster activities facilitated connections to other crews and artists for networking and project work, and offered them work as mentors on bootcamps, courses and workshops for cluster activities. Enquiries from prospective incoming productions have increased since Quarter 2 of Year 2 after an adjustment period, and an increase in production is expected in 2025.

One upside to the slowdown in production was that it allowed some industry stakeholders to participate more fully in industry-led training activities such as tours, site visits and workshops. There was more capacity to build relationships and networks, facilitate knowledge sharing conversations on skills gaps and rent out equipment to support smaller productions. Higher employer engagement in the initial planning phase has helped build a robust industry-led strategy for the cluster's programme, and this is expected to ensure that activities stay relevant to industry needs and address skills gaps through the remaining quarters of Year 2 and Year 3.



Figure 9: Screen Berkshire launch - LSIP Workforce Development Partnership meeting

Screen Berkshire was also successful in placing 5 trainees on an independent film at Shinfield Studios with Giant Films. The first session with Amazon trainees was held in the form of a catered lunchtime meet-up so that the session would have negligible impact on their roles and professional time commitments. Trainees networked amongst themselves, met the cluster team, and asked questions that they felt could support their development. Screen Berkshire also placed one work experience student in the camera department at Shinfield Studios for a production with Neal Street Productions. Screen Berkshire has remained available via phone and email to address any emerging issues, while also continuing pastoral care on site once a month till the production has been completed in 2025.

Despite challenging times, in Years 1 and 2, Screen Berkshire aligned and coordinated multiple programmes and different levels of productions to continue getting trainees on set. A particularly successful effort was the placement of 23 trainees on a High-End TV production Citadel at Bray Studios, with Amazon's NFTS Prime Video Pathway Craft Academy and ScreenSkills Trainee Finder. The trainees worked in a variety of departments across the production, with most trainees continuing all the way into early 2025.



Figure 10: Citadel HoD Training 2023

In summer 2024, a 2-day pilot training programme targeted at Heads of Department (HoDs) was held, covering essential topics like HR, diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), leadership and management for 6 HoDs from the Amazon Citadel production. The HoDs were also able to meet and network with local facilities and freelancers. The training was aimed at developing participants' knowledge of Berkshire-based studios, facilities, locations, suppliers, crew and local hiring solutions, along with providing a safe space to explore challenges and solutions related to HR, access and sustainability. Participant HoDs were therefore equipped with knowledge and perspectives to source crew locally and sustainably, as well as enhance diversity in their respective departments in future projects. Conversations are ongoing with Warner Brothers and Lucas Film who are interested in developing the pilot further for their own HoDs and crews.

As demonstrated in this subsection, the cluster has been successful in facilitating opportunities despite ongoing industry challenges and had positive impacts across all strands of and connecting asks and offers across partners. The next subsection delves into real life case studies of people who have benefitted from the cluster's programme.

Screen Berkshire has developed a 'Train the Trainer' resource pack to provide teachers, lecturers and career advisors in school and colleges with information on how the film/TV industry works, screen sector jobs and the supply chain, and how to support students with a career information and opportunities. The pack has been created in collaboration with Activate Learning, Windsor Forest Colleges Group and Reading Economic and Destination Agency. This CPD resource will allow staff in various settings to better support learning into industry careers and highlight roles not traditionally associated with the film industry, resulting in greater awareness of roles in electrical and carpentry roles in pre-production and production and specialisms in camera and lighting departments, HR and finance. A pilot training session was delivered at the University of Reading in November 2024 with support from the Business and Employability Manager. Participants included technicians from the Department of Film, Theatre & Television, staff from the Henley Business school as well as other staff from the Careers and Placements team. In the coming year, feedback from the pilot session will be used to further develop the resource and host an Open Access session that will be publicly available to Berkshire-based trainers.

II.v. From Numbers to Names: Case Studies

While some beneficiaries have moved from unemployment to employment due to training received via a skills bootcamp and SWAP (Sector Work-based Academy Programme) delivered by Screen Berkshire, others have found ongoing 1-1 support crucial, demonstrating the strength of the cluster's approach to developing new and supporting existing talent across a range of roles and levels of experience. Below are some case studies of Screen Berkshire partnership beneficiaries in their own words.

Create and Credit

“

From the age of sixteen, Resource Productions has given their all into helping me gain success in the film industry, whether through teaching me at the BFI Film Academy or after-school Film Club, inviting me to events, or giving me the opportunity to direct a short film I had written, 'Chosen Mum', at Shinfield Studios with a full crew. Without them, I also wouldn't have been able to find my first professional industry work. Their connections led me to a Disney traineeship on 'Dr Strange II', work on 'The Witcher': Blood Origin' and most recently a trainee position on Amazon's 'AUPS' in the costume department. Through my ups and downs, each staff member has been a constant support, and I can't wait to see where else my relationship with them takes me.

Grace (Director, Chosen Mum film shoot at Shinfield Studios, Screen Berkshire launch 2023) ”

Train and Develop

“

I'm a professional freelance photographer and videographer. However, being a unit stills photographer in the film and TV industry is my ideal vocation. The Film & TV Bootcamp hosted by Resource Productions has been beneficial for me in my career. The knowledge gained on the Bootcamp gave me an additional cinematic understanding of imagery that I am now applying to my own work. It has also helped me improve my videography skills allowing me to provide my clients with a more quality product. I have made connections through the Bootcamp that will allow me greater opportunities for stills photography in the future. Since completion of the course, Sky's 'A League of Their Own' reached out to me to feature one of my recent images in their upcoming series for use throughout the UK. This is my first acquisition request from a broadcaster and a big step in my career.

Rishi (Camera Taster Workshop and Film & TV Skills Bootcamp 2023)

”



Figure 11: Create and Credit shoot of the film Kitty Party at Minghella Studios, University of Reading 2023

“

Five years ago, I was working at a casting agency looking for a way to get back into the industry with some hands-on experience. One year ago, I was working in the industry as a Crowd Second. Today I'm a First/AD so reading the script, looking at storyboards, and seeing how long it's going to take us to shoot this taster. [working on Kitty Party] it's a lovely campus and I found this [a] very well-kept and professional looking set.

Amy (1st AD, Kitty Party film shoot at Minghella Studios 2024)

”



Figure 12: Participants at an ARRI Camera Taster Workshop 2023



It was great to connect with other local creatives and companies. In particular, the MBS Group. Since the course finished, I did a day's work with them at the newly developed Shinfield Studios. It was great to be introduced to local creative businesses, such as Cube Studios. I had no idea they were there, but now I do, along with a much clearer understanding of Virtual Production and its potential within the creative industries. I'm pleased to let you know I have already collaborated with another course-mate- I acted as a Unit Production Manager on a short film she was producing.

Megan (DWP-SWAP Runners Course 2023)



Recruit and Retain



I now work at MBSE Lighting Equipment technician. Resource Productions helped me to get back on my feet after personal loss and gave me the confidence needed to break into the film and TV industry as well as the necessary contacts to get my foot in the door.

Jamie (DWP-SWAP Runners Course 2023)



I have been selected for the JETS initiative (Junior Entertainment Talent Slate) that takes place alongside Berlinale (Berlin International Film Festival). The international co-producing competition is an opportunity for first and second-time feature film makers to find partners in order to realise their production. I am the co-writer of feature film, **THE SLEEPER** - a book option based on the novel by Emily Barr. I will be attending JETS along with Sara Gibbings of TROY TV. Resource Productions have been an invaluable support to allow me of Aston Productions to achieve accreditation at the Berlin Film Festival and ensure maximum exposure for **THE SLEEPER** and my directing profile.

Jo (Ongoing 1-1 Freelancer support)



Reflect and Share



I never even considered that I could afford to dream about this. It was only through meeting Dom and going to this after-school film club and then being given £100 to make a horror film—I showed it to my mum. Yes, the challenge began earlier because I could not point to anyone and say, “This is what this career could look like.” It was so unknown. It was important for me to do it consistently so that I could then pick the right GCSEs and ask to go to university to study this. It had to be a viable idea in my mother's head before then.

Myriam Raja (BAFTA Award-winning director; oral evidence to the CMS Committee 2024: 30)



Figure 13: BAFTA-winning filmmaker Myriam Raja

It must be noted that Raja was not trained via Screen Berkshire activities. However, her testimony has been included in this report to demonstrate the Reflect and Share strand, which seeks to use learnings from partners' skills training activity to model the development of future courses and programmes and reduce duplication. Raja's testimony to the Culture, Media and Sport (CMS) Committee demonstrates the success of lead partner Resource Productions' method of training and community engagement, and this approach has informed several activities of Screen Berkshire.

III.i. The Screen Berkshire Model

“...it is about communication, structure, working together and a clearer targeted approach...”

Dominique Unsworth MBE (Oral evidence to the Culture, Media and Sport Committee 2024: 35)

The Best Practice in Screen Sector Development report "examines the strategies and policies that have been implemented by established and emerging jurisdictions around the world to maximise screen production activity and adapt to the changing Screen production landscape" (Olsberg SPI and AFCI, 2024: 8). A review of this report suggests that Screen Berkshire's model of collaboration and alignment across partners to develop and deliver industry-led training is well ahead of it being considered best practice in other contexts. The report also discusses how such a model has been successful in other international contexts based on case studies. One can therefore suggest that Screen Berkshire's model is in line with globally recommended practices to improve workforce capacity in screen industries. Combined with core cluster partners' deep understanding of local communities, economies and infrastructures, this model has proven to be a real strength and advantage.

In Key Areas of Best Practice for Workforce Capacity, the report has the following recommendations, which match well with activities and objectives of the different strands (Olsberg SPI and AFCI, 2024: 20):

TARGETED INTERVENTION (matches with objectives and activities in the Create and Credit and Train and Develop strands)

- Workforce development strategies should be developed in line with the specific needs and requirements of a jurisdiction
- Strategies can address a wide range of workforce development areas, including critical skills gaps and role shortages, transferrable skills and DEI efforts
- Strategies should provide clear pathways for entry into and progression through the Screen production sector

COMPREHENSIVE DATA COLLECTION (matches with objectives and activities in the Reflect and Share strand)

- Consistent and regular data collection on sector workforce, across all departments, can help to anticipate future and longer-term capacity issues in a jurisdiction
- Tracking should cover capacity issues, including specific skills gaps, shortages and retention across roles, grades and departments
- Relevant agencies should ensure that robust and consistent data tracking is implemented and reviewed at regular intervals

III. Cluster Impact, USPs & Best Practice

ALIGNING TRAINING WITH INDUSTRY NEED
(matches with objectives and activities in the Train and Develop strand)

- A jurisdiction’s training provision should align with the needs of the local industry
- There should be increased focus on practical, set ready skills development and bridge training that provides new and existing crew with the necessary skills and tools to work on domestic and incoming productions

COHESIVE STRATEGIES
(matches with objectives and activities in the Reflect and Share strand)

- Effective workforce development strategies involve engagement with key public and private partners, including industry, economic development agencies, training providers, colleges and universities, unions and guilds
- While maintaining local specificities, strategies should be informed by international standards, structures, and roles
- A variety of strategy models can be adopted to support workforce development, including skills boards and advisory committees

A Hyper-local Approach

Georgia Brown, chair of the UK Skills Task Force (an industry-led group to address critical skilled labour shortages in the UK’s screen production sectors) stated in her oral evidence to Parliament’s Culture, Media and Sport Committee that decentralization was key and local strategies and local connections are key to diversity and inclusion. A keen understanding of the community is crucial to identify skills gaps and production needs that are felt most at a local level by businesses and productions. At the same time, this hyper local focus when combined with a mission to diversify the creative industries ensures that local communities’ talent, barriers, and challenges are understood and addressed.

The Screen Berkshire partners believe that a successful and sustainable model of workforce development must not just provide ‘band-aid’ training to patch immediate skills gaps but must understand and address the entire talent pipeline and supply chain. Initiatives for skills development must therefore start with youth engagement, training, and development, as well as retention, reskilling and returners to work. Target learners and beneficiaries are therefore not just young people entering the industry, but adults willing to try their creativity or transition into the screen industries with skills that could be made more relevant to the industry with a bit of additional training.



Figure 14: Screen Berkshire Industry Mixer hosted in partnership with Filming in England, December 2023

Partnership, Connection and Collaboration

The model of Screen Berkshire also looks at not reinventing the wheel and prioritizes signposting and collaboration with existing provisions to ensure energy is utilized to make these available rather than creating new and repetitive resources. This allows the cluster to draw upon existing government programmes, assessment processes and standards as well as training (albeit with some reworking to make it contextually relevant). As a result, efforts and activities are aligned and integrated, as opposed to duplicated.

The alignment of the cluster’s quarterly reports and Board meetings with that of the Berkshire Film Office has allowed for programme activity as well as reporting to be streamlined. The role of the Berkshire Film Office is discussed later in this section. This has enabled energy and resources to be directed towards developing and sustaining partnerships to identify skills gaps accurately, connect with and train beneficiaries that are most in need of support, and align asks across training providers and communicate these to employers to avoid duplication and bombardment of employers with multiple approaches.

As per the Best Practice in Screen Sector Development report, best practices in partner engagement usually involve collective long-term commitment from partners to strengthen and stabilise the sector of partners to prioritise the smooth functioning and long-term stability of the production ecosystem. As per Olsberg SPI and AFCI (2024: 77), good screen sector partnership development practices also aim to bring on board a diverse range of partners such as:

... national governments (including ministries or departments of economy and finance, culture and tourism), municipal or local authorities, key agencies in areas such as customs and immigration (for the smooth importation of production equipment and workforce), the private sector, the general public and others.

Strong partnerships are seen as valuable by incoming productions and companies due to their ability to facilitate a smooth experience of production from start to finish.

Existing partnerships were strengthened further with MBS Equipment (Lighting), Stage Fifty, Sunbelt Rentals, 80six (Virtual Production), Pip Studios (Post production Sound), University of Reading, Windsor Forest Colleges Group, Reading College / Activate Learning, Bray Studios, Shinfield Studios, ScreenSkills and Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) to develop and deliver a range of training activities and employment opportunities in years 1 and 2.

New partnerships developed in Years 1 and 2 include NEP UK (broadcast solutions company headquartered in Berkshire), Amazon Ascend, and NFTS Prime Video Craft Academy. The cluster also collaborated for the first time with Creative England to host the cluster’s second freelancing networking event; this was Creative England’s largest networking event held till date with nearly 250 industry attendees.

Most crucially, Screen Berkshire’s approach will help build an ecosystem of screen businesses and employers, training providers and ongoing support mechanisms, which creates the potential to identify skills gaps, develop and deliver industry-relevant training, and achieve consistent employment and retention. Such an approach requires partners to come together with effective communication and transparency so that each can pool their strength and deliver positive outcomes to benefit the sustainable development of a locally based workforce and talent pipeline.

III.ii. Alignment of Programme Delivery

Cross-cohort training

A real strength of the cluster is its cross-cohort approach, where learners from a variety of backgrounds are integrated into a training experience and training providers also come together to play to their strengths.



Figure 15: Screen Berkshire launch Create and Credit shoot

Create and Credit shoots undertaken at the launch of the Screen Berkshire cluster (October 2023) and a ministerial visit (April 2023) at Shinfield Studios as well as the shoot for the short film Kitty Party at Minghella Studios (May 2024), demonstrated this unique training approach of cross-cohort learning. Learners from University of Reading, FE colleges, SWAP courses and skills bootcamps came together to assist, train under, and observe a variety of heads of departments in these productions. The diversity of industry experience as well as the different demographic and sociocultural backgrounds of participants across these training provisions (FE, HE, bootcamps and workshops), offers opportunities for organic networking and connection within the developing local workforce.

[A video of the cross-cohort approach in action can be viewed here](#)

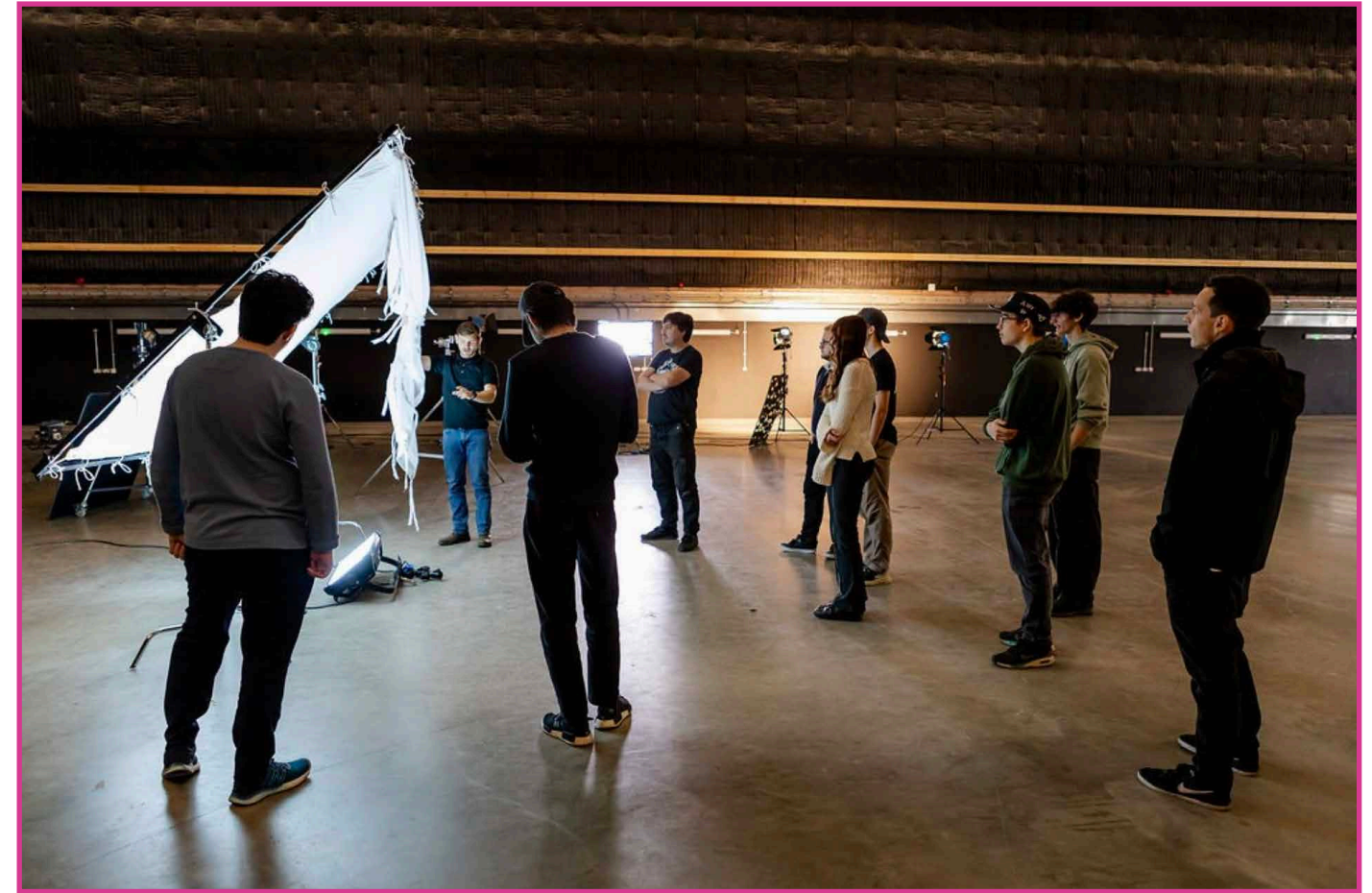


Figure 16: Lighting Workshop 2024

The mix of strengths of training providers has been exemplified in the Film & TV bootcamp, Camera Skills, Lighting and Grip bootcamps, as well as Introduction to Audio Post-production and Camera taster workshops which have involved industry employers such as MBS Equipment UK to deliver specialist lighting train in and CUBE studios to address specialist Grip & Virtual production skills. These workshops and bootcamps have also been delivered in part by the University of Reading's specialist camera technicians (delivering ARRI camera training and certifications) and the specially-appointed Sound Design technician, funded by Screen Berkshire (delivering sound design training). Participants involved have had the opportunity for paid roles within several companies that delivered training, and additional connections with companies such as Copper Connections, Version 2 Lights and Pip Studios ensured further scope for movement within the sector supply chain.

The cluster's approach to the training of entry level persons by industry and academic experts ensures that learners coming out of the training programmes are well-equipped to take on the short term paid roles and can also continue learning on the job, thereby connecting and completing the cycle of training and employment effectively.



Figure 17: DWP SWAP 2024

In February 2024, the cluster welcomed Minister for Employment Jo Churchill to Shinfield Studios Stage 2 to meet participants of a Screen Berkshire Create and Credit activity. The learners gained invaluable on-set experience which put them in a stronger position to start their careers in the TV & film industry. Core partners of Screen Berkshire provided an overview of the Sector Work-based Academy (SWAP) Programme (with the support of the Berkshire Job Centre), an initiative designed to equip participants with the knowledge, skills, and contacts to access work in film and the wider creative industries.

[Coverage of the ministerial visit to Shinfield Studios can be viewed here](#)



Another example of the cluster's success in coordinating a range of different objectives and activities was seen in Year 2 for placements in the HETV production Citadel at Bray Studios. Screen Berkshire coordinated several programmes (ScreenSkills, Prime Video Craft Academy, Screen Berkshire) and aligned processes with consistent effort to facilitate 23 trainee opportunities on the production.

Figure 18: Visit of Minister for Employment Jo Churchill to Shinfield Studios

Higher Education

In addition to cross-cohort training, partners have further developed their specific offerings in response to skills gaps and industry requirements and aligned in a way that ensures a complementary rather than competitive approach.

As the core Higher Education (HE) partner of the cluster, the University of Reading has enhanced its curriculum at the Department of Film, Theatre & Television (FTT) moving towards a higher percentage of practice embedded across its film and TV programme. It has embedded more masterclasses and industry-led sessions in its modules and enhanced its career-related provisions via a Business and Employability Manager and sound specialist technician. An inspiration event was also undertaken at the FTT Undergraduate Festival 2024 where a Screen Berkshire prize was awarded to the winning film/TV project team.



Figure 19: Recipients of the Screen Berkshire Award at UoR's Film, Theatre & Television Festival

After considering the outcomes of a successful employer engagement workshop in 2022 and emerging requirements expressed by local industry employers, modules across UG and PG programmes have a renewed approach to developing student capacities in a range of professional skills. Students have engaged with an even wider range of industry professionals such as art director Luke Whitelock, producer Andrew St Maur and cinematographers Diana Olifirova and Alessandro Repetti (to name a few) and businesses such as ROSCO and MBS Equipment to gain insight into screen industry working practices and career development in specific roles and departments. Employers have repeatedly expressed the need for students to develop soft skills, particularly communication, initiative and resilience, which have been enabled by students working on their final year film/TV projects as well as projects with external commercial and community partners.

In February 2025, the University launched a new module in Film Production Accounting at the Henley Business School, training twenty students of BA Management and Accountancy. This initiative to solve a specific skills shortage in screen production will repeat across subsequent years. It will be followed by curriculum efforts to addressing skills issues in film and TV art departments, with a new module in production design, The ARRI Camera Systems and BAFTA albert training are embedded into the programmes so that students willing to achieve these certifications can do so via their degree programme, alongside a critical and practical understanding of film/TV practices and creative industries.

Since the recruitment of the Business and Employability Manager, a new appointment forming part of the University's in-kind contribution to Screen Berkshire, student engagement across placement appointments, career queries and interest in attending careers events/workshops has been steadily growing. Relationships are being developed with studios and creative businesses in and around Berkshire and overall, there is progress in facilitating industry links and opportunities as well as developing student employability and career planning.

Further Education

In terms of Further Education partners (FE), there has been an alignment of training provision across different colleges in the Berkshire region. While Reading College / Activate learning has focused on skills such as carpentry, electrical, make up and costume, the Windsor Forest Colleges Group has rebranded itself as the Home of Stage, Screen and Design. Part of LSIP funds were used to collaborate with Cube Studios (local supplier of virtual production facilities) to develop a new virtual production studio, editing booths and sound studios to support podcast and voiceover recording. At the same time, Resource Productions has worked with the college's apprenticeship team to pilot a production-based apprenticeship programme (Production Assistant and Content Creator) which started in September 2024 and engaged local supply chain businesses to take on apprentices.



Figure 20: Representatives of Cube Studios and Windsor Forest Colleges Group presenting on curriculum and infrastructure development

The case study on the collaboration for curriculum development was included in the Skills for Success in the UK Screen Industries report 2024, a report by Work Advance for WorldSkills UK, supported by the BBC.

“

The interest and engagement we have seen from colleges has been amazing. Both management and those shaping and delivering the curriculum are excited by the opportunities our sector brings, whilst employers and heads of department are keen to support them in developing ways to build a sustainable pipeline of future crew. We are already seeing the ways into work open up to a broader potential workforce, resulting in more diverse, better trained crew for our productions going forward.’

”

Dominique Unsworth (quoted in Carey and others, 2024: 44)

It has been possible to align activities across training providers via consistent strategy and planning. After activities and interest amongst local communities, FE/HE institutions and businesses snowballed in Year 1, a workplan was made for Year 2 to strategize and map all activities and initiatives in Year 1. This, coupled with the work of the LSIP Workforce Development Partnership (discussed in the next subsection) has helped prevent multiple asks of employers and training providers to deliver duplicated activities and made it easier for partners to agree activities within a Board approved programme framework for Year 2.

III.iii. Regional and National Impact

The outcomes would not be possible without fostering collaboration and alignment with local, regional and national governments and initiatives. In this subsection, we will look at how this has been successfully achieved by the cluster resulting in positive impact at the local, regional and national level, through several related initiatives.

Workforce Development Partnerships

At the regional level, the cluster has aligned goals with the Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce's Screen Industries Workforce Development Partnership (WDP), a collaborative forum for education/training providers and employers to address workforce development challenges and develop effective solutions.



Figure 21: A Workforce Development Partnership meeting in progress

A primary objective of the WDP is “to foster dialogue, exchange ideas, and promote collaboration to enhance the skills and capabilities of the local workforce,” inviting employers to help solve the skills challenge” (LSIP Berkshire, 2023). Through a series of themed sessions to discuss industry priorities and actions for stakeholders as well as collaborative projects amongst cluster partners, WDP outcomes include new courses in hair and make-up for Film/TV at Activate Learning, a new T-level in Media, Production and Broadcast at Kennet School with input from the awarding body VTCT Skills.

The WDP and cluster collaboration has also supported the development and roll-out of two apprenticeships at Windsor Forest Colleges Group discussed in the previous subsection, engaging employers to take on apprentices and providing support to navigate apprenticeship structures and systems. New Directions College and University of Reading are also engaged in a project to reflect on and share best practices to embed sustainability training (via the Carbon Literacy project, Julie's Bicycle and BAFTA albert) across accredited and non-accredited training provisions. The aim is to move closer towards screen industry and national goals of net zero status by 2025.

Berkshire Film Office: Regional Production, Local Economy and Employment

The positive outcomes of cluster activities so far have been facilitated immensely by the Berkshire Film Office (BFO). Based on BFO reports from Years 1 and 2 of the cluster, there has been substantial benefit to council residents and economic activity in the Berkshire region. Selected films and HETV productions filmed in Berkshire and facilitated by the BFO in the last six quarters of Screen Berkshire include The Gentlemen and Black Mirror (Season 6 Ep. 1) for Netflix, Late Night Lycett for Channel 4, The Crown (Season 6). Access to high quality productions opens routes for harnessing employment opportunities and BFO, with its database of local crew can supply trained professionals to productions looking to hire.



Figure 22: Berkshire Film Office at Shinfield Studios

The Berkshire Film Office (BFO) also stimulates economic activity and income for local councils in the county. Based on the British Film Commission’s framework to calculate the economic impact of filming activity (which estimates £2 positive impact/indirect spend for every £1 spent/direct spend), BFO report figures indicate that there has been a positive economic impact of film production activity for boroughs across Berkshire between Years 1 Quarter 1 and Year 2 Quarter 2.

	Y1 Q1 (£)	Y1 Q2 (£)	Y1 Q3 (£)	Y1 Q4 (£)	Y2 Q1 (£)	Y2 Q2 (£)
Direct local spend (filming days x average estimated daily spend)	2,172,358.80	18,214,800.00	1,658,919.73	942,875.00	6,610,399.00	2,201,276.00
Indirect local spend (the economic impact of production spend equates to £2 for every £1 spent)	4,344,717.60	36,429,600.00	3,317,839.46	1,885,750.00	13,220,798.00	4,402,552.00
Average per borough	724,119.60	6,071,600.00	552,973.24	314,291.67	2,203,466.33	733,758.67

Figure 23: Berkshire Film Office estimate of economic impact on boroughs in Berkshire per quarter

In terms of local beneficiaries, the latest data available (for Year 2 Quarter 1) indicates that the BFO has engaged residents from all six boroughs, with beneficiaries largely located in Slough, Reading and Wokingham.

	Slough	Wokingham	West Berkshire	RBWM	Reading	Bracknell	Anonymous	TOTAL
April								
Young people	84	82	0	1	0	0	8	167
Adults	22	6	3	8	25	1	17	82
May								
Young people	9	37	0	0	20	0	32	98
Adults	11	4	3	8	23	1	17	67
June								
Young people	10	51	0	1	0	0	15	77
Adults	29	54	0	8	8	1	14	114
TOTAL	165	234	6	26	76	3	103	606

Figure 24: Berkshire Film Office data on beneficiary profiles across boroughs in Berkshire

As evident from the data discussed above, the work of the Berkshire Film Office has had, and continues to have, a positive impact on income, employment opportunities and high-end filming in Berkshire by interlinking screen productions to locally based businesses, facilities, and trained professionals. It also provides a route by which the views of the six Berkshire councils can feed into Screen Berkshire, not least through the alignment of quarterly meetings on the same day and at the same venue.

Oral evidence to the Culture, Media and Sport Committee and World Skills Report

The extensive work and experience of Screen Berkshire lead organisation Resource Productions has contributed to discussions on skills development and DEI at a national level.



Figure 25: Oral Evidence from Laura Mansfield (ScreenSkills), Myriam Raja (Filmmaker) and Dominique Unsworth MBE at the CMS Committee

The UK Parliament's Culture, Media and Sport (CMS) Committee is in the process of examining the current challenges faced by the British film and high-end television industry, investigating what actions and measures can ensure that the UK remains a global destination for production. It is also looking into interventions to support the independent film production sector, enhance skills and retention in the industry and assess the challenges of AI to the industry. Dominique Unsworth and Resource Productions alumna and BAFTA winner Myriam Raja were invited to give oral evidence to the CMS Committee on 21st May 2024. They described the work of Screen Berkshire, the Berkshire Film Office, and responded to questions on the current state of the film industry and what needs to be done to support entrants of all levels.

Dom and Myriam spoke alongside representatives of screen industry sector organisations of national significance such as Laura Mansfield (ScreenSkills), Georgia Brown (Screen Sector Skills Task Force), Dr Jon Wardle (National Film and Television School), and Sara Whybrew (Director of Skills and Workforce Development, British Film Institute). They highlighted challenges within the sector for historically underrepresented communities and freelancers, as well as the successful model of Resource Productions and Screen Berkshire that has successfully fostered alignment, connection and collaboration for skills development. Their oral evidence to the CMS Committee is significant as it will inform policy to initiate much needed change in the screen industries.

The work of the cluster has also influenced national level skills via a case study in the report released in 2024 by Work Advance for WorldSkills UK (supported by the BBC). The report explores the skills challenges facing the screen industries (film & TV, animation & visual effects, and video games) from the perspectives of young people, skills providers and employers. The case study of Resource Productions and Screen Berkshire has been included as it pioneers a new localised approach to bringing together previously fragmented sectors and objectives to address skills gaps and develop pathways to train, upskill and offer support to learners with diverse levels of industry experience.

Local, Oral Histories for National Impact



Figure 26: Logo of the AHRC IAA Screen Industry Voices project

The University of Reading's Screen Industries Voices project is "a three-year project exploring the lived experiences of screen industry professionals and examining how to create positive change to address current industry challenges." (Purse, Philip and Byrne, 2025)

Funded by the University's AHRC Impact Accelerator Account, the project creates bespoke interventions into current industry challenges based on oral narratives of creative industry professionals and businesses. Key insights from this research will be used to develop provisions to support regional freelancers and businesses, while others are expected to go on to influence national policy to secure the future of the screen industries for everyone.

III.iv. Community Engagement, 1-1 Support and Pastoral care

Screen Berkshire, relative to other BFI-funded clusters, is the most local and county-specific cluster. This allows it to develop and sustain local relationships and harness opportunities to address locally relevant skills gaps and industry needs.

Resource Productions has a 25-year history of enabling underrepresented people in mainstream media, “to make art and films that will better reflect them, and to voice their views and challenge others’ opinions and attitudes of them” (Resource Productions, 2025). This history of engagement with diverse learners and communities has proved crucial to attracting diverse cohorts to participate in strands and activities.



Figure 27: Film & TV Bootcamp 2024

The cluster has also partnered with a Berkshire-based community networking group, Through A Different Lens, and engaged with local organisations such as Reading Film and Video Makers and Reading Biscuit Factory via networking and screening events to further its engagement with Berkshire-based professionals and new entrants in film/TV.

Collaborations as well as resources developed via the cluster (such as the Train the Trainer resource pack) demystify the production process and the sector more widely for those who have remained outside the boundaries of screen production sector networks. Deep knowledge of local contexts and challenges as well as cross sector partnerships ensure that interventions are tailored to the local context.

The University of Reading deployed its research and filmmaking expertise on relevant community-based practice research projects. The AHRC Impact Accelerator Account funded project ‘Futures in Film: Community Visions for careers in Film/TV in Reading’ (2023) used methods rooted in participatory filmmaking and community-based research to engage with the local community in Whitley, which is one of the most deprived wards in Reading. Community researchers and young people from Whitley, in collaboration with student researcher-filmmakers from the Department of Film, Theatre & Television, co-developed two short research films exploring the community’s perspectives on local film/TV industry developments, barriers to entry and solutions to facilitate equitable participation, training and employment opportunities for the community. Key community insights from this project are currently being considered by relevant Screen Berkshire partners to further enhance equitable participation in local film/TV production.



Figure 28: Community participants in action during the Whitley Futures in Film project 2023

Shinfield Studios has also engaged with the community via a dedicated Community Engagement Officer in 2024. It launched Shinfield Cinema (run by Shinfield Parish Council) in October 2024 and has been actively collaborating with local schools, colleges and the University of Reading to support training and careers provisions.

In order to enhance the participation of underserved communities and participants from nontraditional backgrounds, individual learner needs must be understood and met across multiple levels of training and experience.

Participant engagement in programme activity therefore often includes the crucial component of ongoing 1-1 support and pastoral care. While this approach is time and resource intensive, such support often proves to be the most effective to support participants to aspire to careers in the creative industries and progress into higher level roles with bespoke advice and negotiating barriers, where possible. Pastoral care for those in entry-level and mid-career roles also helps build confidence and supports participants with timely information and advice crucial for progression and retention.

Given the substantial demographic variations within the county, the cluster has its work cut out to ensure that underserved communities benefit from relevant strands of activity by tapping into community-based initiatives and using a wider range of communication channels.

IV. Looking back to move forward: Reflection and Next Steps

IV.i. Reinvigorating Ways of Working & Strengthening Collaboration

Resource Productions

Resource Productions has utilised its historically successful ways of working with communities, industry and academia to lead the Screen Berkshire cluster towards successful outcomes. In the process, it has encountered new challenges with a wider pool of beneficiaries and industry.

As discussed in Section II, there has been a noticeable shift in the demographic profile of Resource Productions' beneficiaries. Resource Productions has historically had a high number of ethnically diverse beneficiaries, particularly those from the global majority, owing to its close engagement with community networks and local organisations, and this has been crucial to its facilitation of a diverse creative industry talent pipeline so far. However, with the expansion of operations across the wider Berkshire region, the number of ethnically diverse beneficiaries has reduced. At the same time, there has been an increase in engagement of disabled and d/Deaf beneficiaries, which is a very positive development and it is likely that the additional resources available via the cluster have made information and training activities more accessible for disabled and d/Deaf people across the region.

While disability and ethnic diversity are not mutually exclusive categories, noting this the shift in beneficiary profiles presents a challenge as well as an opportunity. The challenge lies in examining reasons for the reduction in the number of ethnically diverse beneficiaries and developing strategies - including potential affirmative action measures - to improve numbers that are currently lower than expected. The opportunity lies in reflecting on existing practices that are working well to engage disabled beneficiaries and potentially using an intersectional approach to understand beneficiary experience via selected case studies. This can help Resource Productions and Screen Berkshire better understand beneficiary experience across a range of diversity indicators and identify strategies that strengthen beneficiary numbers where needed effectively and sustainably within the framework of scaled-up operations and activity.

Another challenge has been to find industry employment for the bootcamp participants in the aftermath of the slowdown as productions have not steadily crewed up. Several cluster beneficiaries are new entrants and do not yet have the credits required for bigger productions that are underway. To overcome this, Resource Productions is actively engaged with participants on an individual basis, providing further training and mentorship and seeking short term roles to fill employment and skills gaps.

It has also been noted that beneficiaries have historically been willing to take up all opportunities that create entry points into the industry. However, new entrants outside the usual target focus of Resource Productions are not necessarily willing to take opportunities that are not perceived to as aligning with their direct goals and interests, even if it would usually advise trainees to take these on to strengthen their employability profiles.

University of Reading

The University has been reflecting on and addressing its standard module development and approval timelines, which can be slower than required in order to be responsive to quickly changing industry needs. In the short term, it has embedded training related to skills shortages in Production Accounting and Art Department more quickly into existing modules and provisions via dedicated pathways in Production Design, industry masterclasses and careers training. However, longer term deliverables such as cross-disciplinary modules require a longer timeline for discussion, alignment with university AQAR standards and School and Department approval. The team is working on building stronger connections between relevant departments and functions to support and expedite, where possible, the process of module development.

In the coming years of the cluster, the University of Reading is also initiating processes to align its Widening Participation and Outreach activities via teaching and research projects, and engaging Berkshire-based alumni who can participate in and benefit from the cluster's activity strands. This can add a wider diversity and number of beneficiaries for the cluster, supporting current as well as previous learners from HE contexts into industry roles and careers.

Berkshire Film Office and Local Councils

Reflections and actions from the BFO Year 2 Q1 report suggest that there is scope to improve relationships with leaseholders and communicate more clearly regarding Council capacity. As locations databases and volume of enquiries increase, knowledge and awareness within the BFO of council owned property leaseholders and agreements-related complexities needs to be as up to date as possible. Given the understandable pressures of staff time and other internal matters, greater communication from councils regarding pinch points, busy periods and unavailability of staff or departments would also be helpful. With one contact point (BFO) holding up to date and detailed information, productions can be facilitated more quickly and smoothly via required for discussion and negotiation.

Industry Database and Pooling Opportunities

There has been a lot of work to align databases of facilities and crew across partners. This prevents local workforce and businesses needing to sign up to multiple databases and also allows productions to move faster with hiring using one set of resources.

At the moment, most partners keep their own database but divert most sign-ups to Screen Berkshire, which has resulted in a strong database. However, there is a need for all core partners to have easier access to this resource, within data protection guidelines, so that core partners may engage registered beneficiaries for bespoke training, research, and events. There are also some new databases such as Filming in Reading (by REDA) which could be aligned more clearly with the Screen Berkshire database.

IV.ii. Pathways to Sustainable Impact and Growth: Funding the Future

“

We have been fortunate to get the BFI support because it has acted as a badge that we can then go out to industry with. Industry has responded exceptionally well. We have been working with the education sector through the University of Reading. We have been working with all our councils through the film office that we run. We have been working with Shinfield Studios, which is brand new.

Through all those relationships, we have been able to get Amazon on board. Only when you have players like Bray Film Studios and Amazon can you start to integrate training and production effectively because you are there at the start of production and are talking to the unit production managers. You have access to the jobs before they go live and you can start to influence.

For me, the clusters are a game changer in our microlocality, where we are the smallest, because we can start to work closely with those productions to tailor responsive training.

”

Dominique Unsworth (Oral Evidence to the Culture, Media, Sport Committee, 2024: 40)

As evident from the quote above, funding from the BFI has been crucial to bringing partners together and achieving outcomes. This grant has of course provided the actual funds to execute the collaborative model of Screen Berkshire. However, the respect and esteem garnered via BFI and National Lottery funding, and the centralised overview of the Skills Cluster Fund has allowed more partners than ever before to come together and align themselves for a strong, united vision. The three-year funding has allowed partners to work through clashing objectives, reflect on their own working practices and make plans to address challenges. Additional funding for the cluster for the next three years can help consolidate this work and create not just impact within the timeline of cluster funding but also build sustainable pathways for future collaboration and impact in the future.

In conclusion, the Screen Berkshire model has been successful in the first one and a half years in delivering proposed activities and outcomes. It has had a substantial impact on the economy, workforce development and employment and is on track to achieve further local, regional and national impact. The cluster has successfully engaged a range of beneficiaries, prioritising diversity, inclusion, and different levels of experience. It has also demonstrated that alignment and cross-sector collaboration amongst partners is key to a diverse, well-trained future workforce and talent pipeline.

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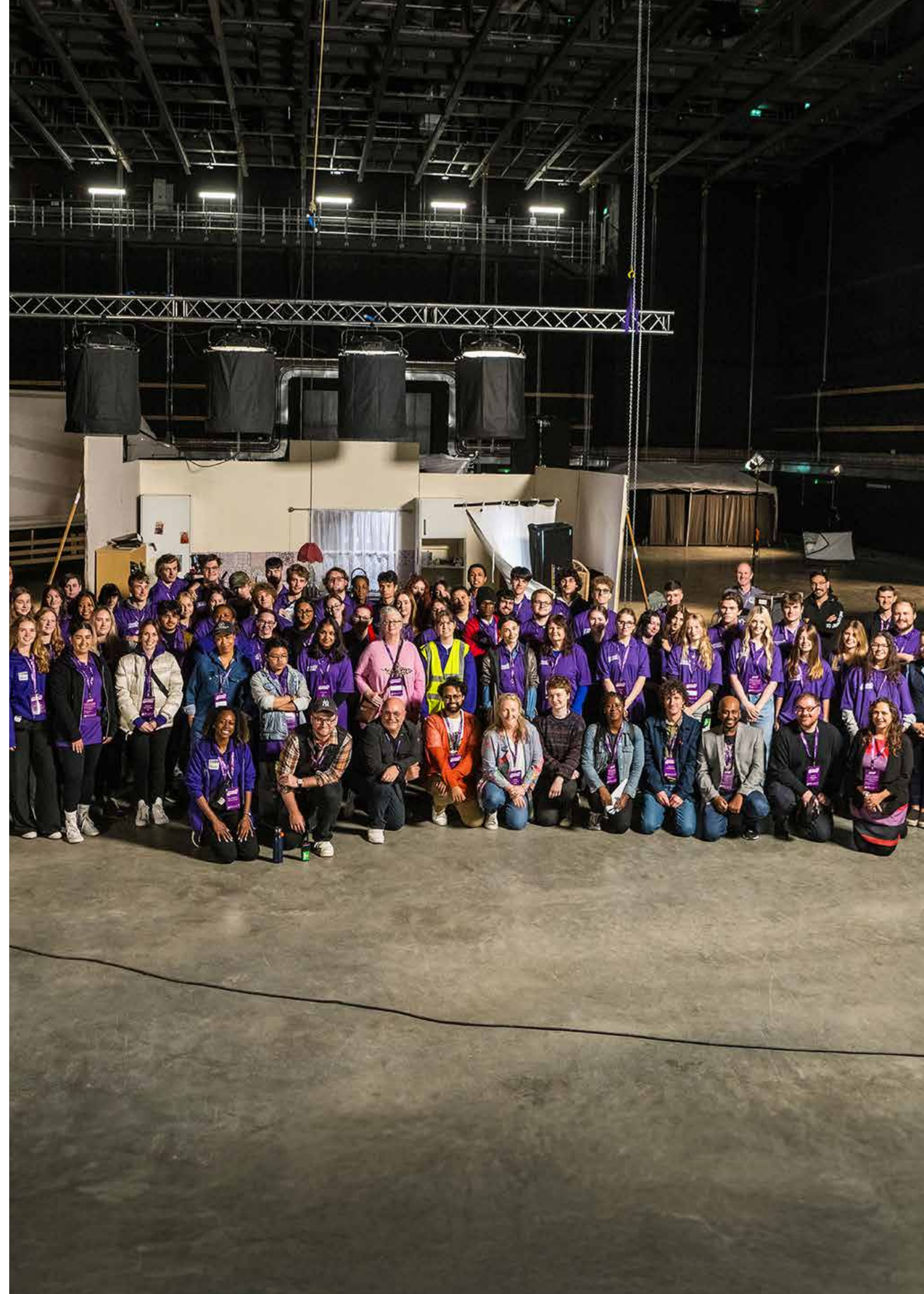
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IMPACT REPORT

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