

# Innovation and Resilience Fund (2021-22)

## Impact Report

April 2025

## Introduction

The Innovation and Resilience Fund was a grant scheme designed and managed by East Devon District Council which ran between September 2021 and June 2022. During this time £2,082,918 was awarded to 51 projects across the district. Following the conclusion of these projects, this report has been produced to explore the impact of the fund and any other general findings of interest.

## Key Findings

- 47 out of 51 IRF projects were completed successfully in the 3 years since grants were first awarded.
- At least 45 new jobs were created, with a new job created on average for every £20,000 awarded.
- Around £633,000 of match funding was leveraged from the private sector and town councils.
- 80% of recipients used the grant to diversify their business and create new products or services.
- 82% of recipients gave only positive feedback on how the fund was managed.

## Background

During the 25 November 2020 Cabinet meeting, members agreed to reserve a proportion of discretionary COVID grant funding, known as Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG), to fund a recovery focussed grant scheme.

Cabinet initially allocated £1,044,070 of ARG funding with a spend deadline issued by Government of 31 March 2022. This was topped up to £1,087,551 once underspend from other ARG funded schemes was included. A further £1m from the EDDC business rates retention scheme pilot was used to match-fund the ARG funding, bringing the total budget for the IRF scheme to £2,087,551.

During the time of the pandemic, there were concerns that unemployment would increase and business investment would worsen once restrictions were relaxed and financial support, such as the furlough scheme, came to an end. The IRF therefore had a strategic focus on job creation, business diversification, decarbonisation and offering inclusive opportunities to disadvantaged residents.

A Policy document for the IRF scheme was developed and endorsed by Cabinet on 8 September 2021. This detailed how the application process would be managed and set out the criteria businesses and organisations were required to meet to access the grant funding.

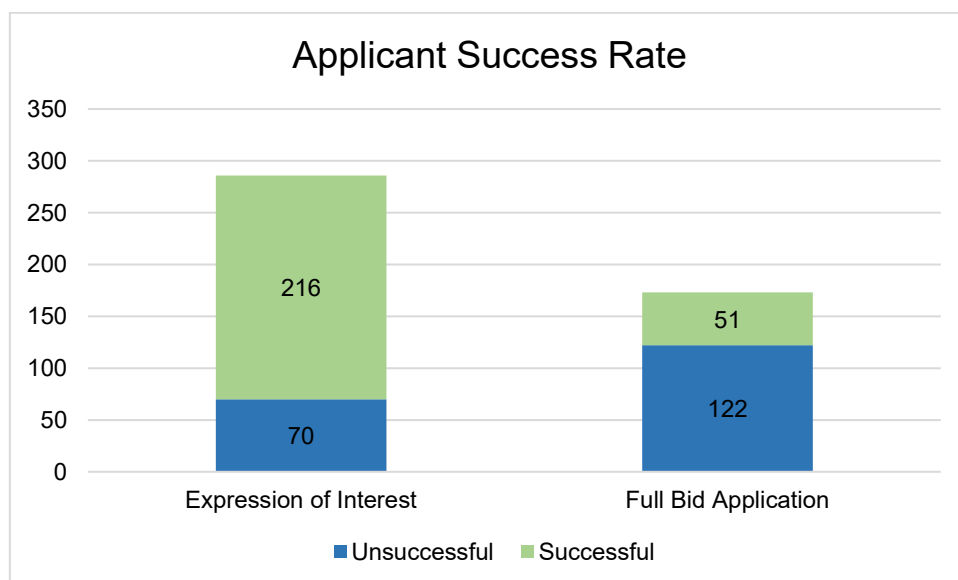
In addition to the Policy, a terms of reference was agreed by Cabinet for an IRF cross-party Panel of EDDC members. The purpose of the Panel was to review applications, scores and comments made by officers and to make a final decision on whether grant funding should be awarded.

## Application Process

There were two stages to the IRF application process, an expression of interest stage (Eoi) and a full bid application stage. The Eoi was an outline application form, allowing EDDC to capture all of the information required by Government for issuing ARG funds. The Eoi stage also gave officers an insight into the applicant's proposed project to check its eligibility and to offer advice on how to strengthen the bid where appropriate.

A total of 286 applications were submitted, with funding requests totalling £10.5m. 216 of these Eois (76%) were invited to the second stage of the application process, which was to submit a full bid application. Of the 80 applicants who were not invited to the next stage, in most cases the reason was due to either the applicant not primarily operating/trading in East Devon, or the project proposal included ineligible expenses like wage costs or replacing 'business as usual' equipment. Any applicant unsuccessful at the Eoi stage was able to submit a second application, which had to differ significantly from the initial proposal.

Of the 216 successful Eois, 173 (80%) submitted a full bid application. The full bid application stage required applicants to outline their project proposal in more depth, allowing officers to score each application against the key objectives detailed in the Policy. This involved filling out a template Microsoft Word document available on the Council's website. 74 of these full bids were scored with a recommendation for approval, whereas the remaining 86 were recommended for rejection or deferral pending further information. 51 applicants (29%) were awarded funding of the 173 full bids submitted.

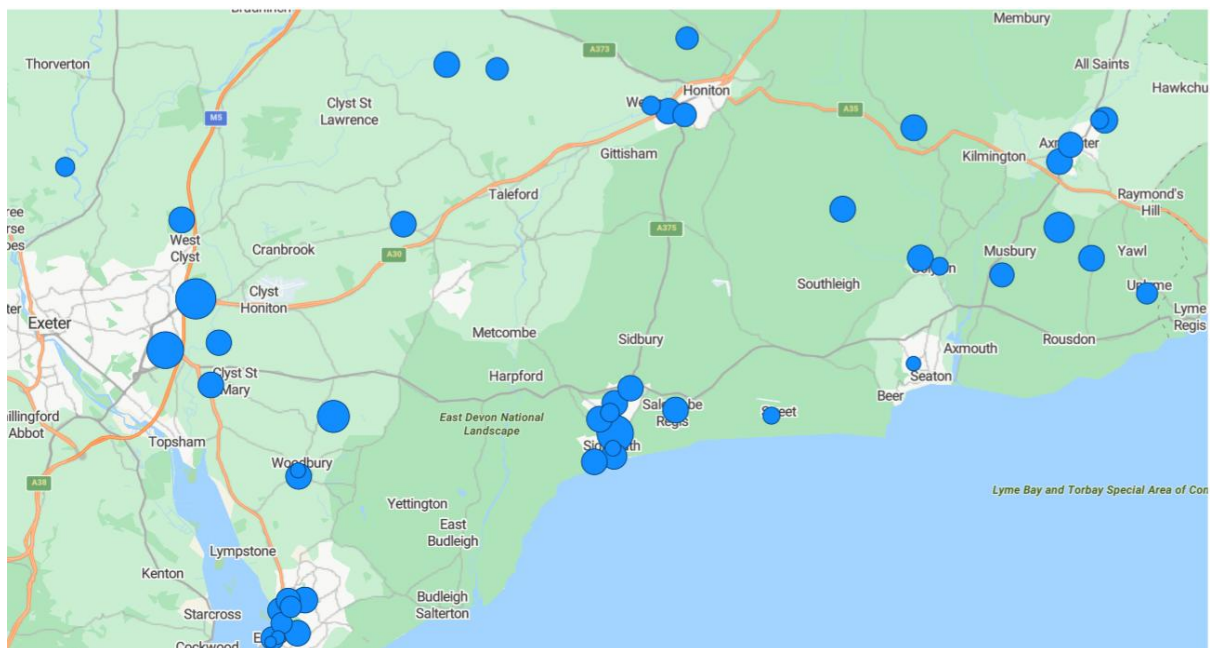


EDDC contracted the BIP (Business Information Point) to provide project sponsor support, which involved them assisting applicants with their full bid application at no cost to the applicant. BIP supported a total of 79 applicants, ranging from 30 minutes of support to 10 hours in a small number of cases. 28 of the 79 applicants supported (35%) were eventually successful in being awarded funding. This means that the

majority of successful IRF applicants (55%) had received at least some project sponsor support from BIP.

## Grants Awarded

During the lifetime of the fund, £2,082,918 was awarded to 51 projects of the £2.1 million allocated, with an average project cost of £40,841.53. Of the 51 projects, two of these were from CIC's, which were awarded a total of £52,683. One local authority was awarded £146,209 for a collaborative project between five town councils. All remaining funding went to enterprises. The map below shows the location of the recipients, with larger circles representing larger funding awards.



The smallest grant awarded was £2,683 to the Community Waffle House CIC to purchase audio equipment for an open mic night. The maximum grant award available for most applicants was £50,000, which 14 projects received.

Collaborative bids, or applications evidencing extraordinary impact, were eligible to apply for up to £150,000. One £150,000 grant was awarded to Sigma Technical and Two Drifters Distillery to create a Direct Air Carbon Capture machine for the distillery. Four grants were issued for collaborative projects which exceeded the £50,000 threshold.

A full list of projects, including the funding awarded and overview of their project, can be found in Appendix 1.

## **Project and Business Success Rates**

As of December 2024, 49 of the 51 organisations receiving IRF grants were still in operation, with two entering liquidation either during or after the project completion date. This gives a 96% success rate in terms of business survival, which is highly encouraging considering the challenging trading conditions at the time and the strategic emphasis on business survival through growth.

In regard to projects, 47 out of the 51 were completed successfully in the 3 years since grants were first awarded. Of these projects, one closed early and returned funding and one company entered liquidation before spending all the funding. The other two projects fully spent their grant award to suppliers who delivered faulty products or services so were unable to achieve their project aims. This means 92% of projects were successful in completing their project as planned.

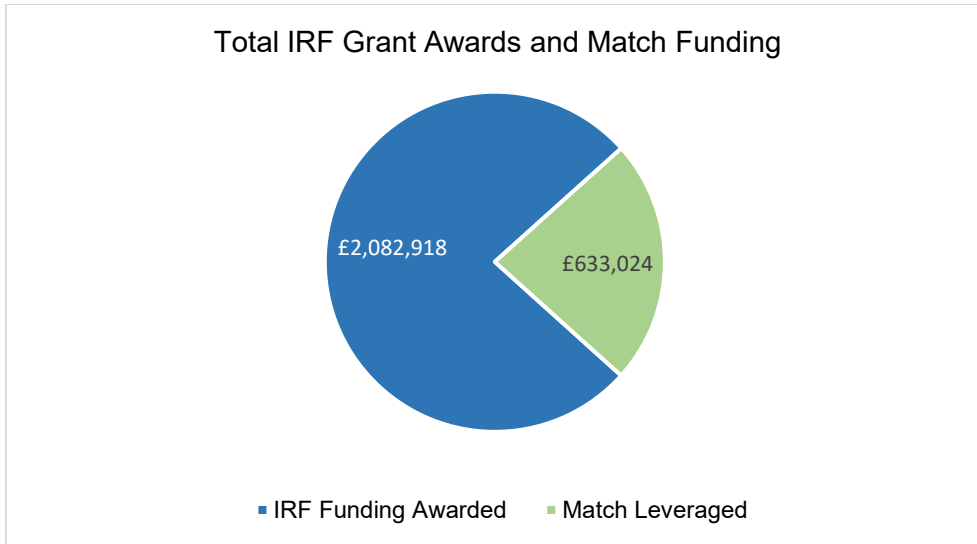
The IRF Policy specified that projects had to be completed within 18 months. On average, it took around 14 months for recipients to complete their project. 8 recipients required additional time, with the longest project needing 30 months to complete and the shortest project taking less than 3 months. Of the 47 completed projects, we are still waiting for final 'completion reports' from 4 of them, as they successfully requested additional time to deliver their projects. As a result, the impact of these projects has not been included in the remainder of this report.

Lastly, it should be noted that one of the funding recipients relocated to Exeter after completing their project, as they could not find suitable workspace in East Devon to expand into. Another recipient has expanded out of the district, establishing a footprint in Exeter, with their original operation remaining in East Devon.

## **Funding**

Of the £2,087,551 allocated to the IRF, a total of £2,082,918 was awarded. The £4,633 underspend was eventually allocated in the successor to the IRF. Only one recipient was required to return unspent funding, returning £7,811 of their £50,000 award.

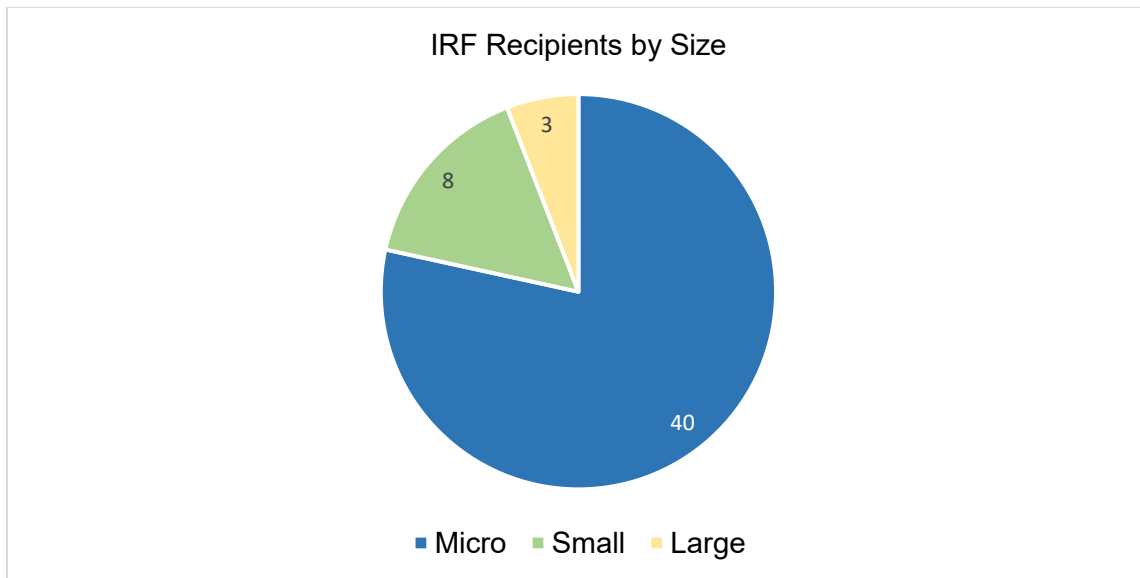
Projects were not required to commit match funding or to provide any evidence to show how much match funding was spent. However, applicants scored more highly for offering match funding voluntarily, increasing the likelihood of their application being approved. Of the projects that did so, the total amount of match funding leveraged was £633,024. This means the total amount spent on IRF projects was £2,715,942, and that the voluntary match commitment comprised 23% of total project costs.



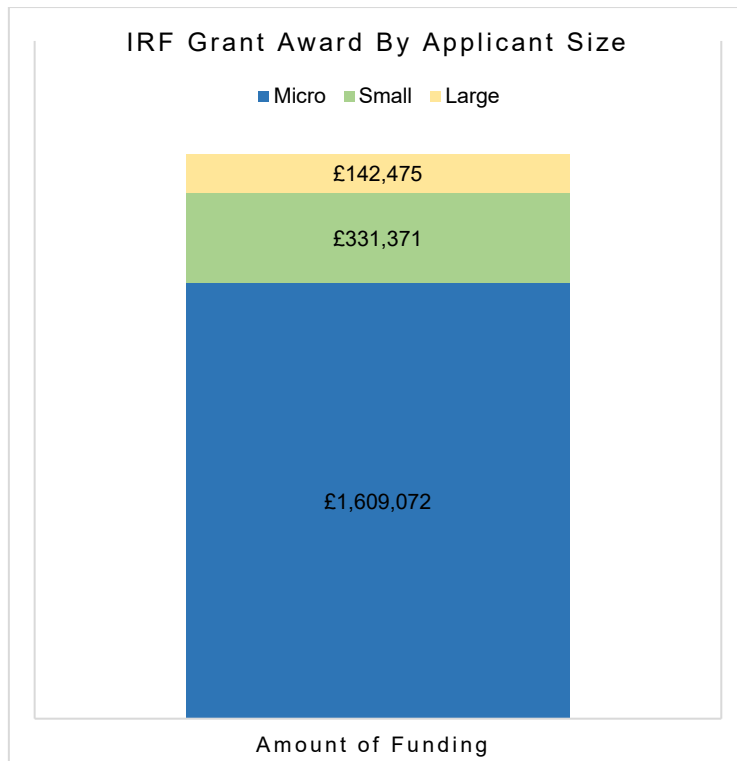
It should be noted that a small proportion of this match-funding would have come from other public sector sources, such as the Coast Meets Country project led by Sidmouth Town Council, which committed £30,000 in match-funding, for example.

## Recipients

Businesses and organisations of any size could apply to the IRF. To be eligible an applicant needed to demonstrate that they primarily operated and traded within East Devon. This prevented national or international businesses with a local presence from applying, keeping the focus solely on businesses of local origin.

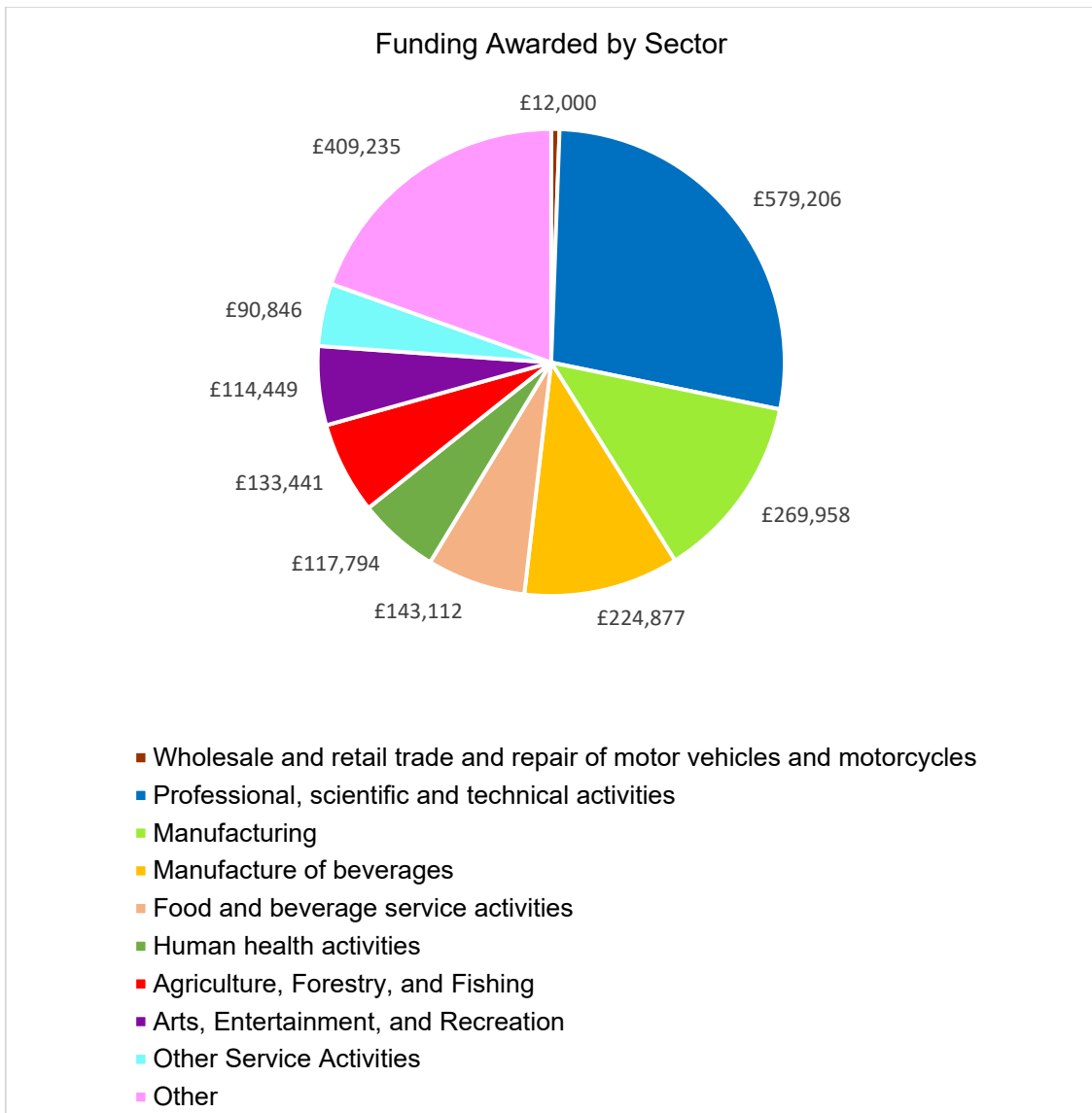


The majority of organisations supported were micro businesses, with 8 SMEs and 3 large organisations supported. 78% of projects were run by micro businesses, totalling 77% of the funding awarded. Only 7% of funding went to large organisations.



There was parity between the number of projects supported by business size and the amount of funding issued. This suggests that micro businesses were as effective at securing large grants as large businesses.

There was a large range in the sectors of business supported by IRF, which included CIC's and Local Authorities. The largest sectors supported were Professional, Scientific, and Technical Activities, Manufacturing, and Food and Beverage Service Activities.



Overall, there was a reasonably good spread of financial support across different sectors. There was a particularly notable number of businesses engaged in manufacturing beverages who were awarded IRF funding, which are displayed separately in the graph above from the wider manufacturing sector.

## Outputs

As a recovery focused scheme, the IRF was not prescriptive in the outputs and outcomes expected. However, in the final completion reports, provided six months after their projects were completed, grant recipients were asked about the outputs they were able to achieve and report on.

Many recipients did not quantify their outcomes and gave more generic responses. For example, some recipients said they had increased their turnover or had more customers, but not by how much or how many.

For the purposes of this report, two measurements have been conducted for impact. The first is adding together all those reporting specific quantifiable figures relating to the project's impact. The second is going through all completion reports and identifying how many recipients said this output/outcome had been achieved, but not providing a numerical value.

### ***Jobs and Training***

Job creation was a major strategic focus for the IRF scheme. In total, there were 26 recipients (60%) who confirmed that they had created new jobs, with 45 in total reported as a result of the funding. 11 recipients said that jobs had been safeguarded, with some recipients reporting both jobs safeguarded and created.

It should be noted that not all of the recipients confirmed whether the jobs created were full or part time. It should also be noted that the total number of jobs created could have increased or decreased after the completion report was submitted. We therefore can only measure impact at a particular point in time whilst relying on the accuracy of the information provided.

Recipients were not required to specify the annual salary of the new jobs created, although our expectation is that this will vary considerably given the projects and sectors the recipients operate in.

When comparing the number of jobs created by the amount of job-creating projects funded, we can calculate a cost per job figure. For the IRF, an estimated average of £19,837 in grant funding was awarded per job created. This, however, does vary between projects, with the lowest at around £1,300 and highest at £50,000 per job created. For comparison, the Regional Growth Fund, funding much larger projects at a national scale, achieved an average of around £33,000 per job created in 2011<sup>1</sup>. This could suggest that in terms of job creation, the IRF achieved good value for money.

A payback figure for the taxpayer can also be derived. The median wage for those working in East Devon during 2023 (when most IRF projects had completed) was £27,668. In the 2023/24 tax year, a typical amount of tax payable at that salary comes to £7,092 per year. This would suggest that IRF grant funding of £19,837 per job created would result in a payback for the taxpayer of around three years<sup>2</sup>.

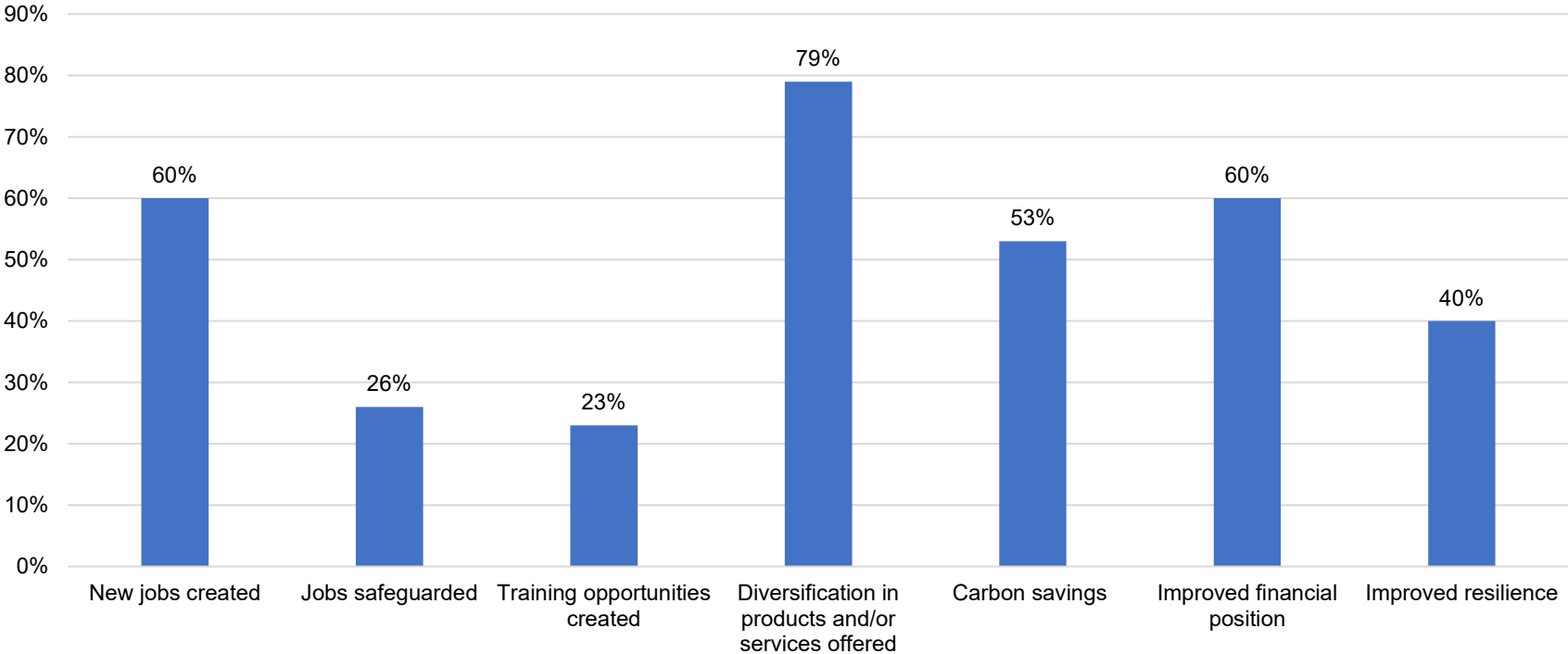
In addition to job creation, the IRF had a strategic aim of offering inclusive opportunities to disadvantaged residents. Of those recipients who completed their projects, 10 of them have confirmed that they either created training opportunities for their staff or hired someone on a work experience or apprenticeship programme.

---

<sup>1</sup> National Audit Office (2012), *The Regional Growth Fund*. See: <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/121317.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> This includes income tax, national insurance and employers NI. It does not include other non-employment taxes paid by the recipient, such as Corporation Tax, National Non-Domestic Rates (Business Rates), VAT, etc.

### Percentage of Recipients Reporting Outputs



The graph above shows the percentage answering 'Yes' to each question within the completion report. There was no question on resilience in the Completion Report, but any recipient who used the word in their report was included in the data.

### ***Diversification and Financial Resilience***

A total of 34 recipients (80%) reported that their IRF grant had enabled them to develop new goods or services. In some circumstances, this involved the business branching out into a new industry or sector.

The list below outlines examples of projects across different sectors. A full list of projects, including new products and services provided, can be found in Appendix 1.

- Creation of a virtual reality (VR) studio space for interactive learning experiences (Cosmic).
- Design and development of a new innovative and sustainable product for attaching and removing sheeting to scaffolding (Avestin).
- Development of new software to automate the collection and processing of carbon accounting data (Blue Marble)
- Provision of specialist rehabilitation equipment to aid 'active ageing' (East Devon Sports Therapy).
- Development of a new e-commerce site pulling together local and drink producers and products (Taste of the West).

A total of 26 recipients (60%) reported that they were in an improved financial position as a result of the grant. Of the recipients who provided a specific figure of increased turnover, this came to a total increase of £37,075 per month (£445,000 per year). It is worth noting that only around a quarter of recipients provided specific numbers relating to increased revenue, so the actual figure for all recipients is likely to be much higher.

### ***Decarbonisation***

The last strategic priority for the IRF was to support projects linked to net zero innovation and decarbonisation. Of those who reported back to us, 23 recipients (53%) reported that they had managed to reduce their carbon emissions as a result of the funding, but only 5 provided a figure to accompany this statement.

Of the 5 recipients who provided estimates, a combined total reduction of 40t of carbon was reported. However, given the challenges in verifying and producing accurate figures, the accuracy of this figure is questionable. Most recipients felt their business had reduced carbon emissions because they either shifted their business model to deliver digitally, moved production in-house (thus saving travel and haulage emissions), or were using more efficient machinery which saved energy. Some also reported biodiversity gains or investment in tree planting on their land.

## Images

The images below show images of equipment purchased by some of the recipients using their IRF funding. The images were taken by officers during site visits conducted after the completion reports were received.

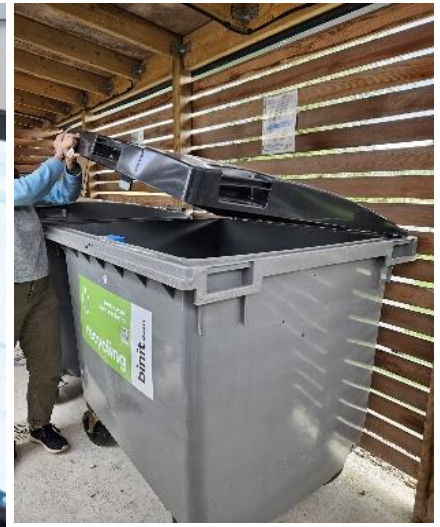
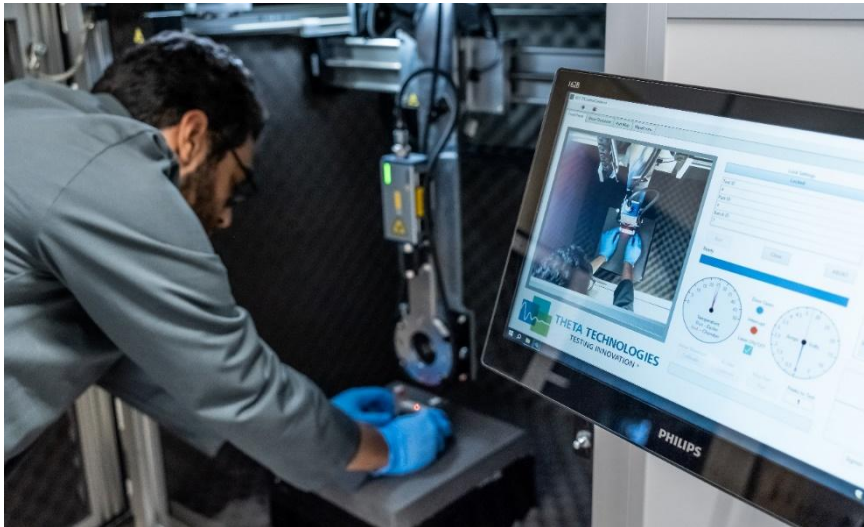


Image 1 - Theta Technologies tests their IRF machine. Credit to Chris Parker of Chris Parker Creative on behalf of Theta Technologies.

Image 2 - 'Binit' Bin fitted with new technology to measure the fullness of bins



Image 3 - Axminster Tools Ltd CNC Machine



Image 4 - Wine being corked at Castlewoods Vineyard



Image 2 - Market Garden beds at Trill Farm Garden. Credit to Gareth Williams of Gareth Williams Photography



Image 1 - Biochar in the soil at Trimplants Nursery. Credit to Gareth Williams of Gareth Williams Photography



Image 8 - New prep kitchen at Heron Farm. Credit to Gareth Williams of Gareth Williams Photography



Image 7 - Coworking space at Branches Café, Poltimore House

## Qualitative Feedback

In addition to measuring the number of numerical outputs, like match funding leverage and jobs created, we have also sought to gain qualitative feedback on the impact of the IRF grants. This includes businesses reporting back on benefits which are difficult to quantify. For example, in a number of cases, recipients confirmed that the process of applying for competitive growth-focussed grant funding helped them to clarify their future business plans and get a clear direction for next steps.

The quotes below from recipients helps to identify some of these qualitative benefits:

*“The session with someone [at BIP] to help with developing the action plan was invaluable and everyone we have dealt with throughout has been interested, supportive and flexible.”*

*“We found the entire experience of the IRF application process very useful to our business. The process helped focus on looking at our business in more detail and to identify our strengths, threats, weaknesses and opportunities and have this as a business plan that we can use moving forward. All parties involved in the application process were professional, helpful and very supportive.”*

Many recipients mentioned how IRF funding made them more resilient in challenging times:

*“We are less reliant on the international supply chain and have better control of quality, price, and lead time. It has enabled us to react more swiftly to changing market conditions, feedback, and customer needs.”*

*“Our project has made us more resilient. We are now more capable of withstanding the tumultuous times we face in our industry.”*

*“We have found this to be an overwhelmingly positive experience with great support from the council staff. It’s helped us to come out of Covid stronger and more diverse and able to take on whatever comes next!”*

*“This also provides us with a far better projection of the business and helped increase public image as a professional and well-presented modern motor vehicle repair shop. This has and will continue to undoubtably benefit and protect the future business resilience. Subsequently we are busier than ever and without question increasing business turnover.”*

We have seen a number of project-specific benefits to East Devon resulting from the fund, such as Academy Learning, who offered their online learning platforms free of charge to state schools in East Devon. Another example is Agar Management, who offered 1,000 free places on training courses to residents and planted of 200 trees. Trill Farm Garden were able to increase their donations to a local food bank.

One recipient was able to move into a unit in their hometown of Exmouth, reporting that *“Going to work is now a walk across town rather than a 70-mile round trip. Ties are being made with local businesses and groups with most of our supplies being sourced within East Devon.”*

One business credits the IRF grant to their survival, with one reporting that “*without the grant we probably would not have survived as a hospitality business coming out of covid and going into a cost-of-living crisis.*”

The Coast Meets County project is a positive example of how neighbouring town councils can work together to improve the local tourism offer. This was a collaborative project between the towns of Sidmouth, Seaton, Honiton, Ottery St Mary and Budleigh Salterton, focussing chiefly on sustainability. The project also resulted in modern interactive webpages being hosted on the Visit Devon website for each of the towns.

Our expectation is that both the quantitative and qualitative benefits of the IRF scheme will continue to be visible for many years to come.

## Fund Feedback

All recipients were asked to provide feedback on the scheme, including feedback to improve future grant funds. The majority of feedback received was immensely positive, with businesses expressing their gratitude for the funding. The word cloud below shows the most frequently used words provided in the feedback section of the report.



Of the recipients who provided a comment, 82% gave only positive feedback, with 18% raising challenges or issuing recommendations. 11% did not provide any feedback. Of those recipients who raised challenges or issued recommendations for future improvements, these were as follows:

1. A request for future grants to include revenue costs or internal costs more suitable for R&D projects
2. Felt that the Progress Reports were unnecessary for smaller scale projects and that a single final report was sufficient

3. Creation of a 'troubleshooting' page from applicants to learn from the mistakes of previous applicants
4. Monitor progress using digital tools like those used by Innovate UK
5. Request to meet the IRF Team face-to-face at the outset to make the process more personable
6. Hold a showcase/event where project leads could meet and discuss their projects
7. Some questions on the application form were a little confusing and/or not relevant to their project

For subsequent grant schemes, some of these recommendations have been implemented, including amending guidance in the application forms and ensuring a tighter scope in what types of projects we receive. We have also started hosting Teams meetings with all successful applicants at the outset of the project, which has subsequently led to a decrease in the number of recipients failing to submit their progress reports on time. This shows the value of receiving constructive feedback, even if not all suggestions raised can be acted upon.

## **Post IRF**

Once the IRF scheme closed for new applications and successful applicants were awarded their grants, a decision was made to provide 'post bid' support to unsuccessful applicants. The purpose of this was to help them to improve their project plans to aid any future grant application, or to help shape up a business plan for commercial investment, such as bank loan applications for example. This offer was taken up by 21 full bid applicants.

A commitment was made by Cabinet in November 2022 to relaunch the IRF scheme, known as the Innovation and Resilience Fund 2, using funding allocated to EDDC through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF). The purpose of this was to build on the success of the original scheme. IRF2 ran in 2023, with a third round in 2024, and a fourth round currently planned for Spring/Summer 2025.

A second grant scheme was also established to provide grants to businesses and community organisations to decarbonise; for the purchasing of solar PV panels, air-source heats pumps, LED lighting, etc. There was a lot of demand for this type of project, but these were not supported through the IRF as they were not focussed on job creation and productivity. We therefore established a separate Carbon Action Fund as the best way to meet this demand whilst keeping IRF focused on purely economic outcomes.

Of the 21 applicants who were unsuccessful for IRF and received post bid support, 4 went onto applying and successfully receiving funding in the second and third rounds of the IRF and decarbonisation grant schemes.

## Conclusion

The Innovation and Resilience Fund provided a significant injection of public investment for East Devon businesses at a time of major economic uncertainty. At a local level, the fund was unprecedented in terms of its size and flexibility, with a clear focus on job creation, diversification, inclusivity and net zero innovation.

Given the number of applications received and the number of grants awarded, the fund was highly competitive. The project sponsor support offered ensured that those applicants without bid-writing experience had a better chance of scoring more highly against experienced bidders. This helped to ensure a good balance between the size and sector of business supported.

The monitoring and reporting process for IRF was intentionally flexible and light-touch. Although this reduced the workload for both officers and recipients, this did make it more difficult to measure quantitative impact once the projects had concluded. There is also a risk that information provided may not always be accurate, or that in some cases projects may have proceeded regardless, without grant funding. With that said, the purpose of the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG), used to fund just over half of the IRF budget, was to nurture business survival through growth. Given the 96% survival rate for recipients and that 60% of recipients reported improved financial resilience, this aim has been largely achieved.

Although economic conditions have stabilised since the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, we still face significant economic uncertainty from both domestic and international sources. Having an 'off-the-shelf' suite of public interventions, capable of being deployed quickly, can strengthen our preparedness for future economic shocks and respond to prolonged periods of stagnant growth. The IRF is an example of one of those interventions.

Overall, it is highly encouraging to report on the overall positive impact the IRF scheme has achieved, especially in terms of job creation and the improved financial resilience of successful applicants. Should any future economic shock materialise which threatens the survival of our business base, a grant scheme similar to the IRF can be an effective countermeasure. Although this requires sources of funding at a national level, it is key that local authorities retain expertise at a local level to ensure such initiatives can be effectively managed should they need to be deployed in future.

## Appendix 1: Successful Applicants List

The Innovation and Resilience Fund Round 1 was a capital grants scheme designed to help businesses recover and grow from the impacts of Covid. A total of £2.1m was awarded to 51 projects. The list below details all the successful IRF1 recipients, including the amount awarded and a brief project description.

<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Grant Award</b>
<b>3 County Tyres</b>	<b>£12,000</b>
3 County Tyres provide vehicle repair and maintenance. Their project involved the creation of an additional space for the business through the conversion of a 20ft shipping container. This space serves as a reception and administration area for the business.	
<b>Academy Learning</b>	<b>£50,000</b>
Academy Learning provides conferences and training days for headteachers, teachers, and students. Their project involved moving their growing web-based learning platforms from Australia to East Devon, creating new higher wage jobs and offering seamless blended learning opportunities to local schools.	
<b>Agar Management Consultancy</b>	<b>£36,000</b>
Agar Management provide development support to individuals, teams and organisations to enable them to fulfil their potential. Their project was to significantly increase and enhance the content available on their online learning platform and seek to expand into other digital marketplaces.	
<b>Avestin Limited</b>	<b>£50,000</b>
Avestin Ltd received funding to design and manufacturing a new innovative product within the Construction Industry, the Zaptye™, which provides a new, quicker and more sustainable solution for attaching and removing sheeting to scaffolding.	
<b>Axminster Tool Centre Limited</b>	<b>£50,000</b>
Axminster Tool Centre Limited manufactures and sells a variety of tools, machinery, and woodworking equipment. Their project was to purchase an additional Computer Numerical Control machine to manufacture many of these products (currently produced in the Far East) in-house.	
<b>Bar Buoy Limited</b>	<b>£6,237</b>
Bar Buoy produce ready to drink bottled cocktails using premium spirits and high-quality ingredients. Their project was to expand their business to attend food markets and festivals, selling their products direct to consumers and gaining brand exposure.	
<b>Binit Group Ltd</b>	<b>£29,151</b>
Binit provides rubbish and recycling services for businesses, operating since August 2016. Their project involved taking one lab-based piece of hardware to a fully tested hardware product to be rolled out in a 6-month trial, opening opportunities for subscription-based products to their customers.	
<b>Blue Marble Environmental Partnerships Ltd</b>	<b>£50,000</b>
Blue Marble is a carbon accountancy practice who help organisations to calculate, report, reduce and offset their Carbon Footprint. Their project was to automate the collection, and processing of carbon accounting data through the development of the Blue Marble platform.	
<b>Castlewood Vineyards Ltd</b>	<b>£40,000</b>
Castlewood Vineyards' project was to purchase the equipment needed to press their own grapes and those for neighbouring smaller scale vineyards. This provided a new income stream for the business and cut down their processing costs.	
<b>Clarepharm Ltd</b>	<b>£50,000</b>
Clarepharm pharmacy is in the grounds of Exmouth Health Centre. Their project aimed to create an innovative hub and bespoke model using automation to fulfil the increasing dispensing needs of the pharmacy. The funding received went towards a robot for automated dispensing.	

<b>The Community Waffle House CIC</b>	<b>£2,683</b>
The Community Waffle House is a non-profit café and community space. They received funding to create 'Waffle Live'; a community-centred, alcohol free music hub in the centre of Axminster.	
<b>Cosmic</b>	<b>£42,475</b>
Cosmic provide four core services: digital skills training, digital consultancy, IT technical support, and website design and development. They used their grant to develop a dedicated studio-style space at East Devon Business Centre, equipped to produce high quality online video content and virtual learning experiences. The project includes development of an online learning platform, customer management and data analytics tools.	
<b>Craft Heaven</b>	<b>£39,488</b>
Craft Heaven designs, manufactures and sells laser cut craft shapes and creates personalised handmade gifts. Their project built on their base of CAD developed, laser cut craft shapes to further strengthen our competitiveness by offering In house designed collections of Eco UV printed signs, gifts and homeware designed & produced using repurposed second life timbers.	
<b>Crossed Anchors Brewing</b>	<b>£39,820</b>
Crossed Anchors Brewing is a small craft brewery in the centre of Exmouth. Their project was to double their brewing capacity and expand to a larger premises. This enabled them to supply more consumers and events.	
<b>East Devon Sports Therapy</b>	<b>£50,000</b>
East Devon Sports Therapy provides state of the art rehabilitation facilities for elite athletes and the general public, dealing with arthritis, strokes, neurological conditions, joint replacement rehab, and sports injuries. They used their grant to purchase specialist rehabilitation equipment to aid 'active ageing' and recovery, allowing easy to access equipment for senior residents of the area.	
<b>Finn Studio Ltd</b>	<b>£11,000</b>
Finn Studio received funding to create a new learning experience including new photography skills and traditional printing methods. They purchased four blank and white photography enlargers to run small classes from their studio.	
<b>Fortis Clothing Ltd</b>	<b>£12,462</b>
Fortis Clothing manufacture quality outdoor clothing. Their project involved the purchase of new machinery for the factory to enable us to increase output and employ more staff.	
<b>Framing Excellent</b>	<b>£19,432</b>
Framing Excellent offer a comprehensive design and manufacture service to create handmade, bespoke frames for artwork and memorabilia. They used their grant to purchase a computerised mount cutter (CMC) to enable them to use state of the art technology to produce millimetre precision cutting in a fraction of the time.	
<b>Franchise Consultants Limited</b>	<b>£8,400</b>
Trading as DaffyDownDilly, Franchise Consultants is a quality confectionery brand wholesaler. They used their grant to purchase a packing machine and heat sealing machine to pack sweets more quickly and distribute them to local retailers.	
<b>Grace Safety and Compliance Ltd</b>	<b>£50,000</b>
Grace Safety & Compliance Ltd is an Aviation Safety Consultancy that provides practical support, advice and training. They received funding to develop a modular, blended, bespoke training package for aviation staff using an online learning management system.	
<b>Heron Ventures Ltd</b>	<b>£20,217</b>
Heron Farm operates a café for breakfast and lunch guests. They used the grant funding to build a preparation kitchen next to their main service kitchen. It contains ovens, hobs, dish washing capabilities and prep' space to effectively increase output of food items through the business.	
<b>Hook Farm Leisure Park Ltd</b>	<b>£21,000</b>
Hook Farm are a campsite located in Uplyme with 135 touring pitches and 17 static caravans. They used their grant funding to install a water collection and treatment system	

that collects ground spring water, stores this water, treats the water for reuse. This reduced the carbon footprint of the site and cut water usage by visitors.	
<b>HT Ecology Ltd</b>	<b>£18,461</b>
HT Ecology Ltd undertakes research and surveys to provide advice on ecological matters. They used their grant to purchase a high-resolution Thermal Imaging Camera (Flir T560-24 640x 480 pixel) in order to use this innovative technology to expand and diversify the work undertaken by the ecological consultancy.	
<b>HydroSurv Unmanned Survey (UK) Ltd</b>	<b>£50,000</b>
HydroSurv is a new-entrant innovator in Uncrewed Surface Vehicle (USV) technology. Their project was the development of a Remote Operations Centre (ROC) - a land-based facility where human operators maintain watchkeeping over USV platforms that are operating 'over-the-horizon'.	
<b>Ideal Dry Cleaning &amp; Laundry</b>	<b>£50,000</b>
Ideal is a dry cleaners and laundry for both domestic and commercial customers. Their project involved replacing their old gas rotary ironer with a more efficient steam powered machine. This machine enabled them to process 400 items an hour rather than 400 a day and create a new job within the business.	
<b>Jurassic Physio Ltd</b>	<b>£50,000</b>
Jurassic Physio provide musculoskeletal injury assessment and treatment both in Sidmouth and Seaton. Their project was to diversify their services by creating a digital branded exercise platform with online classes aimed at the over 65 age group.	
<b>Jurassic Vets</b>	<b>£10,000</b>
Jurassic Vets were funded to create a successful laparoscopic ("keyhole") surgery service at their veterinary practice in Colyton. Keyhole surgery equipment allows female dogs to be neutered and can also be used for many other surgical techniques such as liver biopsy and stomach surgery in a less invasive way.	
<b>Kit &amp; Kee</b>	<b>£45,095</b>
Kit & Kee is an event catering company that specialises in local, seasonal, organic food and event management in East Devon, primarily for weddings. The funding was used to expand the catering business and diversify into corporate events and food manufacturing.	
<b>Kobocrete Limited</b>	<b>£44,636</b>
Kobocrete is a cast stone and concrete supplier who manufacture stone pier caps and coping stones. Their project focused on diversifying their production ability to include the manufacture of polished concrete products plus upscaling their current production capacity of cast stone pier caps and coping stones by 100%.	
<b>Lorimer Consulting Limited</b>	<b>£50,000</b>
The Devon Business & Education Centre provides co-working, training and meeting space to individuals and businesses. Their project was to create a new mobile space on the site, that will support groups separate from the main centre for new services, including small conferences, mental health and wellbeing workshops, small award ceremonies, and team building programmes.	
<b>Mefoods Ltd</b>	<b>£27,117</b>
Mefoods is a catering/streetfood company and a local biltong manufacturer. Their project was to develop their 'Yamza!' brand through the transformation of their 'fresh food' business into a retail brand with supermarket shelf ready products and kit out of a food truck.	
<b>My Hinterland</b>	<b>£36,548</b>
My Hinterland delivers land management and conservation services across East Devon. An the grant enabled them to invest in innovative but proven low impact equipment to improve their productivity and extend their ability to make more challenging land based projects accessible and commercially viable.	
<b>Norcotts Cider</b>	<b>£38,820</b>
Norcotts Cider's project was to produce their own bag in box ciders, relocating the process from Bristol. This saved over 90 hours per month in collecting the ciders and reduced the carbon footprint of their production process.	

<b>Piccolo Plants Nursery</b>	<b>£10,000</b>
Piccolo Plants are a small nursery that specialises in succulents, also growing various veg, herbs, flowers and perennials for collection and local garden centres. Their project was to expand their indoor growing space and adapt to the growing online shopping market.	
<b>Poltimore House Trust</b>	<b>£50,000</b>
Poltimore House is a Grade II* listed building on the outskirts of Exeter. The IRF grant went towards the creation of a commercial café and visitor attraction 6 days per week including a craft retail outlet, hotdesking, biodiversity trail and event facility.	
<b>Powderkeg Brewery Ltd</b>	<b>£100,000</b>
Powderkeg is a modern microbrewery in East Devon. Their project involved installing an in-house canning line at Powderkeg, saving costs and enabling a 25-50% profit increase on their own-brand products.	
<b>Pyramid Health</b>	<b>£17,794</b>
Pyramid Health provides chiropractic services and were working solely from temporary premises with limited working hour availability. The funding was used for the fit out costs of new premises, converting an existing empty shop unit (previously a betting shop) in a suburban retail area into a two-room multidisciplinary private health clinic.	
<b>Remit Zero Limited</b>	<b>£120,000</b>
Remit Zero received funding to enhance and simplify the design of their Cylo® prototype and prepare it for market. Cylo® is a zero-carbon heating solution that can be easily installed in homes and businesses, reducing energy bills and carbon footprints.	
<b>Rye Smile Caricatures</b>	<b>£3,449</b>
Rye Smile is sole trader caricature artist drawing live 'on the spot' funny caricatures of guests at weddings, parties and events in the south west of England. He used his grant to purchase high spec digital illustration equipment to move from a travelling to home-based artist able to create caricatures for clients across the globe.	
<b>Safeguard Fire Ltd</b>	<b>£40,846</b>
Safeguard Fire provide fire response services to outdoor events and festivals. Their project involved training and equipping 6 staff to JOIFF Certified Industrial Firefighters, enabling them to become competent and equipped to fighting fires in a wide range of contexts.	
<b>Sidmouth Town Council</b>	<b>£146,209</b>
Sidmouth Town Council's 'Coast Meets Country' project is a collaboration between Sidmouth, Honiton, Ottery St Mary, Seaton and Budleigh Salterton town councils. They used the grant to improve online reach and recognition of the partner towns, produce a cohesive destination profile encouraging visitors to move around East Devon, provide a platform through which local tourism and hospitality businesses can market and sell their services to a global audience all year round, and grow responsible tourism in the five towns and across East Devon.	
<b>Sigma Technical and Two Drifters Distillery</b>	<b>£150,000</b>
The collaboration between Sigma Technical Ltd and Two Drifters Distillery Ltd aimed to produce and sell direct air capture machines (DACs). DACs remove carbon from the atmosphere which can be stored and used in the businesses' operations. The project involved the creation of three machines to be installed in East Devon businesses.	
<b>Taste of the West Ltd</b>	<b>£48,000</b>
Taste of the West provide business support services to the food sector, including advice, food product testing and evaluation, marketing support, and consolidated supply chain support. Their project is to develop a consumer empowered online e-commerce entity which pools local and regional food and drink to East Devon's consumers in a more accessible format.	
<b>Theta Technologies Limited</b>	<b>£39,800</b>
Theta Technologies have developed a technology that allows rapid and complete non-destructive testing of advanced materials. They used the funding to accelerate development and broaden their product into additional markets.	
<b>Thorn Golf Centre</b>	<b>£50,000</b>

Thorn Golf Centre provide recreational facilities, including golf, camping, weddings and a music festival. Their project was to develop a modern 'Tithe Barn' made from sustainable Devon Oak or Devon Douglas Fir, all sourced locally. This structure would be multi-functional, including hosting the Sidmouth Fringe Festival, wedding venue hire, and smaller one-off events.	
<b>Tony Bengel Landscaping</b>	<b>£50,000</b>
Tony Bengel are a multi-disciplinary landscaping services comprising design, construction and maintenance across domestic and commercial sectors. Their project involved expanding into professional tree care service, including tree risk assessments, advanced decay detection, and commercial site clearance to retain more trees and habitats.	
<b>Trill Farm Garden</b>	<b>£49,896</b>
Trill Farm are an organic market garden, producing vegetables for sale to restaurants, cafes, shops and the public. They used the funding to expand their market garden to enable them to supply more local households with locally grown organic food. This also enabled them to grow more organic vegetable and flower seeds.	
<b>Trimplants</b>	<b>£36,997</b>
Trimplants are a wholesale nursery growing ornamental plants. They had an opportunity to work with a building company to develop production of green walls. This required increasing their biochar production, so they used the grant to mechanise the the process of producing higher quantities of biochar.	
<b>TRS Bespoke Interiors</b>	<b>£49,140</b>
TRS Bespoke Interiors design, make and install high end fitted furniture. Their project was to invest in machinery and bring more work "in-house", lowering their carbon footprint by negating deliveries and opening up job opportunities within the business.	
<b>Unique Boutique</b>	<b>£4,945</b>
Unique Boutique is a High Street boutique selling ladies clothing, footwear, lifestyle products and gifts, offering local people an individual shopping experience and access to high quality goods. Their project was to diversify to offer online sales alongside the physical shop presence.	
<b>Woodbury Studio Gallery</b>	<b>£4,800</b>
Woodbury Studio makes and exhibits individual studio ceramics, curate and stage exhibitions. Their project was to develop a new website including an online sales platform to modernise the business and expand sales.	