Inspire East
Evaluation 2007

EDuce ltd

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Inspire East Evaluation 2007

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Inspire East Evaluation 2007 – Summary

About Inspire East and the 2007 Evaluation

Inspire East is the regional centre of excellence for sustainable communities in the East of England, one of nine nationally. It aims to deliver the knowledge, skills and advice that will inspire people to use and apply best practice in creating high quality places to live, work and visit. It is funded primarily by EEDA, in the context of the regional renaissance and social inclusion goals of the 2004 Regional Economic Strategy.

The objectives of the evaluation project have been to undertake an evaluation of Inspire East, its services and Strategic Added Value, reviewing progress made since the initial impact assessment in late 2006.

Approach to the Evaluation

The evaluation has used the framework developed in 2006, and reviewed a range of indicators of Inspire East activities, outputs and results, some of which can be used as performance targets. These go beyond current activity measures (eg, numbers of event participants) in considering individual and organisational outcomes (eg, in knowledge gained and improved plans and design standards), and qualitative measures relating to customer satisfaction, stakeholder awareness and confidence in Inspire East's future impact on user organisations and on physical and community development in the region more generally. It is still relatively early in the life of Inspire East, and given the nature of Inspire East's aims, it will take time to demonstrate fully its impact.

Evidence for the evaluation has come from a survey of users and stakeholders; Inspire East management data; and interviews with representatives of regional and local bodies who have worked closely with Inspire East in the past year, Advisory Board members, and Inspire East staff. The survey allows comparisons with baselines provided by its predecessor in 2006.

Delivery of Inspire East services

Notable achievements of Inspire East in the past year have included:

- a very significant level of delivery of seminars and workshops: nearly 2,100 attendees at Inspire East events in 2006/07, including an active programme for the Design and Historic Environment Champions, Funding East and Local Delivery Vehicles networks and increased activity on community engagement leading to the formation of the Community Development network
- the launch of the Excellence Framework, providing a standards-based toolkit for appraising projects and plans covering all aspects of sustainable communities
- responsibility for leading the work of the National Empowerment Partnership in the region
- consolidation of the Design Review Service
- double the use, and further development of the Inspire East website
- support for the skills development programme of Regional Cities East

- success in attracting additional funding for Inspire East activities (at £243,000, more than double the original target for 2006/07)

Further work has been pursued to embed and spread the learning from earlier Inspire East projects, including the review of lessons learnt from Cambourne and the development of the Cambridge Quality Charter. Other new initiatives include hosting Waterwise East promotes improved water efficiency in the region.

Stakeholder perceptions

Stakeholder interviews confirm that Inspire East is becoming well-established amongst regional stakeholders and key bodies in the sustainable communities field. A theme has been the perception that Inspire East is professional and, importantly, *"people we want to work with"*. Inspire East compares well with benchmark organisations in other regions for those interviewees who were able to comment on this.

User satisfaction and benefits

Key findings from users responding to the survey include:

- Satisfaction ratings reflect the stage of Inspire East development. They averaged 3.25 out of 5 (1='poor'; 5='excellent'), a slight increase on 2006 (3.13). There was again a tendency for respondents to opt for the middle score of '3' on the basis of their as yet limited experience of Inspire East
- Organisational benefits: mainly 'better understanding of sustainable communities' (43%) and 'greater awareness of information sources' (40%) followed by 'new partner relationships' (23%) – all increased from 2006
- 69% respondents reported at least a marginal influence on their own policies or practices (up from 43%), and 17% report specific improvements in their organisation or partnership (problems solved, improved services, better plans, better design)
- Personal benefits: primarily knowledge sharing through networking (52%, up from 35%), greater awareness of policy and research (41%, up from 29%), and knowledge of concepts and techniques (38%) – a pattern again reflecting the proportion of respondents who have attended Inspire East events

Inspire East records show that 89% participants found Inspire East events 'useful' or 'very useful', and nearly all respondents (98%) considered these 'well' or 'very well' organised.

Confidence in Inspire East

There continues to be considerable evidence of goodwill towards Inspire East and expectations that the organisation will make a difference:

- two thirds of all respondents are confident that Inspire East will make a significant contribution in promoting better community and physical development within the region
- there are positive perceptions of Inspire East's roles, especially in relation to bridging sectors/disciplines and promoting best practice, though not as high in relation to addressing skills gaps and acting as a first 'port of call' for information and events on sustainable communities.

Momentum and added value

Reviewing the work of Inspire East shows **increased momentum and impressive levels of activity**, which are attracting significant numbers of people as participants in events and users of the Inspire East website. There is, however, less (direct) evidence of this level of activity being converted into improved practice and policies. This reflects a number of factors: eg, the nature of Inspire East activities, the lead time for changes in policies and practices relating to physical investment to be reflected in the standards of actual development, and the still early stages of building Inspire East's reputation and influence.

Importantly, our interviews brought out **the views of regional stakeholders that Inspire East is establishing its reputation as** *"an organisation we can work with".*

Evidence from event feedback shows favourable ratings, with the stakeholder survey demonstrating that Inspire East is moving in the right direction on stakeholder awareness and user satisfaction, though without major improvements on the 2006 survey. The responses on quality indicators suggest that there is **scope to improve understanding of user needs**. The experience of delivering the Learning Laboratories also points to the importance of helping practitioners, through diagnostic activities, clarify what their needs *are*.

The main aspects of **Strategic Added Value** (SAV) provided by Inspire East have so far **related primarily to 'engagement'** (numbers of people involved with Inspire East to some degree) **and 'leverage'** (attraction of additional funding). There are examples of other forms of SAV, such as playing a leadership role in the new Regional Empowerment Partnership, persuading EEDA to adopt the Excellence Framework for project appraisal, influences over the content of new learning provision in the region, and potential synergy in working with professions on Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and with Regional Cities East on their Capacity for Urban Renaissance in the East (CURE) initiative.

Increasing impact through influence and advocacy

Future impact notably depends on:

- shaping the agenda on a small number of key issues in the region, with a particular emphasis on solutions that Inspire East can provide, or enable others to find
- maintaining reasonably high levels of activity, providing opportunities for people to be engaged and gain networking benefits
- focusing on activities which are more likely to lead to impact, in terms of learning applied
    - capitalising on the Excellence Framework, through training and support (key to implementation within EEDA) and as a unifying tool in much of Inspire East's work
    - seeking to maximise the practical value of Design Review and Enabling Services, not just for the individual projects involved but for wider demonstration
- stronger follow-up and dissemination to make the most of projects supported, be they skills or good practice initiatives
- targeting activities and audiences in support of these principles

There is **scope for Inspire East to play more of a 'think tank' and advocacy role.** This would be welcomed by EEDA at board/ senior management level, who see a 'challenge' function as important in driving higher levels of success in the region. In line with Inspire East's mission, there is scope, for example, across:

- raising design standards and the quality of new development, especially in growth areas
- responding to skill gaps, especially in relation to those highlighted by emerging understanding of what is required for successful 'place making'
- promoting cross-sector and cross-disciplinary learning, including an effective partnership for cross-profession CPD and acting as a catalyst for more coherent HE provision within the region
- influencing practice by local authorities, public agencies, and developers on community engagement and means of ensuring that local communities benefit as fully as possible from new development

Developing more of a focus on advocacy and influence will have implications for staff and Advisory Board members in their representative and promotional roles.

Marketing

The survey suggested that a significant proportion of people on the Inspire East mailing list have as yet limited experience of Inspire East, and there is still a need to increase reach and take-up of Inspire East services within EEDA and GO East. **There is a significant need to strengthen Inspire East marketing further**, not just the promotion part of the 'marketing mix' but also *personal selling* of what Inspire East has to offer and developing *customer intelligence*/ market research.

Actions should include:

- strengthening customer orientation, including towards the private sector
- more concerted and frequent use of press releases (building on the – valued – support of the EEDA marketing team), where appropriate, going for *national* media
- taking a structured approach to identifying the needs of key customers, including across EEDA and GO East teams
- finding ways to strengthen logging, developing and sharing customer intelligence, exploiting possibilities in the Customer Relationship Management system to use simple coding to enable analyses for market research purposes, sampling, monitoring and evaluation

Improving services

a) events

Feedback appears to suggest that Inspire East is 'getting a lot of things right' in organising events. Event feedback and the stakeholder survey, however, point to a **gap in addressing participant needs and meeting their expectations to the full.** Experiments in charging for events have been successful and will need to be extended as part of the organisation's funding mix. There may be scope to run **more events linked**

to current policy developments, in some cases timed to coincide with specific consultations, as a route to attracting high priority audiences and income generation.

The programming of events can be improved, in that in both 2006/07 and 2007/08, events have been predominantly scheduled for the later part of the year. More could be planned for the autumn, evening up some of the pressures on staff over the course of the year.

b) website

While website use is increasing, there are questions about the value of different parts of the site for users, not least when weighed against the staff time that is required in keeping each element up to date. There is a **need to review the content of the website**, explore further how people use the site and what they value, and test their reactions to options for new and deleted elements. There were no specific comments in the user survey to provide steers for this.

c) Design Review

A **more proactive approach is needed to sourcing projects for the Review process**, working with staff in EEDA and in target areas within the region. Feedback from people who have been through the Review process also highlights the need to ensure that panel feedback is as practical and oriented to specific sites as possible. The intention to provide good project examples and draw lessons for wider dissemination remain critical goals for this service.

Maximising value

As we indicate above, thinking through **how best to maximise Inspire East's value** remains important, in a context where much of what Inspire East does is intangible and more likely to bear greater fruit in the medium rather than short term.

There are implications for project planning and strategies for dissemination: how best to promote change and better practices? There is a balance to be struck between achieving outputs (Inspire East needs to continue to demonstrate tangible success) and strengthening qualitative impact through influencing practices, policies and skills supply. Keys are to think more in terms of 'investments' that Inspire East makes through use of staff time and project budgets: how can we ensure a better return on what we do?

Efforts to demonstrate Inspire East's value will be assisted by **applying monitoring and evaluation methods** more consistently with regard to projects, events and logging examples of Strategic Added Value.

It remains important to illustrate **what Inspire East brings to EEDA,** as EEDA's role evolves in the light of the Sub-National Review and in the implementation of the Regional Economic Strategy. This would highlight, eg, Inspire East's contributions to building delivery capacity within the region, and to tackling major challenges on sustainable communities. Evidence of improving quality in physical development, in community engagement, addressing skills gaps, and supporting private sector involvement in growth and regeneration areas are important aspects – which Inspire East should be increasingly able to show.

1. Introduction

1.1 About Inspire East

Inspire East is the regional centre of excellence (RCE) for sustainable communities in the East of England, one of eight established nationally in the past three to four years. The mission of Inspire East is to *"champion the creation of high quality places to live, work, and visit in the region"*. It seeks to *"ensure that there is the necessary knowledge, skills and advice in place that will inspire people to use and apply best practice"*.

Aims

Inspire East has four aims:

- create sustainable communities by promoting better community and physical development in regeneration areas and areas of growth
- enhance skills required by sharing knowledge, information and experience and close working with training providers
- improve the quality of projects through benchmarking and sharing best practice
- influence and guide policy for sustainable communities.

Inspire East delivers these through four 'building blocks' of activity:

- Information Sharing (eg, case studies and signposting)
- Networking and Enabling (eg, networks, seminars and workshops)
- Skills Development (eg, identifying skills shortages and working with others to fill the gaps)
- Policy and Best Practice (eg, improving standards through Design Review, demonstration projects, regeneration awards and appraisal tools such as the Excellence Framework)

Audience

The audience of Inspire East is defined broadly to include anyone involved in the planning, delivery and management of sustainable communities in the East of England, at regional and local levels. Inspire East thus seeks to work with people in the private, public, voluntary and community sectors, whether they be implementers or decision makers, across property, environmental, social, economic and community development fields. Inspire East has a particular concern to bridge these interests in developing generic skills and cross-sector, cross-disciplinary understanding.

Funding, staffing and governance

RCEs were promoted by the then Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), implementing one of the recommendations of the Urban Task Force (1999), *Towards an Urban Renaissance* (the Rogers Review). Regional Development Agencies were assigned the lead for RCE development in 2002/03, with additional pump-priming project

funding from the then ODPM in 2004/05[1]. EEDA is currently principal funder of Inspire East, contributing £884,000 – three quarters of a budget which covers staff and administration costs and includes a programme budget of £373,000 (from the EEDA contribution) and £350,000 (from other sources).

Following a research and consultation phase, a pilot set of projects and events were delivered towards the end of the 2004-05 financial year, with an initial modest programme of activity running in 2005-06[2] alongside the tasks of setting up the organisation. Inspire East organised its 'Big Event' launch in June 2006, and introduced its fully-featured website in June 2006. Inspire East was fully staffed by December 2006.

While Inspire East has its own brand, identity, and operational freedom, the Inspire East team is formally part of EEDA, with the Executive Director a member of the EEDA management team and reporting to the EEDA Executive Director of Strategy and Development.

The Inspire East Advisory Board has been in place since July 2006, superseding an advisory group involving 25 organisations which helped to shape its early development. The Advisory Board's role is to help provide strategic direction, and it has senior, influential members, recruited as individuals through a formal, open process. They are drawn from the EEDA board, Association of Universities in the East of England, English Heritage, GO East, a local authority, regeneration and growth partnerships, and regional branches of professional institutes, and regional third sector organisations, plus a co-opted member from GO East.

Chapter 2 describes Inspire East activities, achievements and current performance.

1.2   Policy context

National level

The **national policy setting** for RCEs stemmed from the Urban Task Force report, 'Towards an Urban Renaissance' (1999) and 'The Learning Curve' (2002) strategy for skills and knowledge produced by the ODPM Neighbourhood Renewal Unit. Both identified weaknesses in the skills base and the extent of learning from best practice as *strategic* issues in seeking successful regeneration outcomes. Subsequently the role of regional centres of excellence was recognised by the Egan Review of Skills for Sustainable Communities (2004)[3] which outlined the role that regional centres of excellence could play in delivering four specific recommended actions:

- raising the profile of core occupations to encourage new entrants
- brokering cross-occupational working and generic skills as part of formal training

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[1] All RCEs continue to receive core funding from their respective RDAs though their relationship with their RDAs varies, with eg, the Creating:excellence (South West) and Regeneration East Midlands being independent legal entities. While there are some similarities in role and activities, there are also significant variations, with, eg, design services being provided in the West Midlands by another body.

[2] This was in parallel to activities provided by Community Renewal Network East which was funded by the NRU between 2003 and 2006 to promote learning for community regeneration practitioners. Inspire East assumed aspects of the CRNE role thereafter.

[3] ODPM (2004) The Egan Review: Skills for Sustainable Communities
www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1502251

- brokering secondments and joint project working to share skills and experience
- collating information on successful projects as part of wider dissemination of information

RCEs now work closely with the Academy for Sustainable Communities (ASC), which was formed in response to recommendations of the Egan Review to drive skills for sustainable development nationally. The ASC has similar goals to the RCEs, though addressing needs for leadership and action at *national* level. It became fully operational during 2006/07, and has been a source of funding for some Inspire East activities. In late 2006, Inspire East agreed a Memorandum of Understanding with the ASC to clarify roles and promote joint working. Inspire East has accessed ASC funding, eg, for 'learning labs' (see 2.4 below) and is promoting regional delivery of ASC-supported programmes such as 'Building Sustainable Communities' aimed at community workers.

Given Inspire East's interest in design and the built environment, there is also a close relationship with the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE). CABE plays a national role in encouraging policy makers to create places that are safe, beautiful and efficient to run. There is close liaison in relation to the Design Review service, and Inspire East has supported applications of CABE's 'Spaceshaper' toolkit with King's Lynn and West Norfolk District Council. This involved a facilitated workshop to stimulate debate about future use of significant open space, in this case, the Tuesday Market Place.

Important developments in the wider policy context include:

- the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and the associated (draft) statutory guidance on sustainable community strategies
- reviews undertaken for the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007[4], including:
  - Sub-National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration – with implications for:
    - a more strategic role for RDAs, including responsibility for an integrated regional strategy, including spatial strategy
    - devolution of RDA resources to local authorities and local/sub-regional partnerships, given sufficient capacity to deliver
  - Barker Review of Land Use Planning
  - Stern Review of the Economics of Climate Change
  - Eddington Transport Study
  - Lyons Review into Local Government[5]
- Planning for a Sustainable Future: White Paper[6]
- the Homes for the Future – the Housing Green Paper[7], along with, eg:
  - the government commitment for all new homes be 'zero carbon' by 2016
  - Callcutt Review[8] into speeding up the supply of new homes
- Action Plan for Community Empowerment (CLG & LGA)[9]

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[4] www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/spending_review/spend_csr07/reviews/spend_csr07_reviewsindex.cfm
[5] *Place-shaping: a shared ambition for the future of local government* www.lyonsinquiry.org/
[6] www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/planningsustainablefuture
[7] www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/homesforfuture
[8] www.callcuttreview.co.uk
[9] www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/communityempowermentactionplan

A further development is the creation of the Homes and Communities Agency which brings together English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation with a remit to improve housing supply and quality, regenerate land and infrastructure and support the creation, regeneration or development of communities[10].

Regional level

At regional level, the establishment of Inspire East was included as a key action in the Towns and Cities Strategy and Action Plan (2003) and subsequently in the 2004 Regional Economic Strategy (RES). Inspire East has been expected to work towards three goals of the 2004 RES, in particular, Goal 4, *'High quality places to live, work and visit'* in helping to enable the delivery of sustainable communities[11]. Explicitly, Inspire East's role was described as improving the skills and changing the behaviour of people working in the core occupations responsible for delivering this goal.

Inspire East features in the new draft RES 2008-31[12] across a number of themes and priorities, with recognition of its importance as a mechanism that enables transfer of good practice and shared learning[13]. Contributions identified in the draft delivery framework include, eg:

- curriculum development in relation to skills for sustainable communities
- addressing housing targets in the East of England plan and promoting sustainable design standards (both with explicit reference to use of the Excellence Framework – see 2.5 below)
- vibrant, mixed-use city and town centres in the 22 identified 'key centres for development and change'
- renewable energy and resource efficiency schemes
- climate change adaptation measures into planning and design
- community ownership and engagement in service delivery and regeneration

Inspire East is important to the Government Office for the East of England (GO East), in support of the national policy agenda on sustainable communities, including growth communities and community empowerment. Inspire East is also responsible for actions under the Regional Housing, and Health Strategies in ensuring that practitioners have the right skills to deliver these. Also, the Revised Social Strategy: Action Plan[14] features two Inspire East contributions: one, the creation of regional community development network and the other, support for the development of an inter-agency strategy and action plan for involving local communities in planning for sustainable growth in Harlow. This experience is to be used for wider dissemination in 2010.

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[10] Housing and Regeneration Bill
www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmbills/008/2008008.pdf It is proposed that the ASC becomes part of the HCA, and that the HCA will have regional offices. The HCA will become an important partner for Inspire East.
[11] Others were Goal 5, on social inclusion and 8, on sustainable use of resources
[12] Draft Strategy for Consultation, September 2007 www.eeda.org.uk/1441_3509.asp
[13] Capacity issues within the region have also been highlighted by the recent Public Accounts Committee report 'The Thames Gateway: Laying the Foundations'. This drew attention to the risks that economic benefits will not reach existing residents, the need for better engagement with the private sector, and that *"some local regeneration partners have low capacity and struggle with complex procurement and engaging potential investors"* www.nao.org.uk/pn/06-07/0607526.htm
[14] www.eera.gov.uk/category.asp?cat=644&id=SX7F9B-A77FBCB4

Given the breadth of the definition of 'sustainable communities', it is inevitable that Inspire East has to work across many regional, professional and sectoral interests, where there are already established partnerships and organisations engaged in part of Inspire East's agenda. Examples include the Sustainable Development Round Table, Constructing Excellence, and the Regional Skills and Competitiveness Partnership.

1.3   About the evaluation project

The purpose of the evaluation project has been to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of Inspire East, reviewing progress since the initial impact assessment undertaken by EDuce in late 2006. It takes into account the evaluation framework which was developed as part of the original evaluation (see Appendix A), which includes both *quantitative* measures of Inspire East activities and outputs, and *qualitative* aspects (relating, eg, to the extent of Inspire East influence on policy and practice in the region), dimensions stressed by the Inspire East Advisory Board. The approach acknowledges that impact in influencing policies, behaviours and practices will take time to show. That said, it is essential to gather and highlight evidence of the difference the organisation is making.

Evaluation questions

Key evaluation questions for the evaluation included:

- to what extent has Inspire East proved effective in achieving our objectives?
  - promoting better community and physical development in line with sustainable communities principles?
  - improving the quality of projects in regeneration and growth areas through benchmarking and sharing good practice?
  - identifying and addressing skill shortages?
  - influencing and guiding policy?
- what has been the contribution of individual activities? And what synergy has been achieved between them?
- how highly do users rate Inspire East services? How well have these met their needs and expectations?
- what benefits and results do users report, and to what extent can these be attributed to Inspire East?
- how can we improve our services and impact?

As part of our approach, we sought evidence of Inspire East **strategic added value** (SAV) (Figure 1.2 and Table 1.1), in relation to the organisation's contribution in the region. Aspects are relevant specifically to EEDA's own role in promoting regional development – and the content of the SAV model is based on current evaluation guidance to RDAs.

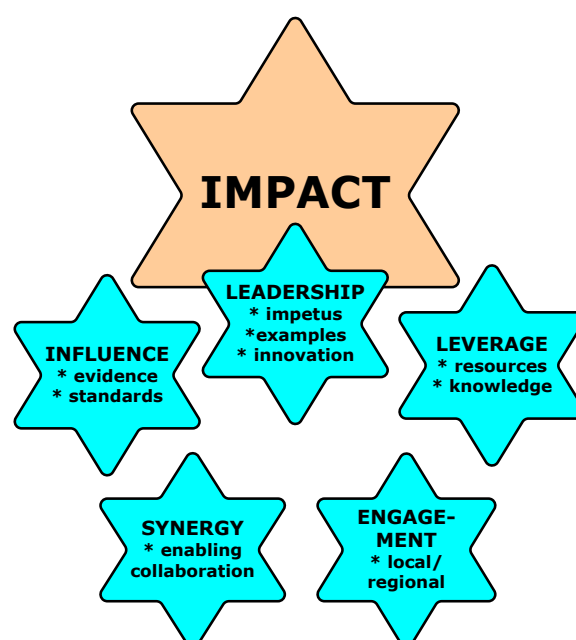**Figure 1.2   Strategic Added Value & Inspire East**

Table 1.1   Strategic Added Value – Forms & Characteristics

Form of SAV	SAV characteristics and illustrations relevant to Inspire East
Leadership	▪ anticipating key issues for policy/practice and helping people consider/act on these ▪ building impetus behind regional action for improved design and sustainability standards, or for stronger community engagement in development ▪ providing a platform for innovation (ability to try out ideas; work on new topics before there is a market for them) ▪ making things happen that would not have happened otherwise
Influence	▪ influencing planning policies and design standards ▪ influencing demand for learning and careers, improving quality and range of learning opportunities through setting the sustainable communities skills agenda within the region ▪ developing the evidence base on needs, standards, good practice, etc
Leverage	▪ leverage of resources to promote skills for sustainable communities (eg, from ESF, Academy for Sustainable Communities) ▪ leverage of knowledge: access to knowledge in other regions as part of the RCE Excellence Network, etc
Engagement	▪ engagement of local and regional stakeholders (reflected in attendance at events, use of services, etc) ▪ established in stakeholders' minds as 'the place to go' on sustainable communities (where you find the 'right people, right topics', where you can expect to find the answers, connections and signposts you are seeking)
Synergy	▪ enabling networks/'communities of interest' around key sustainable communities topics/interests ▪ helping partners join up approaches in promoting learning and good practice for sustainable communities

Evaluation tasks

The evaluation has involved:

- face-to-face and telephone interviews (26) with regional stakeholders and partners, Inspire East staff, board members and several service users

- reviewing management information gathered by Inspire East (eg, participant feedback forms), set against performance targets included in the Inspire East Business Plan
- desk research, covering, eg, regional strategies, RCE and ASC materials and other relevant evaluations
- an online survey of Inspire East users (those people who have used Inspire East services) and stakeholders (a wider group of people with whom Inspire East has contact, as potential users, influencers, etc)

Table 1.2 sets out how these tasks have contributed to reviewing the distinct components of the Inspire East evaluation framework.

Table 1.2   Evaluation framework and evidence sources

Evaluation dimension	Indicators	Evidence sources
Awareness	▪ level of awareness of Inspire East and its services	▪ stakeholder/ user survey ▪ interviews
Activity	▪ events ▪ design/ enabling projects, etc ▪ website and other services	▪ management information (MI)
Quality	▪ satisfaction ▪ recommendations	▪ MI ▪ stakeholder/user survey
Individual benefits	▪ eg, networking, cross-sector understanding, skill gains, confidence	▪ MI ▪ stakeholder/user survey
Organisational benefits/results	▪ improved design; problems solved, etc ▪ influence over policies/practices	▪ MI ▪ stakeholder/user survey ▪ interviews
Regional influence	▪ strategic added value ▪ perceived influence on policies and standards of development ▪ confidence in IE contribution to developing sustainable communities in the region	▪ stakeholder/ user survey ▪ interviews

The thinking behind the framework informed the design of the survey, seeking in particular evidence of change/ impact at individual *and* organisational level. The survey covered:

- respondent characteristics (their experience, job role, etc)
- use of Inspire East services (including what prompted this use)
- satisfaction (overall and with service features such as depth and range of information, understanding of needs, stimulus to thinking and action)
- personal and organisational benefits gained
- actions taken and consequences in terms of impact or influence on policy, practice or services
- what they would have done if Inspire East services had not been available
- suggestions for service improvement

Key questions in relation to Awareness; Satisfaction; Personal and Organisational Benefits; and Confidence (in Inspire East contributions in the future) provide indicators of progress, set against the 2006 survey as a baseline. The design of the survey also incorporated Inspire East brand values (inspirational, professional, impartial, accessible,

inclusive, leadership, credible, champions, innovative), given that these are relevant dimensions to user satisfaction and stakeholder perceptions.

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The report proceeds to describe Inspire East activities and achievements in service delivery (Chapter 2). Chapter 3 presents the findings of the evaluation research, drawing primarily on our interviews and on the survey of users and stakeholders. Chapter 4 presents conclusions and recommendations.

2.   Inspire East Activities & Achievements

2.1   Activities and roles

This chapter concentrates on Inspire East activities during the period January to October 2007, and reporting on performance against targets (for 2006/07 and for the first six months in 2007/08)[15].

Inspire East group their activities under the categories of:

- Information Sharing
- Networking and Enabling
- Skills Development
- Policy and Best Practice

Four thematic priorities were introduced in Inspire East's Service Plan for 2007/08: Climate Change; Neighbourhoods; Growth; Major Regional Cities and Towns.

Inspire East plays a variety of roles in the delivery of these activities, eg, in organising network events, acting as programme manager for the Design and Enabling Service, contracting out specific services, and/or acting a project co-funder and member of project steering groups.

Inspire East staff are also involved as a partner in over 15 regional partnerships and initiatives, eg, the regional Sustainable Development Round Table and Constructing Excellence, with the network of involvement through Advisory Board members much wider. Staff seek opportunities to promote the organisation in, eg, making presentations (eg, East of England LSP Network) and taking exhibition space at national and regional conferences, such as the '2012 Construction Commitments' conference organised by Constructing Excellence in September 2007.

2.2   Information Sharing

The fully featured Inspire East **website** is intended as Inspire East's main tool for knowledge management and signposting, and contains seven sections:

- What Works (case studies across sustainable communities topics; awards)
- Careers and Skills (relevant courses and training programmes, current job vacancies, interviews with people in sustainable communities jobs)
- Events (events calendar featuring relevant seminars, workshops, etc of interest to users – not just Inspire East events, with an on-line booking facility)
- Networks (Design and Historic Environment Champions Network, Funding East, Local Delivery Vehicles – see 2.2 below)
- Resources (organisational profiles, reports, toolkits and the Excellence Framework and the Excellence Framework see 2.5 below)
- Support Services (Design Review; Enabling Service – see 2.3 below)
- About Us

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[15] Further information on Inspire East activities can be found in the 2006 evaluation report and on the Inspire East website.

Website use has grown since the site was launched in 2006. Numbers of 'unique visitors' have more than doubled since late 2006 (to 1,931 in October 2007), with a larger proportionate increase in the number of visits (to 4,507 in October 2007) – a ratio of 2.3 visits per 'unique visitor', up from 1.7 in October 2006[16]. Over the year (November 2006 to October 2007), page hits had reached 2.69m, and the year end target for 2006/07 was substantially exceeded.

Figure 2.1   Inspire East website usage
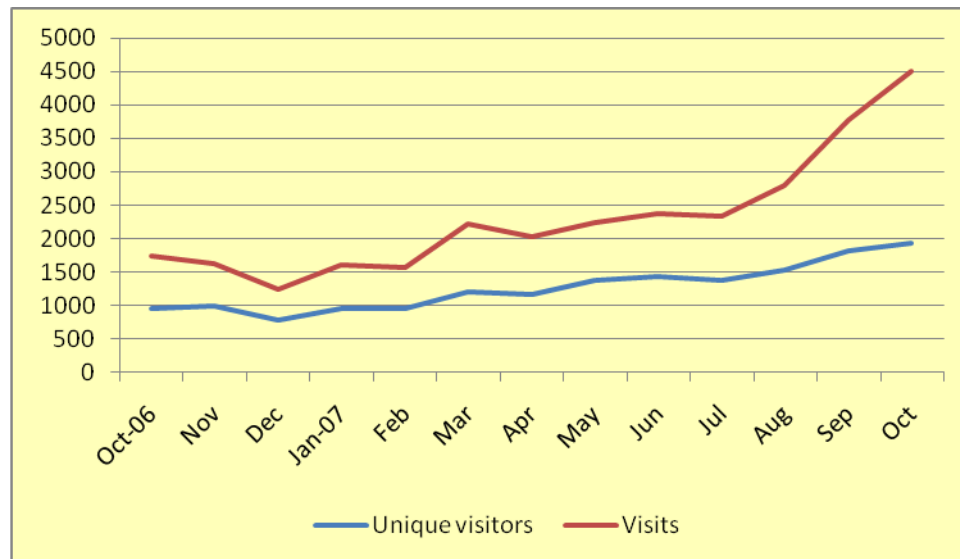
It is difficult to compare these figures to those of other relevant websites where we have access to data and which use similar data definitions. The website statistics available to Inspire East do not provide information on downloads, so it is impossible to say what documents have been the most accessed.

Increased use of the website can in part be attributed to the monthly **e-newsletter**, first distributed in November 2006. This now reaches over 2,600 e-mail addresses. Statistics for the e-newsletter show nearly 40% of recipients 'opening' the e-mail and typically 10% clicking on links contained in the newsletter. These figures appear to exceed current norms in e-newsletter statistics across a range of fields and demonstrate an 'interested' user base[17]. Most popular 'click-throughs' in the past six months have been the Kickstart[18] case study, Funding Advisors Guide, Excellence Framework, Lessons from Cambourne, and the Micro-Firms ESF project (all mentioned later in this chapter). Most frequent follow-up has come from six local authorities (Essex, Cambridgeshire, Luton, Cambridge, Norwich and Great Yarmouth), GO East and EEDA.

By the end of October 2007, ten Inspire East case studies had been added to the website, along with fourteen interviews. The latter feature a variety of 'inspiring people' working in sustainable communities/ regeneration in the region, about how they entered the sector and the advice they would give to someone just starting out. The organisational directory on the website will soon be accompanied by a **'Think Map'** illustrating key organisations in the regions and their connections.

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[16] Unique visitor numbers understate the numbers of users, as there could be many accessing the web through a single IP (Internet Provider) address. A single organisation may have one or more IP addresses.

[17] Source: Itineris

[18] A wheels-to-work project in Norfolk and Cambridgeshire

Inspire East maintains a **library** which comprises over 500 publications (in electronic and hard copy formats). This is intended to complement the virtual library maintained by the East of England Observatory by dedicated gathering of material specific to the sustainable communities agenda, including 'grey' (unpublished) material.

The Inspire East **Annual Event** is another element of the Information Sharing strand of work. and was held in Peterborough in September. It followed the success of The Big Event in 2006 which served as the official launch of the organisation, and attracted 137 people, a fresh audience of whom only 8% had attended the previous year's conference.

2.3   Networking and Enabling

Inspire East supports three networks, each with its own distinct section on the Inspire East website – and is about to launch a fourth, on community development. These networks serve as a 'brand' for events promotion and 'mini-site' on the website, rather than forming communities of practice, managed by participants themselves.

Networks

The **Local Delivery Vehicle Network** is aimed at people working in and with existing and emerging local delivery vehicles (LDVs) such as Urban Regeneration Companies, with the most recent events being on 'Linking Education and Planning' and 'Linking Planning and Health'. Inspire East is supported by an informal management group in planning the events.

The first 'Winter School' for the LDV network was run in March 2007, a two-day action learning set built around the development of sport and leisure infrastructure to underpin regeneration in Basildon. An edge was given to the programme by focusing on a specific, 'live' project and building in a presentation at the end of a panel including the local authority Chief Executive. The event proved very effective in the learning gained by participants and in giving further momentum for project implementation[19]. Its success has encouraged the Inspire East to organise a second school, to be held in Harlow in March 2008. The network is supported by GO East, English Partnerships, Environment Agency, and the Housing Corporation with funding for the initial Winter School from the ASC.

The **Design and Historic Environment Champions Network** has been developed in partnership with CABE, Shape East and English Heritage, and is funded by English Heritage and CABE. Events run in 2007 include: 'Designing for Town Centres', (run with Essex Design Initiative) and 'Designing for Movement'

Funding East brings together both funders and funding advisors to promote mutual understanding and better investment of funds for developing communities and services. The network offers information exchange, learning from what works, training and induction. There were well-attended networking events in March and September 2007, and Funding East has also launched a guide for new Funding Advisers. It has maintained a register – publicised on the website – of 20 individuals willing to act as mentors for people who are funding-related roles. Funding East has a steering group which includes the Big Lottery Fund, Capacitybuilders, Inspire East and local organisations.

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[19] Winter School report at www.inspire-east.org.uk/FileAccess.aspx?id=1099

The new **Community Development network** was launched on 18 December 2007. Inspire East has worked with Community Development Exchange to develop this as one of a series of regional networks supported in the East of England by the National Empowerment Partnership, funded by CLG. The network has a practitioner-based steering group.

Inspire East's involvement with the National Empowerment Partnership builds on other community development and engagement activities which have included:

- **'Practical Introduction to' themed events** – launched first in 2006 on 'Community Development' and subsequently organised on 'Participatory Appraisal', on 'Sustainable Communities', and 'Arts-based Community Engagement'. This branding is seen as a successful formula. Inspire East plan to deliver more in future, on their own or in conjunction with partners such as Rural Action East
- Recognising the need to spread effective practice in community engagement involvement as part of the sustainable communities agenda, Inspire East organised a **Tools for Community Engagement 'market place'**, as a regional event bringing together a range of tools and approaches to community engagement in regeneration and sustainable communities.

Enabling Service

The Enabling Service is managed in conjunction with the Design Review Service (see below). Experienced professionals were recruited onto a panel who could be called upon to assist local projects (especially those of a regional significance) which need help to progress. Enablers work with a client for a limited number of days to provide assistance on specified tasks, with an emphasis on helping the client develop their own capacity, rather than undertaking tasks for the client (which would thereby be akin to a 'traditional' consultant role). The tasks might involve, eg, assisting the client with the development of a brief for a project; advice on engaging the local community; or guidance on ways forward with a stalled project.

The first six Enabling projects were in train by the start of 2007, and have involved, eg, advice to a local authority landscape team on managing a complex project requiring significant stakeholder buy-in, and advice in setting up and assessing a design competition. Both of these have been expected, in due course, to lead to projects coming forward to the Design Review Panel, and in another case, an Enabler has been assigned to a project *following* a presentation to the Design Review Panel.

2.4   Skills Development

The work of Inspire East on skills is supported by the **Skills Sub-Group**, chaired by the LSC's Regional Director of Skills. Part of its role is to pursue ways in which Inspire East can influence skills policies and provision in the region, and it has been instrumental in securing the funding for the latest ESF project. It has also sought (with ASC funding) to ensure that sustainable communities skills issues are being addressed through the brokerage network (Train to Gain and Business Link brokers), and to develop project ideas for future funding, including work on careers promotion for young people.

The Group is also likely to act as the skills group for the Sustainable Development Round Table, avoiding duplicated activity.

Learning Laboratories

Inspire East has promoted two **Learning Laboratories**, part of a national Academy for Sustainable Communities initiative to stimulate new ways of addressing skill needs for sustainable communities work. The first, in 2006-07, was with Thames Gateway South Essex, starting with a skills audit to review the skills and tools needed locally to ensure that new development and regeneration schemes reflect user needs to high quality design standards, delivered through partnership. This led to a practice-based learning programme built round a sustainable communities project in Basildon, in implementing the Fryerns/Craylands Redevelopment Community Action Plan. Participants were members of the Neighbourhood Centre Working Group (NCWG). The learning programme was designed to develop '3C competence' (the effective use of communication, collaboration and consensus building skills), and to maximise the value of the learning, with the content linked to work that participants were having to carry out anyway, rather than involving time out from the job considering hypothetical situations[20]. Unfortunately, the Working Group was disbanded part way through the project, and a couple of key individuals moved to new jobs, such that the full programme was not run. Practitioners involved valued the diagnostic stage in clarifying learning needs, and the project did contribute to a better understanding of the type of brief required for redevelopment of the area, while highlighting project management issues. Work has since progressed on the masterplan for the area, including submission for outline planning permission.

The skills audit stage of the second Learning Laboratory project, with **Regional Cities East** (RCE)[21], has been completed. This was managed by Inspire East, with their role now advising RCE on training activities to meet identified needs, with events administered through RCE on topics such as Integrated Public Space and Transport Strategies, Masterplanning, Urban Regeneration Companies and Local Area Agreements. The focus is on the 'core' professions relevant to sustainable communities[22] and the skills they need to collaborate effectively, make a significant contribution to the region's economic growth, and grow their cities in a sustainable manner. The audit highlighted in particular skill needs relating to 'energy and mental vitality', crucially skills in bringing people along with you, where you do not have direct managerial responsibility.

The 'Lab' has led RCE to form a new initiative, Capacity for Urban Renaissance in the East (CURE) to tackle capacity issues. This is investigating a range of potential solutions for helping RCE members tackle capacity issues collectively. Inspire East has been identified as a key partner in delivering some of these. Feedback from the survey

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[20] URI, University of Greenwich (2007) Fryerns/Craylands Regeneration Project: Final Report
www.inspire-east.org.uk/learninglaboratories.aspx

[21] Regional Cities East brings together Colchester, Ipswich, Luton, Peterborough, Norwich and Southend with the common aim of making a significant and sustainable contribution to the region's economic growth. See www.rce.org.uk

[22] The 'core professions' in the Egan Report identified as those "people who spend almost all of their professional time in activities to do with planning, delivering and maintaining sustainable communities": built environment professionals, architects, urban designers, etc; decision makers and influencers: staff from local, regional and central government, developers and investors, and staff from voluntary and community associations.
www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1502251

demonstrated interest on meeting skills needs 'on the job', and Inspire East spotted an opportunity to link with the EERA Interchange[23] programme, which seeks to help local authorities take advantage of learning and development opportunities other than training courses, and share experience across boundaries. Opportunities include buddying, work shadowing and secondments, problem-solving or networking groups and 'emergency trouble shooters'.

Generic skills

Inspire East influenced priorities within the EEDA co-financed element of the European Social Fund in 2006, which led to securing funding of up to £270,000 to deliver a **generic skills training programme** – developing new modules, training trainers and delivering training. This seeks to tackle major needs identified in the Egan Review for cross-disciplinary skills such as leadership, project management, visioning, and conflict resolution. It has been delivered by a consortium led by the Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce, with Scott Wilson consultants piloting the training modules to fill gaps in regional provision. The mapping stage was completed in 2006, with the training developed and piloted in 2007 and around 100 people taking part. The programme focuses on problem solving, consensus building and decision-making, and is aimed at a mix of participants with different backgrounds, skills and experience. The programme is being further refined in the light of feedback. This will provide a legacy of generic skills training modules and trained trainers from both Higher Education and the private sector.

Influencing skills provision

A new development has been the **cross-profession CPD programme**, jointly badged by Inspire East and Construction Industry Council East and run by RIBA East, with the endorsement of the Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists (CIAT), Chartered Institute of Building, Constructing Excellence in the East of England, Institution of Civil Engineers, RICS and RTPI. Inspire East's role has been to help fund and promote the programme. Other examples of influencing provision include liaison in the development of a new Masters in Social Enterprise and Community Development (University of Cambridge).

Capacity to spread good practice

The **Micro-Coaches** project[24] has been newly developed in 2007, delivered by Social Enterprise East of England and also funded by the ESF. This aims to help successful social enterprises involved in sustainable communities pass on their learning to others. Early interest has been promising, in terms of numbers of people completing the skills and commitment audits and attending the initial training courses. Eight courses are planned, involving over 50 participants.

Other skills development activities

Other training and development activities have included:

- **Historic Environment Local Management** (HELM) programme, funded by English Heritage to deliver heritage training for non-specialists in the region, building

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[23] www.eera.gov.uk/Text.asp?id=2253
[24] www.microcoaches.co.uk/index.asp

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on existing national provision. Event topics in 2007 have included skills supply for conservation of traditional buildings.

- **'In a Nutshell' workshops** in January and February 2007 (with online workshops planned for February 2008), intended to help participants develop their understanding of the term 'sustainable community', explore the national and regional policy context and perspectives, and consider the roles, responsibilities and skills of the various organisations and individuals responsible for delivery.

2.5 Policy and Best Practice

The **Design Review Service** is a substantial aspect of Inspire East's work, intended to improve standards of design and planning, by providing expert advice at an early stage in a project's development. The scope of advice offered may cover a wide range of built environment issues including commissioning new buildings, public realm design, masterplans, urban frameworks or strategies for green spaces. The service is available to schemes of 'regional' significance as defined by their scale, nature or replicability. To take advantage of the service, project proponents have to submit project information and designs and make a presentation to the Design Review Panel at one of its regular sessions[25]. Examples of projects presented to the Design Review panel have included housing development on the site of a language school, the 'gateway' to a railway station, marina development, a quayside development and a disability studies centre. There have been few private sector developments to date.

The experience of delivering the Design Review Service has led to a (realistic) scaling down of the annual target for projects submitted to the Panel, with 18 considered in 2006/07[26] and 13 by the end of September 2007 (against a target for 2007/08 of 24).

Excellence Framework

The Inspire East **Excellence Framework**[27] was launched in June 2007. This is intended to support appraisal of projects using the CLG definition of a Sustainable Community[28]. Work to develop the framework, guided by a multi-agency steering group, reviewed existing tools, literature and case studies to form a web-based resource offering qualitative benchmarks, intended to raise aspirations and standards in sustainable communities work in the region. The project formed one of EEDA's 'balanced scorecard' performance targets[29] in 2006/7, and the EEDA Chief Executive's Group has since made a commitment for the agency to use the tool throughout their involvement with projects, from design and appraisal to final evaluation. Training and support for implementation is planned for end of 2007/early 2008. It will also feature in EEDA's Green Infrastructure Investment Framework.

As at 23 October 2007, there were 96 registered users of the Framework, and Inspire East has found growing interest in its use from a number of quarters, including Regional

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[25] For further details of how the Design Review service operates, see
www.inspire-east.org.uk/howdesignreviewworks.aspx?Area=CONTENT

[26] This contrasts with the original target of 56, assumed for a full year. The Panel, however was only launched in September 2006, and the revised level of targets are comparable, eg, with those of the similar regional service in the East Midlands.

[27] www.inspire-east.org.uk/excellenceframework

[28] www.inspire-east.org.uk/frameworkwheel.aspx

[29] This refers to EEDA's performance management system.

Cities East, CLG, and GO East (in relation to regional projects and the London Olympics). It features in the Urban Design Compendium[30] produced by English Partnerships, and there is interest from Ignite (the equivalent body to Inspire East in the North East) in developing the Framework for use there. Feedback from early registered users suggested a range of applications, including a format for e-consultation, and encouraging different lines of thought (eg, a comment from a land and property company: *"it has been useful in prompting us to consider some areas we had not thought of"*).

Colchester Stadium: use of the Excellence Framework

One of the earliest full applications of the Excellence Framework has been that by Colchester Borough Council in reviewing sustainability aspects of the proposed Community Stadium. The exercise confirmed strengths in current plans (eg, a match day travel plan and use of air source heat pumps) and highlighted actions that the Council needed to take to improve the quality and community benefit of the project, eg, in:

- strengthening community engagement, proposing a dedicated community development budget to develop 'local distinctiveness and sense of pride amongst those who do not go to football matches (eg, to support a community arts project)
- developing services associated with the Stadium which cater for the wider needs of the local population (with, eg, an innovative library proposal and the involvement of the Primary Care Trust)

The Council found value in the using the framework in standing back and considering aspects which may not have been given sufficient consideration, and is confident that the exercise will contribute to successful implementation.

Source: October 2007 report to Cabinet[31]

Inspire East is also involved in the development of the **Sustainability Checklist East of England**[32], an online tool developed by the WWF (Worldwide Fund for Nature) and BRE (Building Research Establishment) and jointly hosted with EERA. This is intended to help developers, local authorities and other interested parties to assess the sustainability of designs for major new housing and mixed use developments, to be used at the design and planning application stages of a new development. Inspire East has sought to ensure its complementarity with the Excellence Framework.

Regional Empowerment Partnership

A new development has been the creation of the **Regional Empowerment Partnership** led by Inspire East as part of the government's action plan for Community Empowerment. It relates to the National Empowerment Partnership which seeks to strengthen community empowerment activities and projects across the country. recognising that such efforts are often scattered, have unstable funding and are of variable quality.

Inspire East was invited by GO East to bring the partnership together and submit plans for approval and funding. The Partnership intends to:

- support professionals and public bodies so that they can better engage with their communities
- create a website for information sharing

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[30] www.urbandesigncompendium.co.uk/
[31] Press release at www.colchester.gov.uk/Info_page_two_pic_2_det.asp?art_id=6069&sec_id=1040
[32] www.eastofenglandchecklist.co.uk

- identify demonstration projects to show how community empowerment works
- research existing activity in the region to identify both good and poor practice

Ultimately, it seeks to promote improved practice and increase the numbers and capacity of people able to influence the decisions that affect their lives.

Other best practice activities

Inspire East promotes relevant **awards** to help identify and spread best practice, eg, sponsoring new community-related categories in Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) awards. In the latest competition, five projects were nominated for the RIBA regional award and eight for RICS regional award. Inspire East also publicises national competitions, eg, the BURA Best Practice Awards[33]. Sponsorship of awards is seen as an effective means of reaching key audiences, not least in the private sector.

Inspire East develops **guides and tools** for use by practitioners, often linked to related events, eg:

- **Rainham Marshes** (on the use of generic skills in conservation and regeneration)
- **Lessons from Cambourne**[34] (practical lessons that can be applied in the planning and development of other new settlements across the region based on interviews with over 50 stakeholders and a literature review)
- **Low Carbon Growth** for planners and councillors
- **Foundations for Living** evaluation of a supported housing project in Huntingdon, developed by the Papworth Trust; this project involves integrated living and learning for disabled people.
- **Masterplanning in the East of England**, a review of four exemplar masterplans supported by EEDA (Chelmsford, Gunnels Wood in Stevenage, Felixstowe and King's Lynn)

Other 'best practice' activities have included:

- **Housing Quality Action Group**, established by Inspire East to bring key agencies together (CABE, Housing Corporation, East of England Regional Assembly – EERA, representatives of Registered Social Landlords – RSLs, housing developers and local authorities) to develop actions to raise quality of housing development in the region. Inspire East chairs and provides secretariat to group which reports to the Regional Housing Delivery Group, responsible for the delivery of the Regional Housing Strategy. Action plan developed including design training for RSLs
- support for the development of the **Quality Charter for Growth in the Cambridge Area**, working with Cambridgeshire Horizons, Urbed, and the Academy for Sustainable Communities to develop a consistent approach to ensuring quality physical development in the Greater Cambridge area. This involved earlier best practice visits in the UK, Germany and the Netherlands, a symposium and recently the publication of the draft Charter

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[33] Criteria for Inspire East sponsorship of awards are set out at
www.inspire-east.org.uk/sponsorshipofawards.aspx?Area=CONTENT
[34] Cambourne is a new settlement 10 miles west of Cambridge. At the time of this review it was half completed towards a projected 4,200 homes.

- **Study visit to Hammarby**[35] in Sweden, a 200 hectare brownfield development conceived to expand the inner city with a focus on the water, while converting an old industrial and harbour area into a modern, sustainable neighbourhood, planned originally as part of Stockholm's bid for the 2004 Olympics – and a follow up event held at the Building Research Establishment
- establishing **Waterwise East** with national not-for-profit organisation, Waterwise, an initiative to reduce demand for water in the region by influencing planners, developers and the public and by acting as an authoritative focal point for water efficiency in the region[36]. Waterwise East is supported by EEDA, EERA, DEFRA and the Environment Agency.

Inspire East has also contributed as a member of the working group to the development of the **'Aspire 2 Perform' diagnostic model for Local Strategic Partnerships** (funded through GO East), ensuring attention to all aspects of sustainable communities within the framework.

2.6 Performance against targets, 2006/07 and 2007/08

Table 2.1 provides a breakdown of Inspire East's performance in 2006/07, detailing targets, outputs to end March 2007, while Table 2.2 provides the current position (as at the end of December 2007) and forecasts to the end of the financial year. The output targets were agreed in the current Inspire East Business Plan and relate to EEDA performance targets (hence the inclusion of jobs created and the split on numbers of people benefiting from training of over and under six hours' duration).

Table 2.1   Performance against targets 2006/07 out-turn

	Annual target 2006/07	Out-turn
FTE jobs created	1	1
FTE jobs transferred	1	1
Website hits	50,000	1,427,710
Support calls - people advised	200	51
Placements[37]	20	0
Registered mentors	40	20
Number of people benefiting from training >6 hours	1,000	1,398
Number of people benefiting from training <6 hours	200	677
Projects benefiting from Design Review	56{	18
Projects benefiting from Enabling Panels		6
Good practice guides published	4	3
Awards	45 candidates/ 16 prizes	9 candidates/ 1 award
Toolkits developed	3	1

Key points from performance in 2006/07 were:

- the target for numbers of 'people benefiting from training for more than six hours', was surpassed significantly (by 40%) and the target for 'under six hours' exceeded by nearly three and a half times

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[35] www.hammarbysjostad.se
[36] A 'mini-site' for Waterwise East was added to the Inspire East website in December 2007.
[37] This relates to work with Regional Cities East which had not progressed because of constraints amongst the Regional Cities East partner towns and cities.

- website use was much higher than anticipated[38]
- the level of take-up of Design Review and Enabling projects was significantly below plan[39]
- there was a lower level of ad hoc enquiries/advice than anticipated (partly reflecting under-recording)
- and similarly for the number of candidates and prizes awarded

Experience from 2006/07 has influenced targets set for 2007/08[40] (Table 2.2):

Table 2.2   Targets for 2007/08

	Annual target 2007/08	Total performance to end Dec 07	On track?
FTE jobs created	0.5	0[41]	▲\▼
Website hits	8-10,000 hits/ month	13,691 unique visitors/ month (ave)	▲
Registered mentors	10	10	▲
Number of people benefiting from training >6 hours	1,020	696	▲
Number of people benefiting from training <6 hours	1,200	703	▲
Businesses supported[42]	50	211	▲
Projects benefiting from Design Review	24	13	▲\▼
Projects benefiting from Enabling Panels	30	11	▼
Good practice guides published	8	3	▲
Awards	5 awards/ 15 nominees	2	▼
Toolkits developed	6	2	▲
Case studies for the website	12	6	under review
Interviews for the website	12	7	under review

Key: ▲ = on track, given current workplan and projections; ▼ = off track; ▲\▼ = close to target

Table 2.2 also summarises the latest position against targets. Numbers are considered on track for numbers of people benefiting from training under 6 hours' duration and for the website, with a heavy concentration in delivering the target for attendees at training over 6 hours' duration into the latter part of the year. There was a similar balance last year, and the target was exceeded. Numbers of projects coming forward for Design Review and Enabling have been affected by the time it has taken to replace the panel co-ordinator. It has also proved difficult to schedule time for preparing case studies and interviews for the website, and plans for these are under review.

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[38] Allowing for the fact that the number of 'hits' is inflated by the way the webs statistics software works. Figure for 10 months only.

[39] There was an inevitable lead-in time on Design Review and Enabling Services before significant numbers of projects could be generated and processed. The first Design Panel meeting was held in September 2006.

[40] We note that assumptions behind these targets were based on limited experience of delivering Inspire East services, and several targets were specified before managers responsible were in post

[41] Short term positions have been created for the delivery of the National Empowerment Partnership contract.

[42] Mainly private and third sector organisations represented at Inspire East events.

2.7 Leverage

Inspire East has been successful in attracting additional funding (leverage) to extend its programme of activities, raising £243,600 in 2006/07 (more than double the target in the original business plan) plus further commitments for 2007/08. Table 2.3 summarises income generated in 2006/07, with sources, and Table 2.4 provides the projection for 2007/08. Inspire East is moving to a policy of full cost recovery, such that future external funding must contribute to staff and organisational costs as well as the marginal costs of the delivering the project or event concerned. The experience in 2006/07 was one of 'swings and roundabouts': estimated funding from GO East, for example, did not materialise, while additional funding was secured from the Academy for Sustainable Communities and English Heritage. Hoped for funding for Funding East was not secured.

Table 2.3   Income attracted by Inspire East, 2006/07 (£'000)

Activity	Income received	Sources
Research	1.0	*ASC*
Generic skills	102.0	*ESF*
Learning events (incl Learning Labs)	89.6	*ASC; English Heritage; events income*
LDV Network	11.6	*ASC; EP, Housing Corporation; Environment Agency, EERA; events income*
Design Champions Network	15.0	*CABE; English Heritage*
Community engagement	5.2	*ASC; event income*
Good practice guides	19.0	*ASC; English Heritage*
TOTAL	243.6	

Table 2.4   Income forecast, 2007/08 (£'000)

Activity	Income forecast	Sources
Generic skills	68.0	*ESF*
Micro-coaches project	100.0	*ESF*
Learning Lab	50.0	*ASC*
HELM	17.0	*English Heritage*
LDV Network	9.6	*ASC; EP, Housing Corporation; Environment Agency, EERA*
Design Champions Network	10.0	*CABE*
Community engagement	6.8	*ASC; event income*
Good practice guides	14.5	*ASC; English Heritage*
Regional Empowerment Partnership	134.0	*CLG*
TOTAL	409.9	

Note: estimate as at November 2007. This table excludes income from events.

Inspire East has begun to charge for some events, eg, the Annual Event and 'Tools for Community Engagement': community and voluntary sector £40, public and private sector £80. Such fees have not proved a deterrent to potential participants, with these events being fully booked sometime in advance. The policy remains to set rates at below fully commercial rates, given a desire to avoid price levels which discourage the involvement of target participants.

3.   Evaluation Research Findings

3.1   Surveying users and stakeholders

This chapter concentrates on reporting the findings of the user/stakeholder survey, supplemented by further interviews with a number of regional stakeholders.

As in 2006, the survey sought to:

- assess user satisfaction with Inspire East services
- ascertain actions taken by users and the personal and organisational benefits they have gained
- provide examples of impact or influence on policy, practice or services
- identify what users would have done if Inspire East services had not been available
- invite user suggestions for how Inspire East can improve its services

plus

- explore awareness and perceptions of Inspire East amongst a larger body of stakeholders who have not yet used Inspire East services

About the survey response

In all, 2,437 e-mail addresses were mailed for the survey, undertaken in mid October 2007, and 162 responses received[43]. Allowing for undeliverable e-mails, the effective response rate was 6.8% (which compares with 10.2% in 2006[44]).

Some 26% of contacts on the mailing list are chief executives, chairs or directors, and a further 25% managers, the remaining being professionals or frontline workers.

65% are in the public, 18% private and 17% voluntary) and the breakdown of responses was public 57%, private 11%, and voluntary 32%. There was at least one response from 16 out of 54 local authorities in the region.

Key data about the respondents (Appendix A) includes:

- 24% describe themselves community or voluntary worker, 17% as a built environment professional, 13% public agency manager, 9% regeneration practitioner, and 5% partnership manager
- 32% in a voluntary organisation or housing association, 31% work in a local authority, 8% in a professional practice/ consultancy and 7.5% in other public agencies
- 26% were chief executives or directors, 31% managers, 12% professionals and 28% frontline workers

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[43] Two respondents were not included in the analysis that follows: one board member and one contractor on grounds of possible conflict of interest. There were three other people who declined to respond on the grounds that they were new to Inspire East.

[44] The e-mailing list was smaller in 2006: 1,824

- over 25% have worked in sustainable communities / regeneration for 11 years or more, 22% between 6 and 10 years, 46% between 1 and 5 years, and 5% less than one year

A check of respondents who gave their names suggests that only 7.6% of the respondents replied in both 2006 and 2007[45].
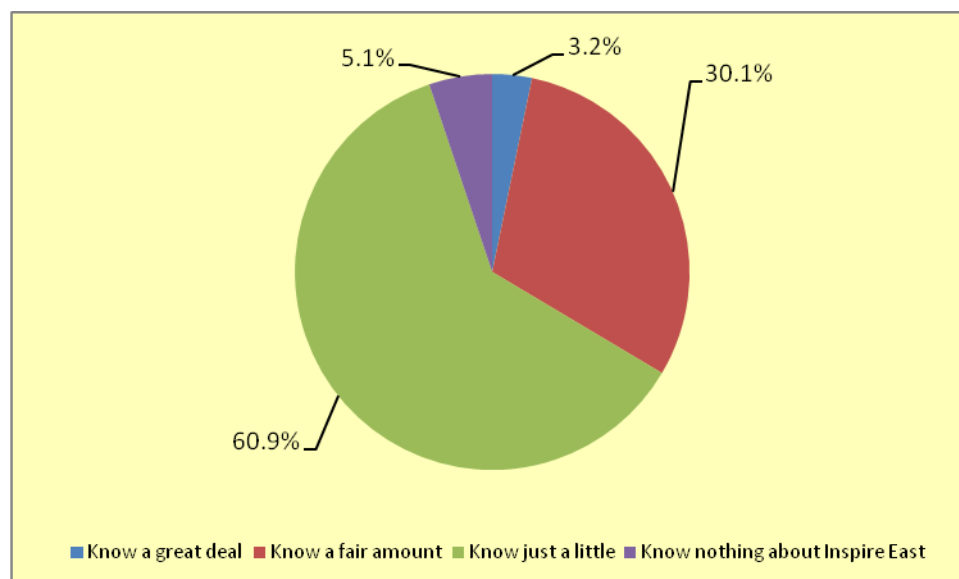
3.2   Awareness of Inspire East

Levels of awareness amongst the Inspire East's contact list of stakeholders are still relatively modest:

- 94% of respondents know *something* about Inspire East
- a third of these know 'a fair amount' or 'a great deal' – rising to 56% amongst respondents operating across the whole region

These levels of awareness are similar to 2006, despite the introduction of the Inspire East e-newsletter, more frequent press releases, and continued promotion through presentations and networking.
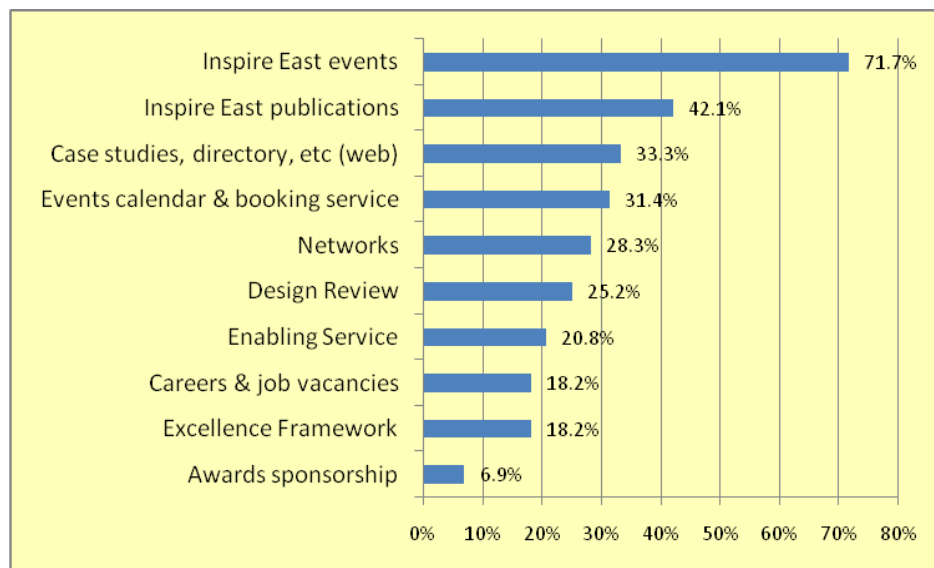
Figure 3.1   Awareness of Inspire East

Q. Overall, how well would you say you know Inspire East and its activities. N = 156.

Highest levels of awareness (Figure 3.2) relate to Inspire East events (72%), followed by Inspire East publications (42%), case studies and directory of organisations (on the website) (33%), the events calendar (31%), Networks (28%) and Design Review (25%).

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[45] 210 respondents identified themselves by name in the two surveys. The limited overlap between the two surveys suggests between them – within a year – they have attracted responses from c13% of the current Inspire East mailing list.

Figure 3.2   Awareness of Inspire East services and activities

Q. Which of the following Inspire East services were you previously aware? N = 159

3.3   Involvement with and use of Inspire East

Seven out of ten respondents can be classed as people who have used Inspire East services (Figure 3.3) – ie, those who have attended an event, used the website, made an enquiry or taken advantage of the Design Review Panel or Enabling Service. The most frequent uses of Inspire East have been attending an event or events (68%) or using the website (54%)[46].

Figure 3.3   Use of Inspire East services
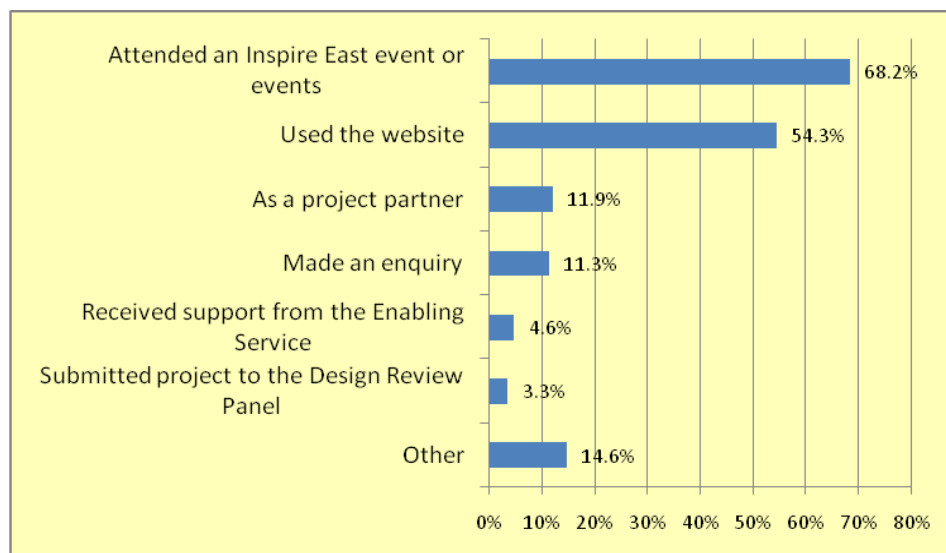
*N = 151. Q. In what ways have you been involved with Inspire East?*

Of those attending Inspire East events, 57% had attended one event, 29% two and 14% three or more.

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[46] The 'Other' category in Figure 3.2 mainly includes reference to the Inspire East e-newsletter and attending events featuring presentations. Note: Three respondents were not included in the analysis: one Inspire East Advisory Board member and two Enablers (as contractors) who had not been users of Inspire East services.

Use of specific services

Events drawing the greatest numbers of respondents (Figure 3.4) were the Inspire East Annual Event (25%), Tools for Engaging Communities (23%), Funding East network events (19%) and the Community Development Gathering (18%).
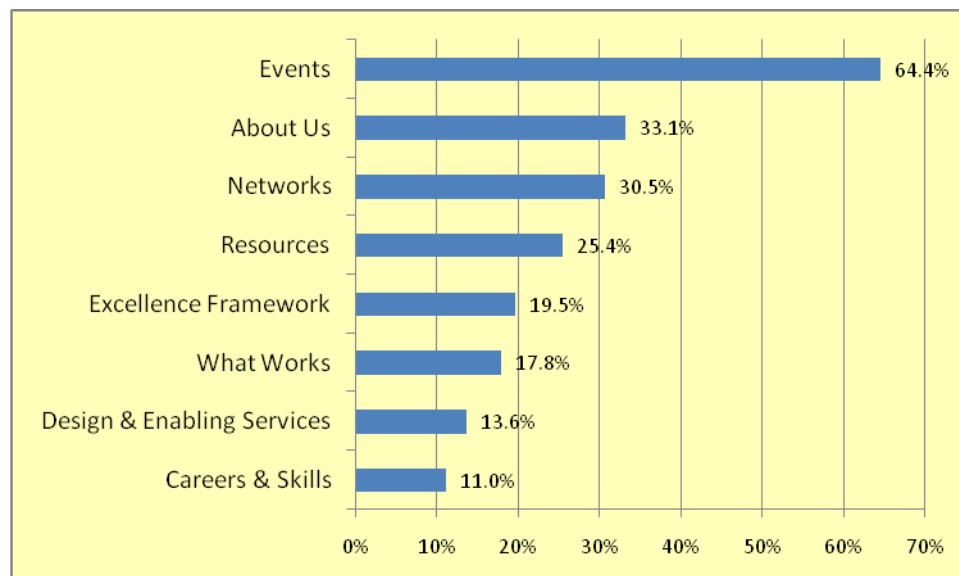
Figure 3.4   Respondent attendance at Inspire East events
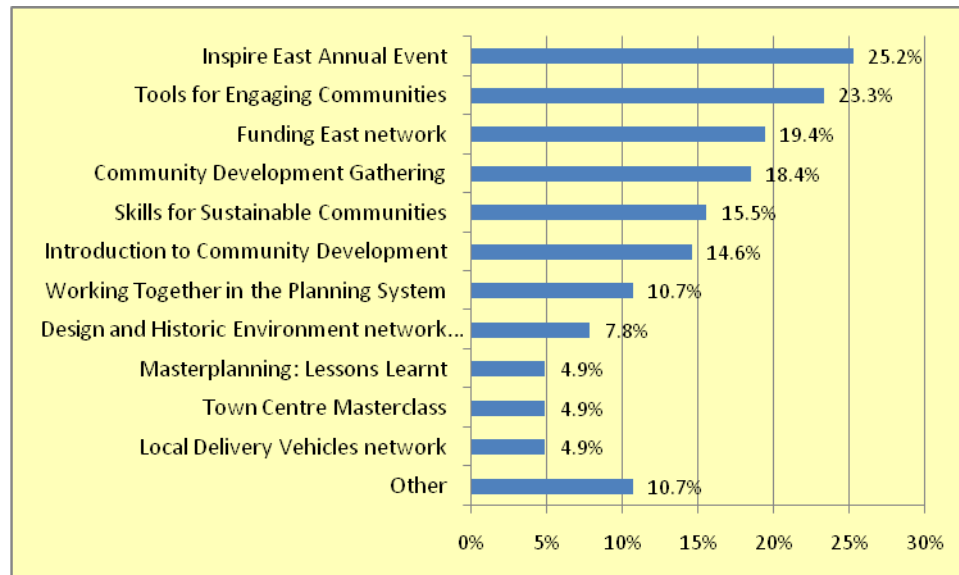
N = 103: all respondents who have taken part in Inspire East events

Nearly three quarters of respondents who have used the **Inspire East website** have used it two to five times in the past year, with over one in five having using it at least monthly.

Figure 3.5   Sections of the website used

N = 118. Q. If you have used the website, which parts have you accessed?

This level of website use is higher than in 2006 but not significantly so. This may suggest that the increased use of the website shown by the web statistics represents a widening of the user base, rather than more intensive and regular use of the site.

Sections of the website may not be achieving their purpose, eg, on careers and skills. As part of this evaluation, we also contacted 20 individuals who have volunteered through Funding East to act as mentors to organisations seeking advice in bidding for funding. Their details are provided on the website, and interested parties invited to contact them directly. No mentor has had an approach generated by the website. Inspire East has, however, had some positive feedback from projects featured as case studies on the site, indicating that website users have made contact.

Some 20% respondents have used **Inspire East documents** (a similar level to 2006), with only one document cited by more than 10 respondents: *Masterplanning in the East of England*. This was followed by *Lessons from Cambourne* and *Generic Skills in the Public Realm*.

3.4 Service satisfaction

Overall, users tend not to have developed strong views so far on their satisfaction with Inspire East services (Figure 3.6):

- satisfaction ratings averaged 3.25 out of 5, with many respondents opting for a middle score on the basis of their limited experience of Inspire East to date
- 46% rate Inspire East 4 or 5 (on a range of 1, 'poor' to 5, 'excellent'), an increase of a third from 2006

Figure 3.6 Overall satisfaction with Inspire East services
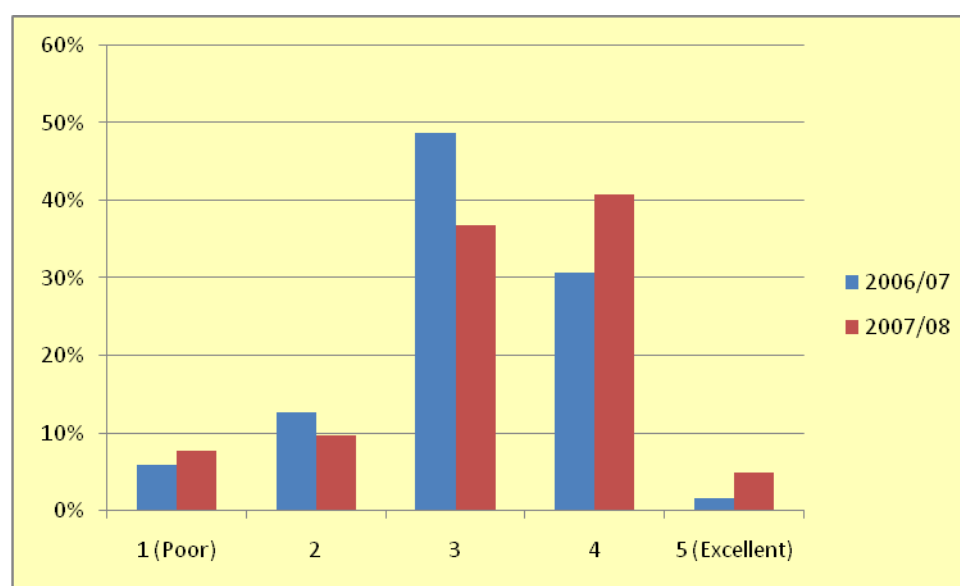
Inspire East users only. N = 103 (2007); 114 (2006)

Respondents were invited to comment on reasons for high or low ratings. Favourable comments included:

> *"The Tools for Engagement was the most informative conference I attended last year."*
> CENTRAL GOVERNMENT MANAGER

> *"Information is always clear, relevant and attractively packaged."*
> NOT STATED

> *"Inspire East has formalised and professionalised the sustainable community agenda and activity."*
> AGENCY MANAGER

> *"I think the real strength of Inspire East's role is that they can pull people from all sectors and areas of interest together to share an understanding of the issues faced in a fast developing region."*
> VOLUNTARY SECTOR MANAGER

The few critical comments reflected either one or two specific concerns with individual events or related to deeply held views about things that need to change and expectations – not necessarily realistic – of what Inspire East can do to address these:

> *"Inspire East have failed to address issues with poor standards of planners, poor planning and a resistance from planners to creative architecture"*
> ARCHITECT

> *"Poor depth, means too deep. Poor overall satisfaction due to there being too much to learn, and not presented in layman's terms. It seems to me that the term 'sustainable' has been stolen from the English language and twisted to mean something particular, and then a whole industry has been created to justify the new special meaning."*
> VOLUNTARY SECTOR MANAGER

> *"Inspire East can do little to influence political thinking around community development, which is often seen as 'pink and fluffy'. Politicians seem to think a sustainable community can be built with just bricks and mortar, despite LAAs, etc."*
> COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WORKER

Respondents gave higher scores on service features for the quality of information provided (its range and its depth) (Figure 3.7), and, as in 2006, gave lower scores for 'understanding user needs'. This must remain an area for improvement for Inspire East.

Figure 3.7   Satisfaction with service features

N = *range of 99-103*
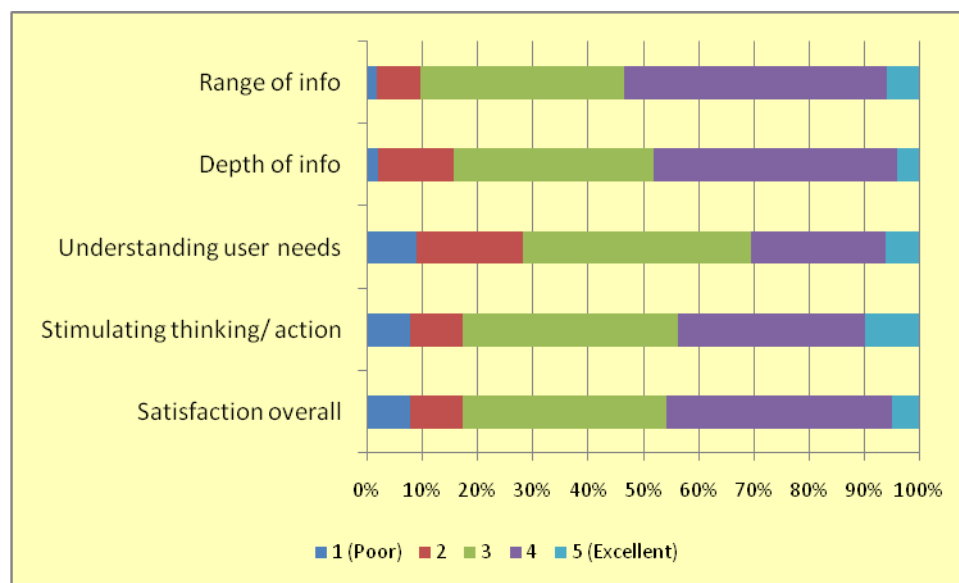
Users were also asked how likely they were to recommend Inspire East to others, a further indicator of satisfaction and goodwill for the organisation. 85% would do so, (27% unprompted, 58% if asked) – an almost identical response to 2006.

Feedback from events

As a further source of evidence on customer satisfaction we reviewed participant satisfaction ratings from Inspire East events. Standard feedback forms were introduced following the 2006 evaluation, which should assist the process of reviewing performance.

Information for 20 events run between late March and early October, shows that the average attendance was 35, with a range between four to 130. Feedback forms are available from 12 events (287 forms – a completion rate of 53%).

These responses paint a favourable picture:

- 88.8% participants found the event 'useful' or 'very useful' (26.5% 'very useful'), while only 9.1% considered the event 'not that useful' and 1% 'of no use' (just three people)
- only the 'Designing for a Changing Climate' event in March was not very successful, with nearly half of participants finding the event of limited or no use
- objectives were met, at least in part, for 97.5% participants – met in full for 63.1% and for only 2.5% were they not met) (data available for seven events only)
- 'new learning' was recorded by 95.6% (though this was 'partly' the case for 31%) and only 4.4% reckoned that they had gained no new learning (data for six events only)
- nearly all respondents (98.3%) reckoned that their event was 'very well organised' or 'well organised' ('very well' for 57.8%), and only 1.6% stating 'not that well organised' 1.6% (data for seven events only)

There is limited evidence of actions proposed or taken by participants, though Inspire East has picked up other feedback such as the case of a leading councillor who found the event on Cambourne *"enormously helpful"* leading to use of the material from the event in discussing masterplanning for part of their council area – *"We need more of this kind of analytical and reflective process around the whole growth agenda"*.

These ratings are broadly similar to those analysed for 2006, though different questions tended to be asked from event to event. Some 92% stated that their expectations had been at least partly met (68% fully met), and 90% that they had gained some learning from the event. Intention to do things differently was lower at 56%[47]. Feedback on the main annual conference (the 'Big Event') was slightly stronger than for 2007, with 38% participants 'very satisfied', 55% 'quite satisfied', and 6% 'dissatisfied'. The comparable breakdown for 2007, was 20%, 73% and 7%, though a different scale was used: 'very useful', 'useful' and 'not that useful'.

Feedback from the Design Review and Enabling Services

Feedback forms are available from 18 participants in the first 13 Design Review projects submitted to the Panel – three of which were covered by interviews in the 2006 evaluation. Five out of the thirteen were located in Norfolk, three in Essex and three in Hertfordshire, one each from Cambridgeshire and Suffolk, with none from Bedfordshire[48].

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[47] Analysis of 122 responses from six events.

[48] The stakeholder survey added little to this analysis, as only five respondents (3%) had taken advantage of the Design Review Service.

Only in one case had the advice of the Design Panel been implemented in full and influenced the project significantly. In four, the advice had been implemented in part – and in three, there had been at least a marginal influence. With regard to the remaining projects, there were ongoing discussions or an Inspire East enabler had been recruited for a follow-up assignment – such that it was too early to say what impact the Panel's advice had yet had.

The main benefits reported were:

- greater understanding of design issues from different perspectives (eight respondents)
- confidence/ reassurance in the quality of the proposed scheme (seven)
- improved scheme design (six)
- decision not to do something/ mistakes avoided (six)
- improved relationships/ understanding (five)

Comments included:

> *"I can only express praise of the professional way our initial enquiry, submission and review has been dealt with."*

> *"The objective outside view was very helpful in identifying issues not always apparent to those very closely involved with projects."*

> *"The review was useful and members did put forward useful and challenging views which have helped us determine our approach to the project is correct."*

> *"Broader understanding of the scheme in different aspects, not only design."*

Overall satisfaction ratings for the service were positive, with half of the respondents viewing their experience of the Panel as 'very good' or 'excellent'. Relatively lower levels of satisfaction (where at least two thirds rated the Design Review as poor or good – ie, at 2 or 3 on the five point scale) related to the usefulness of the Review format; clarity in explaining what to expect from the process; and (lowest rated) the value of the Design Review report itself.

Where concerns were expressed these tended to relate to:

- the realism of comments made by the Panel, questioning the grasp of physical, financial and political constraints affecting the project
- time allowed for the Panel to consider and report on the scheme
- comments about 'what might have been' which were not felt to be helpful

…with several commenting that they wished that they had been able to take their project to the Panel at an earlier stage.

It was interesting too that, in one case, the project team members recognised that compromises could jeopardise scheme quality, leading to agreement that the next step should involve the assistance of an Inspire East Enabler.

Suggestions for improvement included:

- site visits (which for Inspire East would increase the costs of the service significantly)
- more thorough preparation by *all* panel members
- references to other schemes where similar issues have been faced
- the style of the Panel session and the 'pitch' of advice given

> *"Structure the discussion better — get a better view of context and local circumstances at the start of proceedings – listen more, with less cross-examination."*

There is currently a challenge for Inspire East in attracting the 'right' kind of projects to the Panel (ie. those where the Panel can make a difference and have the potential to act as models and the focus of learning for others) – and typically at an early enough stage in their development. Progress has been limited by having several months without a panel co-ordinator. There is a protocol with EEDA setting out, eg, at what stage projects should be presented to the Panel – but more needs to be done to channel EEDA-related projects into the pipeline.

Enabling Service

There has been limited take-up of the Enabling Service to date, and most assignments are still current. We attempted to contact three cases where the assignment has been completed or was nearing completion, but unfortunately only one client took up the invitation to be interviewed, despite follow-up contacts being made with the other two.

The contribution of the Enabler has been valued though the experience of assignment has highlighted the range of factors which can prolong project implementation, in this case, for example:

- complex issues relating to utilities and access
- ill-formed partnership arrangements
- lack of funding
- the retirement of the architect

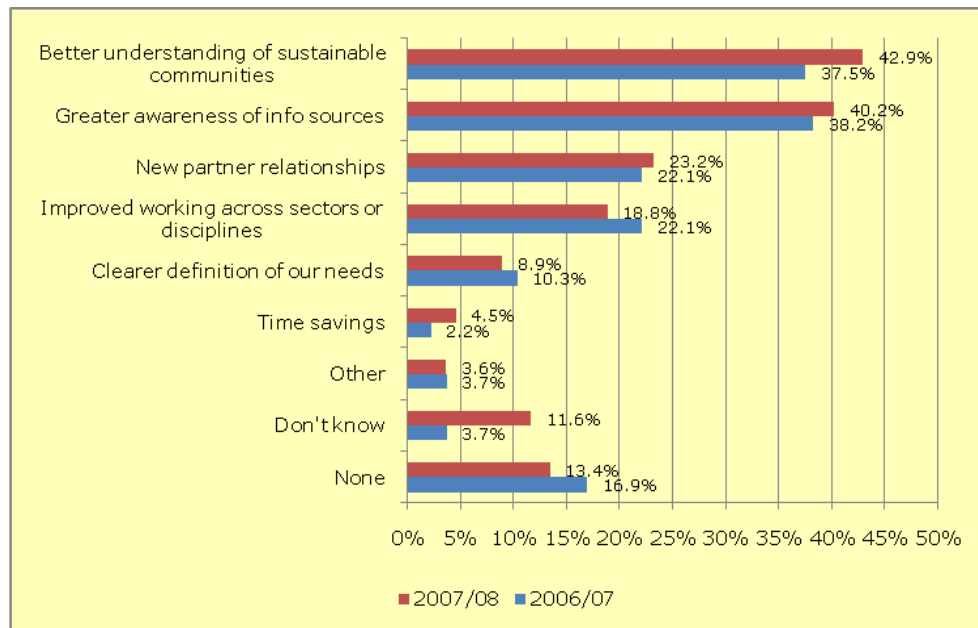## 3.5   Organisational benefits

Figure 3.8 illustrates the nature of organisational benefits gained by respondents. These have primarily been:

- 'better understanding of sustainable communities' (43%) and
- 'greater awareness of information sources' (40%)

…both slightly up on 2006 – and followed by:

- 'new partner relationships' (23%)
- 'improved working across sectors or disciplines' (19%)

Figure 3.8   Organisational benefits

Q. What are the main benefits that your organisation (or partnership) has gained through involvement with/ use of Inspire East services?
N = 112 (2007); 136 (2006)

These main benefits were also cited by a number of our stakeholder interviewees, with in the case of the Winter School, *"It was good for the participants and it gave the project sturdy legs"* (Chief Executive).

Comments from survey respondents included:

> *"We are aware that design is important and emphasising this is worth doing."*
> NOT STATED

> *"We have gained access to new networks and people who between them will contribute to future projects, both by way of their expertise and unique resources."*
> NOT STATED

> *"Generally, greater awareness of sustainability."*
> GROWTH AREA PARTNERSHIP MANAGER

> *"I have read about and contacted those responsible for sustainable house design; received information and made further contacts which will be pursued, and organised a site visit. This may result in new partnership with another organisation."*
> ARCHITECTS

> *"The fact that you exist, provides inspiration. We discuss who might go to the events – we think about the issues."*
> NOT STATED

> *"Confirmation … that we are on the right track regarding Sustainable Design."*
> NOT STATED

> *"Better sharing of information. Established networks and lines of communication."*
> COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WORKER

> *"Wider identification of potential partners. Better understanding of community development issues."*
> LOCAL AUTHORITY EXTERNAL FUNDING MANAGER

> *"Inspire East funded a consultant to work with us to set up a training programme for regional stakeholders. They are also partnering us in training workshops for LSPs to help embed sustainable development into Sustainable Community Strategies."*

GO EAST MANAGER

"Using Inspire East as advisor and delivery of training to organisations taking sustainability agenda forward."
AGENCY MANAGER

3.6 Personal benefits

Personal benefits gained from use of Inspire East services (Figure 3.9) have related primarily to:

- knowledge sharing through networking (51.8%)
- awareness of policy & research (41.1%)
- knowledge of concepts & techniques (38.4%)

– ratings which reflect the high proportion of respondents who have attended Inspire East events. These percentages have all increased since 2006. These types of benefit were followed by new contacts (33%), understanding of other sectors and disciplines (19.6%) and confidence/reassurance about their own activities (14.3%).

Figure 3.9   Personal benefits
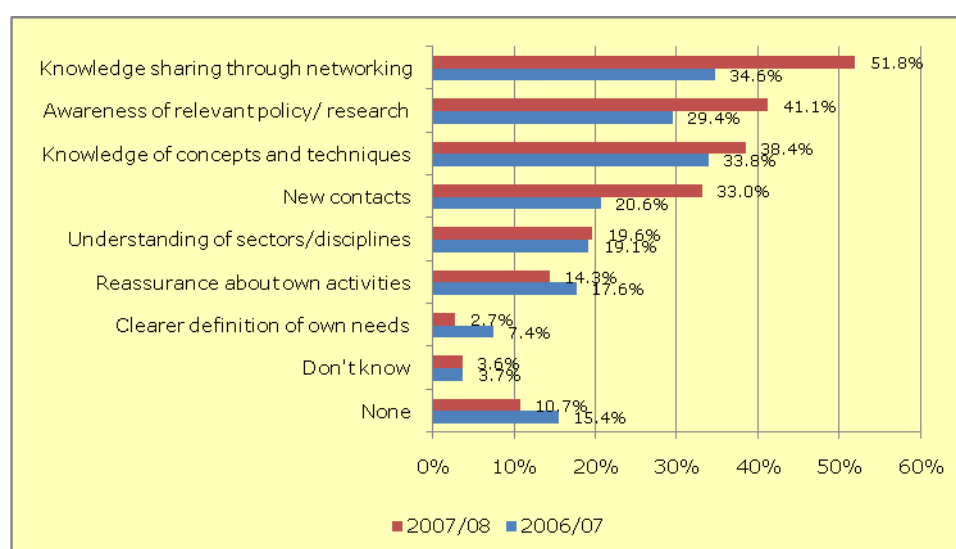
Q. What are the main benefits that you have gained personally through your use of Inspire East services? N = 112 (2007); 136 (2006)

Comments on personal benefits included:

"I have used consultation techniques that I learned at the Engaging Communities event."
LOCAL AUTHORITY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

"Ideas and terminology for applying for funding."
COMMUNITY CENTRE MANAGER

"Funding East is a great place where funders can meet and share/learn."
NOT STATED

3.6   Organisational improvements and results

In response to related questions,

- 69% reported that Inspire East had had at least a marginal influence on their own policies or practices (2% to a great extent; 26% to some extent; 41% at the margins)[49]
- 17% considered that their use of Inspire East services had led to specific improvements in their organisation or partnership (11% in 2006) – with a further 10% expecting improvements but thinking it too early to be sure

Types of improvement cited were: solution to a particular problem/ way forward identified (by 8% all users); improved service delivery (7%); improved project design (5%); success in attracting resources (5%); and more robust plans (4%). For two in five users, however, it was 'too early to say' whether or not Inspire East had contributed to any organisational improvements.

Quotes from survey respondents included:

> *"Clearer view of the sustainable community model, using this to influence Sustainable Community Strategy with the local authority."*
> NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGER

> *"Getting greater definition to our masterplan and regeneration framework."*
> INFRASTRUCTURE COMPANY DIRECTOR

> *"Design input has been extremely valuable, providing expertise where ours is lacking."*
> LA HEAD OF PLANNING & REGENERATION

> *"Community located multi-agency resource. Local residents taking forward community events and seeking funding for the future. Health services delivered in locality, supporting vulnerable community needs."*
> NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGER

> *"Networking through Funding East and information gained at Funding East events has shaped the way we deliver funding and development advice here. This has contributed to us being able to find a way of working which enables us to cope with high demand with limited service availability whilst not compromising the quality of the service we provide."*
> VOLUNTARY SECTOR FUNDING ADVISER

> *"Inspire East funding has enabled us to continue with a significant piece of research which will be used to assist organisations providing community support to disabled people or moving people from residential care to more independent ways of living to learn from our findings and develop best practice models of community support and transitions."*
> VOLUNTARY SECTOR MANAGER

> *"Inspire East's prompt in securing funding for our research/pilot project from the Academy for Sustainable Communities: this enabled me to quicken my organisation's agreement to go ahead with the work."*
> NOT STATED

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[49] This was higher than in 2006, though we note that options for response to the question were modified slightly. Previously the choice was 'Yes – to a great extent' and 'Yes – at the margins'; Yes – to some extent' was not offered.

In our stakeholder interviews we also gathered examples of influence. These included:

- the decision by one national professional institute to include sustainable development within its CPD specification
- mounting collaborative events, supported by Inspire East funding and contacts, and helping each partner to reach audiences which they would not otherwise have done

3.9 Additionality: what would have happened otherwise?

We asked respondents to consider what would have happened otherwise, had they not had access to the Inspire East services they used (Figure 3.10).

Figure 3.10   What would you have done without Inspire East?

N = 112
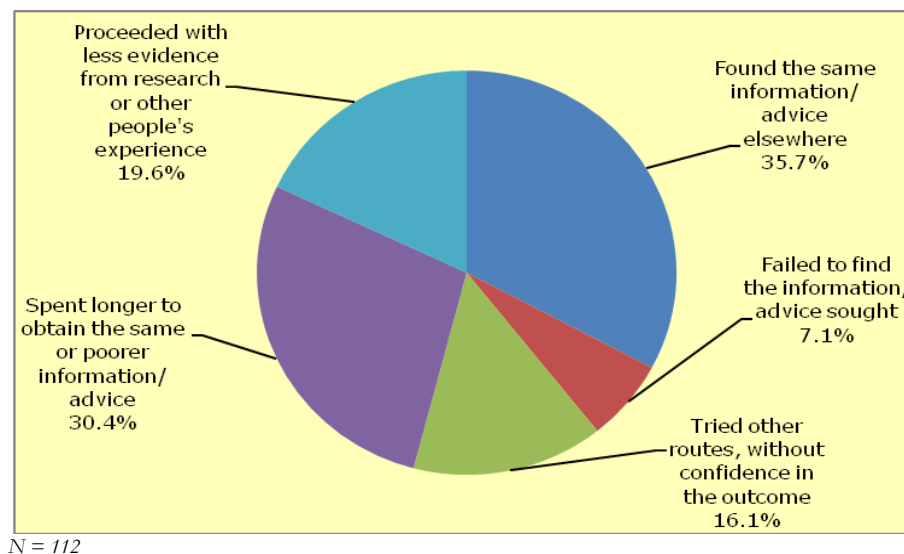
While this shows low *absolute* additionality, in that few felt that they would have failed completely to find the information/advice they needed, there is evidence of *relative* additionality, in providing better quality ideas, answers and evidence than respondents would have obtained otherwise. A good example of additionality from the interviews is the case of Regional Cities East: *"Without Inspire East we would not even have tried to tackle our own skills agenda. We'd have spotted the issue, but not taken it forward…They have been a great help to us"* (RCE Director).

3.8 Confidence in Inspire East impact

Given the period of time that it can take between someone taking advantage of Inspire East services and this tracking through to results, it is appropriate to ask for views about the *likelihood* that Inspire East will have an impact in (a) helping users and stakeholders achieve better outcomes in their efforts to promote sustainable communities, and (b) making a significant contribution to such outcomes throughout the region

Analysis shows that:

- six out of ten respondents (seven out of ten amongst users) consider that Inspire East will help them achieve better outcomes in promoting sustainable communities (Figure 3.11) – lower than in 2006

- two thirds are confident that Inspire East will make a significant contribution in promoting better community and physical development within the region (Figure 3.12)

Feedback from several interviewees suggests that stronger follow-up is needed to maximise the benefits and impact of projects that Inspire East has supported, eg, in ensuring that there is more of a legacy from the ESF generic skills programme and the introductory workshops with Business Link and Train to Gain brokers on skill needs in sustainable communities occupations.

Figure 3.11   Confidence in Inspire East help in achieving better outcomes
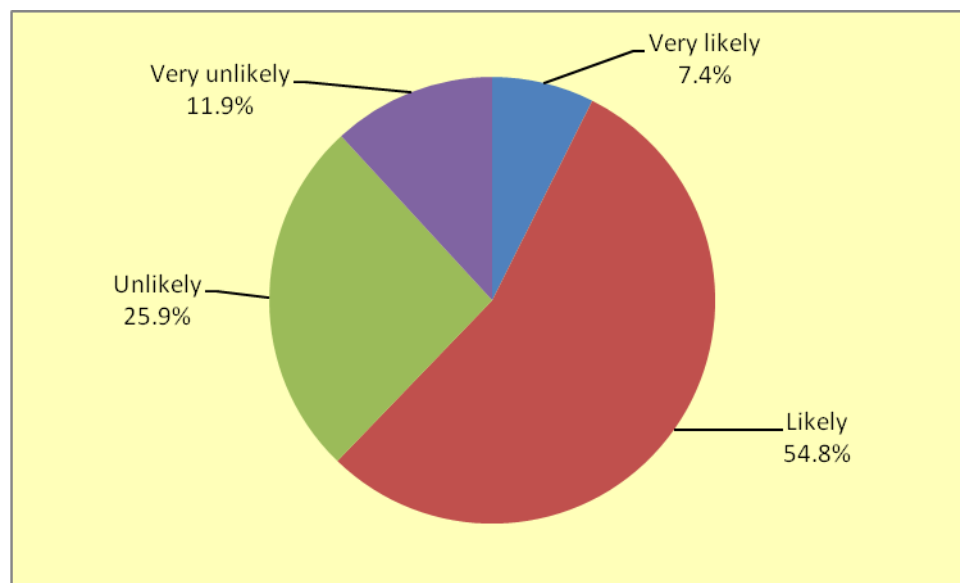
Q. How likely do you think it is that Inspire East will help you achieve better outcomes in promoting sustainable communities? N = 135

Figure 3.12   Confidence in Inspire East making a significant contribution to better community and physical development across the region
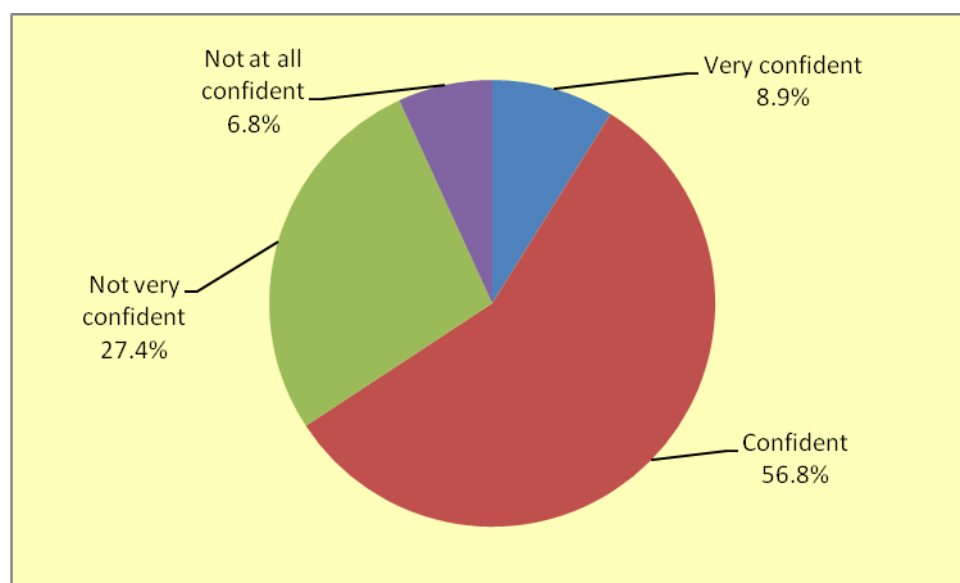
Q. To what extent are you confident that Inspire East will make a significant contribution in helping organisations in the region promote better community and physical development? N = 146

A proportion of people on the Inspire East mailing list are not yet convinced about what Inspire East has to offer. While 77% are 'very likely' or 'likely to use' to work with Inspire East or use Inspire East services in future, 19% think that they are 'not very likely', and 5% 'not at all likely', to do so.

3.9   Perceptions of Inspire East roles

The expectations of the future value of Inspire East are accompanied by positive perceptions of Inspire East's roles, especially with regard to promoting best practice and bridging sectors and disciplines.

We asked users and stakeholders to consider the extent to which they agreed with the following statements (Figure 3.13): "Inspire East…

(a) … is my first port of call in the region for information and events about sustainable communities
(b) … is effective in promoting and sharing best practice
(c) … helps to bridge differences between sectors, occupations and professions
(d) … is making progress in addressing skill gaps and skill shortages
(e) … provides credible leadership in promoting sustainable communities within the region

Figure 3.13   Perceptions of Inspire East roles
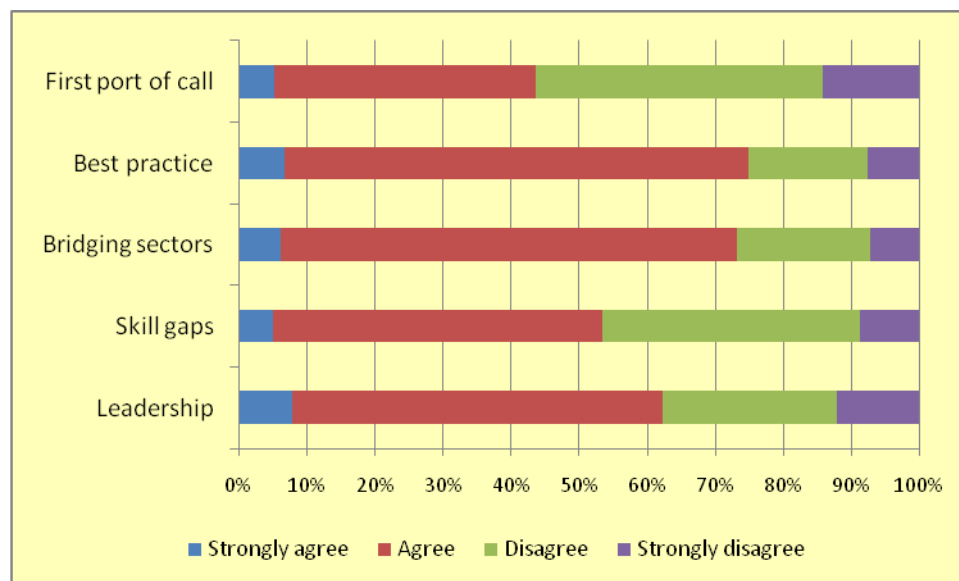
N = in range of 115-136

Highest levels of agreement were found for (b) promoting best practice (75%'strongly agreeing' or 'agreeing') and (c) bridging sectors (73%), followed by (e) leadership (62%). For most respondents Inspire East is not positioned as their 'first port of call' – though it is the norm that practitioners will tend to look first to their own professional or sector bodies before one which crosses all aspects of sustainable communities. There is an improvement on this, with 44% agreeing or strongly agreeing in 2007, compared with 36% in 2006. In contrast, confidence in Inspire East in tackling skill gaps has weakened slightly (53% agreeing or strongly agreeing, compared to 60% in 2006).

A further question asked about the extent to which Inspire East had influenced policies for sustainable communities at regional level. One in five reckoned that this has been the case 'significantly' or 'to some degree' (rising to three in ten amongst regional stakeholders), with only one in ten considering that there has been no influence. Well over half (62%), however, were 'don't knows' (45% for regional stakeholders).

3.11 Suggestions for improvement

Respondents in 2007 tended to have fewer suggestions for improvements that Inspire East might make than in 2006, when there were many relating to marketing. Also, requests for more attention to be paid to community aspects of the sustainable communities agenda were not repeated in the 2007 survey, reflecting the greater level of Inspire East activity on this theme this year.

There were a few general comments like,

> *"Keep at it!"*
> PRIVATE SECTOR DIRECTOR

> *"Thank you - difficult and complex issues associated with your work - please keep at it, your help/efforts are appreciated."*
> FE MANAGER

…accompanied by a few regrets from respondents that they not had enough time to take full advantage of what Inspire East has to offer:

> *"I am behind the goals of your organisation, but the main difficulty I see is mostly at our end (and probably at other similar organisations) where we are stretched in terms of resources and until this is resolved it makes it very difficult to engage further with organisations like yourselves. This is not a satisfactory position, but sadly is reality. I wish your organisation all the best for the future."*
> AREA PARTNERSHIP MANAGER

> *"I am sure Inspire East is an excellent resource and I would like to have made more use of it. Pressure of work means that I have not been able to seek out the resources that could be useful to me."*
> AGENCY MANAGER

Amongst the quotes that follow are some criticisms. While these were not commonly made points, they have value in prompting consideration of ways in which Inspire East might improve.

Marketing

Suggestions relating to **improving Inspire East promotion** included:

> *"Inspire East is not getting to the right people in local authorities - I don't have enough knowledge about what they can really do to help us."*
> *"Awareness-raising within local authorities at strategic director/executive member level. Offer longer term support for particular projects/activities in addition to one-off events."*
> LOCAL AUTHORITY SENIOR MANAGER

> *"Spread the word about its activities more."*
> PRIVATE SECTOR DIRECTOR

"Raise its profile so I understand what it can offer."
LA COUNCILLOR

"Be more proactive in promoting work direct to professionals rather than relying on word of mouth and website perhaps also through LPA."
NOT STATED

"Direct contact – needn't be too regular, but the usual medium of website/e-zine is insufficient."
VOLUNTARY SECTOR MANAGER

Marketing came through more strongly as an issue in our interviews, though several people noted that Inspire East was more 'on the radar' of their colleagues than it had been. There was some interest in joint publicity (eg, from the Home Builders Federation), and a few interviewees observed common challenges in attracting greater private sector involvement.

Views on promotion were sometimes linked to a few concerns relating to **the clarity of Inspire East's purpose and intended impact**. Comments from the survey included:

"Difficult to understand the overall aims and objectives of the organisation - they are a well run and good organisation, but not clear on their purpose."
LOCAL AUTHORITY MANAGER

"…excellent at ideas but lacks impact/ clarity of purpose."
NOT STATED

"As an organisation it is not very inspiring, it does not seem to have a clear vision or direction, it is not very well known within the public sector and does not have a very high profile."
"A clear vision and drive (Clear Objectives). Raising the profile of what you do Improve your website. Clarity about what the customers needs are. Plan, organise, control, review, evaluate generally."
LOCAL AUTHORITY OFFICER

"Unclear about role and aims of IE - them and me…"
"Clarity! More professionalism and less preciousness."
VOLUNTARY SECTOR MANAGER

Work programme

Suggestions for improvements to the work programme were relatively few and mainly related to the built environment.

"Inspire East is helping set the agenda, particularly in respect of its recent Annual Event and focus on sustainable living and a move towards reductions in carbon outputs. Having set the agenda, Inspire East might now consider doing even more to create better circumstances for individual action. Specifically, when future events are arranged, even more thought could be given to advance notification of public transport, car sharing schemes and choosing locations that already have good access."
NOT STATED

"Explore more clearly the local political impediments to better design quality, etc."
LOCAL AUTHORITY MANAGER

> *"Tackle planning failures and their resistance to creative architecture...Tackle poor planning knowledge at local planning departments, and their culture of power and authority."*
> ARCHITECT

> *"Designers need specific information about low-carbon components for buildings: which manufacturers, which installers, terms of warranties... Also need reliably up-to-date source for grant application information."*

> *"Sustainable houses have proved very successful and popular (eg, Lessons from Cambourne report): this needs publicising, and techniques promoted among private developers who do not have/take time to carry out research... It is critical that the developers of the 1000's of new houses to be built in the area should have state-of-the-art information resulting in the best possible low-carbon systems."*
> ARCHITECT

> *"Needs to work more closely with grass-roots groups. Especially in action-researching, supporting and enabling regional credit unions, community development initiatives and focusing on the disappointing statutory sector dismissal of central government's discussion paper, the Community Development Challenge."*
> SOCIAL ENTERPRISE MANAGER

Service delivery and targeting

Similarly, there were a few suggestions on service delivery and targeting:

> *"Target events to specific audiences. Engage inspirational speakers at events. Check the quality of speakers before engaging them. Try holding a speed networking event. Publicise the website more."*
> VOLUNTARY SECTOR MANAGER

> *"Build up database of case studies with technical details of best practice."*
> REGENERATION MANAGER

> *"More work needed to get parish councillors aware of the impact they can make in helping their communities. Help to help them as they are all busy people trying to sustain their communities in their free time!"*
> PARISH CLERK

> *"It's all well and good promoting sustainable communities and best practice, but what would be really useful to front line officers whose job it is to deliver housing/facilities on the ground are the practical skills needed to make the communities sustainable. Less talk and studies and more doing would be helpful."*
> LOCAL AUTHORITY OFFICER

4. Conclusions & Recommendations

4.1 Reporting on the evaluation

Table 4.1 summarises key findings relating to the different elements of the Inspire East evaluation framework. The chapter proceeds to comment on Inspire East's impact, quality of services, future prospects, and recommendations relating to strategy (is Inspire East doing the right things?) and management (is Inspire East doing things right?).

Table 4.1   Inspire East Evaluation Framework: key survey findings 2007

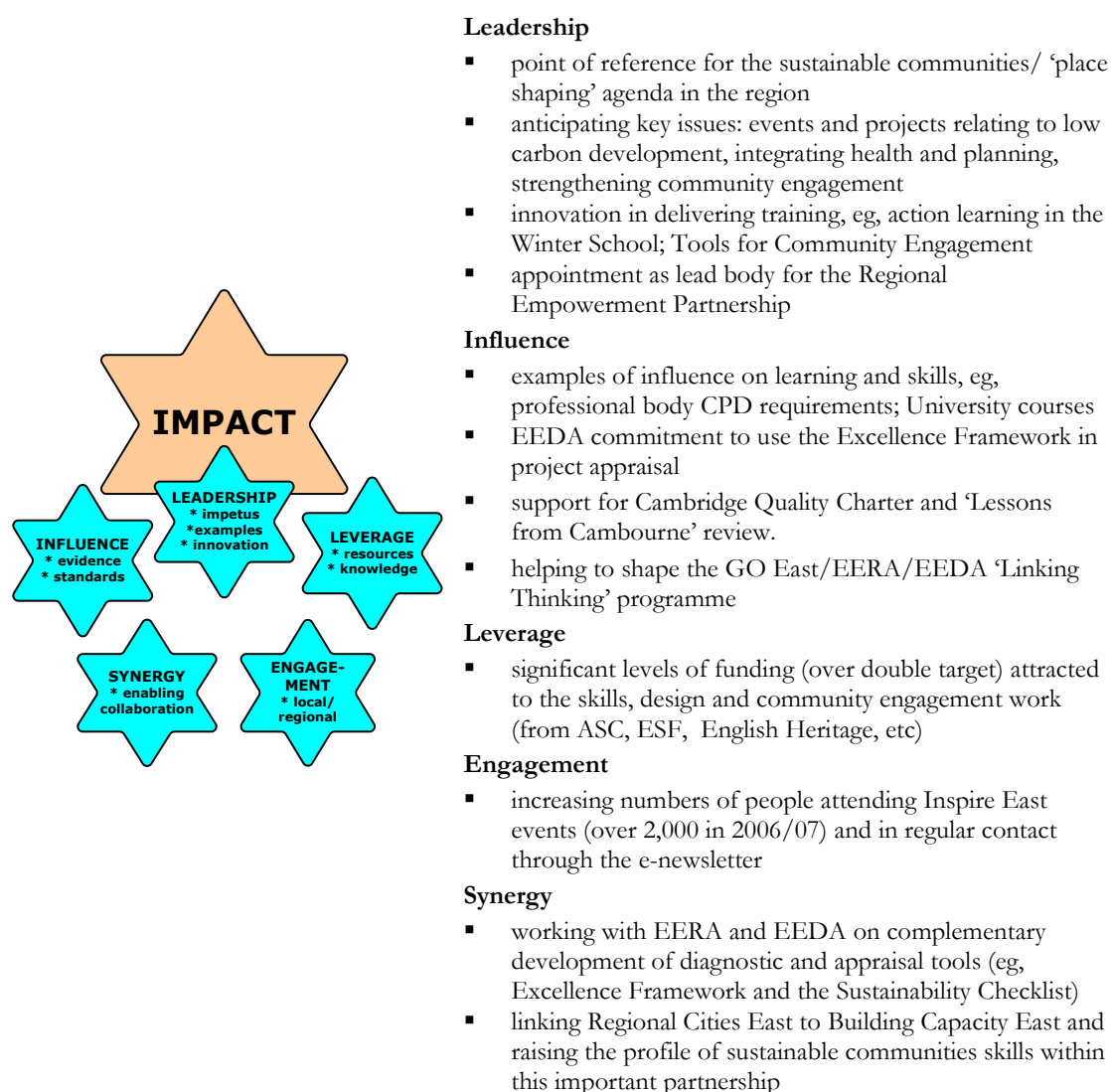| Aspects to the evaluation	Indicators	Evidence
Awareness	▪ level of awareness of Inspire East	▪ slight increase in levels of awareness of Inspire East – many people reporting 'just a little' ▪ most awareness relates to events
Activity	▪ events/ participants ▪ design/ enabling projects, etc	▪ nearly 2,100 attendees at IE events in 2006/07, exceeding targets
Quality	▪ user satisfaction ▪ recommendations	▪ slight increase on satisfaction levels (now averaging 3.25 out of 5)
Individual benefits	▪ networking, cross-sector understanding, skill gains, confidence	▪ benefits primarily sharing knowledge through networking (52%, up from 35%), greater awareness of policy and research (41%, was 29%)
Organisational benefits/ results	▪ improved design; problems solved, etc ▪ influence over policies/ practices on own organisation	▪ benefits mainly 'better understanding of sustainable communities' (43%) and 'greater awareness of information sources' (40%), up from 2006 ▪ 69% reported at least a marginal influence on their own policies or practices (up from 43%), ▪ 17% report specific improvements in their organisation or partnership
Regional influence	▪ influence on policies & standards of development ▪ confidence in IE contribution ▪ Strategic Added Value (SAV)	▪ two thirds confident that Inspire East will make a significant contribution in promoting better community and physical development within the region ▪ for SAV see, Table 4.2 below

4.2 Impact

Impact made by Inspire East

Reviewing the work of Inspire East to date shows **increased momentum and impressive levels of activity**, which are attracting significant numbers of people as participants in events and users of the Inspire East website. There is, however, less (direct) evidence of this level of activity being converted into improved practice and policies. This reflects a number of factors: eg, the nature of Inspire East activities, the lead time for changes in policies and practices relating to physical investment to be reflected in improved standards of actual development, and the early stages of building Inspire East's reputation and influence.

The Strategic Added Value provided by Inspire East has so far related primarily to 'engagement' (numbers of people involved with Inspire East to some degree) and

'leverage' (attraction of additional funding). We note that leverage in future may be limited by the proposed absorption of the Academy for Sustainable Communities within the Homes and Communities Agency and new priorities for the European Social Fund.

Table 4.2   Summary of Inspire East Strategic Added Value

Leadership

- point of reference for the sustainable communities/ 'place shaping' agenda in the region
- anticipating key issues: events and projects relating to low carbon development, integrating health and planning, strengthening community engagement
- innovation in delivering training, eg, action learning in the Winter School; Tools for Community Engagement
- appointment as lead body for the Regional Empowerment Partnership

Influence

- examples of influence on learning and skills, eg, professional body CPD requirements; University courses
- EEDA commitment to use the Excellence Framework in project appraisal
- support for Cambridge Quality Charter and 'Lessons from Cambourne' review.
- helping to shape the GO East/EERA/EEDA 'Linking Thinking' programme

Leverage

- significant levels of funding (over double target) attracted to the skills, design and community engagement work (from ASC, ESF, English Heritage, etc)

Engagement

- increasing numbers of people attending Inspire East events (over 2,000 in 2006/07) and in regular contact through the e-newsletter

Synergy

- working with EERA and EEDA on complementary development of diagnostic and appraisal tools (eg, Excellence Framework and the Sustainability Checklist)
- linking Regional Cities East to Building Capacity East and raising the profile of sustainable communities skills within this important partnership

Our view is that Inspire East is filling a role which would not be filled in the region otherwise in supporting networks and running events on sustainable communities topics.

We note also appreciation from a few bodies that Inspire East has enabled them to do things that they would not have been able to do otherwise or on the same scale or rate of progress (relevant to the 'leadership' SAV criterion). These include the Papworth Trust in evaluating their Foundation for Living project and the East of England Faiths Council.

4.2   Service quality

Evidence from event feedback shows favourable ratings, with the stakeholder survey demonstrating that Inspire East is moving in the right direction on stakeholder awareness and user satisfaction, though without major improvements on the 2006 survey. The responses on quality indicators suggest that there is **scope to improve understanding of user needs**.

The survey suggested that a **significant proportion of people on the Inspire East mailing list have as yet limited experience of Inspire East**, and there is still a **need to increased reach and take-up of Inspire East services within EEDA and GO East**.

4.3   Prospects for impact

There continues to be considerable goodwill towards Inspire East, and evidence that Inspire East is bringing focus within the region to the sustainable communities agenda. Importantly, our interviews brought out **the views of regional stakeholders that Inspire East is establishing its reputation as** *"an organisation we can work with"*, accompanied by compliments about the quality of its staff and their willingness to 'go out of their way' to get things done. This perception is important, and is reinforced by the views of Inspire East staff that they find relationships easier, with less need to explain Inspire East and persuade people to work with them or respond readily to contacts they make.

This provides a platform on which Inspire East can build, as is the level of confidence amongst stakeholders in the likelihood that Inspire East will make a difference. This is stronger amongst organisations operating at regional level.

Future impact notably depends on:

- setting out to shape the agenda on a small number of key issues in the region, with a particular emphasis on solutions that Inspire East can provide, or enable others to find
- maintaining reasonably high levels of activity, providing opportunities for people to be engaged and gain the networking benefits they seek
- focusing on activities which are more likely to lead to impact, in terms of learning applied
    - capitalising on the Excellence Framework:
        - through training and support in its use (the training to be run with EEDA staff is especially important) – and
        - as a unifying tool in Inspire East's work (including in shaping further work on good practice development of the website development)
    - seeking to maximise the practical value of Design Review and Enabling Services, not just for the individual projects involved but for wider demonstration and learning
- strengthening the cross-sector and cross-profession dimensions of Inspire East's work
- stronger follow-up and dissemination to make the most of projects supported, be they skills or good practice initiatives
- targeting activities and audiences in support of these principles

We also note that there are dangers in pursuing targets for participants in learning events which could be, on balance, too high. The consequence could be success in counting 'bottoms on seats' but failing to get the 'right bottoms', especially people who are most likely to be able to influence policies and practices in the region.

4.4   Doing the right things?

Inspire East has a constant challenge in determining what are the 'right things' for it to pursue: the sustainable communities agenda is so broad that there are many possibilities. The organisation has developed a better sense of where it can best make a difference, and how to get there. It is making progress in carving out a distinctive niche, important in a context where there are many other bodies with an interest in at least part of the agenda, some of which provide related services.

However, there remain concerns, amongst Advisory Board members, staff, users and stakeholders that **more focus and tighter priorities are needed**. This is not easy, given the range of opportunities and lack of strong steers from outside the organisation.

There is **scope for Inspire East to play more of a 'think tank' and advocacy role.** This would be welcomed by EEDA at board/ senior management level, who see a 'challenge' function as important in driving higher levels of success in the region in future – even if sometimes arguments made could be regarded as an irritant.

This would require Inspire East to become more proactive in seeking to set the agenda – and help develop solutions – on a small number of key issues. It would help to have a clearer articulation of where Inspire East is seeking to make an impact, and in what ways. What more can Inspire East do to 'inspire' the actions and behaviours that will be needed to achieve the changes most appropriate to the organisation's mission? – eg, in:

- raising design standards and the quality of new development, especially in growth areas
- responding to skill gaps, especially in relation to those highlighted by emerging understanding of what is required for successful 'place making', and also in providing a regional response to national work by the Academy for Sustainable Communities on generic skill gaps
- promoting cross-sector and cross-disciplinary learning, including an effective partnership for cross-profession CPD and acting as a catalyst for more coherent HE provision within the region
- influencing practice by local authorities, public agencies, and developers on community engagement and means of ensuring that local communities benefit as fully as possible from new development

Ensuring that there is full recognition of these roles within the Delivery Framework for the new RES, and in the other regional strategies under review, provides a good test for Inspire East in widening recognition of its strategic contributions in the region.

Maximising influence

It is worth reviewing how Inspire East can do more maximise its influence, thinking about (a) what the organisation wishes to influence, and (b) the ways in which it can bring this to bear (Table 4.3). Several interviewees remarked on the **need and potential to help 'join up' relevant skills provision** in the region.

In line with current Inspire East thinking, implications include capitalising on the potential of the Design Review and Enabling Services, in ways which have regional

impact, and the use of the Excellence Framework as a tool to build capacity and drive higher standards.

Table 4.3   Sources and methods of influence

Sources and methods of influence	
Sources	
Resources ▪ people ▪ skills	▪ sufficient staff with time to devote to relationship management and be in the 'right places at the right time' ▪ staff with high level influencing, advocacy and presentational skills
Position	▪ track record in project delivery ▪ strong 'word of mouth' on quality of events, reports, website, etc ▪ perceived relevance to meeting user needs
Networks/ contacts	▪ strength (range and depth) of contacts with practitioners and decision-makers
Methods	
Vision and inspiration	▪ compelling IE events – good programmes, high quality speakers, contributors from outside the region/ abroad; use of study visits ▪ IE contributions to events, regional partnership meetings, etc ▪ quality of speakers at IE events ▪ key issue publications (with associated publicity), drawing attention to the 'state of play' in the region, current challenges and solutions
Persuasion	▪ use of marketing and influencing skills to generate interest and desire to act amongst key members of IE's audience
Evidence	▪ data, analysis and intelligence supporting the need for change and improvement ▪ well-presented good practice which users feel that they can act on
Personal behaviour	▪ style of working which reinforces good working relationships and IE brand values
Negotiation/ formal agreements	▪ appropriate in managing partnership projects, especially where these are complex and/or involve significant risks to reputation/ track record
Alliances	▪ appropriate where there may be longer term advantages in developing programmes of work with other bodies, to mutual advantage

There are also implications for how Inspire East approaches its role, including demands on staff, in being yet more proactive, persistent, authoritative and assertive. This will be required especially in activities to engage more senior officers in local authorities and the private sector. There are also hints from interviews of a need to understand more – and work with – the needs and agendas of other organisations.

Members of the Advisory Board have a key role to play, in backing the advocacy function and in playing a personal role in extending Inspire East's influence. They have recognised the scope to play a bigger role (discussed at the September board meeting), and in some cases may welcome more of a one-to-one briefing session.

Potentially more can be made of the contributions of members of Inspire East's advisory groups, linked to specific strands of work. Not all members of these groups are well-informed about the work of Inspire East.

4.5   Doing things right? (a) Marketing and reputation

Despite the level of activity in the past year, the regular e-newsletter and more press releases, **there is still a significant need to strengthen Inspire East marketing**, not just the promotion part of the 'marketing mix' but also *personal selling* of what Inspire East has to offer and developing *customer intelligence*/ market research.

Actions should include:

- strengthening customer orientation, including towards the private sector
- more concerted and frequent use of press releases (building on the – valued – support of the EEDA marketing team), where appropriate, going for *national* media
- taking a structured approach to identifying the needs of key customers, including *across* EEDA and GO East teams
- finding ways to strengthen logging, developing and sharing customer intelligence, exploiting possibilities in current IT systems (see 4.7 below)

Staff have become more publicity-conscious but recognise that they do not give promotional activity the consistent priority it warrants. They also recognise that they need to have sharper sales messages which convey better what Inspire East has to offer and has achieved (which can be used not just by staff but also by Board members, EEDA staff, and other supporters). The concept of 'place shaping' appears to be striking a chord in discussions with stakeholders.

Several interviewees remarked on the need for more engagement by Inspire East at sub-regional level and with individual councils – which fits emerging thinking in Inspire East on geographical targeting.

4.6 Doing things right? (b) Services

Events

Feedback appears to suggest that **Inspire East is 'getting a lot of things right' in organising events**. Several innovations have proved successful, eg, with the approach to the Winter School and learning laboratory work; and where innovations have been less successful (such as the electronic voting at the annual conference), staff have learnt from this.

A cause for concern, however, is that **event feedback and the stakeholder survey point to a gap in addressing participant needs and meeting their expectations to the full**. There may be more scope for sounding out prospective participants and reviewing why participants have noted that their expectations have been only partly met.

Experiments in charging for events have worked, with applicants having to be turned down well in advance of the day because all places had been booked. **A higher proportion of income can be generated from events** (fees for more events and at higher rates, lower for voluntary and community organisations) without compromising Inspire East services.

The programming of events needs to be improved, in that in both 2006/07 and 2007/08, events have been predominantly scheduled for the later part of the year. More could be planned for the autumn, evening up some of the pressures on staff over the course of the year.

Linked to the points above about influence, there may be **scope to run more events linked to current policy developments**, in some cases timed to coincide with specific consultations. (Current examples, eg, include Streamlining Local Development

Frameworks, the Community Infrastructure Levy, and the draft statutory guidance relating to sustainable community strategies). These can serve several purposes in attracting the desired audiences, and generating surpluses to contribute to the Inspire East budget. Some policy developments lend themselves to attracting the private sector, not least on low carbon development and community engagement in the planning process.

Website

While website use is increasing, there are questions about the value of different parts of the site for users, not least when weighed against the staff time that is required in keeping each element up to date. The survey findings also suggest that there are not many people visiting the site frequently, though the e-newsletter appears to be prompting additional use.

As an example of one use of the website, we contacted all the Funding East mentors, who volunteered to act as advisers for people new to bidding or to acting as funding advisers themselves. None of the sixteen had any approaches as a consequence of the website.

There is a **need to review the content of the website**, and test user reactions to options for new and deleted elements. There were no specific comments in the user survey to provide steers for this. Ways of promoting more frequent use of the site should be considered.

Design Review & Enabling

Progress in rolling out the Design Review service has been slower and on a lower scale than originally anticipated, due this year to a staff shortage. It is also the case that successful outcomes can take a long time to be realised, given development cycles. What with necessary confidentiality of projects put to the panel, there are resultant difficulties in providing many actual examples of benefits for promotional purposes[50]. The service has not yet reached the critical mass of projects to enable this, or to ensure that there are enough lessons and good practice from the service for wider dissemination.

A **more proactive and strategic approach is needed to sourcing projects for the Review process**, and ensuring that projects come to the Panel at an early enough stage for the Panel's advice to be most useful. There is scope to attract more private sector projects, to bring more EEDA-related projects through the system, and to concentrate target projects in priority growth and renewal areas within the region. Feedback from people who have been through the Review process also highlights the need to ensure that panel feedback is as practical and oriented to specific sites as possible.

4.7   Doing things right? (c) Systems

Customer intelligence

A necessary step in strengthening marketing is to **improve customer intelligence**. Currently little can be done to analyse details of the Inspire East contact list, held on the

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[50] There are no examples of actual (or illustrative) Design Review projects on the website currently.

EEDA Customer Relationship Management system. A range of key questions cannot, or cannot readily be answered at the moment, such as:

- who are Inspire East's users?
- what are their characteristics: types of organisation? job roles? authority within their organisations? location?
- how frequently do they attend Inspire East events?
- in what other ways are they involved with Inspire East or using Inspire East services?

It has been possible to undertake a very rough and ready analysis for the evaluation (see Appendix A), but this could be improved, eg, by introducing a simple coding structure. This would enable more targeted approaches to marketing in future and to develop sample frames for future market research and evaluation. It would also be useful in analysing where they may be gaps in the coverage of the mailing list. Regular pruning of the list is also needed to ensure that the e-newsletter and target mailings are received by people who want them.

Monitoring and evaluation

Inspire East has made progress in developing systems within the organisation, including performance monitoring and evaluation, this having been raised as an issue in the 2006 evaluation. The need was recognised for active and systematic gathering of evidence of Inspire East's value, including enquiries handled, cases of strategic influence, and the introduction of standard procedures in reviewing events, major services and projects. Core evaluation questions have been introduced into events monitoring, and evaluation put into place for the biggest new project, Micro-Coaches (including, eg, a 'before and after' method of assessing gains in skills).

However, these **monitoring and evaluation methods are not being implemented consistently, and need to be** – they lose their value if they are not carried out. The system of recording SAV is not yet operational, and in the case of events feedback, it was assumed at the outset of this evaluation that there would be analyses of feedback available consistently for each event. This did not prove to be the case, and only a partial analysis of events was possible. There needs to be clear responsibility for ensuring that these records are maintained – and *used*, with periodic reviews of what analysis of event feedback has to say and where improvements could be made.

The similarities in the responses to the 2006 and 2007 surveys suggest it may be worth reconsidering the timing of the next one (shifting it to early summer or autumn 2009). Evaluation should not be given lower priority, and resources could usefully be devoted to a **rolling programme of service reviews**, programming, for instance, work on the website, Design Review and the Excellence Framework, and ensuring regular reviews of feedback from events.

4.8   Maximising value

As we indicate above, thinking through **how best to maximise Inspire East's value** remains important, in a context where much of what Inspire East does is intangible and more likely to bear greater fruit in the medium rather than short term. There are implications for project planning and strategies for dissemination: how best to promote

change and better practices? There is balance to be struck between achieving outputs (Inspire East needs to continue to demonstrate tangible success) and strengthening qualitative impact through influencing practices, policies and skills supply. Keys are to think more in terms of 'investments' that Inspire East makes through use of staff time and project budgets: how can we ensure a better return on what we do?

It remains important to illustrate **what Inspire East brings to EEDA,** as EEDA's role evolves in the light of the Sub-National Review and in the implementation of the Regional Economic Strategy. This would highlight, eg, Inspire East's contributions to building delivery capacity within the region, and to tackling major challenges in creating sustainable communities and renewing existing ones. Evidence of improving quality in physical development, in community engagement, addressing skills gaps and supporting private sector involvement in growth and regeneration areas are important aspects – which Inspire East should be increasingly able to show.

Appendix A   User/ Stakeholder Survey Respondent Details

A.1   Survey mailing

Net total of e-mail addresses mailed = 2,437 (figure excludes 'undeliverable' messages)

Figure A.1   Approximate breakdown of Inspire East mailing list contacts
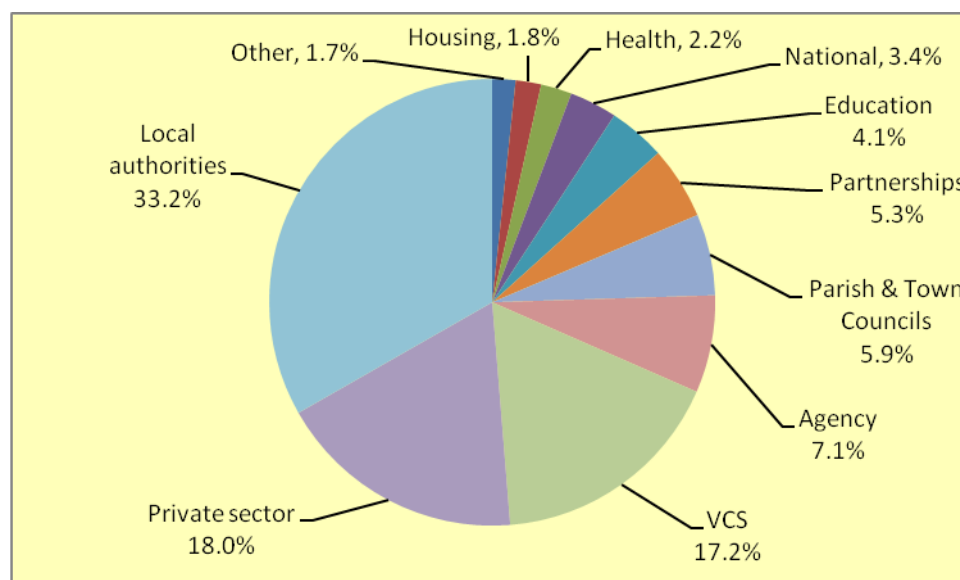
The mailing list comprises all organisations and individuals in receipt of the Inspire East newsletter, generated through past contacts, recommendations and 'cold' additions from supplied mailing lists. It also includes a number of national organisations who are not likely to be users or beneficiaries of Inspire East activities and services.

Responses: 162, plus 1 after deadline. (The late respondent, along with one Advisory Board member and two contractors were excluded from the analysis.) Three others e-mailed to decline to complete the questionnaire.

Response rate of 6.8%.
[Data for comparison from the 2006 survey: 1,674. Response rate = 10.2%]

Survey period:

10 October to 23 October 2007. (The corresponding survey period in 2006 was 27 November - 8 December.)

Job responsibilities of mailing list contacts

The Inspire East mailing list (and records on the Customer Relationship Management system) does not differentiate between actual users, potential users of services and contacts being 'kept informed' (such as in DCLG or the Academy for Sustainable Communities). Nor is it possible to use the Inspire East system to sort contacts, eg, by job title, department/ function, profession, etc. We have, however, produced an approximate breakdown of organisations and job responsibilities, gleaning information from organisational names, e-mail addresses and job titles.

Figure A.1   Job responsibilities of mailing list contacts
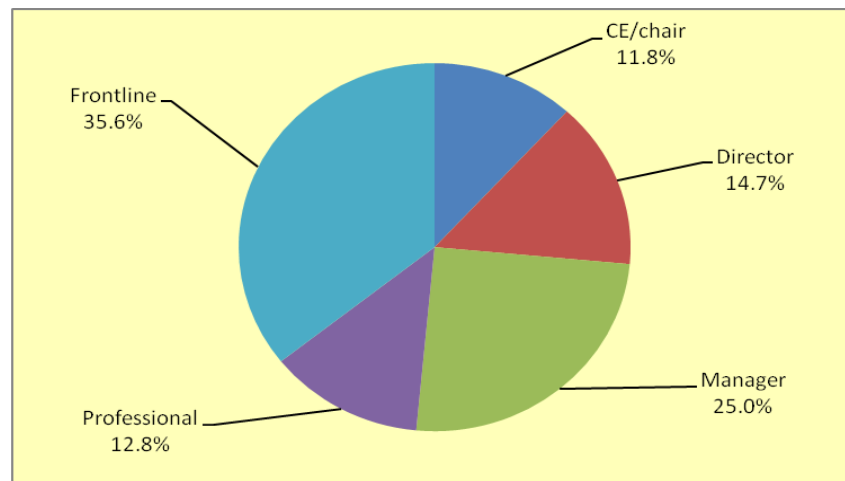
*Source: Inspire East mailing list. N = 2,300 where job titles provided*

As the mailing list has expanded in the past year, it has significantly increased the proportion of staff in frontline/ non-managerial roles.

The analysis of the mailing list cannot be used directly as a basis for comparison of response rates by 'job responsibility' category, as (a) full job information is not provided on the Inspire East database; and (b) the survey invited people to self-classify.

The professionals category is used to classify those in jobs requiring chartered professional status, but not employed as managers. Hence the percentage for professionals will be understated as many managers and directors will also have such status.

A.2   Respondent characteristics
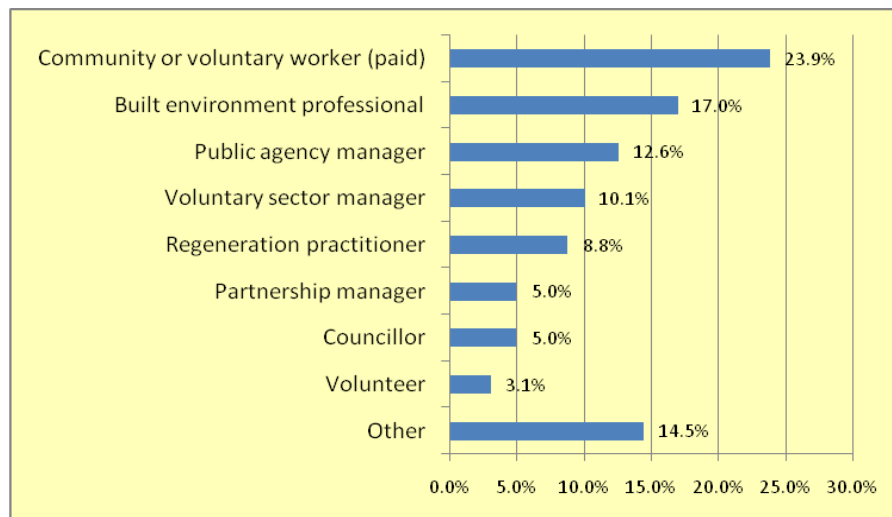
Involvement with/ use of Inspire East

Figure A.2   Respondent involvement with Inspire East
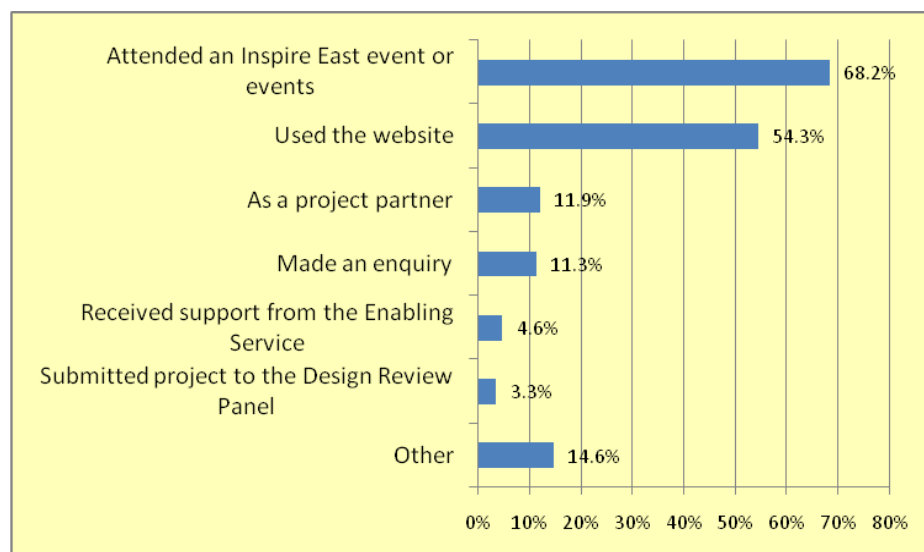
N = 151

These percentages are broadly in line with those for 2006, though with increases in particular on events attendance and use of the website.

Role in sustainable communities

**Figure A.3   Respondent roles in sustainable communities**

The 'Other' category included parish clerks, FE, researchers, environmental scientists, people working in the police/ community safety, one builder and one developer.

The proportion of respondents relating to the voluntary and community sector (community/voluntary workers; voluntary sector managers and volunteers) at 37.1%, is double that in 2006, reflecting the increased level of Inspire East activity on community development.

Employing organisation

Figure A.4   Employing organisations of respondents
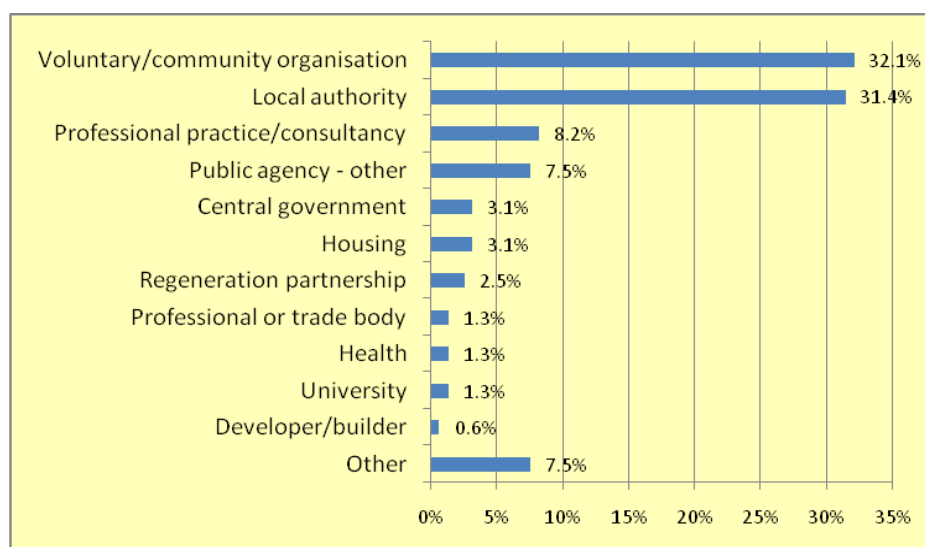
Q. In what type of organisation do you work? N = 159

The voluntary and community sectors and local authorities each account for almost a third of respondents. The local authority proportion is similar to 2006, while the voluntary and community sector has doubled. There was at least one response from 16 out of 53 local authorities (30% of authorities which were contacted). (The corresponding proportion for 2006 was 43%.)

The 'Other' category includes a health club, school, FE college, mentoring forum and a community safety partnership.
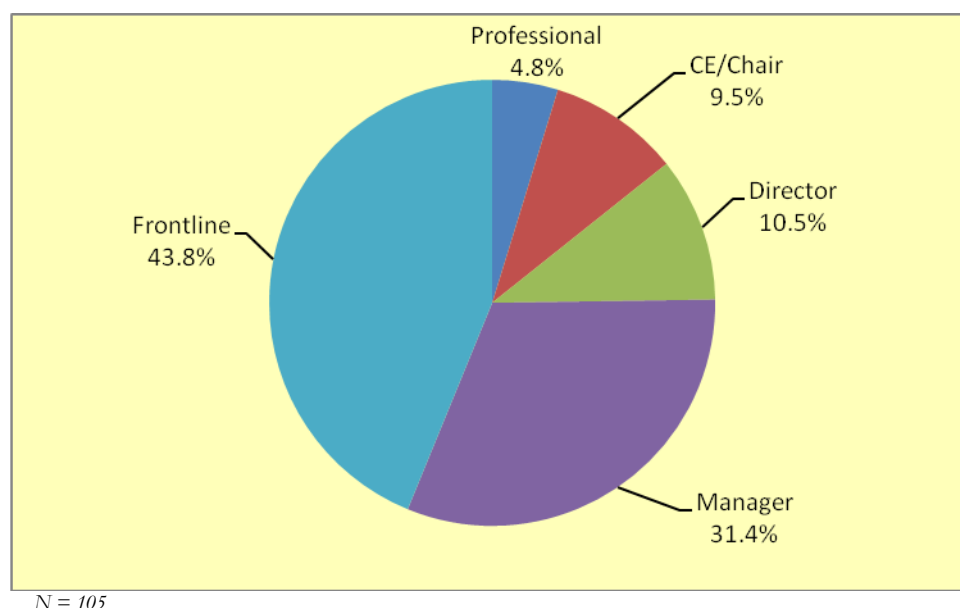
Sector

Split by public/private/voluntary sector employers

- Public 57.2% (55.8% in 2006)
- Private 10.7% (20.9% in 2006)
- Voluntary 32.1% (23.3% in 2006)

Job responsibility

Respondents were asked to provide their job title – given in 105 instances (112 in 2006). Figure A.5 presents a *rough* breakdown for these.

Figure A.5   Job responsibility of respondents

N = 105

The largest set of responses (44%) came from people variously in front-line/ non-management jobs, up from 27% in 2006. The proportion of managers is the same (31%), while that for chief executives and directors has fallen slightly (from 26% to 20%). The proportion for professionals (ie, professionals who are not also managers) has fallen.

Length of time in sustainable communities/regeneration

Figure A.6   Respondent experience in sustainable communities/ regeneration
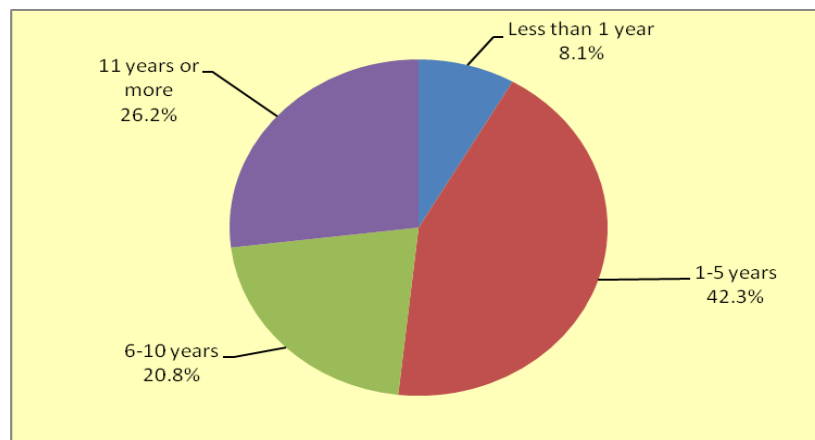
Q. How long have you been involved in sustainable communities/regeneration as part of your job? N = 145

The largest category, accounting for two in five, have been involved in sustainable communities/ regeneration for between one and five years. (In addition, 10 responded that 'sustainable communities/regeneration' is not part of their job.) The proportions are broadly similar to 2006.

Membership of professional bodies

Just under a third (32.9%) are members of a professional body (51.6% in 2006), with the RTPI accounting for one in three of these respondents, RIBA, one in seven, and RICS one in eleven. The spread of responses is otherwise similar to 2006, with no other professional body notable for its presence.

Location

The largest grouping (just over a quarter) of respondents relates to those operating region-wide, followed by Norfolk of all the sub-regions. This is similar to 2006.

Figure A.8   Location of respondents
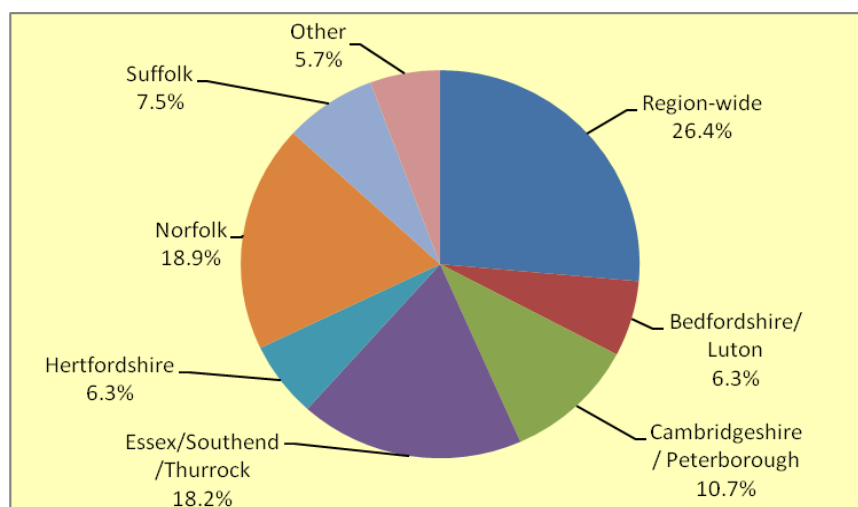
Q. In which part of the region do you work? N = 159

Ethnicity

White	89.3%
Mixed	1.3%
Asian or Asian British	1.9%
Black or Black British	1.3%
Other ethnic	1.3%
Non-response	5.0%

Q. What ethnic group are you? N = 159

'Non-white' categories, at 6%, is slightly lower than the regional average (7%) (source: Ethnicity in the East of England, Cambridgeshire County Council for MENTER, 2005). (This percentage was 8% in 2006.)

Appendix B   Inspire East Evaluation Framework

Extract from 'Inspire East Evaluation Framework and Initial Impact Assessment' (January 2007)

Thinking through Inspire East services to impact

Figure 3 sets out the elements of an evaluation 'logic model' for reviewing the quality and impact of Inspire East, incorporating a logic chain connecting factors affecting whether or not someone would decide to use an Inspire East service through – directly or indirectly – to organisational changes and sustainable community outcomes[51].

The model highlights the **need to understand the connections between**:

- **stimuli to individuals and organisations/partnerships in recognising their needs for information, advice and skills** (1 and 2). Recognition of such needs may be influenced, eg, by personal commitment and learning orientation and by organisational leaders placing priority on improving standards and learning from practice elsewhere
- **factors determining decisions to act on needs identified** (3), including awareness of Inspire East services; time to pursue their interest, or attend an event; and the availability of alternative sources of assistance (eg, within professional institutes or other networks)
- the **quality of the service** provided (4)
- **individual and organisational influences** (5 and 6) on the likelihood that information and learning gained from the Inspire East service will be applied successfully, including the ability of individuals to absorb and apply new knowledge and whether organisational cultures are conducive to innovation and taking on board external advice
- **benefits for individuals** (7): gains in personal confidence, skills and knowledge and networking
- **organisational benefits** (8), eg, in improving plans and projects, in cross-sector working and understanding
- ultimately, **sustainable community outcomes** (9), eg, in better quality physical development, residents more satisfied with local quality of life, reporting greater engagement in community affairs

Success for Inspire East will also be found through **influencing behaviour through 'feedback loops'**, whereby successful delivery of Inspire East services generates further demand for these services and strengthens individual and organisational commitment to raise standards and put learning into practice.

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[51] It relates to the 'classic' model of training evaluation developed by Donald Kirkpatrick, modified for the purposes of the Inspire East evaluation. See Tamkin and others (2002) 'Kirkpatrick and Beyond: A review of models of training evaluation' Institute of Employment Studies.

Figure B.1   Thinking through take-up and benefits from Inspire East services
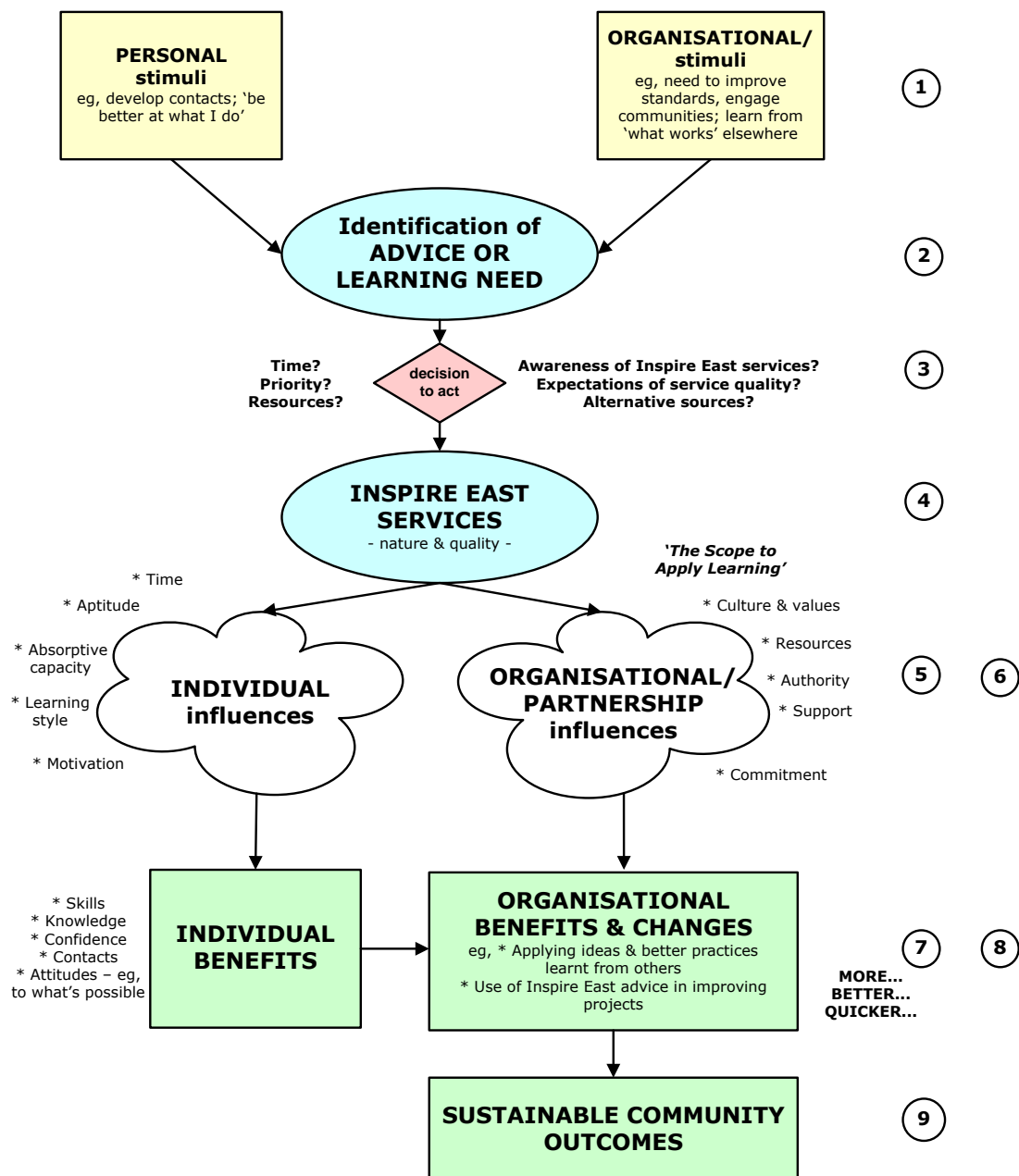
Strategic added value

While the logic model above stresses understanding the factors which affect whether or not *individuals and organisations* benefit from Inspire East services, there are wider dimensions to consider, where Inspire East activities can influence wider policies and thinking which lead less directly to improvements in outcomes.

In line with guidance on RDA evaluation[52], it is possible to consider several dimensions of strategic added value that Inspire East can create:

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[52] PA & SQW for DTI (2006) *Evaluating the impact of England's Regional Development Agencies: Developing a Methodology and Evaluation Framework*

- **strategic leadership/catalyst**: making things happen that would not otherwise have occurred; acting as a platform for innovation and cross-sector working
- **strategic influence:** informing relevant policy, plans and practices, including priority given to sustainable communities principles and improving regional provision of learning opportunities
- **leverage**: of resources, knowledge and expertise
- **engagement**: of stakeholders, with Inspire East established in the forefront of their minds
- **synergy**: capitalising on the links across activities and helping partners join up their approaches to sustainable communities

It is essential that Inspire East build a body of evidence drawing out these aspects, through logging 'case studies' of such roles and using 'testimonials' and further research amongst users and stakeholders to strengthen internally generated information.

Evaluation Framework

It follows from the approach above that it is important to capture several angles in evaluating the work of Inspire East. These must include:

- levels of awareness of Inspire East services amongst users, potential users and other influential stakeholders
- output data, covering the range of Inspire East activities
- outcomes for individuals and organisations

Table 3 below sets out relevant evaluation indicators and sources of evidence, including suggestions for survey-based performance indicators. The latter have been trialled as part of the user survey (see Chapter 4 below) to provide benchmarks for future evaluation.

Evidence sources include project/ service management information, specific evaluation arrangements for the more significant services (eg, Design Review and Enabling, training programmes), user and stakeholder surveys. In future it will be essential to gather specific *examples* of where Inspire East has contributed to outcomes and to influencing policies, to be able to demonstrate how activities make a appreciable difference.

While such outcomes can take time to work through (eg, the Design Review panel provides support well before masterplans or construction projects are implemented), it is possible to seek user views on the likelihood of favourable outcomes being achieved with Inspire East support. Over time, evaluation work should demonstrate more evidence of *actual* outcomes achieved.

Furthermore, there is the challenge of *attributing* benefits and outcomes to Inspire East, as there may be many other factors which influence outcomes. This topic of 'additionality' can be tackled through survey and follow-up work which seeks to establish the extent to which users consider that they would have achieved benefits without Inspire East, in absolute terms or relative (faster and/or better results).

Table B.1   Inspire East Evaluation Framework

FOCUS	INDICATORS	EVIDENCE SOURCES
OUTPUTS & QUALITY		
Service activity	▪ events: type & number, participants (total, by sector, location, etc)	▪ Inspire East management information (MI)
	▪ enquiries/advice (number, type)	▪ MI
	▪ publications/toolkits (number; circulation)	▪ MI
	▪ website (site visits & downloads)	▪ MI
	▪ Design Panel & Enabling Service: (number & type of projects)	▪ MI
	▪ mentors (number; relationships brokered)	▪ MI
Quality	▪ participant satisfaction	▪ MI & user survey ▪ *suggested Performance Indicator (PI): % users reporting scores of 4 or 5 on overall satisfaction*
OUTCOMES FOR INDIVIDUALS & ORGANISATIONS		
Learning Gains (individual benefits)	▪ actions taken 　▪ (eg, learning applied; knowledge passed to others) 'distance travelled' - knowledge, behaviours, confidence ('soft outcomes') ▪ other personal benefits (eg, contacts made; policy awareness)	▪ questionnaire evidence from Design & Enabling Services, training programmes ▪ user survey - *Suggested PI: % users reporting (eg) 'Improved knowledge of concepts and techniques', 'Knowledge sharing through networking'*
Organisational benefits	▪ organisational benefits (eg, improved project design, problems solved, stronger partnerships) ▪ organisational changes and results	▪ questionnaire evidence from Design & Enabling Services, training programmes ▪ user survey - *suggested PIs: % users reporting 'Better understanding of sustainable communities', 'Improved working across sectors or disciplines', 'New partner relationships'*
OUTCOMES FOR COMMUNITIES		
Sustainable Community Outcomes	▪ progress towards achievement of 'sustainable communities' ▪ stakeholder confidence in likely impact of Inspire East	▪ user survey - *Suggested PI: % users reporting very likely/likely that Inspire East will help them achieve better outcomes in promoting sustainable communities?*
STAKEHOLDERS & INFLUENCE		
Awareness	▪ level of awareness of Inspire East activities	▪ stakeholder/user survey - *Suggested PI: % stakeholders reporting 'know a great deal' or 'know a fair amount'*
Leverage	▪ funding attracted to Inspire East activities additional to core funding	▪ MI
Regional influence	▪ 'influencing projects' (eg, reshaping academic course content to improve content on generic skills) ▪ stakeholder confidence in Inspire East progress/ influence	▪ MI ('case study' reporting on 'influencing projects') ▪ stakeholder/user survey - *Suggested PI: % stakeholders holding view that Inspire East has influenced policies for sustainable communities at regional level* ▪ *% users reporting very confident or confident that Inspire East will make a significant contribution in helping organisations in the region promote better community and physical development*