

## **Final Report for the EIF**

**Project: Regional Pilot of building schools talent pipeline for the events industry**

**Organisation: The Power of Events Ltd**

**Timescale: August 2023 – July 2024**

### **Executive Summary**

This is the final report for the EIF on the pilot project undertaken by the Power of Events to help build school pupils interest in career opportunities in the events industry. The aim of the pilot was to develop a programme that delivered inspirational careers guidance, job insights and work experience and business connections to young people aged 11-19. Recruitment remains a major challenge for the UK events industry, so the pilot was designed to raise the profile of the industry and showcase the diverse range of roles within the industry. The pilot project was conducted in the East of England.

This report provides details of the key outcomes from the pilot, learnings to support a national roll out and supporting material providing examples of reach, PR and marketing material and feedback from some of the Ambassadors that helped deliver the programme. Some 30 schools participated in the pilot programme, reaching over 5,750 pupils. The Ambassador recruitment campaign has to date attracted 250 event professionals from across the four nations willing to support the national rollout.

Based on the success of the pilot, discussions are already underway with other regions ready to support the (re-named) Schools Engagement Programme. The pilot has enabled the Power of Events Team to create a PAL compliant presentation deck for use at the schools, processes to ensure adequate support for our volunteer ambassadors and costings to enable accurate budgeting for future regional roll outs.

### **Context**

Since the launch of the Power of Events platform in February 2023, the team have been responding to feedback from across the event industry. This led directly to the development of the Careers Hub on the platform and the development of the schools engagement programme. It was clear to many people in the industry that the impact of Covid 19 had a really detrimental effect when it came to young people making key decisions about their future.

Events of all types were not seen by teachers, parents or guardians as a viable career option, given how they were treated during the pandemic. In addition the lockdowns and other emergency restrictions meant that a whole generation of young people did not experience events themselves – from parties to weddings, concerts and festivals, live performance to outdoor events. The Schools Engagement Programme was designed to address this in order to engage, educate and inspire the next generation of talent.

Looking at existing sources of information about careers in the UK events industry it was clear that there was very little presence on official career information portals. In addition where event professionals were engaging with schools at a local level to provide career information, they naturally tended to focus on their area of expertise and sector, rather than presenting the bigger and more comprehensive picture across all seven sectors

The aim was to create a professional engagement programme, consistent content that fully represented all seven sectors, working with a local schools engagement agency (Form the Future) to deal with the administrative and regulatory aspects of the programme and a feedback loop to ensure continuous performance improvement. This would provide the UK event industry with a much stronger and more compelling profile amongst next generation pupils and also help address the talent pipeline challenge that we face in the UK.

### **Project Overview**

The pilot programme started in August 2023 and ends in July 2024.

The following objectives were established during the initial R&D phase of the project:

- Identify schools in the region that match aims for community engagement
- Review existing engagement formats in order to select most appropriate
- Guidance on presentation and engagement materials to ensure age appropriateness and impact
- Acquisition, recruitment and on boarding of ambassadors
- Facilitation of DBS checks and other safeguarding requirements as required
- Delivery of Industry Awareness programme via school engagement events
- Regular reporting on volunteer participation and feedback from students to help track impact

The autumn term of 2023 (early September to mid-December) was used to review the variety of formats that Form the Future had developed in partnership with the local schools they work with. Since 2015 they have helped over 95,000 young people across 85 schools in the East of England region with career advice and insights. They also began to build the list of schools that were interested in having the Schools Engagement Programme visit them.

The review of the various school engagement formats then led to the design and development of the presentation material that would be used for engagement events. One of the lessons learnt at this stage of the project was that there needed to be a flexible approach to school engagement activity, as there was not a one size fits all solution.

The team was also busy marketing the opportunity to get involved in the pilot programme to event professionals based in the East of England. 10 Ambassadors were recruited for the pilot, in a process that became increasingly bespoke in order to ensure that they were confident and comfortable with the presentation and the opportunity to share their experience with school pupils. Another learning from the pilot – there is an element of competition between different career advisors. Public sector organisations such as the Armed Services and the NHS, as well as major brands working in banking, telecoms, utilities etc. are often deploying full time career advisors into these settings.

By contrast the majority of event professionals work in SMEs and often have little additional capacity in the business to take on extra volunteer work. Acquiring some of their time for the project means that we have had to develop processes to ensure they are on-boarded as an ambassador as effectively as possible. With really busy diaries and paying work taking precedent, the team started working to a three week engagement confirmation deadline to ensure that they could book in the event professionals with sufficient notice. Apart from practical support such as detailed information on timings and location, access requirements and point of contact on-site, each Ambassador was

taken through a briefing meeting so that they were clear on the key points in the deck, as well as the interactive elements in the presentation itself.

Feedback from both teachers and pupils at the schools, helped ensure that the presentation is consistent across different settings and audience sizes. In the Spring term 2024 (early January – Easter) the pilot actively measured the impact of the first series of engagements with a simple show of hands device. Pupils were asked at the start of the presentation if they had considered a career in the events industry. The same question was then asked at the end of the session. The resultant growth of 62% in interest levels across some 2,720 pupils supported the very positive feedback the pilot programme has achieved. The Power of Events also recorded a measureable uptick in visits to the platform after each engagement, which could be attributed to pupils going home and visiting the platform to learn more.

The Summer term (Easter to mid-July) offered up another learning around timing. Despite the exam season, many schools have extra capacity for career sessions as the academic year winds down. However this period coincides with the start of the very busy season for a number of sectors in the event industry - festivals, weddings and outdoor events in particular. So although there were a number of opportunities available to add to the pilot total, it was difficult to match all of these with event professionals' availability.

### **Learnings from the Pilot**

#### **Funding**

During the planning phase for the pilot it was estimated that it would cost circa £15,000 to deliver, of which £10,000 was a grant from the EIF (50% at the start and 50% due in July 2024). That initial estimate has now risen to a total cost of £29,438.00. This includes one-off start up costs in the pilot project set up, the management fees for Form the Future consultancy and a contribution to management time and general overheads (such as postage etc).

One of the specific start up costs that had not been planned for was identified during the design of the presentation for use in the schools. It became apparent that having some form of branded asset that could be left with the pupils would really help to both sustain the message and get it into their homes so that parents and guardians could also be exposed to the messaging from the Power of Events. The solution was to create a branded lanyard and badge that required designing and then production. The badges have activities listed on that pupils could undertake to further their knowledge of the UK events industry, including of course the address for the Power of Events platform.

The completion of the pilot in July 2024 has enabled the team to develop the processes required to support the programme, identify the costs (per hundred) of lanyard and badge production required in any particular region and marketing collateral for use with both supporters and partners to promote the opportunity in new regions. The team have also produced an advert aimed at teachers encouraging them to get involved in the national roll out.

With a much better understanding of the ways the process can be made more efficient and using economies of scale, the revised cost projection per region is now £15-25k dependent on the size/number of school visits – such as a range of 50-100 in total.

## **School Engagement**

For the purposes of the pilot the partnership with Form the Future provided a firsthand understanding of the challenges faced by employers of reaching school pupils in live face to face sessions. Maintained schools and academies have to satisfy the provider access legislation (PAL) introduced in January 2018 in relation to setting out opportunities for providers of technical education and apprenticeships to Year 8-13 pupils. As the school engagement programme offers both as part of the five routes into the industry set out in the main presentation, it ensures PAL compliance.

This learning led to direct contact with the Careers & Enterprise Company and the route into extending the regional East of England pilot into a national campaign. With a national team in place and Careers Hubs across all the English regions, they can provide direct contacts with schools and academies that will enable the schools engagement programme to extend region by region over the next several years.

## **Ambassador Engagement**

For the East of England pilot 10 local event professionals signed up as Ambassadors. The call for support across the 4 Nations has already secured some 250 volunteers. The pilot allowed the team to test in real time the level of support required and as a result of that a more efficient and bespoke approach has been developed. The reaction from the Ambassadors in the pilot was overwhelmingly positive – see sample feedback below:

“The Schools Engagement Programme is hugely important. It is vital that we are able to attract the talent of the future. The skilled workforce of the future, can’t join our industry if they don’t know how they can become part of it. The Power of Events initiative has blown the lid off – raising awareness of what we do as Event Professionals and how we need diverse, creative, innovators to ensure we keep doing what we do, so breathtakingly, in the future.” Pilot Schools Ambassador Leah Freeland - Rego Group

“Recently, we had the privilege of visiting Coleridge Community College, where we engaged 115 Year 9 students with a captivating Careers Carousel. During the session, we shared our enthusiasm for the events industry and showcased the diverse sectors and career opportunities it offers. It was inspiring to witness the transformation from initial skepticism to an 80% show of hands from students considering a future in our industry. The experience was incredibly fulfilling, and we encourage anyone interested in joining us to reach out!” Pilot Schools Ambassador Zoe Lucy - WeImplement

“Supporting The Power of Events with their schools initiative has been very rewarding. It has been heartening to see glazed faces of indifference transform to engaged enthusiasm when the breadth and depth of the events industry is shared and the opportunities which exist for young people and the multitude of paths to entry are explained” Pilot Schools Ambassador Andy Rice - MEI

## **Impact Evaluation**

Apart from capturing the increase in interest from pupils with the simple before/after question mechanic, an impact evaluation framework was also deployed by the consultancy to measure impact. This enables them to gauge the efficacy of their programmes and make iterations to enhance the experience and impact for pupils. As a result of the pilot we are now reviewing the bespoke impact framework ahead of the national roll out.

**Marketing assets**

As part of the conditions for the EIF grant funding, ensuring that they were credited in marketing and PR material was agreed. Please find attached samples of both PR releases and social media posts that were deployed during the pilot project. In addition regular updates were included in the bulletin that is circulated to all the Power of Events supporters and partners.

Please see attached:

- School Engagement Programme Badge design
- Advert for the NASUWT magazine – to encourage teachers to engage with the programme
- April bulletin circulated on TPOE social channels
- PR Release used when bid was accepted by EIF

**Conclusion**

The pilot project supported by the EIF has been invaluable in helping shape the Schools Engagement Programme. Whilst many event professionals engage with schools in a parental capacity, standing up in front of a classroom or in a full school assembly is a very different experience. With the processes and support that have been developed during the pilot, the Power of Events team are confident that managing a national roll out can be delivered in a cost effective and productive programme.

The competition for talent and skills across any given industrial sector at the moment is very high. Aligning the need for attracting young talent into our industry with the broader societal need for sustainable economic growth is a long term goal for everyone working in UK events. This programme is a significant contribution to that goal.

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