

MADE IN LEICESTERSHIRE SURVEY RESULTS 2017

In 2017 we invited artists and makers in Leicestershire and Rutland to complete a survey and attend networking and discussion events to collate thoughts and opinions about their needs and how Made in Leicestershire might develop to better support them in the future. Over 100 people filled in the survey and 23 people attended two networking events in Leicester city and at Loughborough University,

The survey and discussions focussed on the following areas which form the structure of this report:

- Employment
- Portfolio Careers
- Income and Funding
- Studio Space
- Professional Development
- Networks and Memberships

A series of suggested Research and Development areas are included at the end of the document.
Case Studies of groups and individuals are included to show the variety of business practice and development needs within the county.

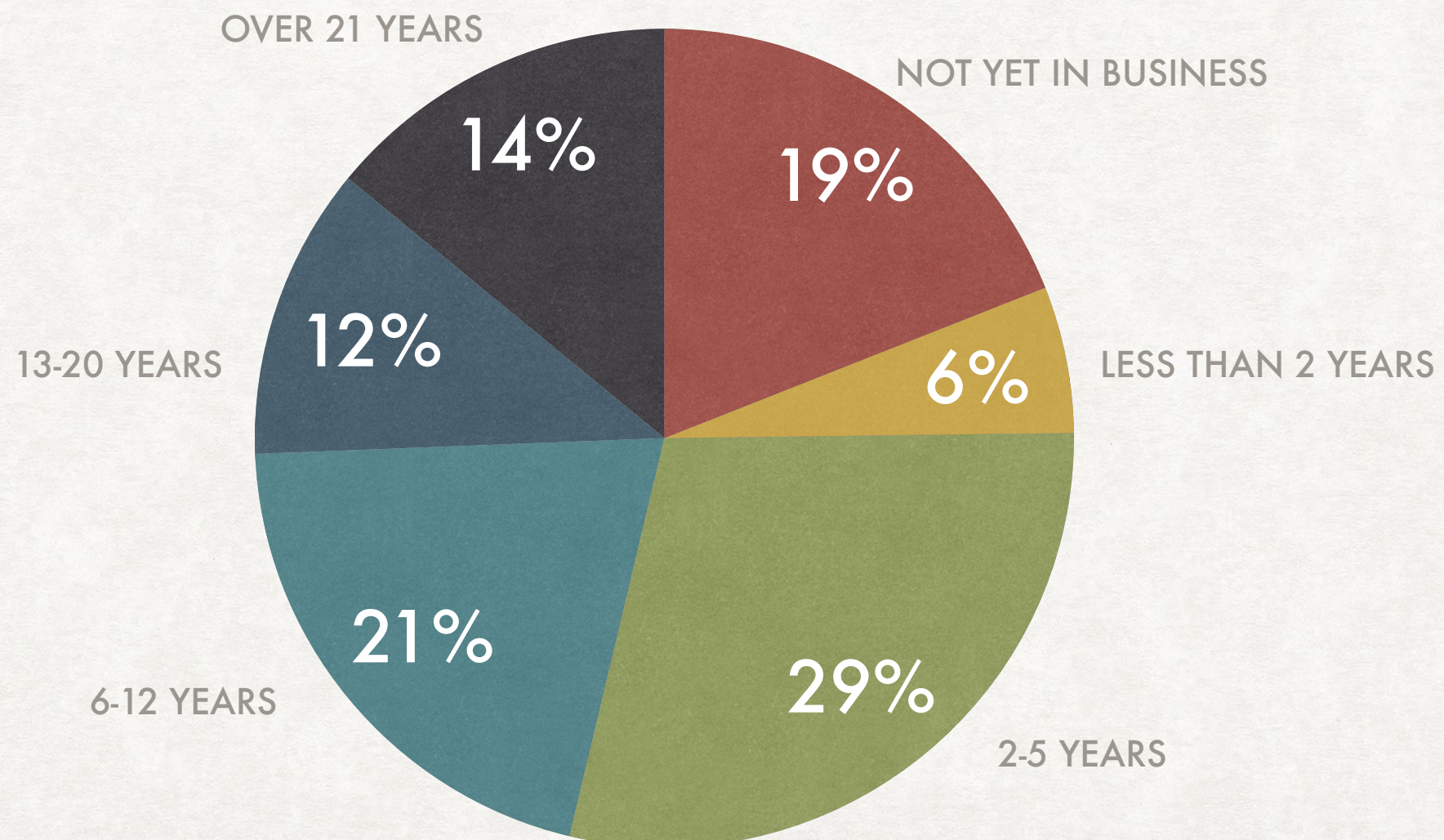
Ruth Singer, 2018

EMPLOYMENT

76% of respondents were sole traders and 75% had been in business for over 2 years.

It is often assumed that those who have been in business some years have fewer development needs but our discussions demonstrate that these established businesses still have training needs but these differ from start up business needs.

Issues may still include expansion, diversification and manufacturing but many creative businesses do not wish to expand very far and are more interested in finding ways to stabilise income and increase financial security while still developing creatively.



PORTFOLIO CAREERS

Nearly 50% state that they undertake freelance work related to their creative practice including designing for other brands, shop or gallery work, consultancy or publishing and teaching. Developing and sustaining a freelance / portfolio career has additional challenges and is under-represented in current support / training offers.

60% don't have another job outside of their practice but the rest work full or part time at another job. Of those 27% are working 3 or more days per week outside of their creative practice.



* Writing and Publishing: This is possibly artificially high as a number of respondents identified as writers rather than visual arts and design which is what the survey was aimed at.

COLLABORATIVE WORKING

The survey shows just under 50% work in some kind of collaboration or partnership with other people, with by far the most selected option being a two-person collaboration creating a product or service jointly. Other ways of collaborating are also mentioned in the survey including collaborations of more than two people, collaborative projects such as teaching and partnerships with non-artists.

Case Study

Ruth Singer & Bethany Walker have collaborated since 2014. They have created the brand Interlace to create concrete and cloth interior and sculpture products. The partnership has been awarded funding from a-n for the collaboration and their work has been exhibited in major exhibitions. They were also commissioned to create a community arts project with young people in Leicester which was funded by the local charity the Joyce Carr Doughty Trust. The finished work Urban Growth is on display at Makers Yard, Leicester.



Urban Growth project by Interlace, funded by Leicester-based charity Joyce Carr Doughty Trust. Photo by Joanne Withers

TEACHING

Freelance or employed teaching is a significant income stream for many creatives. In this survey 52% were involved in teaching and over 90% of this is related to their own work. Teaching adults either informally (promoting and booking courses independently) or through organisations is the most common and the majority takes place within Leicestershire (79%). There is a high proportion of teaching which is self-organised and this is mostly with adults (81%) and community groups (33%).



Ruth Singer Studio. Photo by Joanne Withers

INCOME AND FUNDING

Income generation

The survey shows a variety of income generation models with direct sales to customers and gallery sales being the most significant (other than teaching) but the data shows a wide spread of different types of income including private commissions. About 37% report getting more than half their income from direct sales to customers while trade sales are only significant to 25% of the sample. Private commissions are an important income area for 11% of respondents. Trade sales was selected by just 14% of respondents which is born out in the development desires question discussed below.



Katie Almond. Photo by Joanne Withers

SALES

Online shops, exhibitions and galleries are the most significant sales channels. Others report sales through social media. It appears that networks and contacts (reported as Word of Mouth) are significant to many people which tallies with anecdotal reports.

Local markets and retail fairs were picked by 33% and national retail fairs (higher-profile events) were selected by only 9% of respondents and trade fairs by 19%. **Local and regional sales are significant.** 23% of respondents sell internationally and 15% in Europe.

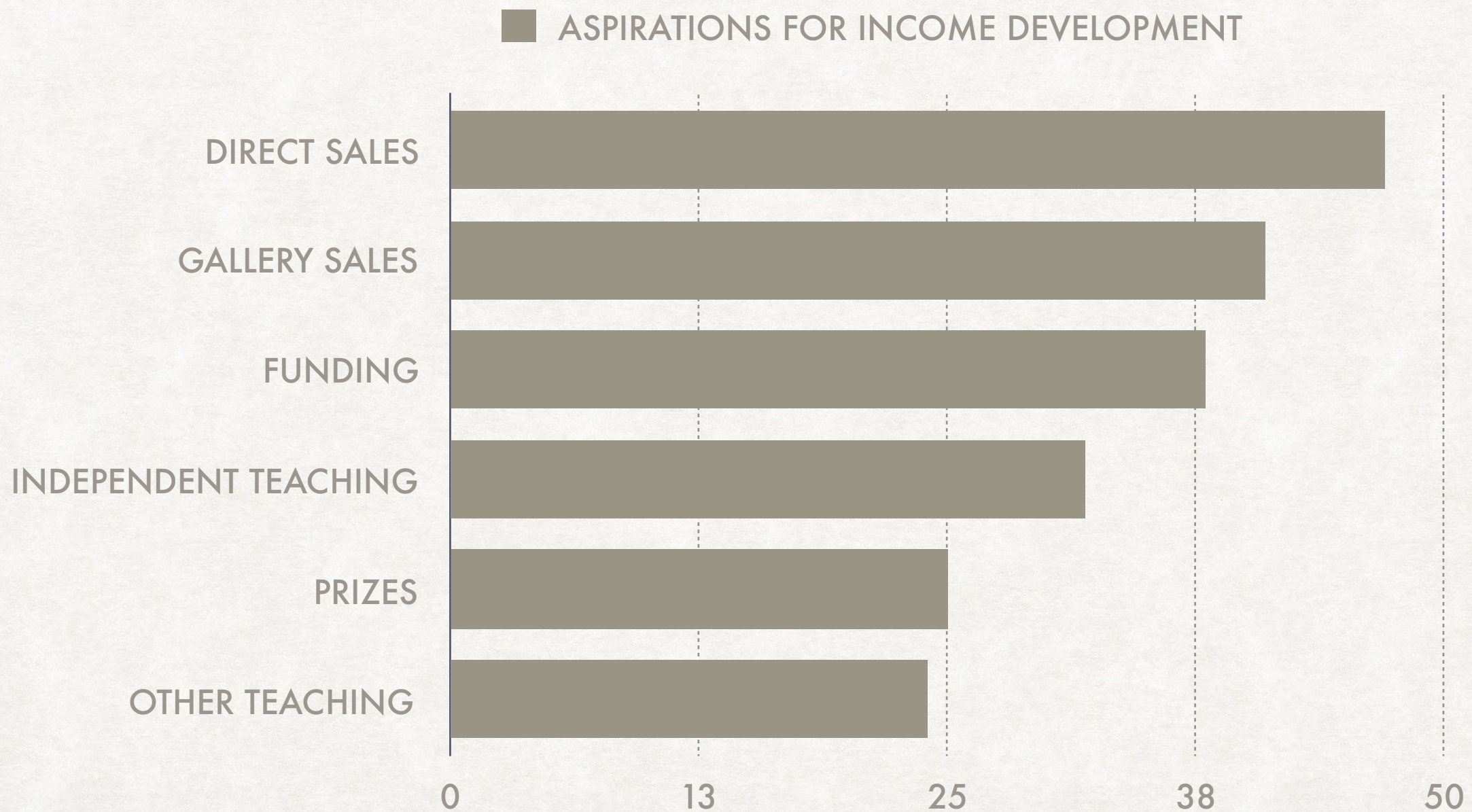
Discussions show that creatives in Leicestershire tend to focus on selling locally and **find selling further afield and in a higher profile context a challenge.** With the limited market in Leicestershire it is a potential restriction on business growth and profile development.

On the positive side, **online sales are important to a lot of respondents** with just over half of respondents selling online via their own or other online shop with Etsy being mentioned in 30% of cases. Online sales through a Made in Leicestershire branded website comes low in the selected options for the revamped brand (37% or 11th of 12 options suggested).



INCOME GENERATION GROWTH DESIRES

The survey asked respondents to select income generation areas which they would like to develop. This shows that the key income generation target would be increasing sales and teaching opportunities. Other aspects such as funding, consultancy and awards could be supported and developed through training and mentoring.



FUNDING

This section of the survey reveals interesting results regarding funding and the perceptions of access to funding.

61% have never had any funding for their own work and 20% have had Arts Council funding and 21% have had financial prizes or awards.

40% have not even considered applying and further 22% have thought about it but not applied.

24% have taken part in an Artist in Residence scheme although only just over half of these were paid which reflects anecdotal findings.



Urban Growth project by Interlace, funded by Leicester-based charity Joyce Carr Doughty Trust. Photo by Joanne Withers

CASE STUDY

KATE BAJIC

Kate is a jeweller working from a home studio in rural Leicestershire. She graduated in 2003 and has established a retail-based business, selling to galleries and at high-end craft fairs.

In 2014 she studied for an MA in Jewellery at Loughborough University and later spent time as Artist in Residence at Lincoln University. These two periods of research and development have been key in a change in her work which is now focussed on research and exhibitions alongside commercial work. This new way of working has boosted her profile and she now exhibits and sells internationally.

Kate wants to expand this side of her practice, building her skills and knowledge in areas of exhibition development, funding and large-scale practice. Accessing this new market and audience is challenging and she is looking for support and mentoring to help achieve her goals as well as marketing and profiling which reaches the right kind of markets.



Kate Bajic

STUDIO SPACE

Issues regarding studio spaces within the county comes up regularly at discussion and networking events including lack of affordable and practical spaces as well as dissatisfaction with existing facilities.

The proportion of people working at home is significant; 59% either have a dedicated room or work in mixed-use spaces such as kitchen table and a further 18% work outside the home some of the time.



Photo by Joanne Withers

For those using external studio facilities a number of issues are raised in the survey which are backed up by the discussions at networking events. The cost of studio space is a major challenge with 48% saying they can't afford the studio they need or the studio costs are a challenge to meet. Security and affordability of studios is an issue nationally. For those paying for studios outside of home most are paying under £200 a month. 32% of respondents say that they can't afford the studio they would really like. 16% say finding the money to pay studio rent is a challenge and 28% feel that their studio has drawbacks. Other issues raised about studios are size and cost, heating and the lack of suitable space to run workshops (which is a key income development goal). 22.5% of respondents travel over 2 miles to their studio.

STUDIO FACILITIES

Only 16% have access to **exhibition space** within their studio and 21% have **meeting space or teaching space** and 14% have communal space. These all impact on networking, promotion and isolation as reflected in the studio desires; 56% would like to have exhibition space and 56% rate teaching / meeting space as important while 48% would like communal spaces.

Studio facilities are an important issue; facilities which allow creative businesses to develop and flourish are often overlooked. These can be as important as the costs of the space. Lack of spaces for interaction, promotion and business development is likely to hinder growth and development of new strands of work. Communal space is also important to create a sense of community in studio buildings and to facilitate networking and collaborative working. It helps reduce isolation and allows artists to support each other.



Exhibition spaces within studio settings are very useful for encouraging collaborative and joint working, allowing studio members to try new things and get work seen to gain feedback. Spaces can also be used to promote visitor attendance, creating new markets and opportunities for studio members.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING

There is a clear issue about training and professional development with over 40% of the sample have not attended any training in the last couple of years. Of these, 36% said they couldn't afford training, 32% had problems attending due to childcare or work commitments and a shocking 40% were not aware of opportunities. Discussions during networking events have highlighted that people are unwilling to commit the time and / or money to a course or training which might not be right for them or 'waste' the money on something unsuitable. On the positive side 67% would be interested in online training opportunities which would solve some of the access issues assuming costs are kept low. Working at home is often combined with childcare or other domestic responsibilities and should also be taken into account when planning events, networking and training programmes. There is no one good time which would suit all but a variety of options needs to be provided.

MENTORING AND SUPPORT

There were two questions in the survey specifically about mentoring and creative support for developing their own work as this is often missed out in development programmes. Business support and skills training are more available but specific advice on making work can be very hard to access except through programmes and projects which have limited availability. It is also harder to access this kind of professional advice for more established makers. There may also be an issue about application processes for such programmes which can be off-putting to artists who are not comfortable writing about their work. 58% have had no mentoring or professional creative support for their work. 9% have paid for such support and 19% have had this paid for by another organisation.

The survey also asked about how people access advice about their own work instead or as well as mentoring. 25% of respondents use online peer mentoring and advice groups (such as Design Factory or Art Fair Buddies Facebook groups) and over 78% would be interested in such a thing provided by Made in Leicestershire. 21% of respondents would be willing to pay a small fee to have access to mentoring through a group.

77% of respondents turn to other artists for help in developing or discussing their work (effectively peer mentoring pairs or groups) while 48% talk to family / partner and 32% use formal artists groups set up for the purpose.

MENTORING CASE STUDY : ORNAMENTUM

Peer mentoring and paid professional mentoring was trialled by Ornamantum in 2014-15. The group of 8 members established two smaller groups for peer mentoring and all found this was extremely supportive and effective in developing their work. The peer mentoring groups became a safe space to bring issues about developing new work, ideas and sharing knowledge of galleries etc in a very specific craft context. For peer mentoring to be most effective these groups need to be true peers, ideally working in a similar context and with similar time in business. Established makers need can be very helpful to less experienced makers but it does not work so well the other way around. A further trial with Design Factory members specifically focussed on non-product practice has proven successful. Small groups work best for this and the members need to commit so it is challenging to set up. Another learning point from the Ornamantum experience is that a facilitator or group mentor is very useful in ensuring the discussions are focussed, helpful and each member gets a fair share of time focussed on their issues.



Ornamantum advert design by Ruth Singer, work by Samantha Robinson, photo by Joanne Withers

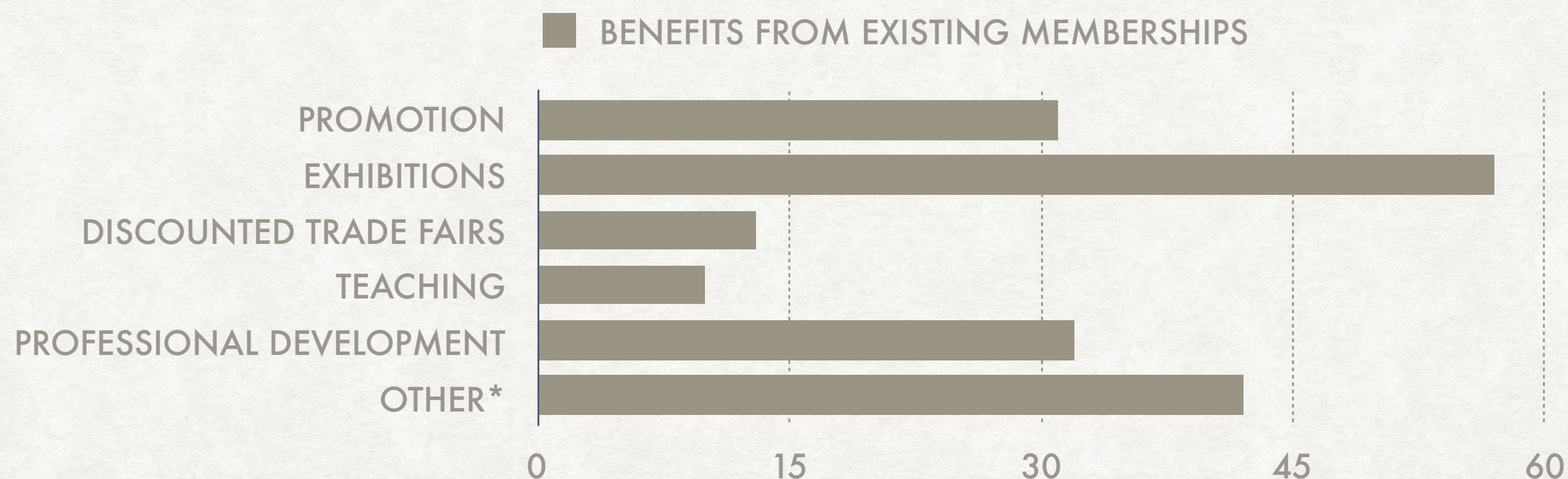
Ornamantum also trialled paying for professional mentoring through Arts Council funding. Each member of the group chose their own mentor and most opted for a more established maker in their field or in a similar practice. Others chose gallery owners, curators or lecturers. This was a very effective programme for those taking part although it has challenges as it is one-to-one and some mentors were very blunt about their opinions and makers found this difficult. It also became apparent that mentors who had experience of mentoring were better at keeping discussions focussed and providing concrete advice and support. In an ideal world the mentors would have more training. Overall the experience was that a mix of peer mentoring, business support and creative mentoring is ideal.

MADE IN LEICESTERSHIRE NETWORKS & GROUPS

51% of respondents were already members of Made in Leicestershire but 15.7% didn't know about it. Half answered the question about membership of other organisations which suggests that those people are not members of any other organisation. Of those responding, 52% are a-n members which is a non-selected organisation (anecdotally this is mainly to access insurance), while 17% are members of Design Factory (now Design Nation) and 25% Leicester Society of Artists both of which are selected membership only. Memberships are varied across a number of local and national organisations which suggests a very splintered workforce who are not accessing the benefits of regional or craft-specific groups.

Networking meetings

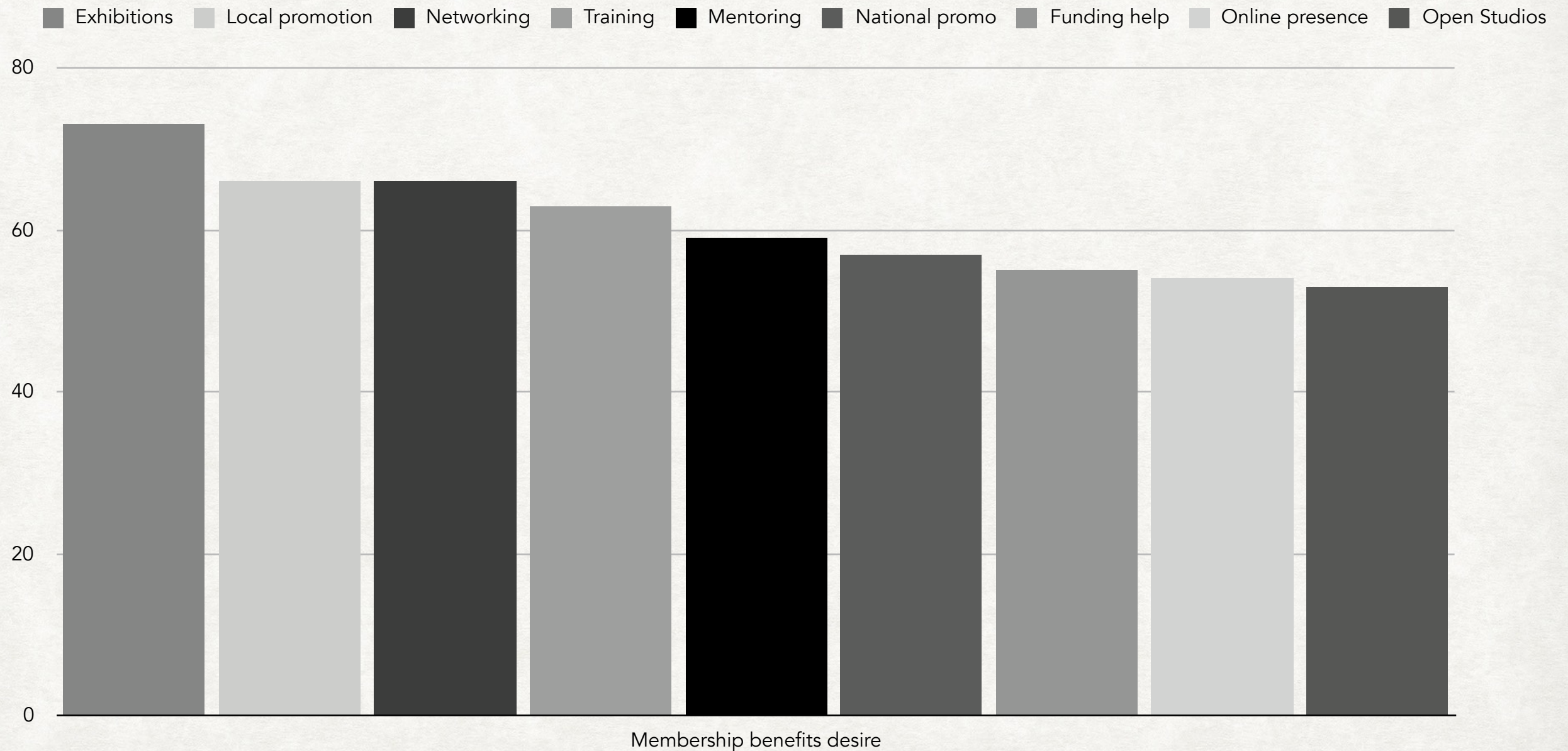
The survey asked about networking events and if respondents would prefer meeting up face to face very close to where they live, would they travel meet up and how they feel about online groups. The majority would prefer both meeting up and online groups. Very local meet ups are most popular with not many willing to travel within the county.



*Other noted benefits included supplier discounts, opportunities mailings, mentoring, networking.

MADE IN LEICESTERSHIRE DESIRES

A further question asked about what respondents **would like to get from an expanded Made in Leicestershire** organisation This list has not been costed or subjected to comparative analysis by the survey respondents but the data reflects discussions in networking events. Overall the findings show a mix promotional and professional development desires from a local organisation.



FURTHER RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

PROMOTION AND MARKETING

Exhibitions

MiL could aim to support the development of artist-led exhibitions around the county with branding and marketing . Ideally exhibition programmes would be supported by a range of partners and organisations to showcase work in a variety of different locations and to reach new audiences. Exhibitions need to also have sales targets and strong marketing to support buying. Exhibitions alone without sales can simply prove expensive to artists. The buying market within the county needs to be considered when planning exhibitions.

Marketing and promotional plan

Further research is needed to develop detailed proposals for marketing and development of the Made in Leicestershire brand. Local promotion and exhibitions are high on the priority list for survey respondents

Online shop

It is not recommended to create an online shop specifically for Made in Leicestershire but instead it seems preferable to link to individual shops from the directory.

Promotion of workshops

Made in Leicestershire could be used to promote workshops to a wide audience including a website and a print leaflet.

CASE STUDY

SAMANTHA ROBINSON

Samantha Robinson is a mixed media maker based in Leicester city. She graduated from De Montfort University BA Design Crafts as a mature student in 2008 after an early career working in a jewellery manufacturing business. Since graduating she has developed her own practice alongside teaching 20-30 hours per week through the city council and freelance.

Samantha is a Fellow member of Design Nation and makes sure to take part in training and professional development opportunities provided by local and regional agencies. Networking and meeting other makers is an important part of her creative practice. Samantha's business could expand if certain facilities and resources were more readily available including suitable workshop venues, exhibition and selling spaces and access to high-spec studio facilities.



Samantha Robinson, photo by Joanne Withers

FURTHER RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Peer Mentoring

Made in Leicestershire could be involved in the matching, setting up and initial support in creating peer mentoring networks and meetings, providing basic training and facilitating in a few initial meetings to help it to get started. Once established the peer mentoring groups should be able to run independently and run concurrently with more general networking meetings.

Supporting more established artist businesses

Made in Leicestershire should aim to provide 50% of its training and professional development output aimed towards those already established, or at least signpost and advise on ways to access this through other means. Peer mentoring and supported mentoring groups would be very useful to this group.

Creating partnerships

Networking, relationships and partnerships within and outside of the creative sector are very important for developing and sustaining creative businesses. Made in Leicestershire could act as a conduit to generate interaction between organisations and individuals (such as universities, arts bodies & museums) through events programmes and joint activities which benefit all parties. The Made in Leicestershire programme should be designed to support the needs of artists and makers but organisations need to be closely involved as partners in the project to support development and create opportunities.

Supporting and developing independent tutors / freelancers

Teaching on a self-directed basis appears to be a growth area and many artists and makers rely upon this income. While this work has many benefits it is also challenging, solitary and difficult to find advice, support and development opportunities. Made in Leicestershire should aim to be a market leader in supporting its members who teach outside of formal education. Similar work should also be considered around other kinds of freelance work which is undertaken alongside artistic practice.

FURTHER RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND INFORMATION

Many comments in the survey and from consultation meetings suggest that access to information is a challenge. Made in Leicestershire website and social media platforms need to be used actively to promote and share information, but this will be most effective when a community or network is established and members feel engaged with the organisation and well disposed towards the other members of the group. Further research needs to be done on the best way to enable members to access information, resources and opportunities visible to the right people. This is of course down to the individual to make an effort so a balance needs to be struck here.

Made in Leicestershire website

Further research and discussion needs to take place about the market and marketing of the Made in Leicestershire website to establish who it really is aimed and how best to achieve the aims. It is unclear if the site is aimed at consumers / potential buyers or to organisations such as galleries.

Communications

The newsletter is very useful and well-regarded by those who receive it. However the monthly cycle means some opportunities are advertised very close to the deadline which can be frustrating and many find the format inaccessible.

Networking

Free access social events and networking would be welcomed. These might be regular pub or cafe meet ups, some with facilitation and a training or development focus but some would be fine just as a friendly get-together to boost collaboration, skill sharing and peer support.

Membership of other groups - this question was posed to find out what groups local people are members of. It is important for MiL not to overlap with the aims of other groups and where possible MiL should think about signposting suitable groups which offer specific membership benefits. For example should craft makers be looking for access to trade fairs it would be most beneficial to join Design Nation rather than MiL running its own access to trade fairs initiative, and likewise a-n membership should be promoted to access insurance. MiL should complement to existing organisations by providing access to different resources and be very locally-targeted for the specific needs of local membership.

CASE STUDY

GILLIAN MCFARLAND

Gillian has been working as an artist and art therapist since graduating from St Martins School of Art in the 1980s. Gillian has an established profile and sells through galleries around the UK, mainly outside of Leicestershire as there is not an established art buying market here. She moved to Leicester in 2014 after living in Scotland and Bath and has worked hard to create networks and contacts in the local art scene. Gillian initially had a studio at Makers Yard but recently moved to StudionAme which she finds has a strong and dynamic network and is more affordable. She feels passionately about the importance of joined up work across the art sector in the county and the need for support and development artist-led groups and initiatives as well as access to exhibition space and promotion for local artists on a national platform.



Gillian Adair McFarland

FURTHER RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

STUDIO FACILITIES

Made in Leicestershire should maintain an overview of studio facilities within the county and establish best practice guidelines to share when there is the possibility of new studios being developed. MiL could also act as support for artist-led studio groups being set up. It could also, in the longer term, initiate and develop the creation of new artist-led studios with excellent facilities as outlined above.

Accessing university studio facilities has come up in discussions several times. The new workshop spaces at DMU are excellent and this is creating excitement and jealousy amongst professional artists and makers in the city. Accessing university, school and college facilities for professional makers should be a key aspiration for Leicestershire. A further analysis of education spaces should be undertaken to map these around the county. This is a potentially challenging issue to work out but one worth pursuing. A pilot partnership could lead the way towards opening up facilities to those outside of education.

It would be beneficial to begin negotiations for a pilot studio access arrangement with an education establishment in the county. The aim of this would be to enable studio access for professional makers outside of the hours used by students such as university and school holidays, evenings and weekends.