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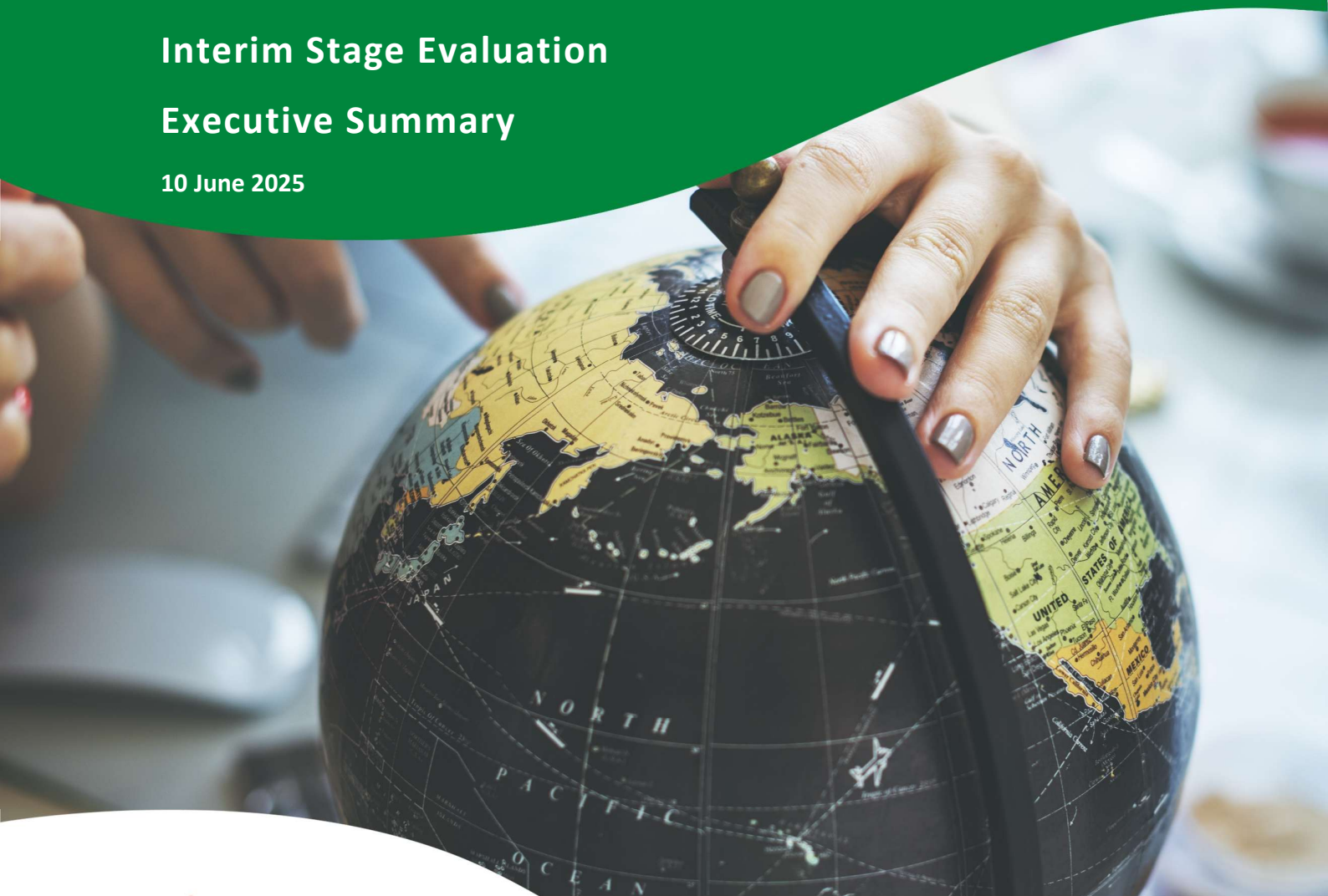
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Evaluation of the Taith international learning exchange programme

Interim Stage Evaluation

Executive Summary

10 June 2025



 **Taith**

Introduction

This report forms the second of a three-stage evaluation of the Taith programme, presenting findings from the interim evaluation which was commissioned in April 2024. The key aim of the interim evaluation is to review performance to date and inform the ongoing delivery of Taith and future investments/policy development in this area. Taith is the international learning exchange programme funded by the Welsh Government. The programme provides grant funding to organisations across Wales from five formal and non-formal education sectors as follows:

1. Schools
2. Youth
3. Adult Education (AE)
4. Further Education, Vocational Education and Training (FE-VET)
5. Higher Education (HE).

Grants are awarded to organisations through two Taith Pathways. Pathway 1 funds the mobility of participants while Pathway 2 funds international collaborative projects. These organisations are described as 'Grant Recipients' whilst the individual learners or staff members engaging in the international exchanges are described as 'participants.'

Taith involves two-way international exchanges (i.e. inward and outward mobility) for learners, young people, volunteers, researchers and staff, ranging from a couple of days to a year in length.

Key Findings

Research and Policy Context

Research consistently shows that international mobilities enhance academic and professional outcomes for participants while also providing professional development opportunities for educational staff. Whilst participation has increased in international exchange programmes over recent decades, there have been concerns about the equitable access to these opportunities.

Taith's three strategic objectives are to ensure exchanges provide the greatest impact, fund high-quality learning exchange projects, and support educational innovation in Wales. Achieving 'greatest impact' focuses on supporting individuals with barriers to participation to international exchange. The Taith programme aligns with several strategic Welsh Government priorities, particularly those outlined in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and contributes to key policy objectives within each of the educational sectors covered by the programme. The importance of international mobility and Taith has been highlighted in the Welsh Government's recently published International Delivery Plan.

The programme has demonstrated considerable resilience and a commitment to continuous improvement in the face of a series of external pressures, including the impact of rising inflation and significant cuts to the programme's budget. However, the impact of the budget reductions on the programme cannot be underestimated.

Delivery Against Output Targets

To date Taith has delivered 7,891 mobilities involving 7,274 participants and is predicted to deliver 15,407 total mobility participants by the end of the programme. Within the context of budget cuts and funding pressures, this performance is commendable. The Taith team are confident that, had it not been for those budget cuts, the original targets would have been "far exceeded" based on their projections and demand for the support at the time. This demonstrates the significant impact that the budget cuts have had on programme delivery.

Progress against the target for inward mobilities has been more difficult to achieve. This partly reflects changes in the wider post-Brexit context but also the impracticality of the original target allocation.

Taith is predicted to deliver considerably more exchanges than Erasmus+ delivered in Wales over a comparable period. The programme has also performed particularly strongly in engaging Youth participants when compared with Erasmus+, demonstrating the programme's success in engaging lesser experienced and non-formal education sectors. The programme's principal achievement to date has arguably been its engagement with underrepresented groups which is at the heart of Taith's core values. Based on delivery to 31st March 2025, individuals from these groups account for 44% of all participants against a target of 40%. At the time of writing, 98 countries have been engaged in the Taith programme, exceeding the target of 40 countries while 48 multi-annual partnerships have been established against a KPI target of 50 partnerships, which means this has nearly been met.

Delivery and Management Review

The programme has been delivered effectively with high levels of satisfaction reported by each stakeholder group. It has managed to cater to the needs of five different sectors, developing strong, supportive relationships and good engagement. Taith has succeeded to engage a positive number of organisations, demonstrated by the fact that it has been oversubscribed and received applications from a substantially larger pool of organisations relative to Erasmus+ over a comparable period.

The programme has also funded more organisations than Erasmus+ funded in Wales over a comparable period and has been particularly successful in engaging Youth and AE organisations. It is particularly notable that the programme has successfully engaged 'new' organisations that had never applied to deliver an international exchange activity before, and the number of organisations applying for the first time has increased year on year, demonstrating strong demand for the support.

There is broad agreement that Taith has been successful in its focus on inclusivity through a range of design aspects. There may be opportunities to build on this further including through introducing new peer-to-peer learning opportunities.

Stakeholders consider strong engagement to be a key strength of the programme with particular reference to the professionalism and approachability of the delivery team.

Most Grant Recipients are satisfied with the application, assessment and grant award processes. The programme has become more automated and agile with resultant improvements to payment processing and processing of application forms. Management and governance processes have been effective following a detailed governance review, although there may be opportunities to further utilise the wealth of knowledge and expertise available through the Advisory Board.

Early Outcome Analysis

The programme has had a positive impact on participants in a range of different areas. This is supported by the observations from staff members and Grant Recipients. For learner participants, this has encompassed soft outcomes such as increased confidence, independence, and intercultural awareness, to improved work-readiness and educational attainment.

Feedback from staff participants across every sector revealed a positive impact on morale and professional development. Staff development has been a major outcome, particularly in Schools through improvements in curriculum design, pedagogy, and professional learning. There is strong evidence of outcomes generated for Grant Recipients, with organisations testifying that it has led to innovation, improved practices, and better performance.

Taith has had a key role in establishing and building on international education links. It has increased the capacity to engage in international learning exchange within formal and non-formal educational sectors in Wales, representing a key legacy impact. The programme has also influenced other national and international learning exchange programmes and in doing so has contributed to delivering soft power benefits to Wales and to promoting Wales as an outward-looking nation.

Value for Money Assessment

The programme has achieved Good to Excellent value for money across most of the indicators established. Indicators of Equity were particularly strong, with 6 out of 8 rated as excellent, including proportions of underrepresented and disadvantaged individuals engaged in Taith. Whilst cost-effectiveness is challenging to measure, there is evidence that impact areas have been met, but that this was above original cost projections for the project.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The evidence discussed in this report shows that Taith has performed admirably to date with high levels of satisfaction from each stakeholder group and good progress against output targets. Stakeholders have been particularly impressed by the pace of delivery and the scale of progress in such a short space of time. This is also supported by the data which shows that Taith has delivered more than seven thousand mobilities already, and these are perceived to have generated important benefits to participants and Grant Recipients alike. Taith compares favourably with Erasmus+ in relation to the number of organisations applying for funding, the number of projects and mobilities supported, and engagement with non-formal education sectors in particular.

Perhaps the main achievement is the programme's success in securing engagement from key target groups, specifically underrepresented individuals and non-traditional organisations. This has been crucial in ensuring that Taith has targeted the support at those who would not be able to benefit from international exchange opportunities otherwise. This success has been underpinned by several key strengths which include the innovations introduced into the design of the programme, the key strategic focus on engaging underrepresented groups, and the strong, personal support, knowledge and expertise provided by the delivery team.

Based on the key findings presented above, we make a series of recommendations that are designed to support ongoing delivery. Some of these recommendations are designed to inform Taith's work over its remaining delivery period whilst others are more suitable for potential successor programmes. The recommendations also vary between some that can be implemented by Taith's delivery team and some that would require action from other stakeholders, such as the Welsh Government as the programme's funder.

No.	Theme	Description	Reference period	Intended audience
1	Increase strategic engagement and communications	Several elements of the Taith programme have been identified as examples of best practice. The programme has also seen a much higher engagement from Welsh organisations than there was with Erasmus+. There are therefore opportunities to strategically engage with stakeholders domestically and internationally. This could be in the form of a strategic communications plan, implemented in close collaboration with Welsh Government officials to inform policy and plans for a new iteration of Taith and/or discussions about the UK's position regarding the Erasmus+ programme. This could also be achieved by ensuring that Taith is involved in/invited to any relevant Welsh Government-led fora or stakeholder groups looking at future policy and strategic direction of youth mobility, international activity and education for Wales. Data from the Participant Outcome Survey can be used to complement the case study approach in raising awareness about Taith's impact.	Remaining delivery period and input to be taken into consideration for future policy and strategic decisions regarding Taith.	Programme delivery team, ILEP Board, the Welsh Government officials, and other key stakeholders
2	Explore challenges with delivering inward mobilities	Taith should develop a better understanding of the reasons behind the difficulties in facilitating greater inward mobility activity. If there is an aspiration for a higher inward mobility rate in future programme delivery, it is likely that specific actions will be required such as setting minimum thresholds.	Identify challenges during remaining delivery period	Programme delivery team, the Welsh Government, and future evaluation activity

No.	Theme	Description	Reference period	Intended audience
3	Support Grant Recipients to secure high inclusion rates more consistently	Taith should consider steps to increase the proportion of Grant Recipients who have strong levels of engagement with under-represented groups. This could include the facilitation of peer-to-peer learning and cascading best practice examples of approaches to engage under-represented groups. Taith should consider improving the visibility of the additional funding offer within its communications. The impact of the new minimum threshold policy should also be monitored closely.	Remaining delivery period	Programme delivery team
4	Expand the role of the Taith Advisory Board	The Taith Advisory Board provides a wealth of highly relevant experience and knowledge which should be retained in the event of a new iteration of the programme. Taith should consider expanding the role of the Advisory Board including by developing a Task and Finish function to advance specific priorities.	Maximise expertise over remaining delivery period Review ToR and consider expanding the role for future programme delivery	Programme delivery team and the Welsh Government
5	Build on current success in engaging new and lesser experienced organisations'	This is a considerable area of success, although there are opportunities to build on this further in future programme delivery. For instance, Taith should draw on support from stakeholders such as Medr to help create entry points to engage with the AE sector. The good practices implemented by Taith, such as the use of Taith Champions and various programme design aspects, should be maintained in any future programme delivery and these functions should be resourced and funded appropriately.	Future programme delivery	Programme delivery team and the Welsh Government

No.	Theme	Description	Reference period	Intended audience
6	Strengthen the programme's outcome data	<p>Several steps should be considered to improve the outcome data collected through the programme's monitoring processes.</p> <p>First, Taith should consider introducing a mandatory requirement for Grant Recipients to increase the response rate to the Participant Outcome Survey. Second, a 'distance-travelled' based model should be considered for future programmes. Third, a 10-point Likert scale should be used to capture greater nuance in the responses.</p> <p>Finally, Taith should also develop a system to record the outputs that are produced through Pathway 2 projects, as well as recording the dissemination of these outputs, and where possible their impact in affecting change beyond the Grant Recipients.</p>	Future programme delivery	Programme delivery team and the Welsh Government

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