

BUILDING SOCIAL VALUE: THE IMPACT OF THE **UNITED BY 2022 TRAILBLAZER STRAND**

United By 2022 Charity, a legacy of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, champions the West Midlands by connecting businesses with community groups. Funded by a £5 million investment, it has continued five impactful programmes supporting volunteers, young people, and local grassroots organisations. The charity upskills community groups, enhances their resilience, and focuses on marginalised communities. Through civic engagement and community development, United By 2022 preserves the Games' spirit of pride and inclusivity across the region.

The United By 2022 Family consists of local community groups and not for profits across the West Midlands. **Social Value** initiatives equip these grassroots community organisations with skills development and networking opportunities, helping them expand their reach and strengthen their social impact. As part of this support, United By 2022 offered a series of webinar sprints that provided guidance on funding applications, including feedback on previous funding applications.

This case study explores how the Social Value initiatives has influenced three organisations: **Wild Earth, Calico, and William Wilson Turner**. Their experiences highlight the transformative power of tailored support and the need for structured corporate engagement to ensure the continued success of community-led initiatives.





Wild Earth: Growing Confidence and Community Through Nature

Wild Earth, a Coventry-based non-profit, works with young people facing multiple barriers, including neurodiversity, economic hardship, and mental health challenges. They upskill young people in outdoor skills such as bushcraft, leadership development and other youth mentoring to promote wellbeing, resilience and practical life skills.

Their engagement with United By 2022 began as a Gen22 partner and progressed into becoming a United By 2022 Family Member. After connecting with the Social Value team, their specific needs were understood, leading to a successful competitive application of a laptop to support their youth-led development projects. **This seemingly small but crucial resource empowered young participants, enabling them to engage effectively in session planning, project management, and skills development.**

Beyond material support, United By 2022 provided access to training and one-to-one mentorship. Participation in events such as 'Meet the Funder' gave Wild Earth an introduction to fundraising processes and best practices, something they had previously had little exposure to. The organisation also benefitted with direct mentorship from members of the United By 2022 Social Value team, who provided invaluable advice on governance, policy development, and organisational strategy.

Their guidance became a crucial support system, helping Wild Earth navigate complex organisational challenges while maintaining a strong and sustainable approach to youth development.

Wild Earth aims to further develop its ability to quantify long-term social impact, an area where they believe the Social Value team can provide valuable support. Given the organisation's emphasis on focused, transformative change rather than widespread, high-volume interventions, securing funding remains a challenge, as many funders prioritise numerical reach over depth of impact. To address this, Wild Earth seeks expert guidance in monetising social impact, particularly in effectively demonstrating the long-term value of their work to funding bodies and private sector investors. Strengthening this capability will enhance their ability to secure sustainable funding and continue delivering meaningful change.





Calico: The Power of Arts and Activism

Calico, a Birmingham-based arts and activism collective, uses creative expression to challenge gender-based violence. Prior to their engagement with United By 2022, they had been working independently on community-driven projects, but their involvement with United By 2022 helped them expand their reach and gain critical funding from the Inclusive Communities Fund (ICF).

One of the most significant benefits of working with United By 2022 was access to corporate networking opportunities. Calico took part in a high-profile event at the Shoosmiths Office, where they presented their work directly to business leaders and potential sponsors. **For a small grassroots organisation, such direct engagement with corporate funders was rare, making this a particularly valuable experience.**

William Wilson Turner: Digital Inclusion and Sustainable Support

The William Wilson Turner Foundation's engagement with United By 2022 was instrumental in connecting with grassroots initiatives and strengthening digital inclusion efforts. A key moment was an event in Smethwick, where UB22 invited RePC, an organisation focused on bridging the digital divide, to discuss their work in improving technology access. With many of the individuals supported by the foundation struggling with low digital literacy, this event provided valuable knowledge and practical solutions. **The insights gained laid a strong foundation for developing new projects aimed at tackling digital inequalities.**

A key concern for them, as well as for other organisations, is funding. While United By 2022 has provided vital resources and mentorship, the reality remains that many grassroots initiatives are operating in survival mode, struggling with limited core funding. They stressed the importance of long-term investment in the social sector, arguing that short-term funding cycles often fail to address the structural challenges facing community-led initiatives.

While they valued the skills-building workshops and one-to-one support, they emphasised the need for recorded training sessions or downloadable resources. Many small organisations lack the capacity to engage with live sessions in real time, and having access to materials after the fact would allow them to revisit key information when it is most relevant to their needs.

Lessons from the Programme

Through the experiences of Wild Earth, Calico, and the William Wilson Turner Foundation, it is evident that United By 2022 has been a catalyst for growth and innovation in Social Value. The programme has provided a platform for small organisations to access funding, training, and corporate networks, helping them to strengthen their impact and develop more sustainable models of operation.

However, each organisation also identified key areas for further support. The need for better measurement of long-term impact, structured matchmaking between grassroots initiatives and corporate funders, financial support for participation in events, and access to recorded training materials were among the recommendations.

Conclusion: A Legacy of Social Value

Social Value and community engagement at United By 2022 has left a lasting impact on grassroots organisations, providing the resources, mentorship, and networking opportunities needed to create meaningful social change. From nature-based youth development to arts-led activism and digital inclusion efforts, the programme has demonstrated the power of strategic investment in community organisations.

For this legacy to be truly transformative, the programme must continue its mentorship approach and facilitate stronger corporate partnerships. **The experiences of Wild Earth, Calico, and William Wilson Turner show that when given the right support, community-led initiatives can thrive, creating lasting Social Value and driving long-term change.** If these lessons are integrated into future support structures, the impact of United By 2022 will continue to shape the grassroots sector for years to come.

