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Bid to get small firms to join forces

Tuesday, February 16, 2010, 08:30

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Creative firms in Leicestershire will be encouraged to join forces to secure bigger contracts as part of efforts to promote the sector.

Key figures from business support organisations met at an event to discuss how they could do a better job of helping fledgling companies get assistance they need to grow.

The seminar at Leicester's Phoenix Square looked at the significant contribution creative companies – such as design firms – make to the local economy.

Leicestershire is believed to have one of the biggest concentrations of design companies outside London.

The event was organised by Unleashing Enterprise, which is funded by East Midlands Development Agency (Emda), and aims to bring together groups involved in supporting small firms.

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Dr Noël James, of Emda, gave a sneak preview of a soon-to-be-published report which suggests creative industries are vital for the region.

She said: "We know that they are really quite important in Leicestershire, they're a growth sector, and future trends show they'll continue to grow.

"They're an important source of employment for a lot of sole traders and freelancers and it's important that they're not overlooked."

She said that although businesses are offered start-up advice from Emda, Creative Leicestershire and other publicly-funded bodies, more could be done.

"We need to look at ways of supporting creative industries in Leicestershire and the East Midlands, find out what it is they need and what networks are already out there to help them," she said.

Also at the meeting was Kate Cowan, enterprise support manager at LCB Depot, in Rutland Street, Leicester, which is home to dozens of creative firms. She said support organisations wanted to encourage more businesses to join forces.

"We want to work with businesses so they are more of a combined force, and firms



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can work together in the form of a consortium to win bigger work," she said.

"It does happen informally already, where some businesses do some bidding together.

"We want to get better connections in place so that if you've got a firm bidding for a huge contract, you can show you've got a great pool of local creatives behind you that you can draw on."

She said more work was also needed to keep graduates in the city and county.

"A lot of it is about raising awareness among graduates that there's a huge industry in Leicestershire, and, because it's such a big industry, it's easier to get ahead," she said. "It's not like in London when you're up against thousands of other graduates."

Visitors at the event, last Wednesday, also discussed setting up a quarterly meetings between support organisations such as Apex Leicester, Skills for Enterprise and The Prince's Trust.

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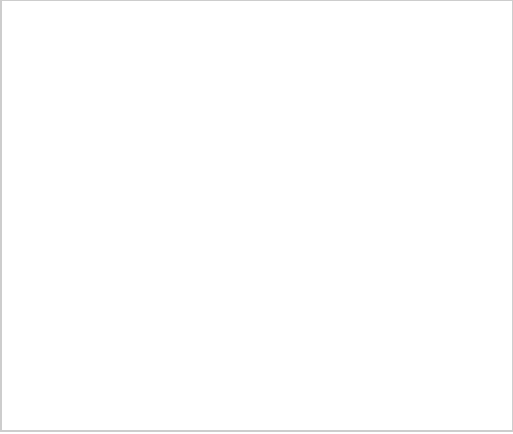
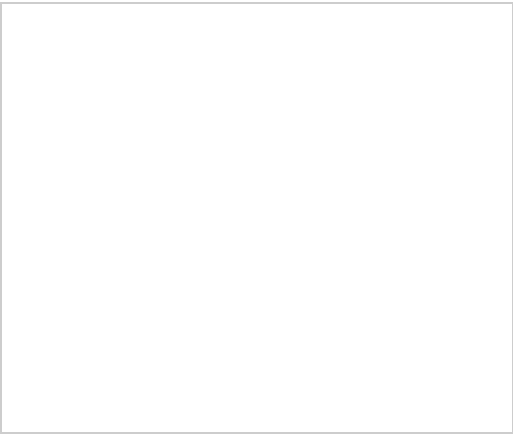
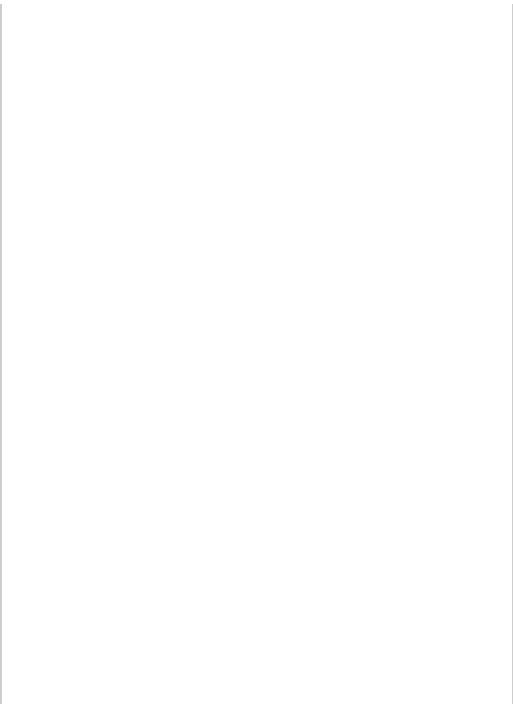
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