



ACTIVITY REPORT

2021 - 2022

x-forces.com



FORCES

NAVY - ARMY - RAF

ENTERPRISE

CONTENTS

Patron's Message	3
Activity in Numbers	4-5
About XFE's Service	6-7
 Pre-Launch Training	8-13
 Launch Finance	14-17
 Post-Launch Support	18-25
Community Projects	26-29
CEO's Message	31
 CASE STUDIES:	
Charles Cordell	10
Jacob Asukile	16
Danielle Corcoran	19
John Burfield	30

This report details the activity of X-Forces Enterprise from 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022.

X-Forces® Enterprise and Soldiering On Awards are trading names of X-Forces (XF) CIC. A Social Enterprise and Community Interest Company registered in England & Wales with Company Registration No. 08034041.

COVER PHOTOGRAPHY

Front: (L-R) John Burfield, Danielle Corcoran, Jacob Asukile, Charles Cordell.

Back: (L-R) James Rodriguez, Andy Dawson, Lucy Goodey, Lee Clements.

Defence Images: Crown copyright

HELPING YOU BE THE BEST IN BUSINESS

PATRON'S MESSAGE



Lt General Richard Nugee
CB CVO CBE

Patron, X-Forces Enterprise

'You can't keep the good down' seems to be a tailor-made comment for the entrepreneurial skills of the defence community and wider defence family. Although the year started in lockdown, and the Soldiering On Awards had to be cancelled at the last minute, the success of XFE and the defence start-up community has continued. This was epitomised by the appearance of Hannah Saunders appearing on Dragons Den and securing funding and support. The Sun quoted a number of comments on Twitter, one of which was: "Phenomenal performance from Hannah. Watched every season of #DragonsDen and I don't remember as impressive, polished and credible a performance in that time." Hannah, an Ambassador for XFE, is a hugely positive example of the defence entrepreneur community at its best.

XFE has also reached some impressive milestones this year, including facilitating over £24M lending and delivering a total of over 40,000 hours of training. Due to the increasing awareness of Climate Change and its implications, with increasing scrutiny of companies, XFE has been at the forefront of championing achieving Carbon Net Zero within the Armed Forces SME Military-In-Business community. There have also been changes to the structure and governance at the top of XFE with the appointment of a number of exciting new non-Executive Directors who bring skill and passion to the Board. In addition a number of new staff have joined, all with the enthusiasm to deliver the very best for the community.

" XFE has proved time and again that it is there to support the whole community – the Defence family "

With the invasion of Ukraine and the cost-of-living crisis, 2022 is going to be a hard year for many, including those starting new businesses. XFE has proved time and again that it is there to support the whole community – the Defence family; my thanks go to all those who have contributed to another successful year.

2021-22 ACTIVITY IN NUMBERS

As pandemic restrictions extended into this period, XFE continued to deliver services online. Whilst the number of applications remained reasonably high, approvals for business launch finance decreased year on year due to a variety of factors; strength of the applications

reducing, assessment time increasing, restructuring the team and the relocation of the office. Significantly more beneficiaries engaged in training, however, and individuals attended multiple courses, thanks to a widened offering that included masterclasses.



191

NEW BUSINESS OWNERS
supported with launch
and growth aspirations



429

BUSINESS PLANS
developed and appraised



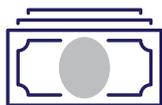
39%

FEMALE OWNED
10% more than the
previous year



798

BENEFICIARIES
engaged in training



£2.5m

OF FUNDING
accessed by beneficiaries



3,745

HOURS
of enterprise training



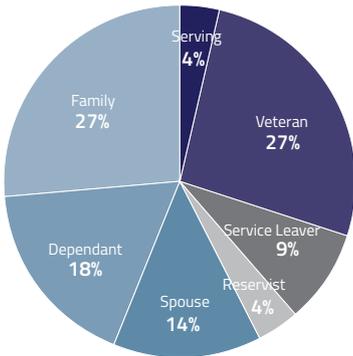
966

**MENTORING
APPOINTMENTS**

2021-2022 figures represent period from 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022.

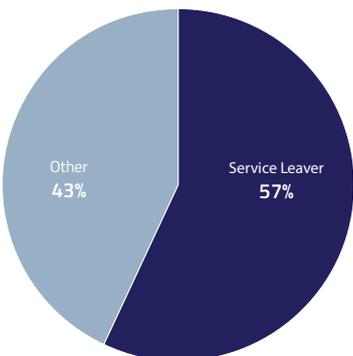
AT A GLANCE ACTIVITY SINCE LAUNCH IN 2013

NEW BUSINESS OWNERS



BENEFICIARY CATEGORIES SUPPORTED
(OF 191 TOTAL, DURING 2021-22)

TRAINING BENEFICIARIES



BENEFICIARY CATEGORIES IN RECEIPT OF
TRAINING (OF 798 TOTAL, DURING 2021-22)

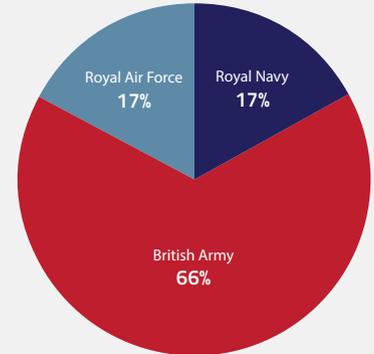
41,292
HOURS
of enterprise training

2,736
BUSINESS OWNERS
supported with
launch and
growth aspirations

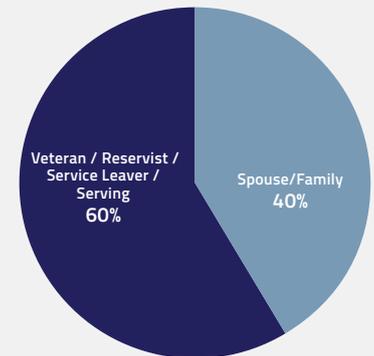
33%
FEMALE
members make up
the complete cohort

£25.4m
OF SEED FUNDING
accessed by beneficiaries

3
POLICY CHANGES
influenced



XFE BENEFICIARY SERVICE CONNECTION
(OF 2736 TOTAL, 2013 TO MARCH 2022)



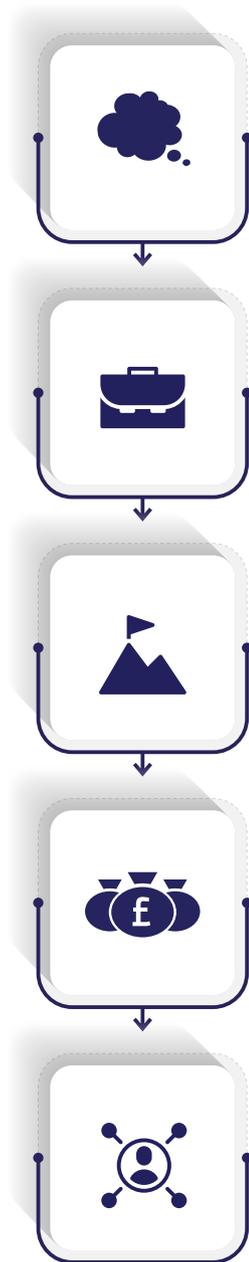
XFE BENEFICIARY CATEGORY
(OF 2736 TOTAL, 2013 TO MARCH 2022)

'Since Launch' figures represent period from July 2013 to end March 2022.

FIVE PHASES OF SUPPORT

The X-Forces Enterprise development journey begins by providing business theory which enables new entrepreneurs to practise their skills on their ideas with specialist support. They are then connected with the tailored training and networks they may need and, finally, signposted to services within the community to help establish their businesses and go on to grow.

Enterprise skills have never been more important, faced with increasing working age populations and market complexities. Second and further careers now common, X-Forces Enterprise's proven model nurtures business know-how that is valuable in both employment and self-employment.



DISCOVERY

Understanding oneself with an introduction to the pros, cons and realities of business in order to make an informed decision about pursuing self-employment.

BUSINESS PLANNING

Breaking down the business plan into easy segments, guided by Business Advisors, from the initial idea to writing a well-structured plan.

REFLECTION

A vital step to reflect and understand the areas to work on for the business to succeed, and in which areas support is needed to develop skills, tools and networks to give the best start.

FUNDING AND LAUNCH

Should the decision be made to progress, XFE can provide information on different funding options that could support the launch of new business ideas.

ONGOING SUPPORT

Whether choosing to start a business or take up an employed role, a network of expert business captains is available to the XFE community, across industry sectors, offering knowledge exchange, advice and reassurance.

FOUR STAKEHOLDERS ONE MISSION

At the heart of XFE is collaboration and partnership to ensure that the best possible support is provided to beneficiaries embarking on enterprise.

BENEFICIARIES

The core purpose is to support and do best by the beneficiaries. These are made up of service leavers, veterans, spouses, reservists, cadets, wounded injured and sick and the wider Armed Forces family.

CHARITY

XFE continues to forge strong and sustainable relationships with third sector partners to ensure that beneficiary provision is at the heart of community activity, giving optimum support at the right time.

BIG BUSINESS

Big Business has a great role to play to support small business; from doing societal good to making commercial sense in the supply chain. XFE channels add energy to the UK's corporate pledges of support for military businesses.

GOVERNMENT

To effect good change we need to share, debate and demonstrate excellence in business and society. Working closely and transparently with government departments provides opportunities to influence and lead on new provision in the Armed Forces community.



XFE is a proud member of the Confederation of Service Charities and upholds the organisation's values to collaborate in support of the Armed Forces community.

XFE plays a very active role in the Cobseo Employment Cluster, a cooperative working group that aims to improve the quality, integration and reach of employment, training and education services.

PRE-LAUNCH SUPPORT

X-Forces Enterprise's training programmes have been developed to give delegates the knowledge, understanding and enterprise skills to be able to decide if they want to pursue self-employment, and how their unique business journey will look.

All of our courses are supported by strategic partners to ensure that delivery is free of charge to the beneficiary.



BRITISH ARMY COMMUNITY

Since 2015, ABF The Soldiers' Charity has supported XFE business discovery and skills workshops, free to access for service-leavers, veterans, reservists, spouses and family members from across the Army. Hundreds have been provided with the knowledge and skills to launch and sustain a business.

“ Training and education to increase the likelihood of Army veterans finding rewarding careers post service is a key focus for ABF The Soldiers' Charity. As such, we are proud of our long-term partnership with XFE, which provides veterans with the knowledge and tools they need to set up their own businesses and enjoy success.”

Major General (Ret'd) Tim Hyams CB OBE,
Chief Executive, ABF The Soldiers' Charity



Army veteran Marc Bucci attended an ABF The Soldiers' Charity supported workshop to build his business, Social Socks.



ROYAL NAVY COMMUNITY

X-Forces Enterprise devised and delivered the workshop 'Naval Families: Self Employment Discovery', providing information and guidance on starting a business to individuals from the Royal Navy community. The content explores whether business could work for them and offers key information to consider. Held online for maximum convenience, the courses welcomed naval veterans, spouses and family members over 18.

Royal Navy Service leaver Keri Jones attended the Naval Families workshop prior to starting her business Keri Jones Floral Design.

OFFICER COMMUNITY TRAINING

XFE continued to deliver intimate and interactive one-day self-employment discovery workshops, designed for former Armed Forces officers and their spouses, in partnership with the Officers' Association (OA).

“ Working with XFE allows the OA to support officers that have the potential to launch a successful second career as a business owner or freelance consultant, by providing essential knowledge and skills.”



Lee Holloway
CEO, the Officers'
Association



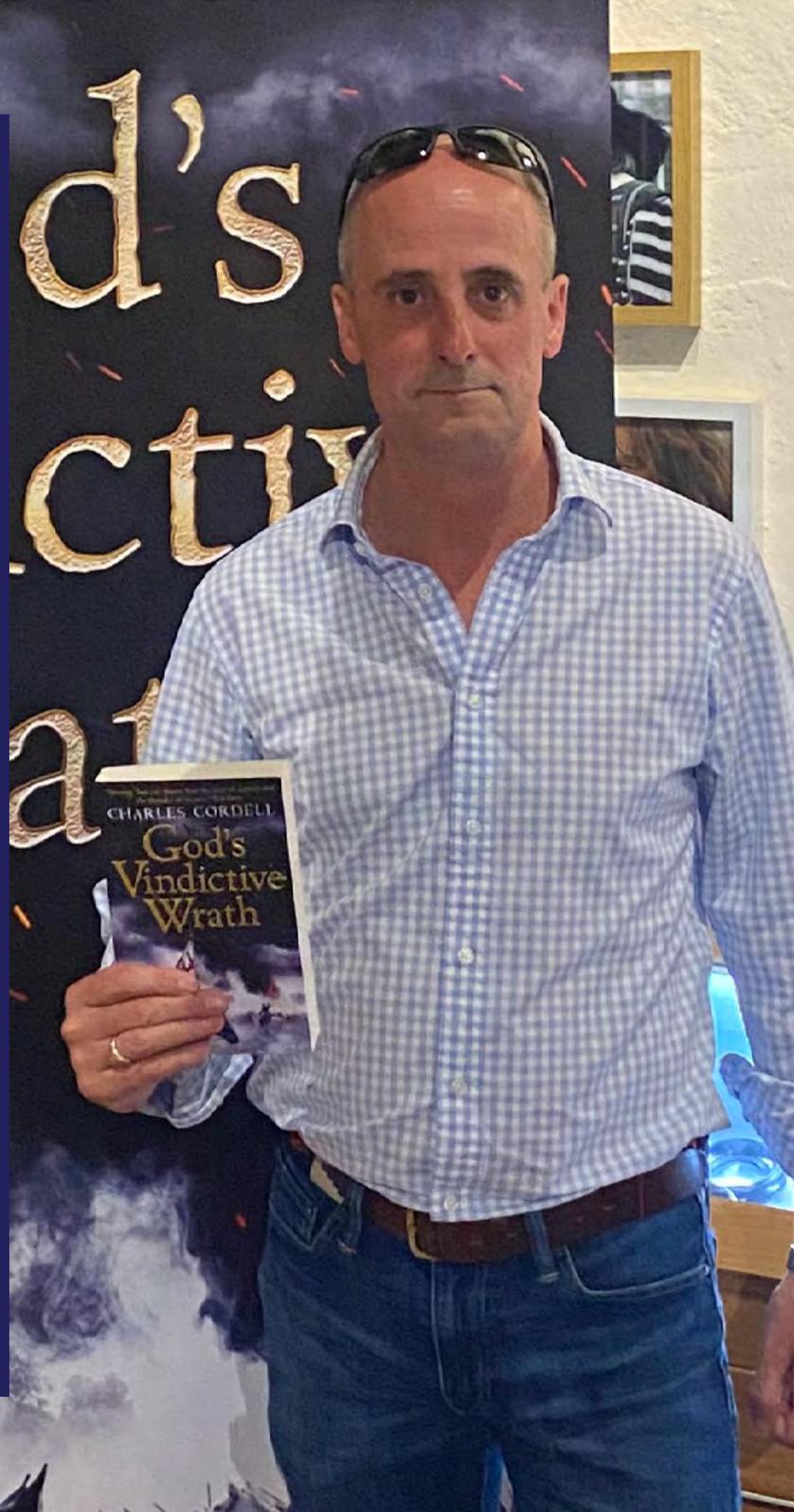
CASE STUDY

CHARLES CORDELL

Charles began writing in 2006, between intense operational postings in Iraq, exploring his creative side to balance soldiering and incorporating his passion for history. As he prepared to transition out of the Army in late 2020, he was undecided on his path. The Career Transition Partnership suggested XFE's training to consider if self-employment would be right for him.

Charles credits the XFE workshops for giving him the knowledge and confidence to develop a business strategy and pitch to literary agents and publishers. Charles' book *God's Vindictive Wrath*, set in the English Civil War, was published in July 2022 and sold hundreds of copies in the first month.

“ XFE's initial workshop really opened my eyes to the possibilities of self-employment as an author. I came away enthused and determined to finish the book; I had to prove to myself that I had a product I believed in. While editing, I attended XFE's two-day course, which helped me pin down the trading status and sales strategy. I came away with my business plan and the confidence to go it alone. ”





SERVICE LEAVERS

XFE continues to provide self-employment awareness and enterprise training to Service leavers across the UK through the Career Transition Partnership programme.

“ The inclusion of self-employment awareness workshops in CTP’s resettlement provision enables Service leavers to make an informed choice about self-employment. This provision is consistently rated very highly by those service leavers who take advantage of the skilled and experienced team at X-Forces Enterprise.”

Adrian Peters
Operations Director, CTP



YOUNG AND EARLY SERVICE LEAVERS

XFE continued its collaboration with Sage Foundation and the Peter Jones Foundation to deliver the sixth and seventh cohorts of the Veteran Tycoon Enterprise Programme, a 12-week course to help service leavers and veterans age 30 and under to start a side hustle business.

“ The training delivered by XFE for the Veteran Tycoon Enterprise Programme enables young military people to deploy their energy and agile thinking into tangible business ideas and prepare them for launch.”

Kevin Doyle
Sage Foundation Channel Manager

sage Foundation

Mark Hill refined his idea to support refugee children in schools on the Veterans Tycoon Enterprise Programme in autumn 2021.



SPOUSES AND PARTNERS

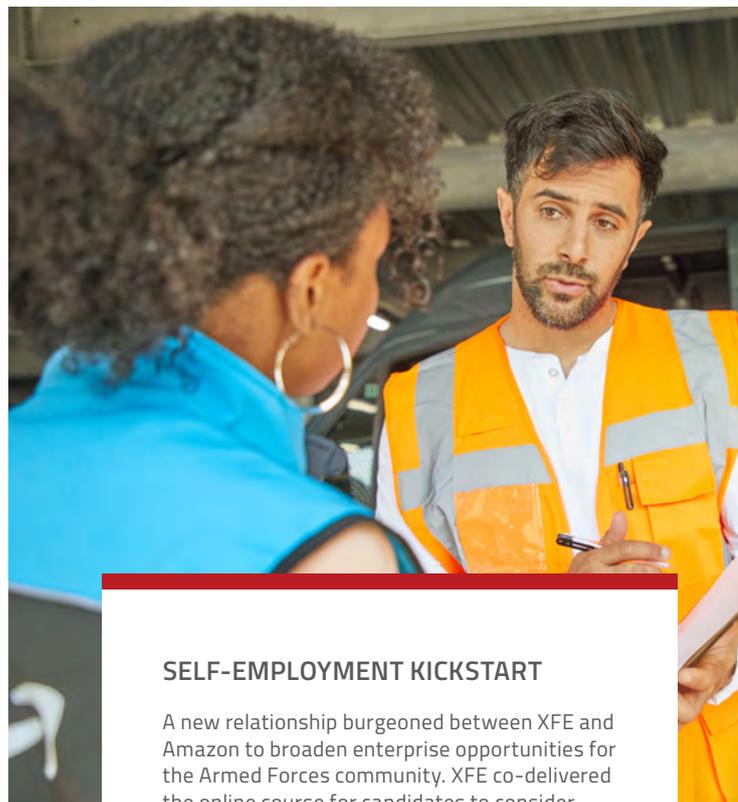
Supported by Royal British Legion, XFE delivered to five cohorts of spouses, partners and family members. The virtual workshops and bespoke individual support enabled participants to explore self-employment as a career option, aiming to significantly increase self-confidence and independence.

“ We are delighted to work with XFE to support self-employment. It is vital that guidance and information is readily available to anyone who needs it within the Armed Forces community.”



Steve Baynes
Head of Grants and Social
Policy, The Royal British Legion

RAF spouse Natalie Jackson attended a course when launching as 'The Longevity Coach'.



SELF-EMPLOYMENT KICKSTART

A new relationship burgeoned between XFE and Amazon to broaden enterprise opportunities for the Armed Forces community. XFE co-delivered the online course for candidates to consider if launching and operating their own parcel delivery business as a Delivery Service Partner within Amazon's ready-made packages would be right for them.

“ Amazon and XFE share a common commitment to enabling the military community to maximise their skills and experience. With XFE, we have been able to offer our DSP programme to veterans and military spouses within a framework that supports them through build and scale up.”



Gillian Russell
Principal Program Manager,
Amazon Global Military Affairs



FEDERATION OF SMALL BUSINESSES (FSB) PARTNERSHIP

XFE's trusted partnership with FSB, whose mission is to help smaller businesses and the self-employed to achieve their ambitions, has widened the support services to beneficiaries and also become a powerful combined voice heard at the highest level.

The one-year employer National Insurance Contributions relief for recruiting veterans, which came into force in April 2021, was one of a number of measures recommended by FSB and XFE to stimulate the employment of veterans in small business in Britain.

" We are proud of our resolute partnership with XFE, that is firmly rooted in a common motivation to support business owners from the military community as well as championing to the UK's employers the 'good for business' benefits of recruiting Armed Forces veterans."



Craig Beaumont
Chief of External Affairs, FSB



LAUNCH FINANCE

Cashflow and liquidity in a fledgling business is vital. Just as each individual's pre-launch needs are tailored to their circumstances, financing a business can involve choosing from venture capital, private equity, loans, crowd-funding, savings and grants.

XFE guides individuals through this landscape to choose the right route for them. While the majority of beneficiaries don't take finance, XFE's long-standing partnerships enable access to seed funding through the British Business Bank and Start Up Loans scheme as well as insurance and professional services through the Federation of Small Businesses.

Army veteran Andy Dawson and his partner Trish Fyfe used a Start Up Loan to launch their valeting and detailing business 'Carfreqz'



START UP LOANS

An official Delivery Partner of the British Business Bank for Start Up Loans, XFE helps applicants to prepare their business plans and cash flow forecasts, assesses final loan applications and provides ongoing mentoring to people whose loan applications are successful.

“ Enterprises started by individuals in the Armed Forces community draw on their military values of courage and discipline to make them a success. We are therefore proud to enable the endeavours of these individuals through our long association with XFE, whose package of support is all-inclusive.”

Richard Bearman
MD Small Business Lending,
British Business Bank



START UP LOAN REPAYMENT

It is often quoted in the media that small business closure rates of 50% within the first five years of trading are considered by some as the norm. Not though by XFE. The Armed Forces community doesn't have to settle for the norm and rarely does.

Of course, successful loan repayment cannot be guaranteed to correlate to business success, but it can be used as one indicator and across the Start Up Loans programme these numbers read well for the Armed Forces community.

The Start Up Loans programme repayment success rate through all delivery channels is 71% since launch of the programme*. Across the X-Forces Enterprise cohort, the successful loan repayment rate during our eight years in the programme runs at 83%*. A truly enviable position across the programme.

** Figures fluctuate based on repayment periods and volumes of loans. The Start Up Loans programme measures loan defaults when repayments are more than 3 months in arrears. Figures correct as of November 2021.*

CASE STUDY

JACOB ASUKILE

Jacob served nine years as an electrician technician in the RAF, maintaining equipment at bases in the UK, the Falklands and Cyprus, before he left to settle in Wales. The pandemic was a crux period for Jacob, offering space to rethink his profession, and he began to plan how he could turn his passion for car maintenance into his own business.

Facilitated by XFE, Jacob drew a Start Up Loan of £10,000 which made it possible to buy a vehicle as well as office equipment, bulk consumables and cover the bills for the first months. Jacob operated his business Protect Valeting alongside an employed role while it grew and, in a unique programme supported by the Royal British Legion, XFE assigned Jacob a business mentor who provided support and guidance for the 12 months post-launch.

“ The monthly check up by XFE has been really good. Even though I don’t know my advisor personally, it has been helpful to have the opportunity to offload on someone impartial and take their advice. It has been a steep learning curve but thoroughly enjoyable. The freedom I have gained from creating the start-up is the most positive aspect. ”



EDUCATION GRANTS

Working in conjunction with XFE, the Royal British Legion has awarded Employment Grants towards the vocational skills an individual needs to start up their business. This education can then be supplemented by mentoring support and our mutual networks.

“ If a veteran feels they need additional training or education to boost their skills and improve their chances in business, there is now more robust support available than ever before through our partnership with XFE.”



Steve Baynes
Head of Grants and
Social Policy, The Royal
British Legion



FINANCE MASTERCLASSES WITH BARCLAYS EAGLE LABS

XFE and Barclays teamed up to create a new Masterclass programme focused on how to finance your business beyond start-up. Online sessions focused on the investment landscape and crowdfunding to enable growth.

“ Both Barclays Eagle Labs and the Military & Veterans Outreach (MVO) have a strong commitment to supporting the military community. We’re delighted to be working with XFE and sharing the tools and knowledge to ensure that those who are starting businesses have the support and guidance to succeed.”



Andy White
Project Manager MVO, Armed
Forces Banking, Barclays

POST-LAUNCH SUPPORT

X-Forces Enterprise's involvement continues well beyond the date that a business owner begins trading, indeed the early months and years can often be the most problematic, when a supportive network can be vital. That's why XFE makes a commitment to be there for business owners all the way, with opportunities to grow their skills, connections and profile.

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE HUB AND BUSINESS CAPTAINS

The XFE Hub launched in June 2020, a free to use business support platform specifically for the Armed Forces community offering information and articles on business, peer-to-peer support and free events. Hub members can also benefit from matching up with a Business Captain, an expert in a specific business area, for support and guidance.

“ The XFE Hub is a superb tool for entrepreneurs, full of useful content and connections, including Karen Porter from our organisation who supports the military in business community with her vast experience in Communications. ”



2565
ACTIVE MEMBERS

65
BUSINESS CAPTAINS

420
ADVICE ARTICLES

at November 2022



Mark Neill
Managing Director,
Landmarc Solutions





CASE STUDY

DANIELLE CORCORAN

The hair and beauty industry was one of the hardest hit during the pandemic but this did not deter Army spouse Danielle from opening her own salon. Danielle credits the lockdown period for giving her the motivation to start her own business; it gave her time, something she says she never usually has, and a plan quickly came together.

Danielle was granted a Start Up Loan for £5000, facilitated by XFE, which she used towards re-fitting the business premises and carrying out vital launch promotion. Marques Hair Salon in Lichfield is now thriving, where Danielle manages a team of three, and she is pleased she took the plunge despite the complex conditions.

“ I was almost starting from scratch. Opening a new salon meant I had a lot of work to do to establish my brand. There were sleepless nights but it has been worth it. XFE has been really helpful, with monthly support to check in on me. ”

MILITARY IN BUSINESS® NETWORK

The XFE Military In Business® Network is an inclusive space to connect entrepreneurs from the Armed Forces community to share experiences and support one another. It is free to join for veterans, service-leavers, reservists, spouses and family members, whether already in business or just at the exploratory stage.

During 2021-22, events continued to be held via video conference, each hosted by a regional ambassador with guest speakers from big business. The Royal British Legion supports the XFE Military In Business® Network, as part of an ongoing collaborative project, now into its fourth year, enabling peer-to-peer support for the Armed Forces community in enterprise.

“ XFE’s Military In Business® network replicates the themes of collaboration, trust and guidance found in service. It is clear that members benefit in many ways from sharing in this safe space. ”



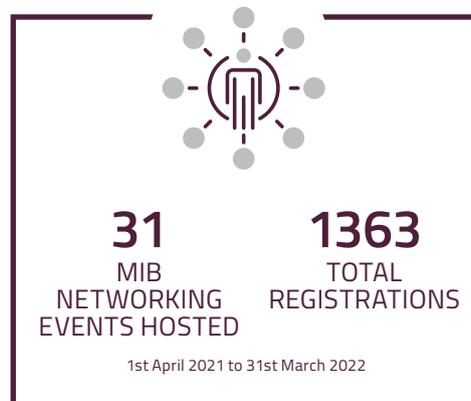
Steve Baynes
Head of Grants and
Social Policy, The Royal British Legion

MILITARY IN BUSINESS® AMBASSADORS 2021-22

XFE wishes to acknowledge and thank these volunteers for their contribution during this period:

Lee Cook – North Wales & Merseyside
Lee Harris-Hamer – North East
Karen Tracey – West Midlands
Adam Taylor – South West
Neil Hallsworth – South
Emma Davies – Scotland

James Wilthew – Yorkshire & Humber
Neel Singh – Greater London
Gary Tucker – London/East
Carrie Moss – East Midlands
Hannah Saunders – South Wales





MILITARY IN BUSINESS® AMBASSADOR PROFILE SOUTH WALES: HANNAH SAUNDERS

X-Forces Enterprise supported Hannah to start her children's skin care business 'Toddle' when she left the RAF in 2017 and has been alongside her since. Hannah recognised the value in the XFE network early on in her business journey: *"It's difficult having nobody else to fall back on when you're the only employee, I'm not sure where Toddle would be now without X-Forces"*.

Committed to giving back, Hannah has volunteered since July 2020 as an X-Forces Enterprise Ambassador for South Wales, where she lives.

In March 2022, Hannah impressed the nation on the BBC show Dragons' Den in which she confidently pitched to secure the full investment sought from two Dragons. Viewers took to social media to applaud her performance and call her the 'best entrepreneur ever'. Just days later, Hannah shared that unique insight with her peers in a Military in Business® networking event.

XFE Ambassadors generously contribute their lived experience to help others on the same path as well as showcasing the exceptional qualities of military entrepreneurs, just as Hannah did so remarkably within minutes on national television.

" Hannah's presentation was very impressive ... what really won me over was clarity of vision on product position; exactly who would buy it and why. It was a very fresh take on an established market and one which fed directly into enabling children to get involved and enjoy a healthy outdoors, particularly after the confines of lockdown."

Deborah Meaden, Dragons' Den investor
Published on www.deborahmeaden.com

BIG BUSINESS SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESS

For start-up businesses to grow and flourish, and for established companies to be sustainable, the economic ecosystem is stronger through collaboration.

Our Corporate members recognise that working together they can make a real difference to the small business agenda which is essential for a thriving economy. These corporates are part of the X-Forces Enterprise Big Business supporting Small Business Steering Group and are made up of key industry sectors and subject matter experts.

Their contributions manifest themselves in enabling the strategic direction of new projects where significant change may need to be considered or adopted to further support the X-Forces Enterprise Business Community. The Group provide a powerful and unrivalled platform for the executive team to have the confidence to carry the recommendations forward.

These big business influencers pledge to provide:

- Strategic thinking and challenge through various stakeholder engagement meetings;
- Access to business captains for knowledge exchange with subject matter experts;
- Host and contribute towards ongoing learning, training and development;
- Easier access to their own procurement processes which supports supply chain diversity;
- Financial support towards engagement and project delivery.

" In their Big Business supporting Small Business initiative, XFE has brought together major players in the corporate landscape to support and uphold small business owners from the military community. What's grown from small roots is now a veritable and formidable working party that has sparked collective thinking and collaborative projects to make a difference in society. NatWest values the enterprise agenda and very much its long association with XFE."



Julie Baker
Head of Enterprise and Climate Engagement, NatWest



BIG BUSINESS SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESS STEERING GROUP MEMBERS 2021/22:





In November 2021 the Big Business Supporting Small Business Steering Group met at The Shard, London to devise and implement an initiative to support small businesses to reduce their carbon impact.

“ I am always delighted to chair the extremely thought provoking meetings of the Big Business supporting Small Business Steering Group. I like the engagement from these wonderful organisations who see the important part the small businesses play in supporting their own supply chains and wider society. We are lucky to have Mike Cherry, Chairman of FSB to support me as the groups Vice-Chair with the knowledge and perspective he is able to bring. Particularly pleasing from our meeting in November 2021 was the pledge to support education in the community for small business leaders on the challenge of achieving Carbon Net Zero. ”

Lt General Richard Nugee CB CVO CBE
Chair, Big Business supporting Small Business Steering Group



MILITARY IN BUSINESS® MASTERCLASS SERIES

Following the successful pilot events, XFE developed its series of specialist workshops designed to develop agile thinking amid a challenging business landscape. 18 workshops were delivered on topics including business agility, selling with confidence, understanding your customer, protecting your data, reaching new markets, website and SEO essentials, the power of mindset and post-launch.

These events were supported by ABF The Soldiers' Charity with contributions from Focus 7, NatWest, Barclays and the Big Business Supporting Small Business Steering Group.



“ I found XFE’s masterclasses and networking to be most helpful, just when I needed help. I’ve really enjoyed surrounding myself with similar mindsets and similar businesses all seeking to grow and learn from one another, and I’ve made some exciting business relationships as a result. ”



When he was planning his IT business, Cyberjag, Army reservist Adam Duffield enrolled on one of the Masterclass series events ‘Fine Tuning Your Business Pitch’ and found it so useful that he attended two subsequent Masterclass events, ‘Financing Your Business’ and ‘Selling with Confidence’.



BIG BUSINESS SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESS: MEET THE BUYER

In collaboration with The Supply Chain Sustainability School and Balfour Beatty, XFE hosted an exclusive Meet the Buyer event for Armed Forces businesses already in the construction sector or wishing to trade within the sector. This event is another successful milestone for the XFE Big Business supporting Small Business initiative,

The event was structured into predetermined 1-to-1 meetings between 16 Big Business buyer organisations and 26 suppliers, interwoven with some larger group networking sessions. Feedback from attendees was very complimentary, such as this statement by John Burfield: *“It was a fantastic opportunity because it’s not every day a small company like mine can get to meet with the supply chain of multi-million pound plus companies. My foot is now in the door and the door is starting to open.”*

“ Access to procurement managers to discuss new ideas, new products and new solutions is really difficult for small businesses. It’s great that so many major contractors are opening their ‘virtual doors’ to potential new suppliers from the military community.”



Ian Heptonstall
Director, Supply Chain
Sustainability School

COMMUNITY PROJECTS

SOLDIERING ON AWARDS 2021

Hampered by the pandemic, the finalists reception and winner winners' ceremonies were held virtually via video conference. Special guest hosts joined the online events to announce the winners and a similarly high level of excitement and exposure was achieved for the winners as would be hoped for under normal conditions. The support and celebration of the winners' achievements was strongly felt in the Forces community despite the ongoing effect of the pandemic on the nation.



“ The Soldiering On Awards recognise and acknowledge the enormous efforts and achievements from many people across the military community who help and support those in need; volunteers, charity teams, public servants, social enterprises, veterans themselves, individuals, employees.

That help and support manifests itself in acts of kindness, the raising of money, provision of services, tremendous acts of courage or endeavour and ultimately doing great good to support those who have served. This is the message we are determined to amplify through these Awards and along the way support the longevity and sustainability of award winners and finalists to do more.”

The Rt Hon Earl Howe PC,
Deputy Leader House of Lords



Assistant Chief Constable Chris Sykes and Inspector Jim Jones of Greater Manchester Police, winners of the Working Together Award 2021

We are really grateful to the Award sponsors and partners for their continued support:



Emma Norton, winner of the Defence Inclusivity Award 2021



Barry Coase and Bella, winners of the Animal Partnership Award 2021

COBSEO EMPLOYMENT CLUSTER

X-Forces Enterprise is an active member of the Cobseo employment cluster, led by RFEA - The Forces Employment Charity. The group meets three times a year to collaborate on employability related issues in the sector, which has been increasingly important during this reporting period.

“ XFE plays a leading part in supporting those across the Armed Forces Community seeking self-employment and is a valued, dynamic member of Cobseo. XFE plays an active and important role in our Employment Cluster, which is improving the quality, integration and reach of employment, training and educational services to maximise the strengths and skills that Service experience and expertise can bring to the UK economy and to society as a whole.”

Lt Gen Sir Nicholas Pope KCB CBE
Chair, Cobseo





ARMED FORCES COVENANT EMPLOYER RECOGNITION SCHEME

XFE continued play a leading role in driving forward the aims of the Armed Forces Covenant at a national and regional level.

Chairman Martin Wing assumed the joint role of Vice-Chair of the Gold Awards Association (GAA) in 2021 and XFE continued to lead the London Region, bringing together Forces-friendly employers and tightening ties between Defence and employers in the region.

The GAA National Steering Board met periodically through the year, on which Ren Kapur MBE represents Small Business. During this period, three national special interest groups were initiated to focus on Reservists policy, employment policy and general employer engagement.



TRADE ASSOCIATIONS AND MEMBERSHIP BODIES SME FOCUS GROUP

In a pilot project that aimed to improve employment opportunities for ex-Service personnel, supported by Forces in Mind Trust, XFE engaged Trade Associations and Membership Bodies to encourage Small and Medium Enterprises to explore and support veterans' employment.



CASE STUDY

JOHN BURFIELD

John is an engineer that began his working life in the Royal Artillery, followed by a second enlistment in the Royal Navy, and subsequently 19 years accruing a broad spectrum of skills in buildings and estate management. It was redundancy that sparked John's move into business; he'd built a name for himself in energy and compliance and realised he could continue to do his work alone.

John started his business Sand Lizard Technical Solutions to offer specialist energy efficiency and water treatment solutions, but was quick to recognise that he needed support with operations. John embraced XFE's full scope of guidance and events; he completed Start-Up Skills training, participated in the first 'Meet The Buyer' event and regularly joins with Military In Business® networking.

“ There was a lot to learn quickly in areas I wasn't familiar with, for example accounting and marketing. XFE's initial workshop gave me a solid overview about all the aspects I needed to consider and XFE events have proved to be valuable to connect with other entrepreneurs and get impartial feedback. ”



CEO'S MESSAGE



Lt Col Ren Kapur MBE
CEO and Founder,
X-Forces Enterprise

This twelve-month reporting period has been like no other I have personally experienced. The uncertainty the pandemic brought is immeasurable. However, for me, what defines success is being proactive to understand your landscape and digging deep to find the right resource, knowledge and support around you. Volatile economic times are a double-edged sword; weaker businesses or industries unfortunately go to the wall, whilst some find new gaps and opportunities to prosper.

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Whether people have been finding it tough or they have been riding the crest of a wave, I'm proud to say that the XFE team has been there for those in the community who are being proactive and asking for help. I am therefore extremely proud of and grateful to the XFE team, particularly the ambassador network and the volunteers who are the focal point of the peer-to-peer Military-in-Business support network, who have been there to engage with all kinds of individuals and businesses during these challenging times. Just being a sounding board can be so valuable. Through all this, the organisation and the team has matured and I would like to personally thank our Patron for his counsel, the new team of non-executive directors who have onboarded so quickly; all contributing so positively. Also to those in my own support network who have helped both myself and the organisation, and finally in particular the members of the Big Business supporting Small Business Steering Group.

I hope you have enjoyed reading about the variety of projects we continue to deliver, have time to take in the achievements and please do share the wonderful success stories threaded throughout this Activity Report. This community is thriving and growing through the most challenging of environments. Long may this continue.



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