CCIN innovation funding – 2018/9 Policy Labs

Would you like to collaborate with other CCIN Members (Councils, Associates and Affiliates) to find co-operative solutions to the challenges facing local government? Is there a co-operative idea that you would like to run in your local area? If yes, we want to hear from you!

As a CCIN member you can apply for up to £10,000 to deliver a Policy Lab. This could be anything from co-operative approaches to tackling food poverty to initiatives that put communities back at the heart of local decision making. We are open to all ideas, the more innovative the better!

So what do we need from you? If you have an idea, please complete the expression of interest form below, telling us about your idea for a Policy Lab. Don't be shy: we want to hear ideas from ALL our members.

Please return your completed EOI to comms@councils.coop

Expression of Interest – CCIN Funding

CCIN Member Authority: Norwich City Council

Name of CCIN Lead Member: Cllr Alan Water / Cllr Beth Jones

Name and Job Title: Kate Price, Neighbourhood and community enabling manager and Adam Clark, Strategy Manager

1. What is your idea?

Provide details of what your proposed project is, the story of how you identified the need or opportunity for the proposal and how the money will be spent.

Taking Equality Impact Assessments from a desktop exercise to a collaborative process which involves data PLUS dialogue

As councils, we are in a time of great change as a result of austerity, shifting social norms, demographic changes, and the advent of new technologies and opportunities. As such policies, services, physical spaces in council buildings and projects in the community are being regularly redesigned, newly created or withdrawn. When these changes are made, councils must demonstrate due regard to the public sector equality duty as part of the Equality Act (2010). One of the ways in which we do is by undertaking an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) to consider how these changes may or will positively or negatively affect particular people or groups in our communities. At a time of austerity, marginalised and disadvantaged communities are often more at risk of being impacted by the loss of services and councils have a statutory and moral obligation to not further disadvantage them.

Currently, Norwich City Council has been reviewing how this process works internally and has identified that the current system we have, while comparable to other councils and statutory service providers, is not a system we feel reflects our ambition to be more collaborative with residents. As a council, we are not a particularly diverse organisation and often officers do not have direct experience of the complex barriers which exist to accessing services for many communities. Due to this, EIAs can be undertaken as a desktop exercise which is not as informed as it might be had we been working alongside people with lived experience who can better inform the mitigations and changes required to assure equality of access.

We have identified this as an opportunity to research best practice and create a more effective, cooperative model and best practice guidance to genuinely inform design rather than simply ratify it. This would take into account localised data and evidence at the first instance – such as specific numbers of people affected and geographical data on locations with high levels of communities affected – and a second step which includes engaging with members of these communities to discuss the risks, barriers and effective mitigations rather than officers speak for them. Given the sensitivities and cultural differences between varied communities, the council would like to do this cooperatively with local VCSE groups who work with communities of disadvantaged residents and the residents themselves to design and pilot new approaches and what is required from councils to make an effective and engaging process, and fellow CCIN member councils who have different experiences of testing options to see if the model can be replicated in other localities.

The budget would be spent approximately as follows:

- £1,000 budget for travel / facilitating meetings with other CCIN member councils to research and share best practice (technology would be used with working group meetings to reduce costs where possible)
- £1,500 budget for expenses associated with meeting local communities such as specialist travel for disabled residents and event/hire costs.

- £1,000 for first stage research costs (internal to Norwich City Council) to establish common practices and specific groups who need to engage in the process development
- £5,000 commission to an external facilitator to develop and test ways in which the community engagement will work with a report on the effectiveness of different approaches
- £1,000 for development of the technology underpinning the process and data extraction
- £500 for delivery of a report and dissemination of information to CCIN members

2. Who will you work with?

A key requirement of Policy Lab Funding is that you work in partnership with other CCIN members. We recommend engaging a minimum of **three** other CCIN members (Affiliates and Associates should bid alongside Full Council members) to create a working group to support the development of your project.

At a local level, we would be working with key voluntary and advocacy groups to secure direct links to members of affected communities of interest and identity. These would include the Norwich Integration Partnership, New Routes and Bridge Plus (refugees and asylum seekers); Equal Lives, the Norwich Independent Living Group and Norwich Access group (disabilities); charities representing specific cultural communities such as the Congolese, Syrian and Zimbabwean groups; groups representing specific disabilities such as Norwich and Norfolk Association for the Blind and the Norfolk Association for the Deaf; key communities of identity such as LGBTQ+ projects and groups relating to age such as the Mancroft Advice Project (young people) and the Norwich Older People's Forum. Through these organisations we will seek to find individuals who can use their lived experience to help us understand context, and organisations with expertise working with specific communities who can advise us.

We would look to engage a minimum of three fellow CCIN members as part of a scrutiny working group to oversee the research and proposed ideas, as well as share the outcomes of the trials and data development. This would be open to any member council but we would look to specifically invite some with different demographic make ups to Norwich so as to ensure that any guidelines or tools created worked outside the local context.   This would include requests to Oldham, Salford, Rochdale, Newcastle and Croydon if they were amenable (Rochdale has confirmed they will work with us already). This group would be used as a sounding board for potential developments as well as signing off final reports and suggestions.

In terms of researching best practice, we would hope to engage all CCIN members in collating their EIA policies and templates for the desktop research element of the Policy Lab.

As part of the external facilitation, we would look to work with a local organisation to test the models for engagement. Using an external provider for this will allow for a degree of scrutiny of the approaches outside a council setting.

3. What are the outcomes you hope to achieve?

What are the outcomes you hope to achieve through this project and how will you know if your outcomes are achieved? What is your measure of success?

The overarching ambition of the improvement and revision of the Equality Impact process is that councils are able to enhance the equity of outcomes for all residents accessing council services. We have a duty to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and foster good relations between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not which we feel a quality EIA process will enhance.

Outcomes will include:

- Residents from communities of interest and identity have a better understanding of how they can engage with the council and influence democratic decision making processes
- Residents from communities of interest and identity feel they have the opportunity to influence and co-design services delivered by the council
- Increased awareness of issues facing communities of interest and identity by council officers
- Improved council relationships with communities of interest and identity so trust in council is increased by EIAs being given value and importance
- Increased understanding by officers of the positive benefits of designing processes and projects in cooperation with the communities using them

Outputs will include:

- Qualitative feedback from members of communities participating linked to the outcomes above
- Number of services which are changed to be more accessible as a result of the new learning and model
- Quantitative evidence in the uptake of services from communities of interest and identity
- Collaboration and cooperation between councils resulting in good practice being identified early and shared with partners
- Awareness of gaps in current collection of data and evidence to influence in other services

It is a long term process to identify whether the services which may be redesigned as a result of more effective EIA engagement has resulted in an improved experience for customers from those affected communities. Therefore we would look to identify two key services with robust data collection to use as examples going forward beyond the scope of the Policy Lab.

Feedback from fellow CCIN members using the model/guidelines on their experience and any challenges or successes they have will also be captured and collated.

A truly successful project will be one which develops not only a set of best practice guidelines for other councils, but a tested model which combines use of technology and in person engagement

to create a process which puts vulnerable communities at its core and is seen by those communities as a positive step in their ability to influence local government decision making.

It would also evaluate itself and improve the process through refining. The organisation and residents with lived experience can each review the EIA with recommendations for improvements to be incorporated to the equalities action plan. As a group, we can also review whether the EIA made the right decision by looking over past cases. This would need time for reflection and time for it to go right or wrong, but having that process would show that any mistakes not identified immediately would still be sorted by the process.

4. How does your project support the aims and objectives of the Co-operative Councils' Innovation Network?

The Co-operative Councils Innovation Network aims to frame the debate on the future of sustainable solutions to public sector challenges. Our work will ultimately improve outcomes for communities by enabling members to develop radical innovation in policy and practice, sharing best practice and learning, and enabling innovators to chart new territory together. Please provide details of how your project will support this aim.

We feel a cooperative council is an effective one that makes informed decisions and has a positive relationship with residents, and that residents are a resource to support the council to make better decisions which lead to more accessible and effective services.

By improving the way in which services are designed from the outset for those affected, will bring council efficiency savings in the long term by increasing the effectiveness of these services for all residents. By incorporating a technological element with regards to the analysis of data, it will save officer time and support them to access the right information at the start of their design process, saving changes and mitigations later down the line and increased time by officers in dealing with residents who fall through the cracks of current universal services which often result in the need for more intensive interventions by the time crisis is reached.

We are committed to sharing this learning with other councils and statutory organisations, and working with them to inform their own development and publishing case studies of its use in changing common services such as redesigning the councils use of Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy which impacts most of our fellow councils. From an internal perspective, all services have to use the same EIA process which will mean it has an impact on more traditional service delivery such as transport design and planning which might traditionally fall back on legally prescribed consultation mechanisms which often marginalise affected people and communities.

By bringing in non-council collaborators, we are looking to explore ideas which are more innovative than those which can often arise from officers working in a more structured and removed environment.

5. How does your project demonstrate the Values and Principles of the Co-operative Councils' Innovation Network?

Our Network is based on the Co-operative values developed by the International Co-operative Alliance: "self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity… honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others". Further details about the CCIN's Values and Principles is available [here](#). Please provide details of how your project will demonstrate the CCIN's Values and Principles.

This Policy Lab is designed to look at how we make democratic decision making fundamentally more equitable, putting some of the responsibly of identifying positive design of services into the hands of customers. A much improved Equality Impact Assessment process would change the nature of the relationship councils have with the diverse communities which make up our towns, cities and boroughs, increasing trust in the council by the council becoming more welcoming and open to new ideas and genuinely cooperative design principles.

We believe that putting residents more tangibly at the heart of project design shows council commitment to care for all our residents and invite them to be part of the team when it comes to growing our city and its services.

6. How will you share your learning with the Co-operative Councils Innovation Network?

How will you share your learning with other CCIN members? How will you share your learning beyond the project? This could be through producing a report, holding a workshop or presenting at the CCIN's annual showcase event.

We would look to present a combined final report, incorporating the research around current practice, guidelines and sample templates which show good practice as well as presenting an imitable tech and engagement model based on the piloting of different engagement methods and their reaction from communities.

We would be very pleased to attend if invited to showcase at a CCIN event but also to work specifically with any other members to share the learning and answer questions on how it might be replicated in their areas.