

CABINET - JULY 16, 2019

INNOVATION & SUSTAINABILITY FUNDS REVIEW – OUTCOMES

Report by Director of Adult Services

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to:**
 - (a) **Approve the recommendations set out under 27 (a-h)**
 - (b) **Reallocate the remaining amount, as set out under 27 (h) to the next round of the Innovation Fund.**

Executive Summary

2. This report relates to the Innovation & Sustainability Funds for Support; administered by Adult Social Care to support the development of daytime opportunities for adults in Oxfordshire. These funds help support people to live well at home and in their communities.
3. It was agreed at Cabinet on March 19, 2019, that a review of the Innovation and Sustainability Funds process and timeline for future grant funding takes place prior to re-opening, and to include the following recommendations:
 - (a) To develop a map to identify geographical location and reach of each service requesting funding, with a view to prioritising funding in areas where there is limited daytime support services
 - (b) To review the evaluation process to allow the opportunity for more detailed evaluation, where necessary
 - (c) To review officer time to monitor what is happening over the grant period
 - (d) To review the application questions to ensure that all necessary information is gathered
 - (e) To find an electronic means of viewing applications or an alternative to avoid masses of paperwork for the panel. The amounts available for the period of April 2020 to March 2021 are £100,000 for the Innovation Fund and £250,000 for the Sustainability Fund
4. Both funds have increased in popularity and it was deemed an appropriate time to review the application forms, criteria and process to enable us to improve our offer and to meet increased demand.
5. The review included holding a listening workshop, an on-line survey, meeting with colleagues whom support the grant process from beginning to end and obtaining specific feedback from the first cohort of successful applicants to the Innovation Fund, for an update on their progress to date and future plans, as they near the end of their funding period.

6. The information gathered from the above activities has enabled us to make these recommendations, for final decision by Cabinet on July 16, 2019, which will shape and improve the grant applications, guidelines, and the award selection and decision-making processes.

Background

7. In 2016 the Council developed a sustainable model for delivering daytime support to meet people's needs now and in the future. This would include: supporting people to live well in their communities; providing some additional tailored support to people who need this; and ensuring that a range of options are available for people with more complex needs to choose from, using their personal budgets or own resources.
8. There remained a need to continue to support people to live well in their local community, taking part in a range of locally available opportunities. Our aim was to reduce loneliness and social isolation by supporting individuals and communities to support each other.
9. Oxfordshire's voluntary sector delivers excellent support to many vulnerable people; and the majority do so without funding from Oxfordshire County Council. As part of the outcomes from the daytime support review, the Council introduced Voluntary Sector Funding. The January 2017 Cabinet report included the below table, showing budgeted funding for the Innovation and Sustainability Funds:

Service	17/18	18/19	19/20
Voluntary Sector Funding (April – August 2017)	£0.573m	-	-
Sustainability Fund (Voluntary Sector funding)	-	£0.250m	£0.250m
Innovation Fund (Voluntary Sector Funding)	£0.100m	£0.100m	£0.100m
Specialist training & support (dementia & autism)	£0.025m	£0.025m	£0.025m
Community Information Network	£0.250m	£0.250m	£0.250m

- The **Sustainability Fund**, £250,000 per year, to provide grants to enable the ongoing delivery of daytime support services in areas of high need. The fund was open to all voluntary and community groups supporting people in Oxfordshire.
- The **Innovation Fund**, £100,000 per year, to provide one-off grant funding to establish self-sustaining projects to fill gaps in services and broaden the current offer. The fund was open to all voluntary and community groups supporting people in Oxfordshire.

- Alongside these funds, there was a further £250,000 available in the **Transition Fund** for 2018/19. This enabled additional support to assist services working towards sustainability following implementation and embedding of the new model for daytime support services.
10. It was agreed by Cabinet on March 19, 2019 that a timely review takes place for successful applicants to establish success rates and where smaller funds are awarded, any implications to the project.

The Innovation and Sustainability Funds review - Methodology

11. We held a workshop event and invited successful and unsuccessful applicants and other people interested in helping us to re-shape the application form and process. We opened an online survey and sent the link to all people invited to the original Innovation workshop (to develop the scope and criteria), and all applicants to both funds. The results of this survey can be found in Annex 1. We asked for feedback from people participating at the cross-party panel meetings, representing the community.
12. Direct contact was made with the first cohort of successful Innovation Fund applicants to acquire specific feedback on progress to date and future plans. The results of this can be found in Annex 2. We also included a general update on successful applicants from cohort 2 and 3 of the Innovation Fund. Meetings were held with internal departments involved in the grant process and with our operational colleagues.
13. Mapping process – we have devised a map reflecting where the currently funded services from the Innovation and Sustainability Funds are based. The map can be found here:
https://drive.google.com/open?id=1veRqygppRvTuBfJUg8aYX2wAqd5i_nYgu&usp=sharing Code: Blue - Innovation Funds and Orange - Sustainability Funds.

Outcomes of the review

14. An overview of the **workshop** feedback:
- Repetition of questions within the application form, asking the same thing but worded slightly differently
 - Criteria for Innovation Fund is not clear, is it new and innovative or an add on to existing services?
 - Transport remains a key problem for many services, we offer services but then struggle to get suitable transport for people to attend
 - Can we apply for funding relating to transport ideas?
 - A word count for each question would be helpful
 - Wording can be off putting – keep it simple
 - Self -sustaining - most services struggling to cover costs and feel added pressure to become self-sustaining, when it feels like an impossible task.

- Can you offer a clear explanation of the types of groups that could apply? Is it Adults and Older People or could it be groups impacted by Mental Health, Autism and Physical Disabilities?
- The 3-year plan is off putting and are we held to account for any information included in this?
- An opportunity to receive detailed feedback if unsuccessful would be very helpful
- It felt overwhelming to present our ideas at the cross-party panel, with an average of 12 people on the panel – the Innovation Fund.

15. An overview of the **online survey** feedback:

- Several thought that the same questions were asked several times or that many of the questions repeated themselves in different ways, making it necessary to write multiple answers for what was essentially the same question
- Some considered that it might have been useful to include examples of projects that would not be approved for funding
- More information would be helpful on who can apply. Make it clear that individuals are eligible to apply as well as organisations
- Some misunderstanding on the length of time for funding offered was evident
- The use of the term 'research evidence' seems onerous, as this appears to indicate the need for a wide knowledge of local statistics and trends. More explanation of what is required would help – e.g. what depth of research is expected? Contributors acknowledged that evidence can be found in local plans, etc, but is this what is being asked?
- Project monitoring expectations were a concern for some. Examples of this would be helpful and the criteria could form part of the agreement from the start, so groups know what is expected in advance
- Request for a 3-year business plan was off-putting for many. Again, clarity of how much information is expected would be helpful
- Overall, the application form, process and payment are relatively simple in comparison to other bidding options.

16. An overview from **panel members** representing the community:

- Found it rewarding to be part of the assessment and recommendation process
- Panel representatives felt that presentations were often being addressed to the Councillors in the room
- Panel representatives found some of the jargon and words used inappropriate for the levels of communication in the room, having to ask the presenter to explain what certain words meant
- Too much paper being printed out, can we simplify the application and adapt to meet all communication needs of the people on the panel?
- Can we start the panel later in the day, to allow people travelling by public transport to use their concessionary travel passes?
- What checks have been made on applicants prior to being considered for grant funding? We (the panel) put our trust in the information contained within the application form
- To continue with presentations at the cross-party panel when applying for the Innovation Fund

- What monitoring does Oxfordshire County Council complete throughout the funded period for successful applicants?
 - Can we have the monitoring form at the beginning of the funding period so that we know what is expected?
17. An overview from the **first cohort of successful applicants** to the Innovation Fund:
- The successful applicants have delivered what was proposed in their original applications
 - One bidder did not accept an award because they were unsuccessful in other bidding and this impacted on their financial stability to set up and provide their proposed service
 - Concerns around how long it takes to receive the funding once agreed by Cabinet, quite often the service was being delivered but the funding hadn't been received
 - Most had spent money on advertising materials only to be informed at a later date (in the grant agreement) that Oxfordshire County Council logos should be included, incurred additional re-printing costs and unaccounted for expense.
18. A general update on the progress of the **second and third cohort of successful applicants** to the innovation Fund:
- All of cohort 2 applicants are underway with providing new and innovative opportunities for daytime support
 - Cohort 3 applicants have yet to receive their grant funding; this should be paid in June 2019
 - One bidder confirmed that they are not able to deliver the proposed service based on being awarded 60% of the amount they requested and have therefore declined the funding
 - One other applicant has since decided that they can scale down their project and accept the 60% of the amount they requested
 - Successful applicants would like to find a way to receive their funds quicker, once Cabinet has made their final decision. They are often providing the service or taking steps to provide the service but do not have the funds readily available to support set up costs.
19. An overview of feedback from **Internal teams**:
- Suggestion that a timeline is shared with all key teams so that they are aware of the timeframes where their input will be required
 - To re-design the application form to support the transferring of information to the legal agreement
 - To find a way to make the payments process quicker and remove the need for a supplier to raise an invoice
 - To complete comprehensive accreditation checks for all services shortlisted
 - When applications are received from existing services, we do not have their monitoring information for the fiscal year because it is expected at the end of

the funding period, suggest that a summary or breakdown of costs is included in bid application

- To include a representative from the Innovation Team when completing the officer scoring process

20. An overview from **operational colleagues:**

- More internal communication about successful funding and areas where this has gone to – we would like to link this to internal resources walls.
- To align with a placed based approach used by operational teams
- To link the publication of grant awards to the quarterly locality briefing meetings

Equalities Implications

21. The equality and inclusion implications of the strategic direction for daytime support and its implementation was set out in the 24 January 2017 Cabinet papers. This included a Service and Community Impact Assessment, included at Annex 3.
22. Equality and inclusion implications have been considered. The proposal to offer grants to community and voluntary sector services is only thought to confer a benefit on those with a protected characteristic and there is no adverse impact on those individuals.

Risk Management

23. The risk management implications of the strategic direction for daytime support and its implementation were set out in the 24 January 2017 Cabinet papers. These papers are available on the council website.

Communications

24. We have publicised good news stories based on several successful applicants from both grants.
25. Potential applicants and people involved in the review of the Innovation and Sustainability Funds will be made aware of the changes prior to both grants opening on August 12, 2019.

Key dates

26. The key dates are as follows:

Opening of the Innovation and sustainability Funds	12 th August 2019
Closing date	20 th September 2019
Proposed Cross party panel dates	7 th , 8 th , 9 th 10 th October 2019
Cabinet	21 st January 2020

Recommendations

27. Our review of the process and criteria of the delivery of the previous rounds of this funding, together with the feedback received has supported the revision of the Innovation and Sustainability Funds, and our proposal for the following recommendations:

Process

- (a) Approve the revision and rewording of the Innovation and Sustainability Funds application forms using Plain English
- (b) Approve the introduction of a pre-panel scoring process, to meet increased demand for both funds and to ensure that applications meet agreed criteria
- (c) Approve four cross-party panel meeting days to fully consider applicants to the Sustainability and Innovation Funds

Information

- (d) Approve the use of digital communication and the recently devised map demonstrating where Oxfordshire County Council currently funds daytime support services across Oxfordshire

Finances

- (e) Approve the phased introduction of three-year grants for Sustainability Fund funding, reducing the burden on applicants and improving voluntary sector sustainability
- (f) Approve the opening of the next round of funding on 12th August 2019, to cover 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021
- (g) Approve a requirement that funding offers should consider if it is viable to offer a percentage of the requested funding amount and any potential impact
- (h) Reallocate £5,865, previously awarded and declined, to the next round of the Innovation Fund

LUCY BUTLER
Director for Adult Services

Documents

Annex 1 – Innovation & Sustainability Funds Review Report – May 2019
Annex 2 – Innovation Fund Feedback from First Cohort
Annex 3 – Service and Community Impact Assessment

Contact Officer: Rebecca Lanchbury, Commissioning Officer
Rebecca.lanchbury@oxfordshire.gov.uk 07584 481 255

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