



Co-operative Councils

Innovation Network

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: [Stevenage Borough Council](#)

Name of CCIN Lead Member: [Cllr Sharon Taylor](#)

Name and Job Title: [Rob Gregory – Assistant Director Communities & Neighbourhoods](#)

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.

CO-OPERATIVE NEIGHBOURHOODS : LIVING OUR VALUES THROUGH THE WAY WE WORK WITH OUR COMMUNITIES

Our proposal is to test trailblazer neighbourhood/locality pilots to demonstrate the value of co-operative councils further developing their mechanisms to work at a very localised level with their residents as co-producers of local communities and neighbourhoods.

The era of austerity has meant that many councils have subsequently reduced mechanisms for neighbourhood level engagement. Community development teams have been decimated across large parts of the country as a swathe of non-statutory functions have been reduced as part of cost-saving measures. Alongside this commissioning councils have embraced more cost-effective procurement of services on far larger economies of scale to reduce costs, but ultimately reducing the available resources and services at a neighbourhood level.

The above short-termism ignores the broader economic benefits of good quality neighbourhood engagement, at the level that is most meaningful for local residents. We believe that the CCIN is well-placed to provide a counter to this common mantra by a well-developed policy proposition that makes a strong case for neighbourhood working in a truly co-operative way which delivers both economic benefits and better outcomes in a local government context.

Our policy lab will test:

- 1) increased economic value in terms of more effective service delivery and improved outcomes for local residents as a consequence of meaningful neighbourhood working.**
- 2) the benefits of increased democratic engagement of local residents at a local level, as citizens become more involved in co-producing outcomes in local communities.**

The policy lab will identify the enabling factors to help co-operative councils and their partners to shift culture, policies and practice to support and facilitate neighbourhood working and better cooperation with local residents.

The Policy lab will reference emerging work on localism from Locality and social action from the DCMS due in 2019, but will firmly frame its focus on organisational change, following co-operative council principles to make both localism and social action a reality in local government settings.

We are proposing to conduct this policy lab over 2 years, working with:

- Stevenage Borough Council: an urban district council in the East of England
- Sunderland City Council: as a unitary council in the North-East of England
- North Herts District Council Labour and Co-operative Group (Associate Member) : a rural district council in the East of England
- Staffordshire County Council Labour group (Associate Member): a top tier county council in the West Midlands

The differing contexts of the 4 councils will provide a rich variety of examples and case studies to demonstrate the impact of neighbourhood working across geographic communities and service areas. We will also undertake desk-based research and case studies from members across the CCIN.

The indicative budget is as follows:

- 4 x action research reviews £5,000
- Report production £500
- Resources & Expenses £500
- Info-video £4,000
- TOTAL £10,000

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.

Sunderland City Council

Staffordshire County Council Labour Group

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?

Our proposal aims to demonstrate how co-operative councils can embed neighbourhood working to deliver better outcomes and better value for money through a co-operative model of organisation and delivery at a local level.

We aim to do this in 3 ways:

- 1) Identify the enabling mechanisms necessary for co-operative councils and their partners to facilitate meaningful neighbourhood working with local residents.**

We will measure this by: interview feedback from residents and councils, existing published research, action learning across 3 areas.

- 2) Demonstrate the value creation of localised working, through the unlocking of community resources, more effective public sector service delivery and better outcomes for local residents.**

We will measure this by: value creation measures such as Social Return on Investment from highlighted examples across a range of service areas such as adult social care, street scene services and children's services.

- 3) Demonstrate the strengthening of participatory democracy at a local level.**

We will measure this by: engagement growth measures through case study examples and resident feedback in survey areas.

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.

The project embraces a highly topical and relevant area in public policy discourse. As discussions on community involvement in service delivery solutions continue to emerge. With examples ranging from older people and isolation, to children on the edge of care, to grounds maintenance and street scene services, the manifestations of this emerge at a neighbourhood level. Councils that do not embrace co-operative principles risk doing this in a top-down, autocratic way, which is often tokenistic and manipulative of the good will and free resources of local community groups and does not look at whole neighbourhoods as places where lives and livelihoods are created. As early outsourcing examples, by councils such as the London Borough of Brent also demonstrate, the alternative of large contracts and outsourcing often costs more in the longer-term as neighbourhood issues fester and the skills and resources of local communities are often disregarded.

The project embraces a collaborative policy lab proposal driven by CCIN members to make a meaningful and well-developed contribution to the current policy debate on localism and neighbourhood action.

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.

| Value | Application in this Proposal |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Social partnership: | Embeds social partnership at the most local level of ‘where people live’ |
| Democratic engagement: | Looks to enhance participatory democracy at a local level |
| Co-production: | Looks at the added value of co-production |
| Enterprise and social economy: | Demonstrates the economic value of neighbourhood working in opposition to the common neo-liberal narrative. |
| Maximising social value: | Demonstrates the social value and outcomes for local people in neighbourhoods. |

| | |
|---|--|
| Community leadership and a new role for councillors: | Places the ward councillor at the heart of neighbourhood working. |
| New models of meeting priority needs: | Identifies good practice and emerging models at a community level. |
| Innovation: | Demonstrates that innovation happens within communities to facilitate change. |
| Learning: | Shares with others to expand knowledge and the broader application of co-operative principles. |
| Walking the talk: | An action focus, based on the real practice existing and developing within the CCIN |
| Co-operation among members: | CCIN members from different regions working together |
| Openness of membership: | Willingness to review and expand lab to accommodate interested members. |
| Co-production of the Network's work: | Designed and commissioned by the CCIN |
| Action-focused: | Embraced an action research methodology. |
| Membership-based: | Resourced by the CCIN and driven by CCIN members. |
| Non-party-political: | Non-political in report findings. |

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 plan to share the work in the form of a published report to be shared with policy makers and other councils. We also plan to produce an info video (animated info graphic short) to be shared as a visual summary of findings with a presentation at the CCIN annual showcase event in 2021.