



# Co-operative Councils

## Innovation Network

### CCIN innovation funding – 2021/2 Policy Labs

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#### Expression of Interest – Policy Lab CCIN Funding 2021

**CCIN Member Organisation submitting application:** Oxford City Council

**Name of CCIN Lead Councillor/Officer:** Cllr Richard Howlett, Oxford City Council's Co-operatives Champion/Clayton Lavallin, Principal Regeneration and Economic Development Officer

**Partner organisations:** 4 Local Authorities - Preston, Stevenage, Sunderland, Torbay and The Development Cooperative

**Contact details (Email and phone):**

**Councillor Matthew Brown**, cllr.m.brown@preston.gov.uk Tel: 01772906104

**Mena Caldbeck**, mena.caldbeck@stevenage.gov.uk Tel: 07702916911

**Kate Spencer**, Kate.Spencer@torbay.gov.uk Tel: 01803207014

**Paul Davies**, Paul.davies@sunderland.gov.uk **Catherine Auld**, Catherine.auld@sunderland.gov.uk Tel: 01915611722

**Martin Strube**, Secretary, The Development Co-operative, strube.m@gmail.com Tel: 07860720292

**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.*

The proposed Policy Lab project '**Growing an Inclusive Co-operative Economy**' would combine aspects of both Theme 1 'Identifying the key barriers to developing the co-operative economy' and Theme 2 'Connecting Co-operative Development and enterprise agencies to Councils' with an especial focus on Supporting Co-operatives in areas of deprivation.

The project would be to establish a working group co-operating to share best practice and case studies on how to support the growth of the co-operative economy in areas of deprivation. Approaches may include embedding social value in procurement across anchor organisations; community asset transfers; financial support; advice and awareness-raising.

**Barriers to Co-operative Growth in areas of deprivation** that have been identified by the partners include:

- poor general understanding of co-operative economics
- adherence to "growth" at all costs and the attractions of large corporate inward investment

- skills levels as a barrier; low attainment levels, qualification levels, number of NEETS, apprenticeship levels, access to training to upskill and engagement, including digital skills
- access to business support services and take-up from deprived communities, as well as mentoring support to those who would start-up a business
- Access to digital infrastructure and hardware
- Access to markets, the need to build on existing strengths; including green economy

Given these barriers the **promotion of training and support** to help embed and mainstream Co-operative Values and activity within Local Authorities and in furtherance of their work on Economic Development and Community Development will also be explored by the working group accessing support from the following sources:

- **The Co-op College** courses which could work for officers in basics of what co-ops are and the opportunities (£40 for 4 modules).
- **The [Ownership Hub](#)** – a new package of support available from **Co-ops UK** for local councils to help co-op growth locally.

In each of the partner areas the approach will be tailored to the context and the degree of emphasis on each of the areas will differ. At the end of the project an evaluation presentation will collate this learning to be shared as a toolkit produced for other local authorities who want to replicate learning in their own Councils and communities on how to **‘Overcome barriers and support Co-operative Growth in areas of deprivation’**.

**Oxford:** We will establish a new Oxford City Council action group on Social Value and Procurement from February 2021 onwards to further our Inclusive Economy agenda. The action group will initiate a test-learn pilot for the Policy Lab project on how Procurement, and connected capacity building support, or bespoke finance can be used as a lever for asset transfer in support of the growth of co-operatives in areas of deprivation. Need and Opportunity for the project in Oxford City has been identified specifically through a Community Wealth Building project proposal developed by City Council and Co-operative partners. The research for this proposal highlighted that Co-operatives in areas of deprivation in the city are often overlooked for support and capacity building as well as larger contracts in comparison to the larger and/or university supported co-operatives and social enterprises. The research also flagged a relative dearth of entrepreneurial capacity and confidence. As part of a wider inclusive economy agenda Local Authority procurement and supply chain development could therefore play a role in closing that inequality gap with the approaches summarised above redirecting assets by co-operative activity to the areas of the city most in need.

**Torbay:** Torbay has agreed to implement Community Wealth Building as part of its repositioning of the local economy. Torbay believes that a more equitable local economy can be developed by raising skills levels and increasing the amount of public sector spend within the local authority area. Public sector partners have agreed to develop three themes initially focusing on improving recruitment in the local area, a good employment charter and increasing local procurement from the anchors. Torbay is interested to learn from project partners about effective ways to embed these practices and, practically, work packages include local spend analysis, identification of barriers to entry for social enterprises and businesses, modelling how smaller businesses can become procurement ready and supporting local partners in addressing traditional approaches

**Stevenage:** Stevenage Borough Council is fully committed in supporting Community Wealth Building, to ensure that its economy supports everyone. Stevenage has identified four areas to support its Community Wealth Building programme. These include procurement and social value, training and skills, growing the social economy sector, and tackling climate change. As part of the Council’s commitment to support Community Wealth Building, it recently launched a Cooperative and Inclusive Economy Charter in support of these aims. Stevenage is also interested in learning from partners to ensure its approach benefits all but also understand and remove some of

the barriers to starting up co-operative and social enterprise businesses locally, including addressing skills levels to start up including digital skills; access to informed business support services as well as supporting wider supply chain development and ensuring businesses can access procurement opportunities locally to grow businesses and supporting partner led solutions to support a fairer society.

**Preston:** Cllr Matthew Brown leader of Preston City Council put forward the concept for our Policy Bid application originally, developed from conversations with Open Society Foundation who through their economic justice programme are actively looking at encouraging the expansion of shared ownership models mainly worker coops and employee owned businesses.

Cllr Brown will bring strategic support to the Policy Labs project to share best practice across councils and look at how these policies/approaches are being applied at a level of delivery. Currently officer team capacity prevents Preston City Council taking on any new work streams.

**Sunderland:** Sunderland City Council is fully committed in supporting Community Wealth Building, to ensure that its economy supports everyone. Sunderland has a Community Wealth Strategy, which is embedded within the organisation, supported by a detailed Delivery Plan, which is coordinated by a Community Wealth Delivery Group.

Sunderland has identified seven key development and action areas to support its Community Wealth Building Strategy. These include Demonstrating Commitment; Developing the role of Anchor Institutions; Socially Productive Asset Management including delivery of the Low Carbon Strategy; Community Empowerment, Engagement and Involvement; Business Growth and Investment (inc Voluntary and Community Sector); Increasing Social Value through Procurement and Wider Activity; Improving Community Resilience.

As part of the Council's commitment to support Community Wealth Building, Sunderland is currently working alongside Anchor Institutions in the City to launch a Community Wealth Charter in support of the strategy. Sunderland is also very interested in learning from partners to ensure its approach benefits all but also understand and remove some of the barriers to starting up co-operative and social enterprise businesses locally, including addressing skills levels to start up including digital skills; access to informed business support services as well as supporting wider supply chain development and ensuring businesses can access procurement opportunities locally to grow businesses and supporting partner led solutions to support a fairer society.

**The Development Co-operative (DevCo):** is a consortium of co-operative development (CD) practitioners. In the first instance, DevCo will provide CCIN partners with contact details for their geographically nearest CD practitioner. These practitioners may be called upon as and when required. DevCo will also develop a free online service in the form of a holding page (plus some templates for Business Plans, Projections, etc) for all interested parties in any locality. For example, Northamptonshire does not have an actual Co-operative Development Agency but now has a holding page on the DevCo website in the form of a sub-domain at "northants.development.coop". This can serve as a useful focus point for any activity, local and relevant news, networking opportunities, and enlistment.

The DevCo lead in the Policy Lab initiative is located just outside Exeter and would be looking to explore the potential there for:

- a) Exeter and/or Devon involvement in CCIN
- b) Exeter and/or Devon engagement in the "Identifying the key barriers to developing the co-operative economy" Policy Lab theme with the idea of working with them to realise some of the objectives under this theme.

We will also explore the possibility of seeking elements of match funding from some of the co-operative retail societies under the terms of their commitment to the 6th ICA co-operative principle.

Wider national need and opportunity as well as the need for cooperation between partners has been identified through the CCIN meetings where other partner CCIN members and Local Authority Partners have shared experiences of this need to better support Co-operative Growth in areas of deprivation.

The money would be apportioned between the partner authorities and CCIN Members at Preston, Torbay and Stevenage as well as The Development Cooperative as affiliate member.

The £10k funding if awarded would be allocated thus toward staff time, project delivery costs and administration:

- **£4,000 Oxford City Council** to establish the Project Lab working group, to chair regular bi-monthly meetings and facilitate shared learning/case studies as well as evaluate the Project and disseminate learning at the end, as lead Partner between February 2021-February 2022.
- **£6,000 would be allocated** (at £1500 per member/affiliate x 4) to participate/ deliver as partners of the project.

## 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.*

### A working group for the Project will comprise of:

- **5 CCIN Members:** Oxford, Stevenage, Preston, Sunderland and Torbay Local Authorities
- **1 Affiliate Member:** The Development Cooperative

## 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?*

Policy Lab Project Outcome	Policy Lab Project Measure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Outcome 1:</b> Each of the Partner CCIN members and Affiliate Member commit to attend a bi-monthly working group meeting to share learning and case studies. OCC as Lead reaches out to other CCIN members for good examples.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Measure 1:</b> Minimum 4 x Case studies are shared for presentation at the end of the Policy Lab.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Outcome 2:</b> Each of the Partner CCIN Members and Affiliate Member test a particular approach to generate the learning for the Policy Lab. The Councils working with the Co-operatives in the areas of deprivation will develop and test tools. Once tried and tested these tools will be shared and promoted in the Toolkit at the end of Policy Lab project.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Measure 2:</b> Minimum 4 x Tools for overcoming barriers to Co-operative growth in areas of deprivation tried and tested for sharing in the final toolkit.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Outcome 3:</b> Each of the Partner CCIN Members and Affiliate Member collaborate on producing a Toolkit on how to support the growth of the co-operative economy in areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Measure 3:</b> Overcoming Barriers to Co-op Growth in Deprived Communities Toolkit produced</li> </ul>

of deprivation. Examples will include the role of procurement, financial support, training and awareness raising	
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#### 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 will support the aims of the Co-operative Councils Innovation Network by providing national co-operation between local authorities each working to bring innovation around Overcoming Barriers to Co-operative Growth in areas of deprivation to influence policy and practice in the public sector with a view to long term sustainability and transformation.

The Project outcomes will provide best practice support to those Councils developing the growth Co-operative sector in areas of deprivation regionally as well as provide policy learning for how the work can be replicated in other areas nationally.

- It will do so by producing and disseminating a Toolkit of tried and tested 'tools' drawn from the learning of each areas' approach to the support of Co-operative Growth in areas of deprivation.
- This will ensure the collaboration cross-council and co-operatives is shared beyond the membership of the network and promoted by each authority
- The members of the Working group will undertake training and capacity building in co-operation throughout the life of the Policy Lab project extended the expertise and mainstreaming Cooperative Council practice longer term, beyond the life of the working group.

#### 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.*

The Project will work within the framework of the International Co-operative Alliance values overall but with specific focus on the values of:

- **Self-help/Self-responsibility and Solidarity** by looking at how local co-ops can be supported to promote and support start-ups and conversions locally.
- **Democracy, Equality, Equity** by looking at how councils can prioritise 'generative', democratic businesses using a range of policy levers.

#### 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.*

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**1. End of Project Presentation: disseminated across the CCIN**

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At the end of the Policy Lab project we will share learning from the project in presentation for dissemination across the Co-operative Councils Innovation Network which can be delivered as a workshop at the CCIN Showcase event as well as shared electronically to reach a wider audience, including coops and third sector organisations in each area. We will also seek press and social media opportunities.

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**2. Overcoming Barriers to Co-op Growth in Deprived Communities Toolkit:**

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Which will collate best practice learning, case studies and reliable tools for use in local contexts, from across the partner authorities and areas of the country.

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**3. Input learnings and resources specifically within the CCIN sub-group focused on developing the co-operative economy.**

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This will feed in the learning from the Policy Lab Project into wider CCIN initiatives and forums.

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