



Co-operative Councils

Innovation Network

CCIN innovation funding – 2021/2 Policy Labs

Expression of Interest – Policy Lab CCIN Funding 2021

Developing a Co-operative Economy

CCIN Member Organisation submitting application: Oldham Council / GMCA

Name of CCIN Lead Councillor/Officer: Jonathan Downs / Anne Lythgoe

Partner organisations: This proposal is supported by a total of 4 full member councils and 1 Affiliate Member.

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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 following outline proposal builds from the work published by the Greater Manchester Co-operative Commission, published in January of 2020:

<https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/news/call-for-support-to-further-success-of-co-operatives-in-greater-manchester/>

This Policy Lab will examine the following lines of enquiry:

1. Why are co-operatives different from other businesses?
2. What is the value of co-operatives and co-operative ways of working?
3. How can we go about fostering the right environment for co-operatives to thrive?

We will explore these lines of enquiry across the following dimensions:

- Place – district, neighbourhood and community
- Sector - with a focus on development of the foundational economy
- Time – taking action now to enable strategic development in the future

The Policy Lab would develop a process that others could follow to map, analyse and make recommendations around the three lines of enquiry and how to expand co-op activity into whichever of these sectors are most relevant for any geographic area. This would involve the identification of several case study co-operative businesses and initiatives through which to explore the development of a co-operative economy, which would include comparisons between sectors (for example; digital tech and creative arts) and learning from failure as well as success.

The Policy Lab would be led by Greater Manchester Combined Authority and a Steering Group which would include Oldham, Rochdale and Wigan Councils (we would also invite other GM authorities to participate, including Salford and Tameside).

The funding will be used to create capacity to undertake the case study investigations.

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.*

The working group will include the following CCIN members:

Full Councils

- Greater Manchester Combined Authority
- Oldham Council
- Rochdale Council
- Wigan Council

Affiliate Members

- E3M

In addition, other members will be given opportunity to participate, providing case studies and information, so that the recommendations can be implemented anywhere and are not bound by geography.

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 Policy Lab would develop a process that others could follow to expand co-op activity in their local area. This will include creating a co-operative model and shared resources to engage and empower local authorities, partners, businesses and communities to develop their local co-operative economies, helping demonstrate value and breaking down barriers to implementing this economic model.

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 development of a co-operative economy is often held back due to an absence of legislation and policy, institutional support, advice, incentive and promotion. Our current economic model does nothing to help co-ops thrive and everything to create a hostile environment for models of co-operation, it is unsurprising that the UK has one of the smallest sectors of any country.

Evidence shows that co-operatives are more efficient than corporations and could hold the key to solving the country's productivity problem. Think tanks believe co-operatively owned stores can help save our dying highstreets due to their resilience. Community businesses have a survival rate of 94% or more. Co-operative ownership may also be the key to saving the local pubs, with evidence showing that this model of ownership keeps three times more money circling locally. Co-ops could also help revitalise de-industrialised communities and restore community ownership and control to areas that have felt left behind by the current economic model.

Our proposal will tackle this issue head on, looking at how we can use our local influence to create an environment where the co-operative economy can thrive. We will also use the levers at our disposal to lobby for change at a national level, using the findings from the Policy Lab as a national call for action to improve support to co-operative businesses and the wider co-operative sector.

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.

Our proposal will seek to embed co-operative values of participation, social responsibility, reciprocity and democratic accountability in the operation of the local economy. We want to help our members create local economies where people collaborate, communities are empowered, and co-operatives grow and thrive.

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.

As detailed above, we will create a co-operative model and shared resources to engage and empower local authorities, partners, businesses and communities to develop their local co-operative economies. This will include case studies, videos*, tools and resources to help members grow the co-operative economy in their localities.

* this could take the form of a mini documentary, which could be shared and showcased as the CCIN annual conference.