



# 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:** Birmingham City Council

**Name of CCIN Lead Officer:** Karolina Medwecka-Piasecka

**Partner organisations:** Gloucester City Council Labour Group, Croydon Council, Milton Keynes Council, Sunderland City Council and Co-operative Futures (Associate 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.*

#### **Community Economic Development Plans as a tool for fostering co-operative working between councils and the community.**

This policy lab will explore how can councils effectively utilise Community Economic Development Planning.

Community economic development planning or CEDP is a process of economic development within a specific geographic area, to make the economy in that area work well for that community. The process is led by people living, working, and running businesses in that area.

As an approach, it tackles environmental, social, and economic issues as interconnected, and recognises the importance of connections between the local, regional, and national layers of the economy. It builds on the knowledge, experience, and resources in that community, to identify and maximise the local economic opportunities available.

Within CED three important attributes are emphasised:

- 1. The overall focus is the economy.** CED is all about re-shaping the underlying economic system in a place, rather than working on improving people's capacity to live well within the existing environment.
- 2. The economy is a means to an end, not an end in itself.** Rather than emphasising economic growth as the end goal of local economic development, a CED approach is interested in economic development which generates human wellbeing within environmental limits, at a community level.
- 3. It's led by the community.** In CED, the power to drive the change rests within the community of residents, local businesses, local service providers including councils, community groups and voluntary sector organisations with a direct stake in the economic health of that area.

Community Economic Development Plans (CEDPs) have been created and implemented in communities within both Birmingham and Gloucester, which came about in differing ways and resulted in different outcomes.

In Birmingham, a CEDP for Summerfield was created with the support of the EU-funded project USE-IT! which ran from 2017-2019. The development of CEDPs was part of the legacy strand of the project. The Summerfield CEDP grew out of a coalition of voluntary organisations and local residents who had engaged with the programme. Initially it focused on bringing a local playing field next to the Edgbaston Reservoir back into community use, however it evolved into a mechanism to bring the community and City Council together to explore the future of the whole Reservoir. Rather than residents campaigning against redevelopment plans that they felt did not meet their needs, they instead used the CEDP process to create an alternative. This ultimately led to better partnership working with the City Council and enabled the residents to essentially co-produce the regeneration plans.

In 2015 a CEDP was developed in the Matson, Robinswood and White City areas of Gloucester led by a local voluntary sector organisation as part of a DCLG funded pilot project. The process brought together a range of VCSE organisations and initiatives, local schools, the local housing provider, City Council officers and local councillors from the City and County Councils. The process brought together individuals and organisations that had not previously worked together to create a collective set of objectives. In 2020 the CEDP was refreshed in light of the progress that had been on the original objectives and new objectives set.

In the South Norwood ward of Croydon, a community economic development plan (We Love SE25) was developed in 2017. Using this as a basis a Community Plan for the area was developed over Summer and Autumn of 2018. As a result of this work a consortium of local community groups came together to take over the running of the building operating as a community hub.

These examples demonstrate the power of the community economic development planning process and outcomes. Not only do they create "bottom up" economies but can significantly enhance the relationships between Councils and communities leading to more effective engagement and co-production. To date, community economic development has not been used widely as a policy tool in the UK although it is common practice in the US and Canada.

The "Mainstreaming Community Economic Development" report by Localise West Midlands (LWM) in 2013 concluded that:

*"Adopting a CED approach can make the economy less remote, more linked into place and benefiting people, and inclusive for all parts of the community. The locally orientated option should at least always be considered on its merits with more centralised options. Ignoring or dismissing its potential effectively restricts the future development and shared wellbeing of many localities across the country; it is like entering a boxing ring with one hand tied behind your back."*

*“Mainstreaming community economic development could provide an attractive new political and civil society point of interest, addressing public concerns over concentrations of economic power. We hope that local and national exploration of the approach can at least contribute towards changing the terms of the debate.”*

[http://localisewestmidlands.org.uk/mced\\_research/reports/](http://localisewestmidlands.org.uk/mced_research/reports/)

The research carried out by Localise West Midlands in 2013 will help to inform this policy lab and build on it in the context of the environment in 2021 and its practical application by CCIN member councils.

Following the success seen in Summerfield, Birmingham as part of the USE-IT! programme, Birmingham City Council (BCC) are keen to utilise CEDP in other parts of the city. There is redevelopment planned for the East of the City, including High Speed Rail 2 (HS2) and the extension of the Midland Metro line. This provides an opportunity for BCC to utilise CEDP again and promote its use more widely throughout the city. This aligns with the recommendations of LWM to mainstream CEDP.

Milton Keynes has 48 Parish and Town Councils covering the entire council area. Some services are devolved to the Parish and Town Councils, while others remain within the city council’s remit. Milton Keynes Council are pioneering the devolution of some services to Parish and Town Councils and the use of local CEDPs has the potential to be a useful tool for assessing the needs of differing areas and identifying priorities, as well as services that could be devolved to the Parish and Town Councils. Their engagement in this policy lab will provide a different perspective to the project.

This policy lab will

- Review the different methods used, including who was involved at what stages,
- Explore how effective the plans were, the benefits of CEDPs for both Councils and communities and identify what lessons can be learnt,
- Undertake desk-based research and interviews with members from across the CCIN where relevant.
- Identify the enabling factors to help co-operative councils and their communities to use CEPDs to strengthen local economies

The indicative budget is as follows:

- Desk-based research and interviews £4000
- Report production £4500
- Resources & Expenses £500
- Steering group £1000

## **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.*

Milton Keynes Council – Full CCIN member

Croydon Council – Full CCIN member

Sunderland City Council – Full CCIN member

Co-operative Futures – Affiliate member

Gloucester City Council Labour Group – Associate member

### **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 best practice for Councils in developing and implementing CEDPs.

A report and framework will be produced to assist CCIN member councils in working with and empowering local communities to create CEDPs. This will enable councils to provide better value for money through co-operation and delivery at a local level, which results in growth within local economies. Our measure of success will be the uptake of other CCIN members in utilising the report and building on the framework, and ultimately the movement of CEDP into more mainstream use.

The framework developed from this project will also enable Milton Keynes Council and other CCIN members who are in the process of devolving services to Parish and Town Councils to use CEDPs to inform local decision making effectively.

### **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 partnership of different CCIN member councils enables the sharing of learning and best practice in differing community settings with differing priorities. This collaboration will produce better learning for the wider CCIN network in how to empower neighbourhood and local community action.

As noted above, CEDP is not commonly used throughout the UK as yet, although is an established tool in both the US and Canada. Therefore, this policy lab proposal can be considered innovative in terms of promoting and enabling a 'new' tool for councils in the UK.

This project will improve outcomes for local communities by demonstrating best practice in developing and implementing CEDPS.

### **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 CCIN Values and Principles sit at the heart of this project. For the community economic development planning process to be successful it needs all the participants to commit to the CCIN values. This policy lab will support all the CCIN stated Principles to a greater or lesser extent but in particular:

**Social partnership and democratic engagement:** the whole process of community economic development is founded in a social partnership between the constituent parts of a community from residents to business to service providers and councils. It is a process of enabling communities to set their own priorities.

**Co-production:** All community economic development planning is led by local people and organisations resulting in a plan that is co-produced by all.

**Enterprise and social economy:** The focus of CEDPs is to maximise community wealth building and strengthen local social economies. Often the direct outputs of community economic development planning are the formation of co-operatives to either fulfil a need in the community or to enhance the use of local assets.

**Community leadership and a new role for councillors:** By creating an environment which supports community economic development planning, and by actively engaging with the process, local Councillors will be able to develop relationships with community members.

**Learning:** Investigating the ways that CEDPs have been used in different communities will pull together learning across the network to highlight best practice.

## **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.*

The aim of this project is to produce a report and framework that can be made available to other CCIN members wishing to undertake CEDP.

The findings will be presented at the CCIN annual showcase event 2021 as a webinar (assuming the event will be virtual this year).

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