CCIN Innovation Funding 2024 - Policy Lab : Entry # 512

Organisation leading the project

Newcastle City Council

Lead Councillor or Officer

David Hepworth

Job Title

Business Management Partner ICT & Digital Transformation

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Project Title

Co-operative values driven AI

How much funding are you applying for?

£ 19,500.00

Summary of project idea (150 words max)

The world of AI is moving incredibly quickly with an attitude of "go fast and break things". This creates a serious dilemma for public service leaders. They cannot simply licence the wide-spread adoption of a technology that cannot explain itself and is often biased.

AI is a potential challenge to the principles of democratic engagement and social partnership embodied by cooperative councils. But neither can councils afford to ignore the potential productivity, engagement and analytical benefits.

Following the Mutual Ventures and Newcastle City Council workshop at the CCIN conference in Sunderland last year, this policy lab will work with eight member councils to discuss the moral and ethical opportunities and challenges which AI poses for public services and to publish a guidance framework (based on co-operative values and principles) as well as case studies of good practice. Through these outputs and a series of webinars, all CCIN members will benefit.

Which other CCIN members will work on this project?

- Wigan Council (Rob Gregory, Assistant Director Digital Transformation and Intelligence, r.gregory@wigan.gov.uk)
- Plymouth Council (Heido Ondrak, transformation programme manager, heidi.ondrak@plymouth.gov.uk)
- Oldham Council (Paul Clifford, Director of Economy, paul.clifford@oldham.gov.uk)
- Edinburgh Council (Cammy Day, Smart Cities Lead, cammy.day@edinburgh.gov.uk)
- Glasgow Council (Dr Colin Birchenall, Chief Digital Officer, colin.birchenall@glasgow.gov.uk)
- Manchester City Council (Sherelle Fairweather, Digital Strategy Lead, sherelle.fairweather@manchester.gov.uk)
- Brent Council (Rehana Ramesh, Head of Digital Transformation, Rehana.ramesh@brent.gov.uk)

Provide a detailed budget of how you will spend the budget and whether you are bringing in other funding.

This grant will pay for the time of experienced researchers and facilitators at Mutual Ventures (CCIN Affiliate Member), as well as a contribution for the time spent by the eight participating member councils.
Our proposed budget for the project is set out below:

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1. Initial research into exiting frameworks, international examples etc. – £3,000.
2. Survey with member council to establish baseline of awareness and understanding - £500.
3. Workshop 1 (AI orientation – discussion of challenges and opportunities) prep, delivery and write up - £2,000.
4. Workshop 2 (Development of principles which will inform the framework) prep, delivery and write up - £2,000.
5. Workshop 3 (Reviewing the draft framework) prep, delivery and write up - £3,000.
6. Development of framework and case studies, including design of report - £6,000.
7. Webinar 1 (Mid-point engagement with wider CCIN) – £1,000.
8. Webinar 2 (End of project engagement with wider CCIN) – £1,000.
9. Funding for participating authorities - £4,000 (£500 per authority to contribute towards participating officer time).

Total project cost - £22,500

Mutual Ventures will contribute £3,000 worth of support pro bono support including the knowledge sharing webinars and the in-house design of the report (in line with CCIN branding guidelines).

Funding requested - £19,500

What is your idea and how will you allocate the budget?

Artificial intelligence has the potential to reshape services provided by councils. But it must be approached in the right way, underpinned by the right values, and with an understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.

The world of AI is moving incredibly quickly with an attitude of "go fast and break things". This creates a serious dilemma for public service leaders. They cannot simply licence the wide-spread adoption of a technology that cannot explain itself, sometimes "hallucinates" and is often biased. In particular, AI is a potential challenge to the principles of democratic engagement and social partnership embodied by cooperative councils. But neither can councils afford to ignore the potential productivity, engagement and analytical benefits.

Public services need to be accountable and where a decision impacts an individual, it needs to be transparent, explainable and challengeable. Councils need to find a way forward with AI.

Mutual Ventures ran a workshop on "the role of AI in creating stronger communities" at the CCIN conference in Sunderland last year to discuss some initial work we had been doing with CCIN member Newcastle council. There was a lively discussion on the lack of any agreed principles or values which could guide the adoption of AI within public services.
Our proposal is to work with eight member councils to discuss the moral and ethical opportunities and challenges which AI poses for public services and to develop a guidance framework (based on co-operative values and principles) and some case studies of good practice, which any council or public service body could use to support their AI journey.
The end product will be important and valuable but the high level of engagement and upskilling etc. on this important topic will be just as valuable.

We will use the proposed budget to fund initial research, the development and delivery of three structured workshops, and the development and publication of a guidance framework and case studies. We run two webinars (one at the mid-point of the work and one at the end) which will be open to all CCIN members. We are also earmarking £500 per participating authority to contribute to officer time.

NB - Mutual Ventures are an approved provider on the Crown Commercial Service (CCS) Artificial Intelligence (AI) Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS).

What are the outcomes you hope to achieve?

We hope to equip CCIN member councils with the tools and knowledge they will need to make safe judgements on the adoption of AI technology and to feel confident that AI will support and serve public services (through a basis in co-operative principles).

We hope to achieve this via two main outcomes:

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1) The production of a comprehensive guidance framework (based on co-operative values and principles) and case studies of good practice which can be used to support the exploration and adoption of AI. This report will be designed by MV in line with CCIN brand guidelines (unless otherwise agreed) and will set out the main use cases for AI (e.g. citizen facing, productivity support etc.), the main enabling factors (e.g. good governance, data management) and a set of co-operative overarching principles.

2) A series of engagement and discussion events both with the eight participating councils but also events which will be open to the wider membership, which will build knowledge and confidence when discussing and exploring AI. We would also like to do a follow up session at the 2024 conference with some participating members if agreeable.

How does your project support the aims and objectives of the Co-operative Councils Innovation Network?

Artificial Intelligence is one of the most pressing opportunities and challenges for public services and the CCIN should be making a contribution to the debate and should have a view on the right way to go about AI adoption.

AI has the potential to be an incredibly effective innovation to support the effective delivery of public services in terms of citizen engagement, back-office support and data analytics - but only if it is explored and adopted in the right way and its impact assessed within the right framework of principles.
This work would certainly enable members to start developing "radical innovation in policy and practice" and we will use MV's highly developed webinar knowledge sharing capabilities to ensure the learning is shared widely.

How does your project support the CCIN Statement of Values and Principles?

This project will be entirely driven by the CCIN statement of Values and Principles, in particular:

Co-production – the project will be co-produced by Mutual Ventures and the eight councils. The framework itself will need to include guidance on how to effectively engage with citizens when adopting AI e.g. how much explanation/warning is needed if someone is engaging with a chat bot? At its most advanced, AI could be a powerful co-production tool with the system learning from each interaction with the people who engage with it. The challenge is how to ensure that suggestions and guidance which the AI may generate can be reliable, explainable and transparent. There are multiple issues around data maturity and bias which will need to be addressed.

New models of meeting priority need – AI will drive new models of service delivery and citizen engagement across all sectors. There are already AI supported innovations in, for example, support for carers and engagement with vulnerable people. It will transform how services are delivered and allow humans to focus on more human elements of service delivery. The exploration and adoption of new AI technology has to be driven by a framework which locks in the values and principles we expect from all of our public services. "Move fast and break things" is not an option for councils!

Innovation – AI is the main technological innovation in the world right now. The challenge for councils and public services more broadly is approach the exploration and adoption from a position of understanding of how we think it can help and support our human workforce and to not be blindly led by the technology.

Learning – shared learning is at the heart of our proposed project with three workshops with the eight participating councils and two webinars open to all CCIN members. As important as the framework itself will the learning focused discussions within these forums.

How will you share your learning across the Co-operative Councils' Innovation Network?

Mutual Ventures have a highly developed knowledge sharing webinar capability, which we will use to engage the wider CCIN membership at the mid-point of the project and also at the end. This will be recorded and can be made available on the CCIN website along with the framework and case studies themselves.

We will also devote an episode of the Radical Reformers podcast to discussing the framework and case studies which will feature a couple of the supporting member councils.

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I agree that the final report will clearly show the Co-operative Difference that this project will deliver.

✅ Agree

Notes

Admin Notification (ID: 637b616e68cf7)

added 2nd February 2024 at 12:19

WordPress successfully passed the notification email to the sending server.