

CCIN Innovation Funding 2024 - Policy Lab : Entry # 510**Organisation leading the project**

Prevention Lead, Rochdale Borough Council

Lead Councillor or Officer

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Job Title

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Project Title

Co-operative Governance

How much funding are you applying for?

£ 17,500.00

Summary of project idea (150 words max)

There is a dissonance in co-operative council policymaking, in that “custom and practice” in local government does not have co-operation designed in. Some parts of our systems need retrofitting with co-operative values and behaviours and governance is one of them. This lab helps us to understand and do that work.

For Co-operators in local government who experience dissonance in the governance of purchasing and deciding, our Co-operative Governance Policy Lab is an innovation project to include, distribute and apply learning about what it takes to have brave and inclusive governance. This will help to develop ways of deciding and purchasing in local government that foster equity and democracy. Helping us to change our systems to better align with co-operative values and principles, making it easier for us all to co-operate!

Which other CCIN members will work on this project?

- Hackney Council, Cheshire West and Chester Council, Anthony Collins Solicitors, Co-Operative and Mutual Solutions and Action Together.

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

£5,000 towards match funding for training and participation in workshops (this will be matched with some lottery funding for a “Live Well” accelerator led by Rochdale (Borough Council and Action Together).

£1,000 each core partner to support attendance and involvement of local people in attending the training and community of practice

£5,000 to support co-production activities with core partners (again, this is matched in Rochdale with lottery funding)

£6,500 for design, printing and distribution of materials such as Zines and other creative materials , along with a report.

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

At the CCIN conference in Sunderland in November, through reflection on the tour of Sunderland, understanding the impact of the policy labs and attendance at the workshops, some of us started to understand this challenge we have in the “system” of

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local government. We started talking and realised we shared a frustration. And we believed that, by getting together with affiliate organisations with expertise “outside” of local government (experts in co-operative structures, legal expertise and networks) we could learn more about how to make the changes we need. We want to learn about and develop a local government governance approach that aligns, truly, with our co-operative values.

The frustration we feel is partly to do with the outdated and wasteful nature of some of the ways hierarchical governance structures drive decision making. It is also to do with the way power is held, artificially, somewhere at the top. We believe that, by carefully and clearly distributing that power, we will generate more of it, more inclusively and more democratically in our local government organisations. A lot of this is to do with custom and practice and related assumptions that we are legally obliged to organise our decision making in a particular way. We believe that by deliberately placing ourselves at the more radical end of the co-operative spectrum (with trusted partners) we can learn a lot about how we can carefully distribute power and include more people in democracy in ways that benefit everyone.

We find that, when we come into spaces where we are “able” to behave explicitly in co-operative ways and to be in solidarity with each other, we can acknowledge the systemic failures we live and work amongst more easily. We can acknowledge how the system is inequitable and how it fails people who are facing the disadvantages brought about by their background, culture, experience, community or identity. Some of this is to do with the known “protected characteristics” but a lot of it is in the intersection of these characteristics with other life circumstances such as poverty or place. We need to find ways that governance can enable a more inclusive and intersectional understanding of our communities in order to extend the potential of being in solidarity by being co-operative.

It was a particular conclusion that Cheshire West and Chester and Rochdale Borough Councils came to during their CCIN policy lab on making policy more democratic: that the more you become inclusive in participatory and co-production activities, the more archaic the governance structures we work within seem. A similar conclusion had also been come to by Hackney Council through their system change work. We believe this is something that all local authorities are currently facing and our theory is that the answer lies in the conscious and deliberate enactment of the values and behaviours of co-operation. Our policy lab would enable us to explore that and to generate evidence about how “being co-operative” can generate brave and inclusive governance.

We have got together in preparation for this lab and listed a number of pieces of work where we could understand where power is and how more of it can be generated. Many of these pieces of work are shared or common themes, where we can work together; some are individual pieces of work in a particular locality that will have unique learning and insights which can be shared across the lab partners. These include:

- Trauma informed engagement
- Holding the Met to account
- Paying young people as consultants and amplifying young people’s voices
- Building a non-hierarchical approach to anti-poverty priorities
- Ageing well in communities
- Supporting the VCS to influence systems change
- Measuring impact and, in particular, measuring what we value
- Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM)
- Integrated Care and communities: what does the neighbourhoods model mean to people in communities?
- Trying to co-produce to the highest standard within governance structures that are not conducive
- Anti-racist procurement and grant funding
- Analysing spend vs investment in Voluntary and Community sector organisations
- Participatory co-budgeting for spending and cutting
- Understanding where power is in procurement
- Best value and Community Wealth Building

Please note, we are not seeking funding “for” these pieces of work; this is a list of work that is already happening. The lab would be to explore and understand how a co-operative governance approach could support these agendas, making the processes around them clearer and more inclusive.

What we will do is to learn about and practice co-operative governance together through trainings and communities of practice, which will generate insights and learning that can be shared across the CCIN. We will apply that learning to the topics listed and through reflection, reveal the enablers and challenges in co-operative governance. We will do this through a “core group” of CCIN partners but we will “show our work” in such a way that every session will be advertised and opened up to any CCIN member who wants to come along and be part of the process. The funding is to enable members and their communities to be part of this lab and to support the costs of training (although some of this is matched) and to cover costs of the development and publication of materials for CCIN members.

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What are the outcomes you hope to achieve?

Input: Training and insight generated through Communities of Practice

Outputs:

A minimum of 30 people from CCIN partners accessing training and / or communities of practice

Evidence about the challenges inherent in the governance systems we have in local government.

Evidence about Co-Operative methods of governance and how they can be applied in local government.

Evidence about the Co-operative impact and subsequent systems change which can be generated through these methods

Production of materials and resources to support CCIN partners in developing Co-operative governance approaches in a number of different settings. This will include materials for officers about structuring work in inclusive ways and for elected members in co-operative leadership and power sharing.

Outcomes:

The body of evidence and impact generates increased confidence in more inclusive and accessible governance practices.

The confidence encourages further practice of co-operative governance in local government organisations.

The practice of co-operative governance supports the co-operative values and principles to thrive through the “practice” of important things such as fairness, equity, community wealth.

The distinctive impact and co-operative nature of CCIN members becomes clearer and more tangible, adding value and support to the Co-operative movement.

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

Social partnerships. CCIN says: We will strengthen the co-operative partnership between citizens, communities, enterprises and councils, based on a shared sense of responsibility for wellbeing and mutual benefit.

We will do:

This lab is built on a social partnership developed by two CCIN members working together and in collaboration with affiliates and communities. This lab aims to extend that core group further with another core local authority and three additional affiliates. Each of these partners comes with their own co-operative network and we will also build a wider group of co-operators through opening up access to the learning and communities of practice.

Democratic engagement. CCIN says: We will support the active engagement of the full range of residents in decision making and priority setting.

We will do:

This lab aims to address the challenge of democratic engagement by taking an evidence base about power sharing in decision making and purchasing and applying the evidence in local government settings. The experience of learning about and applying the theoretical knowledge in local government will enable us to change governance practice and approaches to increase democracy and inclusion.

Co-production. CCIN says: We will develop systems that enable citizens to be equal partners in designing and commissioning public services and in determining the use of public resources.

We will do:

The foundations for this policy lab, and the identification of need for it came from Co-operative Co-production. It has become very clear that to practice co-production and other equitable approaches such as anti-racism and community wealth building, that we need a way of “doing” governance that designs in “being co-operative”. The lab would continue to honour that co-produced identification by working in inclusive ways with a variety of different types of people to innovate meaningfully: by participating in learning together and through communities of practice, understanding the broad experience of applying that learning. This would then make for practical co-produced tools for sharing and publication through CCIN.

Enterprise and social economy. CCIN says: We will promote community-based approaches to economic development that focus on supporting the creation of jobs, social enterprises and other businesses and providing an environment for co-operative and mutual enterprises to thrive.

We will do:

This policy lab has a strong emphasis on the application of co-operative governance to enable community wealth, inclusion, co-operation amongst co-operatives and social value. The learning, development, application of learning and subsequent materials will offer a practical guide to local authority and partner members who want governance that enables community based approaches to economic development.

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Community leadership and a new role for councillors. CCIN says: We will explore ways for councils to act as a platform for helping the community to contribute to local outcomes and to rethink the role of councillors as community connectors, brokers and leaders.

We will do:

The workstreams listed above give us a broad application of the learning. These have been selected, not just for the breadth of system impact but for the opportunities afforded to apply power sharing into the role of elected members and portfolio holders. They will enable council members to understand how power can be distributed and the important role of elected members in enabling that to happen, structurally and behaviourally. This will enable a deeper understanding of the features of co-operative leadership which will form part of the lab materials we will be able to share with CCIN members.

New models of meeting priority needs. CCIN says: In exploring new ways of meeting the priority needs of our communities we will encourage models, such as co-operatives and mutual, which give greater influence and voice to staff and users in designing and commissioning public services and in determining the use of public resources.

We will do:

A key local government challenge, which would be addressed by this lab, is to find ways of enabling power sharing, so that we can “be” more co-operative by designing equity into our system. This generates democracy in places where it rarely exists and produces trusting and relational ways of identifying and meeting needs. This democracy would enable our places of power, purchasing and decision making to be more inclusive and representative of the community, its experience and its priorities. This new model will open up the doors, the processes, the reciprocity and the flow of diversity into our design and commissioning.

Innovation. CCIN says: We will embrace innovation in how we work with local communities to drive positive change.

We will do:

This project aims to take innovation that exists from outside of the sphere of local government custom and practice and to develop and apply it in a co-operative way into local government organisations of different types. The result would be a lab that produces new theoretical knowledge as well as an evidence base about the application of that knowledge and a set of tools to enable this knowledge to be applied, co-operatively, into different settings.

Learning. CCIN says: We will capture and ‘expand’ the experience and learning from individual projects and approaches in order to encourage broader application of co-operative principles within individual member councils and across the network.

We will do:

This lab is a “learning by doing” project. It places emphasis on the learning and development of power sharing governance approaches and by applying those approaches into a variety of local government projects in order to understand how the potential can be realised in a practical way. We will convert the theory into practice through the learning and application and be able, therefore to share the learning in a replicable and pragmatic way. Our aim is to “show our work” as we learn by opening up all the learning and training sessions and reflective practice sessions to a wider group so that they can be part of the process of learning, can think about applicability in their own settings, ask questions and challenge the process to squeeze as much learning out into the final sharing materials as possible.

Walking the talk.

We will demonstrate how CCIN “walks the talk” by:

being explicitly co-operative in the delivery of this lab. This means we will describe all the work through that co-operative lens and to promote the value and impact of “being co-operative” as part of the solution to the challenges and dissonance we often face in local government. It will bring to life the tangible difference being co-operative can make to local government organisations and their partners in practical ways. We will be able to evidence the distinct impact of co-operation and describe that both to CCIN members and also non CCIN members who may be interested in “the co-operative difference”.

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

The Co-operative values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity are given the opportunity to exemplify their impact by interacting with each other through this project. This lab, which is intrinsically about enabling democracy in equitable ways, is in and of itself an opportunity to innovate in a way that demonstrably brings these values to life. It is both a duty and a challenge for co-operative councils to live the values of co-operation in their action and this lab aims to enable that to happen.

For the purposes of this application, to illustrate how, we will focus on self-responsibility. What does that “mean” in local

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government in this time? How do local government officers and elected members along with their partners and affiliate organisations, live the value of self-responsibility? It's in the behaviour of co-operators, in how they "show up" to their work and how they enable collaboration. A co-operative local government officer or member would take action to ensure they are bringing all the power at their disposal to enable the priority task at hand to happen efficiently and successfully – they would behave in generative and supportive ways, amplifying the voices that are seldom heard and foregrounding the priorities that come from those marginalised places. This co-operative self-responsibility behaviour, currently, is in itself in the margins. But it is becoming clearer to the partners in this lab that it is vital that we systematise this behaviour and design it into governance in order to support and sustain co-operation in our work.

The Co-operative principles of voluntary and open membership, democratic member control, member economic participation, autonomy and independence, education, training and information, co-operation amongst co-operatives and concern for the community also interface with each other through the design of this lab. This can be illustrated through model we have developed to enable open membership and participation in learning and development. Through a core team "showing their work" and sharing learning opportunities openly, we can democratise the innovation process in our local areas and across the CCIN network. This will enable the benefits of participation to be shared (learning) as well as the "end result" benefits of a toolkit (information).

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

We will "walk the talk" of co-operative action by making the whole programme open for any CCIN member to participate in. Core group members will take responsibility for organising, publicising (through the CCIN whatsapp group and other methods) and facilitating the participation of any members along with people from their communities. This includes funding to support participation of people for whom cost would be a barrier.

In addition, the evidence and insights generated through the work of the lab will be summarised into short, creative and practical materials to support CCIN members (at officer and elected member level) to develop and implement co-operative governance in their own areas.

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 30th January 2024 at 15:22

WordPress successfully passed the notification email to the sending server.