

Innovate and Cultivate Fund Annual Evaluation Report 2021-2022

To: Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee

Meeting Date: 8 December 2022

From: Interim Deputy Director of Communities, Employment and Skills, Paul Fox

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: No

Outcome: To provide the Committee with the key findings from the Innovate and Cultivate Fund 2021-2022 annual evaluation report.

Recommendation: The Committee is asked to:

Note and comment on the report.

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1. Background

- 1.1 The Council's 'invest to save' Innovation Fund was launched with a £1m allocation from Transformation Funds in November 2016, with five grants awarded up to April 2017. A review and refresh of the fund was then carried out, resulting in the Innovate and Cultivate Fund (ICF), as agreed by the Communities and Partnership Committee on 24 August 2017.
- 1.2 On 8 November 2018, the Committee endorsed a number of further recommendations, including:
 - To offer more prescriptive guidance to Cultivate applicants in the form of 'Cultivate Seed Fund Projects';
 - To increase the Cultivate Fund grant threshold from £10,000 to up to £19,000;
 - To extend the estimated return on investment period to up to 3 years; and
 - To request additional funds from the General Purposes Committee.
- 1.3 On 22 January 2019, the General Purposes Committee received a report on the Innovate and Cultivate Fund and resolved to transfer a further £1m from the Transformation Fund to the Innovate and Cultivate Fund, increasing the total fund available to £2m.
- 1.4 Throughout 2019 and 2020, the fund had two funding streams:
 - Cultivate: grants of £2,000-£19,000 aimed at encouraging local networks where people help themselves and each other. A single stage application process, where the Communities and Partnership Committee considered the final recommendations of the panel before confirming award.
 - Innovate: grants of £19,001 - £50,000, for projects that demonstrate an innovative approach. A two-stage application process where second stage applicants present a more detailed project plan and quarterly activity and budget plans to the panel, after which the Communities and Partnership Committee considered the panel recommendations before confirming award.
- 1.5 All applicants to the fund are required to demonstrate a number of stated criteria, including the following:
 - Project outcomes align with key funding priorities for Children and Families services, Adult Social Care or other Council priorities.
 - Projects show they will reduce pressure on Council services and/or offer direct savings for the Council.
 - Projects must be either new, or build on an existing project in a new location or with new beneficiaries.
 - Projects which have been awarded funding have been able to demonstrate how they can deliver a return on investment to the Council's budget, either through cost-avoidance or cashable savings.
- 1.6 The funding priorities for services are:
 - Adult Social Care
 - (i) Maintaining and maximising independence

- (ii) Connecting to the local community and staying well
- (iii) People having greater choice and control over how their care needs are met

- Children & Families services
 - (iv) Building connections between the voluntary sector and county council services
 - (v) Supporting communities to enable positive outcomes and progression for vulnerable children and young people
 - (vi) Community based family support activities that meet a significant need or address an issue that presents significant risk

- 1.7 On 8 July 2021, the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee resolved to update the Innovate and Cultivate Fund to better align to the Council's updated priorities, and to undertake a full Member-led review of the fund.
- 1.8 The Member-led review was held in October and November 2021, during which the Committee's Spokes considered fund mechanics, vision and themes, governance, and decision making. On 2 December 2021, the Committee received the 2020-2021 Innovate and Cultivate Annual Evaluation Report, and agreed to the following recommendations that resulted from that Member-led review:
1. Retain the current fund objectives and incorporate inclusion, biodiversity, climate change into project criteria.
 2. Seek to increase the number of Cultivate Project Ideas to include projects which will support Anti-Poverty.
 3. Reduce potential for duplication of funding with District/City Councils.
 4. Devolve the funding to place based teams in each District.
 5. Arrange a workshop session with CCF to explore a more creative application process.
 6. Remove the two-fund approach and keep only the Cultivate Funding for funds of between £2,000 and £15,000.
 7. Steering Group:
 - Increase the remit of the ICF Steering Group to highlight achievements more often, as received through monitoring reports.
 - Expand attendance at ICF Steering Group meetings to include all four Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee Spokes.
 8. ICF Recommendation Panel:
 - Increase quorum to include at least four Members while removing a minimum officer requirement and ensure we can show that appropriate professional advice was taken instead.
 - Review core officer representation to ensure no duplication.
 9. Support for community groups:
 - Develop the toolkit concept further, which will enable groups to become sustainable without Council funding.
 - Develop proposal for peer support network of bidders.
 10. Make good use of reserve dates for approval by the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion to reduce the waiting time for a final decision.
 11. Increase media and communication messages to voluntary and community contacts, members and others of the timescales and opportunities to apply.
 12. Change the name of the fund to reflect the removal of the Innovate Fund and other changes.

- 1.9 A final round of the Innovate and Cultivate Fund was held in February 2022. A refreshed and renamed Cultivate Cambs fund was launched in July 2022.

2. Main Issues

- 2.1 The annual fund evaluation report has been prepared by Cambridgeshire Community Foundation (CCF), which administers the fund on behalf of the Council, and the ICF fund officer, with support from members of the Innovate and Cultivate Fund Steering group which is comprised of the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee Spokes, Think Communities Area Manager for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (Chair of the Steering Group), officers from Finance, Commissioning, Adult Social Care, Children's and Youth Services, Think Communities, and CCF representatives.
- 2.2 This evaluation report focuses on data from applications received and projects funded for the final February 2022 ICF funding round. Also, it evaluates data from projects that completed their funding terms and submitted final monitoring reports between October 2021 and October 2022. The report compares these findings to data from the three funding rounds held in 2020-2021 and previous ICF evaluation reporting periods where data allows. Whilst the number of rounds in previous reporting periods differ, the comparisons remain useful.

| Table 1: Funding rounds included in annual ICF evaluation reports* | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|---|
| 2021-2022 | 2020-2021 | 2019-2020 | 2018-2019 | 2017-2018 |
| 1 February 2022 | 1 February 2021 1 May 2021 1 August 2021 | 1 November 2019 1 February 2020 1 August 2020 | 1 August 2018 1 November 2018 1 May 2019 1 August 2019 | 26 October 2017 15 December 2017 9 March 2018 1 May 2018 |

* Annual ICF evaluation periods do not align with financial years.

2.3 Number and outcome of applications received during 2021-2022

- 2.3.1 A total of 22 applications were submitted to the Innovate and Cultivate Fund for the single Cultivate funding round held in the 2021-2022 ICF evaluation period. This is the highest number of Cultivate applications received in a single round. The rise in number compared to 2020-21 (13) is likely a result of a reduction in the number of funding rounds. In the previous review periods, where there were two funding streams, the average number of Cultivate applications per round was steady, ranging from 8.3 to 10.5.
- 2.3.2 Of the 22 applications submitted in 2021-2022, 12 were awarded funding and 10 were not funded, including one application that was successful at the panel stage but subsequently withdrawn when alternative CCF funding was secured, and another that was withdrawn because it did not meet key fund criteria. Taking into consideration the two withdrawn applications, the success rate for this funding round was 60%. The 60% success rate is in line with 2020-2021 (62%), but considerably higher than previous years.
- 2.3.3 The reason for the growing success rate can be attributed to less emphasis on return on investment for Cultivate applications in relation to the higher value Innovate applications; a firmer steer for all potential applicants to seek and benefit from formal pre-application advice; and greater availability and take-up of pre-application advice that improves good applications and diverts projects that do not meet fund criteria to other sources of funding and support.

2.4

| Table 2 | 2021-2022 | 2020-2021 | 2019-2020 | | 2018-2019 | | 2017-2018 | |
|----------------------------|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | Cultivate | Cultivate | Innovate | Cultivate | Innovate | Cultivate | Innovate | Cultivate |
| No. applications | 22 (includes 2 withdrawn) | 39 | 20 | 25 | 46 | 42 | 34 | 34 |
| No. grants awarded | 12 | 24 | 10 | 10 | 11 | 15 | 7 | 12 |
| % grants by funding stream | 60% (accounts for withdrawn applications) | 62% | 50% | 40% | 23.9% | 35.7% | 20.6% | 35.3% |
| Overall success rate | 60% | 62% | 44% | | 30% | | 28% | |

Geographical areas of delivery

- 2.4.1 For grants awarded, it is possible to disaggregate the data for delivery area to include all districts where projects are delivering, rather than just 'primary delivery area', as indicated by the applicant on the grant application form. This provides a fuller picture of where projects are making an impact across the County. For the 12 projects funded in 2021-2022, most are delivering in Huntingdonshire (7), followed by Cambridge City (6), South Cambridgeshire (6), East Cambridgeshire (5), and Fenland (4). Three of these projects are delivering Countywide, and a further two projects are delivering in multiple districts.
- 2.4.2 When considered across the life of the fund, a higher number of funded projects are delivering in Huntingdonshire (as one or more areas of delivery) (52), followed by Cambridge (45), East Cambridgeshire (43), South Cambridgeshire (43), and Fenland (37), along with several delivering Countywide (23).

| | Hunts | Cambridge | East Cambs | South Cambs | Fenland | Countywide |
|-----------|-------|-----------|------------|-------------|---------|------------|
| 2017-2018 | 11 | 8 | 8 | 9 | 5 | 4 |
| 2018-2019 | 13 | 13 | 11 | 13 | 10 | 6 |
| 2019-2020 | 12 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 4 |
| 2020-2021 | 9 | 12 | 12 | 9 | 11 | 6 |
| 2021-2022 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 3 |
| Totals | 52 | 45 | 43 | 43 | 37 | 23 |

2.5 Service priorities

- 2.5.1 Of the 12 grants awarded in 2021-22, 6 (50%) projects supported Children and Families service priorities, 3 (25%) projects supported service priorities for Adult Social Care, and a further 3 (25%) were anti-poverty projects. Since 2017, 54% of grants have supported projects for vulnerable adults, 40% have funded projects for vulnerable children, young people and families, and 6% have supported both groups.

2.6 Pre-application advice sessions

- 2.6.1 Potential applicants are strongly encouraged to participate in pre-application discussions with a Council service lead, who will support them to access appropriate data and information to strengthen their application or develop their project ideas.
- 2.6.2 All are given professional support to further develop their projects or link them in to appropriate internal and external partnerships. They are signposted to external support organisations, including Support Cambridgeshire, which delivers the Council's Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Support, and help with developing an organisation's structure, policies, funding application and management skills and with other training/advice. Where project proposals clearly do not fit fund criteria, organisations are advised about other more appropriate funding opportunities.
- 2.6.3 Of the 29 organisations that attended pre-application advice appointments for the February 2022 funding round, 11 submitted grant applications and 9 were successful. The numbers and amount of funding accessed through alternative streams is not available.

2.7 Unsuccessful applications

- 2.7.1 The Recommendation Panel is responsible for scoring each application against the fund criteria using the information provided by the applicant on their proposed project. During this 2021-2022 review period, 1 application withdrew prior to the panel stage, 1 was awarded alternative funding and the Recommendation Panel rejected a further 8 applications (40%). In line with previous years, applications were most commonly unsuccessful in securing funding because they did not meet funding criteria relating to demand reduction and return on investment (ROI).

2.8 Committed funding and administration costs

- 2.8.1 The total amount of funding available for the Innovate and Cultivate Fund was £2.3m. In total, 107 projects were awarded a grant through the application process, 3 later declined the award and 1 was offered alternative funding, leaving 103 grant funded projects in total.
- 2.8.2 In the majority of cases, the amount requested and agreed through the application process (i.e. the amount committed) equals the amount paid out on successful completion of the project. In a small number of cases, project delivery costs differ to those anticipated, grant offers are rejected or returned at a later date, or projects have completed before the end of their funding term. Therefore, amounts shown as committed may slightly differ compared to previous reported figures.
- 2.8.3 CCF is contracted to support the creation and subsequent delivery of the fund. An initial set up fee was paid through available budgets in 2016/17. Subsequent fee payments are based on a percentage of the grants disbursed and are paid from within the Transformation allocated funds.
- 2.8.4 The breakdown of funds available, expenditures and commitments are as follows:

| | |
|--|------------------|
| Funding and expenditure/commitments | |
| ICF Fund allocations | |
| Transformation Fund allocation 1 2016 | £1,000,000 |
| Transformation Fund allocation 2 2019 | £1,000,000 |
| Transformation Fund allocation 3 2021 | £300,000 |
| Total ICF allocation | £2,300,000 |
| Expenditures and commitments | |
| Total grants commitment | £2,092,857 |
| CCF Fees | |
| Year 1 set up and admin fees (not drawn down from Transformation Funds) | £25,000 |
| CCF Fees Nov 2017- Feb 2022 | £114,123 |
| Estimated CCF fees for all ICF projects funded up to April 2022 | Up to £48,743 |
| Total estimated CCF fees: | Up to £187,866 |
| Other expenses | |
| Legal fees | £1218 |
| Room hire | £224 |
| Total other expenses: | £1,442 |
| Total ICF Commitments | Up to £2,282,164 |
| <i>Of which from Transformation Fund</i> | £2,257,164 |
| Uncommitted funds remaining from the £2.3 million Transformation Fund allocation | At least £42,836 |

2.9 Completed projects: Estimated return on investment

2.9.1 A savings estimation has been made for 18 projects that completed their funding term during this evaluation period:

- Total grants committed: £396,167.50
- Total estimated return on investment, including the grant award: at least £713,522.24
 - £250,345.24 on projects primarily supporting Adult Social Care Services
 - £463,177.00 on projects primarily supporting Children and Families Services

2.9.2 Since the start of the fund, 55 projects have completed their funding terms. The total amount committed and estimated return on investment for these projects is:

- Total grants committed: £1,275,164.19
- Total estimated return on investment, including grant award: at least £2,256,862.24
- Total estimated return on investment, not including grant award: at least £981,698.05

2.9.3 In most cases, a favourable return on investment is demonstrated in line with initial bids and plans, and it is important to distinguish this from a reduction in actual costs incurred. Many of the projects are geared towards early help and prevention, for example building community capacity through increased volunteering and community social actions, including those which result in residents living independently for longer within their own homes and communities. These projects can help the Council avoid future cost escalations and delay anticipated increases in demand, rather than leading to savings which can directly reduce the recurrent amount of cash spent on existing services. Savings for these preventative initiatives are also very difficult to estimate so savings scenarios are often offered in place of precise predictions.

2.9.4 A more detailed breakdown by each completed project along with those from previous years is shown in Appendix 1. Methodologies for initial service lead savings estimations and final return on investment estimations are outlined in Appendix 2.

2.10 Completed projects: Impact

2.10.1 The 18 completed projects also had the following positive impacts on their beneficiaries and the wider community:

- Improved and expanded support networks for LGBTQ young people and their families
- Improved confidence, independence and life skills for young people with a learning disability
- Greater opportunities for disabled young people to engage in community activities
- Reduced stress and increased wellbeing for parent carers of young people with a learning disability
- Reduction in carer breakdown
- Residents supported to stay independent, safe and well during lockdowns
- Improved parenting skills and strategies for parents of vulnerable children
- Greater support networks and access to mental health services for young people and parents
- Parents and young people gained knowledge, strategies and self-awareness to instigate positive change
- Improved nutrition and access to food for families in need
- Fewer fixed-term or permanent exclusions from school and improved school attendance and attainment for vulnerable young people
- Increased mental and physical wellbeing of older people
- Reduced feelings of loneliness and anxiety for carers of people with deafblindness
- Reduced falls and early identification of health issues for frail older people
- Increased social networks for beneficiaries and volunteers
- Increased sense of purpose for participants who are lonely or isolated
- Improved knowledge of services and support available

2.10.2 Many of the grant funded projects also offer volunteering opportunities that increase community capacity and local support networks. In June 2021, a new online grant monitoring system was introduced that collects data on volunteering. To date, 16 organisations have submitted final grant monitoring reports using the online monitoring system (some projects that were funded prior to 2020 continued with the previous monitoring system). These sixteen projects attracted the support of 357 volunteers, including 258 new volunteers, who together contributed 9079 volunteering hours.

2.10.3 The grants are also encouraging new opportunities for partnership working, and invaluable opportunities for learning for the Council, where innovation allows a different way of working and positively challenges its thinking. Appendix 4 provides examples of how funded projects have resulted in new partnerships with Council services and other organisations and networks.

2.11 Current status of 'live' projects

2.11.1 There are 46 'live' projects currently in delivery mode, and one project that has completed but has not yet been evaluated by the service lead. Of those, 44 are underway and have submitted at least one monitoring report, and 2 projects are yet to start.

2.12 Applicant feedback

2.12.1 In September 2022, two questionnaires were sent out by CCF. The first questionnaire for all applicants was sent to 10 organisations that had applied to the Innovate and Cultivate Fund but were not successful in the reporting period. Six organisations responded:

- 83% (5) agreed that the webpage contained sufficient information.
- 66% received support during the application process from CCF and/or the Council.
- 83% of those who responded attended the pre-application advice sessions but only 17% found the Cambridgeshire Insights data sets useful.
- 33% were happy about the application process, 50% were neutral and 17% were unhappy. No one was very unhappy or very happy.

2.12.2 The second questionnaire was sent to the 13 successful applicants in this review period. There was a 100% response rate, with 13 responses received:

- 100% agreed that they had received sufficient support from CCF and their Council service lead
- 100% received support during the application process from CCF and/or the Council, with 92% receiving help from the Council and 30% from CCF.
- 77% attended a pre-application advice session and 69% used the Cambridgeshire Insights data.
- 62% were very happy with the overall process, 31% were happy, 8% were neutral and none were unhappy or very unhappy.
- Only 6 responses answered the question about the monitoring process as many had not yet completed a monitoring return. Of these, 66% were very happy with the monitoring system, 16% were happy, and 16% were neutral.

2.13 Update on priority changes agreed for 2021-22

2.13.1 As described in paragraph 1.8, a full Member-led review of the Innovate and Cultivate Fund was held in October and November 2021, which resulted in recommendations for substantial changes to the fund. These recommendations were included as proposals in the 2020-21 ICF annual evaluation report and were agreed by the Committee on 2 December 2021. The following changes were made in this evaluation period.

- (i) The Innovate funding stream was discontinued and the fund is now Cultivate-only.
- (ii) The name of the fund was changed to Cultivate Cambs to reflect the removal of the Innovate funding stream.
- (iii) Fund criteria was updated in line with Joint Administration priorities.

- (iv) The fund Recommendation Panel is politically proportionate with seven elected members and the quorum was increased to include at least four elected members while removing the minimum officer requirement.
- (v) The steering group has expanded to include Committee Spokes.
- (vi) A new Community Food Project 'Cultivate Project Idea' was introduced that supports anti-poverty objectives.
- (vii) Place based team involvement has been increased and formalised at each stage of the grant application, reward and monitoring process. This aims to encourage and enable applications appropriate for the fund and needs of specific areas, to connect and build relationships with applicants and bring a 'place based' view to pre-application discussions and to direct to alternative local funding (including through City/District councils and local partners), and to support projects through the funding term and beyond.
- (viii) Potential for duplication of funding with District/City Councils has been reduced via the increased input of place based teams in the application process.
- (ix) Recommendation Panel meeting dates are now set to align with Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee dates to minimise the waiting time for a final decision.
- (x) A new contract was agreed with Cambridgeshire Community Foundation to continue administering existing ICF grants and the Cultivate Cambs fund.

3. Alignment with corporate priorities

3.1 Environment and Sustainability

There are no significant implications for this priority.

3.2 Health and Care

The focus of the Fund is to offer opportunity for all organisations who want to provide local support to improve the quality of life for people and so they can live healthy and independent lives. It focuses upon the most vulnerable groups and enables a locally delivered approach which improves the outcomes for our citizens and communities, as well as to prevent and delay demand for statutory intervention.

3.3 Places and Communities

The Fund demonstrates continuing investment in communities, helping local groups and organisations to fulfil their needs and aspirations, fund projects which build community capacity, and design and deliver place based community-led support.

3.4 Children and Young People

A key focus of the Fund is to fund initiatives that support vulnerable children and young people, focusing on where the support of the voluntary and community sector makes a real

difference to the lives of children and families, providing opportunities for the whole population to succeed and to enable improved outcomes. Moreover, building communities that are vibrant and have opportunity, and enhancing the social mobility of families, will directly and positively create the best possible start for our children

3.5 Transport

There are no significant implications for this priority.

4. Significant Implications

4.1 Resource Implications

The report above sets out details of significant implications in 2.8 and 2.9 of this report

4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

There are no significant implications.

4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

There are no significant implications.

4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no significant implications.

4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

There are no significant implications.

4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

There are no significant implications.

4.7 Public Health Implications

There are no significant implications.

Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance?

Yes

Name of Financial Officer: Martin Wade

5. Source Documents

5.1 [Cambridgeshire Community Foundation - Grant Application Forms and Guidance](#)