

New Local Innovation Awards Scheme

Summary

This report updates the Board on the latest developments on the new Local Innovation Awards Scheme to recognise, celebrate, promote and support best practice and innovation in the local government sector.

Dame Denise Platt the Chair of the new scheme's advisory panel will be attending the meeting to report back to the Board on progress.

Recommendations

That the Improvement Board:

- Notes the progress that has been made in the inaugural transition year of the new scheme
- Considers the questions set out in paragraph 11 and 12

Action

As agreed by members

Contact Officer: Ruby Dixon
Phone No: 0207 296 6548
Email: ruby.dixon@idea.gov.uk

Background

1. The Improvement Board meeting of September 2009 received a report from Dame Denise Platt, Chair of the new scheme's advisory panel. The jointly owned CLG and LGA Group Local Innovation Award Scheme (LIAS) was launched shortly afterwards, with the aim of identifying, recognising and celebrating best practice and innovative in local government.
2. A radical replacement for the out-dated Beacon scheme, subject to comprehensive re-design, and re-branding was required to produce a Scheme that is more customer focused, more challenging, and more efficient. This necessitated fresh thinking about the peer learning process itself, and strategic alignment with sector's improvement infrastructure.

Progress

3. The new Scheme has been streamlined and sets higher standards. It was launched via an online application process in late September 2009 and received 106 applications in a tight timescale.
4. All applications were reviewed by a joint team of evaluators drawn from the IDeA's improvement leads and senior central government officials. Two themes brought in credible experts (with hands on experience of the relevant service area) and people who use services to assist with the evaluation.
5. The shortlist was announced by Dame Denise Platt at the LGA Improvement and Innovation Conference in Manchester in November. Thereafter there was a transparent evaluation that varied according to each type of theme:
 - For delivery themes applicants underwent a full day on-site evaluation review with partners and people reliant on the service.
 - Only '*achieving more through partnerships*' went through to a Peer Challenge Event hosted by West Midland RIEP. Applicants gave a ten minute presentation to, and faced 45 minutes of challenge questions from, a high calibre judging panel from across the public sector (featuring an Improvement Board Member and LGA officer).
 - *Bright Ideas* had 5 minutes to convince a smaller but equally challenging 'dragon's den' style panel of their idea and 25 minutes of questions. The panel included a RIEP Director, the Director of a public sector innovation mentoring company and the Chair of the Advisory Panel.
6. The Panel's recommendations for award went to the Chair of LGA Improvement Board and Ministers across central government to obtain final clearance.

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7. The Scheme's inaugural Award Ceremony took place on 2 March at 11 Downing Street, at a Ministerial reception, hosted by Dame Denise and Rosie Winterton MP, the Minister for the Scheme. 120 delegates attended, comprising of all shortlisted applicants, partners and people who use services. Also present were LGA lead councillors and senior level officers, judges from across the public sector and CLG officials at this celebration of what the sector has to offer.
8. **Awards and beyond** – five local authorities and one fire authority service share a total of 9 awards. These are:
 - 5 sole winners for the 5 main themes (each awarded c £560k): Northumberland (x2), Sunderland, Trafford and Tameside
 - 4 winning Bright Ideas (each awarded £50k seed corn funding to develop their idea for mainstreaming): Northumberland (x2), Halton, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service.
9. As a prerequisite for the award, these authorities enter into an agreement with the Advisory Panel and the IDeA to share learning, provide peer support and timely knowledge transfer across sector. We want to ensure we have appropriate external linkage to innovation and coaching expertise for awardees. In addition, LGA Group National Advisors and Improvement leads will work with the award holders to drive improvement across the sector and provide support to those authorities and localities that need the Group's help most (e.g. red flag areas, services labelled as 'adequate') to manage reputation risks to the sector. In terms of accountability, it is expected awardees will maintain contact with LGA Boards, Chief Executive's Task Group (CETG) and the RIEP Member Forum.
10. Round 9 and 10 Beacons were invited to submit innovative activity and knowledge sharing projects for a related £2m Local Innovation Transition Fund, under the condition that they embed their work in the LGA Group's Strategic priorities for the sector. A programme board comprising of the Chair, an Improvement Board member, a RIEP Director, and the lead Regional Associate for the IDeA made recommendations for 3 projects to be commissioned. Ministerial clearance has been given for:
 - LB Croydon-led consortia on tackling NEETs (£480k)
 - Essex-led partnership on Olympic and Paralympic Legacy (£330k)
 - Merseyside Fire Service-led consortium on making the Marmot review into public health and tackling health inequalities (£330k).
11. The Chair seeks the Improvement Board's feedback on progress with the new Scheme, which has responded to requests made of it by the Board, in relation to:

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- New branding and values
- A less bureaucratic and more efficient process
- More incentives and 'what's in it for my council' question
- Realising a more sector-led scheme for LGA co-ownership and impact
- Recruitment of a strategic governance body.

Proposal

12. The Chair requests continued Board support in selecting new themes. It is proposed that these should be:
 - Linked into the top 20 LAA priorities already identified by councils and partners for their localities, and the 5 LGA Group strategic priorities
 - Informed by a Local Government Association Analysis and Research review of red flag areas (to identify areas where improvement support is most needed)
 - Reflective of the emerging efficiency ideas from the Total Place pilots and parallel place findings
 - Able to demonstrate the benefits of devolution, local democracy and co-production (giving local communities and service beneficiaries the chance to design and deliver new services alongside councils).

Governance

13. Councillors Frost and Fleming represented the Board in recruitment of panel members (pen note biographies of current panel members are attached in appendix 1). The Chair thanks the Board for its support and seeks its continued support for the recruitment of two high calibre local government officer and political vacancies that are still to be filled on the panel. (The Panel will simply co-opt experts for its strategic meetings, rather than have a duplicative expert group mechanism.)

Financial Implications

14. The new Scheme has realised £450k efficiencies on the same point last year with Round 10 of the Beacon Scheme.

Implications for Wales

15. Wales has its own best practice and innovation scheme, Excellence Wales. But there is a commitment in the performance framework to work with Excellence Wales on certain themes.

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Appendix 1 – short biographies of the LIA Scheme Panel members

- **Dame Denise Platt** - Dame Denise is Chair of the Scheme. She has held a variety of posts both nationally and locally, in local government and social care. She is an Audit Commissioner and a member of the Committee on Standards in Public Life. Previously Chair of the Commission for Social Care Inspection, she has been a Chief Inspector, Social Services Inspectorate, and Director for Children, Older People at DH
- **Hamish Davidson** - Hamish is a head hunter (Jamieson Scotland, Price Waterhouse, Veredus and Rockpools) and is well known in the strategic search industry and the public sector generally. He led the merger of Price Waterhouse and Coopers & Lybrand - (PwC), and undertakes specialist career management for senior executives
- **Bob Hoad** - Bob's career spans 25 years in Commercial Radio and 12 years in the retail sector. He was Community Relations Director at GLOBAL RADIO (including Capital Radio, Classic FM, Heart, and Galaxy). He was Director/Producer of six Party in The Parks and planned Lights Out London for Capital Radio
- **John Tizard** - is Director of the Centre for Public Service Partnerships. Prior to this, John was the Group Director of Government and Business Engagement at Capita Group Plc. He is currently Programme Director for the Worcestershire Partnership's Total Place pilot; a board appointee for Centre for Public Scrutiny; and non-executive director of the Social Investment Business.

Contact Officer: Ruby Dixon
Phone No: 0207 296 6548 or
email: ruby.dixon@idea.gov.uk