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Creative Councils Update

Purpose of Paper

For discussion and direction.

Summary

This report updates the Board on progress with the Creative Councils innovation programme, a collaboration between the LGA and the National Endowment for Science Technology and the Arts (NESTA).

Recommendation

Members are invited to comment on the update and the forward work programme of the Creative Councils initiative.

Action

Officers to reflect members' suggestions in the design and delivery of future support to councils, communications and lobbying activity derived from the Creative Councils programme.

Contact officers:

Mike Short

Teresa Payne

Phone nos:

07799 038432

07879 640823

E-mail:

mike.short@local.gov.uk

teresa.payne@local.gov.uk

Creative Councils Update

Background

1. The Creative Councils programme is a joint programme between NESTA (National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts) and the LGA. As reported at previous meetings of the Improvement Board, the ambition is to work with a small group of creative, pioneering councils and their partners throughout England and Wales in developing, implementing and spreading transformational new approaches to meeting some of the biggest medium and long-term challenges facing communities and local services.
2. The aim is both to provide practical support to the councils and their partners involved in the programme, to successfully develop and implement their ideas and to generate learning, practical models and inspiration that can be applied throughout local government.

Programme Progress to date

3. Phase 1 of the programme, launched in April 2011, called for councils to submit ideas for addressing some of the biggest medium and long-term challenges facing communities and local services. 137 councils offered up innovative ideas which were robustly assessed by a NESTA-LGA project team and a Creative Councils Selection Panel selected 17 of the most promising ideas with most transformative potential to receive financial and non-financial support to develop their thinking and establish the potential to spread to other areas.
4. The support package to the 17 includes a programme of events, workshops and assistance via 'point people' (appointed from the Innovation Unit) to help the councils deliver their vision. The first event, a Creative Councils Camp in Birmingham held in September 2011 provided the Leaders and Chief Executives of the 17 selected councils and idea leads to learn about support on offer to them and the potential to create and work in clusters of councils.
5. The event was also an opportunity to gain further intelligence on the ideas and the extent to which councils through to this round appeared to have the necessary conditions in place to be successful at innovation. A Creative Councils group has been formed on the Knowledge Hub to facilitate the progress of clustering, capturing of information, enhancing the involvement of the LG sector and disseminating information to a wider audience.

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6. The Selection Panel in November, having received more details of the 17 Creative Councils Action Plans developed with their appointed Point Person, agreed that all 17 will receive financial and non-financial support up until end of March 2012. Using these resources, the councils need to be able to produce/demonstrate six things:
 - 6.1 a clear description of the medium-long term challenge ('the problem');
 - 6.2 a clear description of the solution;
 - 6.3 the evidence base;
 - 6.4 a clear and convincing description of the relationship between the above;
 - 6.5 a description of the team and stakeholder relationships that need to be in place to be able to implement the solution, including a clear commitment to support implementation from the Chief Executive and Leader;
 - 6.6 the business case.
7. In addition 6 potential productivity case studies from the 17 Creative Councils (Essex, Stoke, Havering, Reading, Islington and Wigan) plus 6 from the 120 unsuccessful applicants have been identified.

Planned activities

8. In February there is to be a second 'Creative Camp' for all 17 creative councils as an opportunity to share experiences on their respective progress and any shared learning arising from four 'Inspiring Learning Events' that are taking place over the next few months.
9. The first learning event was held on 15 Dec 2011. The event attracted an audience of 40 representatives from 18 LAs and 4 organisations, of whom 16 representatives were from 7 of the Creative Councils. (Monmouthshire, Reading, Islington, Rotherham, Bristol and Cambridgeshire)
10. The event featured:
 - 10.1 Gorka Espiadu – Learning from the Social Innovation Park in Bilbao, Spain. eg. 'foldable electric cars' for hire like a 'Boris Bike'
 - 10.2 Katherine Freund – Learning from iTN in Boston USA. eg. meeting transport needs of older people via use of private car sharing

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- 10.3 Steve Rothschild – Learning from Human Capital Bond in Minnesota, USA. eg. raising social investment in ‘payment by results’ interventions
11. Arising from presentations and discussions on these international exemplars the attendees identified seven key factors as most relevant to developing innovation in local government;
- 11.1 Evidence of savings/efficiencies;
 - 11.2 Coalition of interests – driver;
 - 11.3 Strong leadership – scared into action;
 - 11.4 Independence from government;
 - 11.5 Designing ‘BIG’;
 - 11.6 Bringing sectors together in a ‘neutral’ space; and
 - 11.7 Local sense of belonging.
12. Members will recall that the intention is to provide more significant support for the 5 or so best ideas through a selection process that will take place around April. As part of the selection process, we are looking to hold a ‘joint’ NESTA/LGA Innovation Conference, which would provide an opportunity to hear more about the 17 ideas and for the sector to give some indication as to which ideas they would favour going forward. The event would also serve as the Board’s annual innovation conference and therefore would be open to not only the 17 Creative Councils, but to all the LG sector plus academics, innovators, private and voluntary sectors with an interest in public sector reform and innovation.
13. There will also be a workshop at LGA Annual Conference in June – Creative Councils: The Discipline of Innovation. This workshop will debate how disciplined local government is at innovating. Geoff Mulgan, Chair of NESTA Creative Councils Selection Panel, Leaders of Finalists in Creative Councils, Innovation Unit and Cllr Fleming, Chair of Improvement Programme Board will be invited to contribute.

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Conclusion

14. This is an exciting and interesting programme that offers many lessons for the LG sector in how best to innovate in meeting the requirements of Public Services Reform agenda.

Financial Implications

15. NESTA is providing £2m as their contribution to the Creative Councils programme. This includes £250,000 to support the work in Scotland. The LGID Company Board agreed at its meeting in March 2011 a sum of £750,000 from reserves to support the programme in 2011/12. The LGA will need to set aside a further £250,000 in 2012/13.