

Creative Councils Update

Purpose

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).

The Creative Councils Selection Panel will meet on 16 May 2012 to select the proposals which will then receive further support from the programme.

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.

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Creative Councils Update

Background

1. The Creative Councils programme is a joint programme between the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) 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. They 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 innovation to other areas.
4. Phase 2 provided a support package to the 17 that included a programme of events, workshops and assistance via 'point people' (appointed from the Innovation Unit) to help the councils develop their vision. The first event, a Creative Councils Camp in Birmingham held in September 2011, provided the opportunity for Leaders and Chief Executives of the 17 selected councils and their "ideas leads" to learn about the 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 local government sector and disseminating information to a wider audience.

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 would receive financial and non-financial support up until the end of March 2012. Using these resources, the councils would 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. On 22/23 February 2012 the second ‘Creative Camp’ for all 17 Creative Councils was an opportunity for councils to share experiences on their respective progress and any shared learning. The main feature was for each of the 17 Creative Councils to ‘pitch’ their ideas and progress to a panel of peer representatives from fellow Creative Councils, NESTA and LGA. All of them found this to be an invaluable exercise in preparing for wider dissemination to the sector and many are incorporating the panel’s feedback and suggestions in their proposals and methods of presentation.

Planned activities

8. In Phase 3 of the programme the intention is to provide more significant support for the 5 or so best ideas. 15 Creative Councils submitted their final action plan on 26th April; Brighton, Bristol, Cambridgeshire, Cornwall, Derbyshire, Essex, Havering, Islington, Monmouthshire, Reading, Rotherham, Stoke, Wigan, Westminster and York. Both Leicester and Rossendale have withdrawn from the programme at this stage and have not submitted an action plan. **Appendix 1**, which will provide a summary of these 15 action plans, will be tabled at the meeting.
9. The Selection Panel meets on 16 May to make its decision about which of the best ideas will receive further support and a public announcement will be made on 31 May.

10. There will also be a workshop at the LGA Annual Conference on 26 June – Creative Councils: The Discipline of Innovation. This workshop will debate how disciplined local government is at innovating. Geoff Mulgan, NESTA, Leaders of Finalists in Creative Councils, Innovation Unit and Cllr Fleming, Chairman of Improvement Board will be invited to contribute.

Conclusion

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

Financial Implications

12. NESTA is providing £2 million and LGA £1 million as their respective contributions to the Creative Councils programme.