

Innovation Zone 2024 Update

Purpose of Report

For direction.

Is this report confidential? No

Summary

This report provides an update on the proposed approach to the Innovation Zone 2024 as part of the LGA Annual Conference. The report includes an outline of the purpose of the Zone and opportunities for member involvement, including through the Member Led Innovation Zone Working Group, set to meet this month.

LGA Plan Theme: Communications and events

Recommendation

It is recommended that the board note progress to date on the Innovation Zone for 2024, with members encouraged to share reflections and consider opportunities for involvement on the day.

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Innovations Zone 2024-25

1. The Innovation Zone is a core part of the LGA's Annual conference, which will take place from 2 – 4 July 2024 in Harrogate. The Innovation Zone is a key attraction within the wider conference.
2. The programme offers wide ranging sessions across a range of current topics, providing delegates an opportunity to hear from others within the sector (and sector partners) about the latest innovations and approaches to address challenges and harness opportunities.
3. Newton Europe continues to support the Innovation Zone as our 2024 sponsor and funding negotiations are ongoing, with a strong possibility of increasing the size of the sponsorship package for 2024. Their contract once again includes the provision of a complimentary coffee station as part of the Innovation Zone.

Update on Applications

4. Applications to hold a session at the Innovation Zone opened on 18 December 2023 and closed on 19 February 2024. We have received over **80 applications** to date, including applications from councils across all 9 regions, political groups and a range of council types; as well as partner organisations (e.g. GeoPlace). Emerging themes from applications review to date include digital/AI and sustainability. We will share the shortlisted programme sessions with the Member Led Working Group in due course.
5. Applicants were asked to give an outline of their innovative idea, the outcomes it has achieved, and how this is relevant to other councils to ensure learning is applicable. We will look to supplement these through proactive identification of further ideas and examples of innovative practice from across the sector. Sessions will be encouraged to be as interactive as possible to increase engagement with delegates and we will look to ensure sessions come from individuals and organisations with a diversity of backgrounds and experiences.

Session format

6. The Innovation Zone will offer sessions in different formats. There will be IZ sessions, which focus on a particular project or approach and form the main part of the programme, as well as a Spotlight on series. Both types of session will be creative, interactive and provide delegates with opportunities to ask questions, with a particular focus on sharing learning that can be applied to improve services within local authorities.

7. 'Spotlight on...' sessions will be a key feature of the programme in this year's Innovation Zone. These talks are curated sessions that focus on big ideas or issues that challenge audience members to think differently and in greater depth about what is being discussed. Applications will be considered for 'Spotlight on...' sessions during the selection process.
8. We are looking to have an elevated Innovation Zone session potentially as a plenary following discussion with the Member Led Working Group.

Board Opportunities

9. There is an opportunity for members of the Improvement and Innovation Board to be involved in shaping the Innovation Zone as well as speaking opportunities on the day.
10. A Member Led Working Group has been established with volunteers from this Board, including IIB Chairman Cllr Brown, with cross party representation. The Member led Working Group aims to meet 2-3 times in the coming months to discuss the approach to and format of the Innovation Zone, to finalise selection of sessions, and to update on the Innovation Zone at the end of the process. It is expected therefore to meet in February with a date to be fixed imminently. Thank you to volunteers.
11. There will be opportunities for members to be involved on the day including presenting sessions at the Innovation Zone. More information will be shared once the selection process is underway.

Highlighting Sector Support

12. Responding to feedback from members of this board, we will also be using the Innovation Zone as an opportunity to platform LGA's sector support programmes, focusing on where programmes are providing vital learning to the sector.
13. Programmes have been encouraged to apply and will be considered alongside the wider pool of applications referenced above.

Implications for Wales

14. Welsh councils will be encouraged to apply to take part in the Innovation Zone.

Financial Implications

15. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Equalities implications

16. The Innovation Zone welcomes applications from a diverse range of participants. Presentations will be supported to meet the LGA's accessibility standards.

Next steps

17. Members are asked to note the approach for the 2024 Innovation Zone.
18. Members encouraged to attend the Innovation Zone and to encourage attendance.
19. The Innovation Zone Member Led Working Group to commence and provide advice and guidance where necessary, facilitated by LGA officers.