

## North of Tyne UKSPF Consultation Event Discussion Summary

**Alnwick Gardens 16 May 2022**

### Introduction

North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA) has the responsibility for managing the funding for the region. This document summarises the table discussions which took place at the North of Tyne UKSPF Consultation Event at Alnwick Gardens on 16 May 2022.

107 people attended the event, representing the public, private and voluntary sectors and with a mix of support providers and strategic leads. Following brief presentation by Rob Hamilton, NTCA Chief Economist, attendees took part in round table discussions on one three national UKPSF themes, which they had preselected when they confirmed their attendance.

Attendees were asked to answer the following questions

- What are the key local challenges and opportunities in the North of Tyne area in relation to the Investment Priorities?
- What are the lessons learned from previous programmes?

Attendees then undertook a prioritisation exercise where they each selected their top three Investment Priorities for their chosen theme, prioritising interventions and outcomes. Then give their reflections on the other investment themes.

### General feedback across all themes:

- UKSPF allows an opportunity to reframe/streamline current delivery.
- Consider changes in eligibility and broader range of outputs, for example, job creation vs wealth creation, qualitative vs purely quantitative outputs, social/community impact, requirement for match funding.
- Consistency needs to be applied to ensure smooth transition process and continues support when EU funding ends.
- Alignment of UKSPF as a complementary fund with existing funding.
- Encourage collaboration and co design of future programmes, ensuring a range of expertise is available to ensure support is developed and delivered successfully.
- Local vs regional support/delivery; potential for a mix depending on focus and geography.
- Flexibility in procurement, commissioning may be more appropriate than competitive bidding.
- Covid has changed working practices and opportunities for communities. Impact on labour market, hybrid working enables mobility of talent pool – creating additional opportunities for residents, but also increased competition.

## **Theme: Supporting Local Business**

- Strong consensus that there is a need to increase business stock and increase the level of start up support.
- Increase R&D and innovation activity - at different levels.
- Messages in general need to be simplified to the business community to encourage take up of support.
- Consider accessibility vs inclusivity delivering programmes that are easy to access.
- If possible, lower the number of interventions but ensure they deliver higher impacts.
- Address connectivity issues in the business community. Note, not always digital, some businesses struggle to access or maintain basic utility services (as well as transport).
- Rural business support:
  - Supply chain activity – support to increase opportunities
  - Establish local connectors to bring businesses together
- Skills is a major challenge across all sectors preventing growth. Look to:
  - Increase communication between business community and education
  - Speak to children at an earlier stage to encourage interest across various sectors
  - Business owner skills – additional requirement for financial management, leadership.

## **Prioritisation of ambitions**

The following ambitions were rated as top priority:

E23: Strengthening local entrepreneurial ecosystems and supporting businesses at all stages of their development to start, sustain, grow and innovate, including through local networks.
E19: Increasing investment in research and development at the local level. Investment to support the diffusion of innovation knowledge and activities. Support the commercialisation of ideas, encouraging collaboration and accelerating the path to market so that more ideas translate into industrial and commercial practices.
E29: Supporting decarbonisation and improving the natural environment whilst growing the local economy. Taking a whole systems approach to invest in infrastructure to deliver effective decarbonisation across energy, buildings, and transport and beyond, in line with our legally binding climate target. Maximising existing or emerging local strengths in low carbon technologies, goods, and services to take advantage of the growing global opportunity.
E30: Business support measures to drive employment growth, particularly in areas of higher unemployment.

## Theme: People and Skills

- Big challenge in engaging with and reaching out to people, the pandemic has made the challenge harder. Economically inactive are getting younger.
- Labour market looks very different to before other programmes. Need to address skill shortages.
- Address long term barriers to employment including preventative work to promote health wellbeing.
- Risk of destabilising current provision whilst understanding the need for new and innovative programmes as funding for VCSE is due to end. Impact through loss of people/ work/momentum within service providers.
- Support needs to be poverty proofed.
- Future proofing talent supply for emerging sectors.
- Part time, zero-hour and temporary workers also facing serious challenges.
- Support needs to be easily accessible, and proof of eligibility needs to be streamlined in order to enable quick uptake of provision
- Geography needs to be taken into account when considering intervention example rural issues different to those in other areas.

## Prioritisation of ambitions

The following ambitions were rated as top priority:

E33: Employment support for economically inactive people: Intensive and wrap-around one-to-one support to move people closer towards mainstream provision and employment, supplemented by additional and/or specialist life and basic skills (digital, English, maths\* and ESOL) support where there are local provision gaps. **(MULTIPLY)**

E37: Tailored support to help people in employment, who are not supported by mainstream provision to address barriers to accessing education and training courses. This includes supporting the retention of groups who are likely to leave the labour market early.

E35: Activities such as enrichment and volunteering to improve opportunities and promote wellbeing.

E34: Courses including basic skills (digital, English, maths (via Multiply) and ESOL), and life skills and career skills\*\* provision for people who are unable to access training through the adult education budget or wrap around support detailed above. Supplemented by financial support for learners to enrol onto courses and complete qualifications. **(MULTIPLY)**

\*where not being met through DWP provision.

E39: Green skills courses targeted around ensuring we have the skilled workforce to achieve the government's net zero and wider environmental ambitions.

## **Theme: Communities and Place**

- Consider support at neighbourhood level to ensure highest impact. Deprivation needs to be addressed, in particular poverty, and its impact (fuel poverty, employer practices, schools etc.)
- Opportunity to focus on health in place and communities.
- Place-based approach makes sense for at least some of the programme – perhaps complemented by some NTCA-wide activities too.
- Community engagement: there is a rise in the number of people who are disengaged with services and support and issues of motivation and confidence, as well as knowledge of services, reasonable support infrastructure (travel routes/ digital).
- Social Enterprise and capacity building in local communities: local jobs for local people creating local impact.
- Recognition of the role of anchor institutions for leveraging further impact (social value) and for driving change (living wages). Procurement practices as well as participation in community activities are good places to start.
- Thematic approaches – visitor economy, culture/creative, energy efficiency.
- Given the timeframe for investment – only a three-year programme – can we use existing processes where possible?

## **Prioritisation of ambitions**

The following ambitions were rated as top priority:

E9: Funding for impactful volunteering and/or social action projects to develop social and human capital in local places.
E12: Investment in community engagement schemes to support community involvement in decision making in local regeneration.
E13: Community measures to reduce the cost of living, including through measures to improve energy efficiency, and combat fuel poverty and climate change.
E11: Investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups.
E2: Funding for new, or improvements to existing, community and neighbourhood infrastructure projects including those that increase communities' resilience to natural hazards, such as flooding. This could cover capital spend and running costs.
E3: Creation of and improvements to local green spaces, community gardens, watercourses, and embankments, along with incorporating natural features into wider public spaces.

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