Terms of Reference: Evaluation & Learning Partner for a new fund to support the post-Covid recovery of social enterprises

Project: The new fund will provide grants and non-financial support (technical assistance) to social enterprises and charities within England. The project aims to support approximately 500 social enterprises with key focuses on supporting enterprises to recover & rebuild and on ensuring equitable and inclusive delivery of support. The consortium is seeking a learning and evaluation partner to support the partners in understanding the cost-effectiveness and lessons from the fund's implementation.

Start date: October/November 2021

Anticipated length: Up to two years with varying degrees of intensity depending on project stage, with a possible follow up at a later stage subject to funding availability

Overview

Aims of the fund

The new fund will be delivered by UnLtd: The Foundation for Social Entrepreneurs (UnLtd), The School for Social Enterprise (SSE), Key Fund, Resonance and Big Issue Invest (BII) – referred to as the *implementing partners* or *consortium* in this ToR.

The new fund builds on a completed scheme which delivered support to over 600 social enterprises and charities (hereafter 'social enterprises' or 'social purpose organisations') across England. The new fund aims to distribute £16.3 million to at least 500 social organisations in line with Inclusion Targets which have been set at a regional and national level. Technical assistance will also be provided throughout the grant making process along with signposting to other key services for social purpose organisations.

The consortium aims to deliver grants over 2 'rounds' of applications between November/December 2021 and February/March 2022 and to fund social organisations for projects of up to one year. The new fund will provide financial support for project costs and core costs therefore providing flexible funding supporting social purpose organisations to recover from the impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Aims of engaging the Evaluation & Learning Partner

The 'Evaluation & Learning Partner' (ELP) will be a key partner within the new fund, working with the delivery partners to understand the cost-effectiveness, equity and lessons learned in the delivery of the project. Specifically, the fund's implementing consortium aims to understand and learn from what works in its partnership approach to grant making and how the new fund has reached social enterprises and leaders to support their enterprise recovery from the Covid-19 Pandemic.

The ELP will be expected to work with existing data collection tools and templates, alongside reviewing and understanding the impact aims and intended outcomes that we aim to achieve though our support to organisations; an overview of this is provided in annex 1. This should lead to the ELP undertaking activities to understand:

- The extent to which onward grants and technical assistance were delivered effectively
- The extent to which onward grants and technical assistance achieved the intended impact on the social enterprises (for example the ability of grantees to return or rebuild their trading) and the people they support, as set out at the time of submitting applications;

- How the fund delivered against its equity and inclusion targets and actions; what helped partners reach Inclusion Targets for the scheme and what did not (e.g. engaging inclusion partners, assessment process, eligibility criteria, outreach etc.);
- The role played by contextual blockers and enablers (e.g. further local lockdowns) social enterprises have faced in implementing their plans;
- Customer satisfaction with the scheme, including for unsuccessful applicants; and
- Capture the learning developed throughout the fund's delivery in close collaboration with the lead learning partner, UnLtd.

The consortium of implementing partners has committed to appropriate monitoring of grant making and grantee management activities, and to sharing our lessons with key stakeholders. The ELP should aim to support the implementing partners to ensure the evaluation and learning outcomes are effectively shared with funders and the wider sector.

Key deliverables of the Evaluation and Learning Partner

By engaging with the new fund and it's implementing partners, the ELP is expected to deliver the following key activities and outputs:

1. **Undertake a full review of the fund's monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) frameworks, plans and tools and present suitable complementary learning and evaluation activities:** the consortium will be responsible for data collection from grantees and applicants. The ELP will:
   a. Fully understand the data structure and data collection tools used by the partners.
   b. Propose any reasonable additional data collection needs for evaluation and learning.
   c. Support the fund's implementing partners in the design of any additional surveys and questions (to be distributed by the implementing partners).

2. **Undertake agreed Evaluation and Learning activities as set with the new fund's consortium.** This should include but is not limited to:

   a. A Value for Money approach to evaluating the effectiveness of the new fund, including recommendations of data collection as detailed in question 1) above and proposal to ensure the 'Equity' element of Value for Money is integrated in the evaluation.
   b. Propose and undertake evaluation activities for understanding the 'value add' of the implementing partners in providing grant support and technical assistance to applicants and grantees.
   c. Ensure a 'Diversity, Equality and Inclusion' (DEI) lens review of the fund, including a review and sharing of lessons of how the project design and inclusion targets affected inclusive practices and outcomes of the new fund.
   d. With respect to 1b above, the ELP will work closely with UnLtd and the other implementing partners to propose a reasonable approach to balancing evaluation and formative learning activities. UnLtd who will lead a series of learning workshops to capture emerging lessons and insights from delivery; key learning areas may include partnership working, how we learn to support applicants and grantees or what processes did and didn't work effectively to deliver our work.

3. **Ensure any monitoring and evaluation data is sound through appropriate data validation activities:** Proposed by the ELP, undertake appropriate data and learning validation activities to ensure our learning and evaluation findings are as accurate as possible.

4. **Provide a concise (no longer than 20 pages excluding appendices) evaluation and learning report capturing key lessons, achievements and insights from the new fund's design and implementation**: The ELP will work with the new fund's consortium to ensure the report provides effective insights against the key aims of the fund and communicates findings effectively to key stakeholders. It should be expected that this report includes an internal learning session for the partnership and an externally accessible report to share lessons with the sector and key stakeholders.

Details of our approach to cost-effectiveness, equity and learning within MEL

The consortium is seeking an ELP with the expertise to act as a friendly critic and collaborator to generate insights on what worked in the new fund's design and implementation and what we can do better.

To this end, a Value for Money framework has been selected for understanding the 'cost-effectiveness' of the projects' delivery of grants to social organisations. Specifically, of the 5E's of Value for Money, cost-effectiveness and equity are of key interest to the partners. The ELP should therefore have experience of conducting Value for Money (VfM) evaluation of similar grant making projects. The new fund has ambitious inclusion targets for grant making based on quantitative analysis of the previous programme's projects and national data on key demographics. Progress and achievement against these targets should be considered.

A 'learning' approach also requires the ELP to engage with the consortium's established learning agenda. Specifically, the ELP will be expected to work closely with UnLtd on integrating formative learning activities based on key areas identified through collective prioritisation with the consortium.

Budget and submission requirements

The consortium has an absolute maximum budget of £40,000 (incl. VAT) for the Evaluation & Learning Partner core activities. **Please submit your proposal by 24/10/2021** with the following details:

- No longer than 5 page response on how you propose to deliver the Learning Partner activities within budget.
- A CV of lead person/consultant and any other consultants proposed for consultancy
- A budget detailing total proposed budget, number of days and day rate
- An example of a similar project you have delivered previously
- A statement confirming that it is understood that any overspend on time or costs shall be borne by the consultant.

Please submit your proposal to Stepan Zelinger (Grants Officer) and Joshua Meek (Head of Impact at Big Issue Invest). Email addresses for submission are provided below and do not hesitate to contact with questions:

Joshua.meek@bigissueinvest.com & stepan.zelinger@bigissueinvest.com

Annex 1: Overview Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the new fund

Preliminary evaluation data collection overview

Expected data collection points
1/ at the time of application (online application portal, customer feedback survey – data in csv.)
2/ as part of the assessment process (assessor scores and comments, grant panel decisions and minutes – data in more than one format due to differences in partners' assessment process)
3/ at mid-point through implementation (Zoho survey, data in csv.)
4/ within one month of grant end date (Zoho survey, data in csv.)

Application portal datapoints examples (to be refined and finalised pre-launch, application portal under development)

i)   Type of legal incorporation
ii)   Main office address & project delivery location (postcode), UK region, age of organisation
iii)   Industrial sector of business/trading arm (up to two unranked picklist values, adapted version of SIC)
iv)   Social issues tackled (taxonomy – picklist)
v)   Financial data (income in the financial year pre-Covid / income in the last financial year, % of income from trading, current cash reserves) + documents (annual statutory/management accounts from up to past 2 years, cashflow forecast)
vi)   Human resources (numbers of FTE equivalent staff including staff on Furlough – pre Covid and at the time of application, no. of regular volunteers)
vii)   Beneficiaries served (number of beneficiaries served past 12 months & last pre-Covid year)
viii)   Main beneficiary groups (picklist taxonomy based on type of disadvantage)
ix)   Beneficiaries targeted (LGBTQI+, BAME, disabled, women)
x)   Leadership diversity (gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity, lived experience of issues the social enterprise is addressing)
xi)   Non-financial support requested (YES/NO; picklist values and narrative)
xii)   Grant financials and purpose (amount requested, amount awarded, budget structure, narrative of need and planned use of funds)
xiii)   Fit with intended impact priority areas - on people served by grant holder (picklist values such as 'Improving mental health' or 'Bringing community spaces back to life')
xiv)   Fit with intended impact on organisation (picklist values such as 'Restart, grow and diversify revenue streams' or 'Strengthen systems, including governance, financial management systems and IT')
xv)   3 main intended outcomes (short narrative description of each)
xvi)   Grant experience: customer satisfaction survey carried out at the point of application submission

Datapoints planned for collection post-application (mid-point & final surveys – to be finalised):

xvii)   Grant implementation: spend (on track/delayed/severely delayed), budget amendment rationale; progress on delivery of activities (on track/delayed/severely delayed), changes to project activities or schedule narrative
xviii) Type of services provided with the help of the grant - care services, food, signposting etc.
xix)   Non-financial support requested and received (organisational development area, type – diagnostic tool under development)

xx)   Grant experience: customer satisfaction survey – integrated into final grantee reports

xxi)   Human resources: number of FTE equivalent staff at the end of grant period

xxii)   Attribution – effect of the grant on recipient: to be specified (could capture change in trading income, beneficiary numbers, organisational development, resilience etc.)

xxiii) Contextual blockers and enablers (governmental restrictions, additional funding etc.)