

## **NESTA Creative Councils Programme – York.**

### **Action Plan and Supporting Documents.**

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The City of York Council (CYC) is fully committed to developing its innovation strategy to tackle present and future challenges at both strategic and operational levels. As part of this strategy, (which includes developing a flatter management structure focusing more on competencies and less on traditional job roles), CYC proposes to open up the process of solving the bigger medium to long term challenges through conversations with businesses and the community. This will happen using an 'Open Innovation' process, including an online platform for placing questions/challenges and for posting solutions. The most promising solutions which are posted, will be further developed with the aid of a new 'disruptive innovation team' within the council, to create a tangible 'pilot implementation plan'. The innovation team will help to navigate around potential barriers and using their experience and contacts within the system, can aid the idea providers to develop alternate ways of addressing the big challenges.

The pilot process will focus on 4 initial challenges, to demonstrate the platform and follow up workshops, and to test the robustness of this method. These questions were themselves developed through an open innovation process with consultation between other organisations and departments and are:

1. Hidden Gems – What ways can underutilised CYC assets i.e. equipment, property, buildings, and land, be exploited to benefit businesses, the community and CYC?
2. How can footfall and transport be used innovatively to generate income and improve environmental sustainability in the city?
3. How can we intelligently use non-intrusive tools and methods to aid older and vulnerable people in their homes? E.g. smart assisted living, buddy systems, safety improvements, tools and ideas to reduce isolation.
4. How can CYC procure work from small businesses easily, with less barriers and what ways can residents and businesses be proactive in approaching CYC with beneficial ideas and products?

CYC have already been approached by other departments to post additional questions on the platform, and to use this new approach to problem solving. Initial feedback has been very enthusiastic. CYC intend to embed this method for solving challenges into the culture of the organisation.

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. The City of York Council, together with its partner, Science City York, are delighted to be part of the NESTA/ LGG Creative Council Programme, and intend to use the opportunity to focus on a new process for addressing medium to long term challenges and a new way of developing their five priority areas.

These are listed in the 2011-15 Council Plan “Delivering for the People of York”:

- Creating jobs and growing the economy
  - Getting York moving
  - Building stronger communities
  - Protecting vulnerable people
  - Protecting the environment
2. There has never been a better time for the Council to promote new ways of working together with the wide spread introduction of innovation into its work, making it fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The drivers for doing things differently include the public sector financial squeeze but also focus on why and when we deliver services recognising that one size fits all does not meet the needs of our diverse communities, and that using the tried and tested approaches is not necessarily effective or efficient.
  3. The City of York Council was therefore delighted, and privileged, to be selected to participate in phase one of the NESTA/ LGG Creative Council Programme. The Council is aiming to achieve an organisation that is comfortable to continuously innovate and see the Creative Council programme as the catalyst for its introduction.
  4. This project plan by way of background sets out progress to date through a time line, full cost analysis and key milestones.

## **BACKGROUND**

5. Following the successful submission of the application to NESTA/ LGG for support under phase 1 of the Creative Council programme our work has focussed on honing our approach and gaining pan-organisation support.
6. Following a programme of organisational engagement across Directorates and with other partners, four key challenges/ questions were defined as a basis for developing the initiative. The four questions are set out above in the Executive Summary and relate to the 4 topics of: hidden assets/ gems; tourism footfall and communications; vulnerable persons and procurement/ small business. These four topics relate to key priorities identified in the Council Plan (para 1) and provide the benefit of wide cross ownership and therefore exposure to the open innovation process.

## **APPROACH**

7. For the next critical stage of the project the Council recognises it needs to increase its capacity for the project, and its capacity to manage the innovation process beyond the Creative Council programme. Table 1, the Innovation Team, records the proposal to expand the resource based on a dedicated project champion for each question plus administrative support. The enhanced capacity from within the Council will compliment the resource provided by NESTA by adding capacity to the project, maximising its chances of success.
8. A twin track but linked approach is taken to the innovation process, starting with an on-line platform as a means for setting challenges / problems and for inviting the solutions, evidence and identifying project champions. This on-line platform would be truly open i.e. accessible from within and outside the council. A programme of organisation engagement has generated a strong interest in the platform approach and new challenges have already been enthusiastically identified from across the Council. For the purpose of the Creative Council programme the platform will support the "4 questions" it will also be used as a means to start a journey with other challenges and questions. Table 2 sets out the key milestones and costings
9. The second strand of activity is highlighted in table 3, together with costings, as a basis for taking the 4 questions forward through Open Innovation processes.

## **ACTION PLANNING**

10. There are two spreadsheets attached, one shows the project time-line and the other a full breakdown of month by month and activity costings.
11. As part of the process we are seeking to put in place innovation work that represents a flatter management structure based on a more competency based approach, but bringing with it a 'disruptive innovation team' within the council based on the more creative members of the council.
12. We will introduce an online open innovation platform, open to businesses, community and the council team. Initially this will be via a social media platform called Ning.com with a view to integrating into a new web portal which is being developed for the city. This platform will be maintained by a person appointed to the administrative post, and idea generators and Directorates/ teams posting challenges will be 'mentored' or 'coached' by the innovation team. A template/form will be developed to aid and encourage people posting questions and solutions on the platform. A training session for the innovation team will be created, and this 'step by step' guide will be made into a video to post on the platform to help anyone using the platform for the first time. A 'family tree' of council departments and contacts may help innovators in navigating the council departments and key contacts required for each challenge.
13. A compelling, exciting, positive Communications Plan will be whilst the platform is being constructed and its implementation will be critical to the success of the initiative. We need to be ready to shout about the platform once we are ready to launch it. the implementation of the communication plan will be led by those players with influence and able to enthuse about project, i.e. CYC's Leader James Alexander and Chief Executive Kersten England, SCY's Chief executive Nicola Spence, Marcus Romer who leads York's Creative City network.

14. We are targeting communications at three main recipients; business community, residents/ citizens and the council team. We will also make use of existing communications channels including, the Council: COLIN, (intranet site), council magazine , email from CEO, flyers.
15. Community communications will be targeted through the press, YorMag, Local Link, One and Other magazines, other social enterprise networks like York CVS.
16. Business community will be channelled through SCY networks, Business insider magazine, City Chambers, Science Park, networks on Linked In like York Business week, Network Yorkshire, Yorkshire Mafia, social networks i.e. Linked In, Twitter, Facebook.
17. We will take care to ensure that others organisations which might wish to participate in the initiative are not excluded i.e. universities and colleges, NYBEP networks etc.
18. Knowledge Hub platform, LGG, NESTA.

### **POSTING A QUESTION/ CHALLENGE**

19. Whilst 4 questions have been honed as a basis for taking forward the initiative, we are encouraging others to make use of the platform for posting additional questions/ challenges. As part of the process additional questions/challenges will need to:
  - Describe the context and background, including why it is a problem. Most compelling challenges are those which have high importance to council/city and where the current solution is inadequate.
  - Address the council's capacity for change around issues, i.e. what can or cannot be done, e.g. legislative, considering financial implications i.e. what are the available resources? An understanding of resource capability based on the scale of change and expectations.
  - Provide time scales for each challenge.
20. The platform will include an area for queries, comments and suggestions plus a place to post supporting information i.e. current data around issue, evidence base, to provide as much intelligence as possible.
21. There will also be some way to show 'journey of ideas', the impacts on other ideas and a place to pro-actively suggest solutions where there hasn't been a challenge set first.
22. The innovation team will help to educate any 'idea poster' to provide enough context and detail in order that solutions fit closely with the needs.

### **SOLUTION JOURNEY**

Once these ideas have been shared on the platform, a response process will be developed. Important factors within this include:

23. A Timely response from the innovation team addressing posted solutions is critical!
24. When posting a response, there needs to be a series of questions to frame and pre-refine the ideas.
25. Questions to ask:

- Who is benefiting?
  - Who needs to be involved? (free form with e.g.s)
  - What is your solution or idea?
  - Where would your idea be located? (free form with e.g.s)
  - Why would your idea work? (free form with e.g.s)
  - When? Time-scale, duration etc.
  - Any additional information...
26. With the assistance of an 'innovation guide' it is possible to go through the 'How' process to ascertain a project plan. Once the idea provider has filled in the 'W' questions (listed above), they will be contacted by an Innovation Guide to talk them through their idea and to look at the feasibility of the idea, the resource required, team of people to be involved, barriers to get around. Therefore it is important that the idea generation person is easily contactable.
27. There needs to be Key performance Indicators in place for this part of the process, in order that each idea posting is addressed quickly, followed up and tested. (we want to emulate the success rate of Toyota's innovation model and less like Dell's Ideastorm in % of ideas implemented.)
28. Final sign off needs to happen with in a few weeks and if the idea has legs then the council CEO or equivalent can give the go ahead for the innovation team to work with the 'idea generator' to implement the idea.
29. Projects deemed feasible and which will be piloted will have their progress documented on the platform to share with others and to monitor the progress, encouraging others to come up with solutions and be involved in the process too.
30. There will be an option for other members to 'like' ideas, which will also help verify community support to ward councillors etc.

## **CONCLUSION**

31. The City of York Council in association with SCY look forward to the next stage of this exciting initiative, and we look forward to discussing the detail of this project plan with NESTA representatives.