

## EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT - RESULTS

Title of Policy	Investing in Communities Fund
Summary of aims and desired outcomes of Policy	The new fund aims to empower communities enabling them to tackle poverty, inequality and disadvantage on their own terms, in turn supporting inclusive growth. The fund promotes a more responsive, community-led, place-based approach. One that is flexible and can adapt to existing and emerging community issues, circumstances and priorities in a wide range of policy contexts and regardless of geographical setting or scale.
Directorate: Division: team	Housing & Social Justice: Social Justice & Regeneration: Regeneration

### Executive summary

This is a summary of the full Equality Impact Assessment conducted on the Investing in Communities Fund which was launched in 2019.

This EQIA has considered the potential effects of this new fund and how it impacts upon people with one or more protected characteristics. Our findings are based on desk based research, stakeholder engagement and feedback and learning acquired over a number of years from the design and operation of the following funds:

- Community Choices Fund
- People and Communities Fund

- Strengthening Communities Programme
- Fair Food Transformation Fund
- Making Places Initiatives

This experience has supported informed discussion of the strategic purpose, practical management, operation, monitoring and evaluation of the new fund.

We found that the new fund has the potential to impact positively on those who share one or more of each of the protected characteristics listed under the Equality Act 2010.

We will look to learn from and evolve this fund and hence an evaluation team with external colleagues has been established to help develop the process and provide a sounding board for applicants and recipients to feedback their experience of the new fund.

## **Background**

The fund is designed to contribute to achieving our ambitions as set out in the National Performance Framework, focusing our investment on deprived communities and disadvantaged rural areas.

The fund will help support community and third sector organisations in our most disadvantaged and fragile communities to develop and deliver sustainable local solutions that:

- address local priorities and needs,
- increase active inclusion and
- build on the assets of local communities

to reduce poverty, inequality and rural disadvantage and to enable inclusive growth as set out in our National Performance Framework.

The framework is for all of Scotland and its aims include:

- create a more successful country
- increase the wellbeing of people living in Scotland
- create sustainable and inclusive growth
- reduce inequalities and give equal importance to economic, environmental and social progress

The new fund is intended to support community led responses, less restricted by targeted policy themes, encouraging holistic proposals to address locally identified opportunities and challenges.

The fund is for people and communities who experience inequalities of outcome as a result of deprivation or rural disadvantage, irrespective of the range and scale of settings and circumstances - be that in remote villages, towns, cities, regions or islands - where the deep-seated impacts of disadvantage, poverty and inequality have impacted upon local communities who need support to develop long term solutions.

Applicants to the fund are expressly requested to outline specifically how the activities they propose will improve outcomes for people and communities with one or more of the protected characteristics listed under the Equality Act 2010 who experience disadvantage.

To reduce potential barriers to accessing this fund we have encouraged collaborative approaches whereby an eligible lead candidate may apply on behalf of a consortium of interested parties.

The fund will continue to develop and evolve, and begins to set out a pipeline approach to funding which recognises that longer term planning and support are needed to develop and support communities, which can help them to unlock longstanding issues that grip people and communities in poverty. In response to the need for longer term planning, the fund makes available time-limited multiyear awards to provide essential stability for community-led activity.

The flexible design of the fund further aims to support communities by reducing the administrative burden of applying to multiple funds.

This new fund supports a range of activity through a staged funding approach, enabling communities to:

- build community capacity and strengthen community anchor organisations
- better understand and identify their local aspirations and priorities
- increase active inclusion and develop opportunities for enhanced engagement for groups who are more vulnerable and harder to reach
- create local plans and proposals in collaboration with partners
- prioritise local budgets and access funds
- develop local assets, services and projects that respond to the needs of the people in their communities
- deliver community-led solutions that tackle priorities that matter most to communities; and/or
- develop local interventions which offer opportunities and pathways for social and community integration.

So that they can control more of their own affairs and take forward more of the activities they have identified as being vital to the success of their place.

Views about the new fund were sought at one to one meetings with a range of potential recipients, community representatives and other funding teams including those from within Scottish Government.

We hosted focus groups with community representatives, community support organisations, and other fund organisers and distributors including Big Lottery, Scottish Communities Climate Action Network, Community Ownership Support Services, Community Land Scotland and with a wide range of Scottish Government colleagues responsible for other funds directed towards communities.

We also held a series of stakeholder meetings with key organisations, including Highland & Islands Enterprise, Development Trust Association Scotland, Scottish Community

Development Centre and SURF to seek views on the design of the application form, help and guidance materials, application, assessment, monitoring and evaluation processes to be undertaken. The intent throughout being to make the materials as accessible and proportionate as possible.

### **The Scope of the EQIA**

The Investing in Communities Fund promotes a more responsive, community-led, place-based approach that is flexible and can adapt to existing and emerging community issues, circumstances and priorities, as identified locally. This flexibility in the design of funding proposals better reflects the holistic, cross cutting nature of the challenges communities seek to address. It places trust into local community groups to be better placed to identify what should be prioritised locally that they can undertake. The EQIA has where possible taken into account this flexibility.

This policy is intended to help a wide range of people experiencing disadvantage, including children, young people, families and older people. It may also include specific groups such as young carers, disabled people, and vulnerable families including those in poverty. Many of the groups and individuals benefiting from this fund may have more than one of the protected characteristics. The aim is for fragile and vulnerable people and communities to be given additional support and have increased opportunities as well as contributing towards reducing inequalities.

The general duty (section 149) of the Equality Act 2010 requires public authorities, when exercising their functions to have due regard to the need to: eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity; and, foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (that is age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex, or sexual orientation) and persons who do not.

This fund aims to tackle poverty in all its forms. We have made it clear however, that the Scottish Government prioritises a number of specific themes within this context including child poverty, fuel poverty and food insecurity, which it monitors and reports progress on. Therefore, we asked applicants to identify which element(s) of poverty they aim to tackle with their proposal.

The new streamlined fund builds on the understanding and learning gained from five earlier funds and has contributed to us directing funding support towards those communities experiencing disadvantage, poverty and inequality.

## **Key Findings**

Involving external partners in the shaping and design of the new fund from the outset has been helpful in building relationships which ensured that we appointed a wide range of external views into the assessment panel. This broad expertise and range of local intelligence has provided differing perspectives, balance, objectivity and a more strategic understanding upon which to base decision making. This helped the development of the fund.

The fund is designed to empower communities enabling them to tackle poverty, inequality and disadvantage on their own terms. It proposes, amongst other things to build community capacity and strengthen community anchor organisations; better understand and identify their local aspirations and priorities; increase active inclusion and develop opportunities for enhanced engagement for groups who are more vulnerable and harder to reach.

Applicants to the fund are requested to set out how their project contributes towards national outcomes and specifically how it will improve outcomes for people and communities with one or more of the protected characteristics listed under the Equality Act 2010 who experience disadvantage.

The open design of the fund contributes to advancing equality of opportunity. It is for applicants to determine which themes they are addressing. Some of the themes that proposals seek to advance equality include child poverty, employability, food insecurity, fuel poverty, childcare, community transport, family support, homelessness, improving health and wellbeing, loneliness and social isolation. This is not an exhaustive list with applicants able to indicate alternates.

The fund is anticipated to advance equality within and across each of the protected characteristics.

Successful proposals demonstrate an inclusive approach throughout the design, development and delivery of their proposal. They put communities first by involving local people in the process and support the aims of the Fairer Scotland Action Plan and our regeneration strategy 'Achieving a sustainable future' to change deep seated, multi-generational deprivation, poverty and inequalities.

The EQIA process has identified that the fund will contribute to: eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advancing equality of opportunity; and promoting good relations. It is anticipated that this will be applicable across each of the protected characteristics.

## Recommendations and Conclusion

The EQIA process has identified the Investing in Communities Fund having potential to positively impact upon those who share protected characteristics.

Delivering the new fund is part of an iterative process and we will seek and welcome feedback from stakeholders including communities, panel members and policy colleagues. This will include reviewing those application proposals received from equalities interests and if successful reviewing the success of proposals received from those expressly addressing equalities. We also propose to re-convene the strengthening communities board to support our analysis of applications and development of organisational capacity building. This recognises that there will be communities that are less able to articulate their views and who need support over time to engender empowerment so that they can address inequalities on their own terms.

We will review the application, evaluation, reporting processes and delivery to reflect on the evidence provided about impact for people and communities with one or more of the protected characteristics listed under the Equality Act 2010 who experience disadvantage. Amongst other things, this information will be used to identify evidence gaps requiring further exploration. This will hold true for each characteristic. We will liaise with applicants both successful and unsuccessful as part of this iterative learning.



## Authorisation

I am satisfied with the equality impact assessment that has been undertaken for the Investing in Communities Fund and give my authorisation for the results of this assessment to be published on the Scottish Government's website.

Paul Tyrer

Interim Deputy Director Social Justice and Regeneration

Authorisation date: 2 December 2019