

Responses to question posted on GeniUS website

External Funding into the City of York

The aspiration for the City of York is to place itself in the a **top five UK and top ten European city economies by 2015**, and in the process become a more international, innovative and enterprising city.

In order to achieve this vision, it is important for the city to harness the energy, ideas and expertise of its residents, businesses and academics, working with the Local Authority to lever in investment, develop ideas for the future and become more proactive in seizing opportunities as they arise.

To make this happen we need ideas from you on:

- **how best to identify and progress opportunities for citywide funding or investment;**
- **what additional mechanisms could we put in place to best communicate opportunities;**
- **who we can work with to create groups or consortia within the city that can come together to support this;**
- **what would make is easier for you to get involved if you are interested?**

If you have thoughts or ideas on any of these areas then please post them here: <http://geniusyork.com/forum/topics/external-funding-scrutiny-review> on the forum, to let us know what you think and to discuss and shape them with others.

The discussion on GeniUS! will run until the end of March and your ideas, suggestions and recommendations will feed into a review of external city funding by the council's Economic and City Development overview and scrutiny committee, comprised of Councillors from all parties looking at this issue. The results of this review will go to the council's cabinet, and will inform future council policy and practice in this area.

If York is going to reach and exceed these aspirations, new thinking and joined up working with city partners from all areas is crucial. To set York up for a robust and bright future we need to ensure we secure the best opportunities now.

Replies to This Discussion

Reply by Michelle White on February 23, 2013 at 17:31

I think it is foolish to focus on winning competitions and becoming famous. To change how the city is run to focus on winning competitions is to spend a lot of money creating systems that squeeze everything bone dry. A huge wealth sucking device where we suck more funds, get people to invest- get more funding. Is our goal to become a leech? The main systems that run our city need to be orientated towards beneficial goals for its residents. What if you destroy many beneficial things claiming they are inefficient? How can happiness be inefficient. If every city is like a leech its no wonder we have reached our current situation where everything is bone dry and like tightrope walk. Penny pinching has crippled everything. Why do we need such a massive amount of blood. Because we spend too much thats why. York has its many "Millenium Domes" these were past attempts to compete with other cities. We dont need a new fad or project. What we want is a focus on caring for our own city. Turning it into a competition machine is not what the city needs. The city needs to not be like other cities. York is a tourist attraction BECAUSE it is not like other cities. Cloned shopping centres are everywhere. Nowhere has any character anymore or personality. Everything has become about National businesses and money making. Why cant we show the way. Our city is historical. Why not follow historical ideas instead of this modern self destruction. Increase the historical developments. That will make York shine. You have a city that attracts intelligent educated people and international interest. Those eyes looking and ears watching are waiting for us to do something worthwhile..and its not something that is about spending money on building massive tin shacks or talking a lot of administrative drivel. I already came up with the idea that pensioners might want to decorate the city with flowers "York in Bloom". And having been living in the city for 60 odd years they might want to discuss with you what they have seen in the last 60 years and their wealth of knowledge. These are ideas for developing love and sense of community. What city does this? Why not make York special? A leader showing the other cities new ways

Reply by Heather Niven on March 1, 2013 at 18:42

Not sure anyone is focussing on winning competitions and becoming famous here, more on better ways to fund new initiatives in the city to help new businesses, social enterprises and community groups start and grow.

Your idea of capturing the experiences people have who have lived in York for decades is a great one! One idea could be a Wikipedia for York - a citywide resource for all residents to share their stories. What do you think?

Reply by Michelle White on March 4, 2013 at 13:53

Sounds awesome. I'm in very anti Millennium dome mindset! Born a Capricorn so I'm always focusing on not wasting money. I had an idea that would be a good initiative. It would be a national business set up by the government where anyone with a disability can go and find paid employment. No forcing people off benefits on this one but the disabled person applies IF THEY WISH. Work and payment is not set up to be by the hour but by the job. In this way people with disabilities can work at their own pace. With an hourly payment people will feel pressurised to work fast and may destroy their health if put under pressure. I, for example would like to try 1 hour per week working on a computer but this hours work I would spread over 3 hours so I do it at a 3rd of the speed of a healthy person. Then I would like to experiment with increasing very slowly at my own pace with no pressure or threat of financial loss. Currently there is no employment for someone in that situation. I use a wheelchair & have been to daycentres where other people in wheelchairs sit for hours on end playing windows solitaire. I believe those people would also like to try. It's very depressing and gives rise to lots of fear if there is no prospect of being able to move towards any kind of paid work. no one will employ someone who cannot work fast if the pay is by the hour. Many disabled people are very low mentally because of these obstacles

Reply by Heather Niven on March 4, 2013 at 14:17

Hi Michelle, I really like this idea - what if it was a social enterprise (rather than a national enterprise set up by government) which provided assistance with computer work for charities, voluntary groups or other non for profits and as part of the deal the people doing the work got paid per job either with money or with other perks, i.e. tea at Betty's or tickets to go to nice places in the city? This would get folk out and about as well as providing a way to give time and expertise for a good cause. Everyone benefits - the non for profits get assistance with admin, research, social networking and graphic design and the helpers get out and about or some other reward for taking the time and effort to assist, as well as experience and insight.

Another idea would be to ask the same group of people to spend some time looking online for opportunities that would be useful and relevant to York and its people, and feeding the information back to the council and other groups to then develop and take advantage of? Maybe rewards could be on commission basis depending on which initiatives are taken forwards? Just a thought.

Reply by Michelle White on March 4, 2013 at 18:01

It needs to be paid work. Its all about feeling there is hope to self support or that one can achieve this even on a small scale would lift a lot of depression etc. There is plenty of voluntary work where you can go as slow as you like but as soon as it comes to trying to support oneself financially a bit more there's just a massive brick wall

Reply by Adam Gray on February 26, 2013 at 14:48

As Senior Funding and Investment Officer at City of York Council I would like to kick start the debate by putting forward a few ideas for comment / consideration.

I'm particularly interested in the idea of developing an Ethical Investment Bond for York - i.e. an FSA regulated bond, which raises money from various ethical investors and local benefactors to support start-up businesses retaining young graduates in the City, the development of social enterprises, firms which pay a living wage etc.

The bond would offer low interest loan finance to these firms - the investors would be paid back, but not at a significant rate of return, say 2% per annum max.

Does anyone have any additional thoughts / ideas around this theme? Would this be an attractive proposition for citizens of York to invest in, particularly if the bond were to be FSA regulated?

Reply by Heather Niven on March 1, 2013 at 18:37

Sounds like a really interesting idea Adam, and also the idea of local investors and benefactors helping new businesses the city to develop further sounds laudable. As Carole Dove says, adding in matched funding perhaps through crowd funding would also demonstrate market demand, or support for new proposals which could reduce any risk to investors. An understanding of social impact in addition to return on investment and the added value of this way of funding may also

encourage more people to support new initiatives. Definitely worth exploring further!

Reply by Anna Semlyen on March 4, 2013 at 13:18

As well as cash, an input to a funding bid could be in the form of promises - e.g. of expertise, voluntary work, shared resources, commitment to rent space in a building or guarantee a mortgage or loan.

Reply by Eddy Adams on April 9, 2013 at 11:20

Some brief thoughts on this.

Our forthcoming work on social innovation in Europe's cities suggests that although funding is important, in most places the issue is more about total resource mobilisation - maxing what we have. In particular, this means tackling public sector funding silos, addressing poor performance and encouraging new behaviours. Cities at the leading edge of social innovation and public sector reform are those which are supporting new space for service design and prototyping which allows all actors - particularly customers - to assume a key role. GeniUS itself is a good - although early stage - example of this.

So I would argue that it is a mistake to chase the money, and that good ideas will usually find backing, even at times like this.

However, I do agree that we need to look at new creative ways to support activities - although I'm rather sceptical about SIB¹s etc; I do think we need to fully explore sustainable forms of public sector finance. OECD² is about to publish a review of social innovation finding sources that might be relevant here.

I feel as though I'd be ducking the issue if I didn't say something about money! As we know, one of York's difficulties is that it is relatively wealthy, so hasn't had access to much in the way of EU Structural Funds. These are of course diminishing anyway, but there are new opportunities in the 2014-2020 programmes which are of interest. For example, there will be a much stronger focus on Social Innovation both within the Cohesion Funds but also in the new research programme, Horizon 2020. This means that the type of model York is pioneering is potentially well-placed to attract resources.

¹ Strategic Investment Bonds

² Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

One of the challenges overall is to address fragmented activity within the city. Lots of organisations are very good at attracting funding for their own work and that is likely to continue. Perhaps one of the tricks is to use high profile events/occasions like the Tour de France to mobilise partners behind a range of related activities - which can help break down traditional rivalries and compartmentalised behaviour.

Much of this is already under way in the city I think (hope!). So I'd come back to the importance of creating an ecosystem that encourages coproduction, fresh thinking and the design and prototyping of new ideas. And I'd emphasise that some of the city's ongoing initiatives - such as the Dementia Friendly City concept - offer a strong platform for additional thinking about resources, which is much easier to manage than a general call to arms re external funding.

Keep up the good work :-)

Reply by Adam Gray on April 10, 2013 at 10:53

Hi Eddy

Some carefully considered comments here which make a great deal of sense. Despite my job title (i.e. Funding and Investment Officer) I fully agree that initial emphasis should be placed on co-ordinating partners' activities and generally encouraging co-production and new ideas - which, if robust enough, will still attract funding despite the difficult climate. To an extent this happens already but there is always room for improvement / new ideas.

Your comments around European funding are timely and accurate. CYC is carefully tracking the plans for the 2014-2020 programme, and I think that whilst overall monies will diminish there is potential to support a broader range of eligible projects through the new Structural Programme, particularly around social inclusion, SME innovation, low carbon, environmental activities etc. Horizon 2020 is another one I'm following closely.

As regards creative ways to support activities - again I find myself agreeing that Social Investment Bonds are only one, rather narrow, option and that there are many other forms of potentially flexible new funding to be considered. I will look out for the OECD report and read with interest.

Other interesting reading includes the recent Centre for Cities report around the future of urban development funds in the UK. The move

towards establishing a pan-authority Municipal Bond is gathering pace nationally, although with various complexities. I'd be interested in yours, and other contributors' comments, around that. Although cautious in some respects, I'm also interested in various Crowd funding models which strikes a chord with some of Heather's earlier comments.

Regards, Adam

Reply by Eddy Adams on April 10, 2013 at 11:15

Yes - the CfC One Fund to Rule them all work is interesting - interesting that although UK lags well behind the Nordics and Germany in terms of innovation and urban development, we are still ahead of the curve on creative thinking around processes and financial models. Let's keep in touch - happy to share our (URBACT's³) forthcoming work on social innovation which is out 3rd May.

Reply by Adam Gray on April 10, 2013 at 12:08

Hi Eddy

Thanks for that, it would be great to keep in touch and very interested in the URBACT work around social innovation too.

best regards

Adam

Reply by Heather Niven on April 10, 2013 at 17:36

Some great input here Eddy and Adam, and I am keen to read up on some of the info you mentioned here i.e. Horizon 2020, OECD and cohesion funds as well as your latest report from URBACT.

I agree wholeheartedly that better relationships and more people working together to respond to opportunities is going to give you the most effective solutions. I also agree that this site, GeniUS! York is a definite step in the right direction but still in early stages and is not enough in isolation to achieve the levels of integration we need.

The new 'Innovate York' programme developed between City of York Council and Science City York aims to build on these beginnings to further connect everyone with the shared purpose of making York robust and ready for the future. Residents, businesses, academics, social enterprises and voluntary groups working together to support York in collectively responding to any opportunities which might benefit the city

³ URBACT is a European exchange and learning programme promoting sustainable urban development.

(from both within and out-with the city). Part of this will be to develop specialist 'think tanks', provide lots of networking opportunities to bring people together, bring new ideas to York to pilot, fast-track new ideas in both the council and the city, providing training and expertise in how to be more innovative, and generally helping to make things happen, for the better. I will be posting more on this over the next few weeks and hope you can be involved!

York is full of creative, passionate and innovative people and we need everyone's collective brainpower and support to mobilise the city, become more responsive and therefore seize more opportunities.