

To: Future Oxfordshire Partnership

Title of Report: Social Brokerage Platform Business Case

Date: 3 October 2024

Report of: Emma Coles, Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership Manager (OIEP) Manager

Status: Open

Executive Summary and Purpose:

To consider a business case addressing the challenge of increasing the amount of social value delivered through procurement activity across the county using Social Value Brokerage.

One area of increasing convergence across the councils is to look for ways to leverage and account for social value in procurement activity – increasingly councils are seeking to capture additional social and community benefits from council contracts, local development, and the wider economy in general. The social value working group of the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership (OIEP) has been looking at ways to bring consistency and clear messaging on this across the county.

In December 2023, the OIEP outlined a proposal to support development of a network of Anchor organisations in the county. This proposal was supported by the OIEP, Local Authority Chief executives and Oxford University Hospitals (OUH) and the Universities.

Since December 2023, system partners have worked together to identify a short list of priority areas for collaborative action within this network focusing on employment, procurement, and climate action.

One such opportunity to increase the amount of social value delivered through procurement would be to jointly commission a countywide social value brokerage platform. This could be of benefit to all contracting authorities including Local Authorities, universities, health and other local anchors. It would also enable contracts of any size to consider the inclusion of social value in their delivery rather than the current application against contracts over £100,000.

Unlike a single shared social value assessment framework, it would allow local variation in the assessment of value across different authorities, whilst providing a single view of the aggregate impact of the social value agenda across the county.

For these reasons, it's being considered as a scalable solution to bring consistency of practice in social value space across Oxfordshire, with widely varying social value policies, practices and ambitions.

How this report contributes to the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision Outcomes:

The OIEP contributes to the delivery of the following outcomes of the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision:

Outcome: Our residents will be healthier and happier, and overall wellbeing will have improved The outcomes of the OIEP will contribute to this priority enabling people to have better skills and education attainment to access employment opportunities etc.

Outcome: Our local economy will be globally competitive, sustainable, diverse and inclusive: The aim of the OIEP is to create an environment and communities that can adapt to change, a region that is resilient in the face of shocks in the economy and a workforce that responds to different needs and different kinds of work in the future. The education and inclusive employment working groups contribute to this priority.

Outcome: Our vibrant historic and cultural offer will be rich, diverse and enhanced

The OIEP's aim is to work together to create a more equal region that creates opportunities and benefits for all people within the county.

Recommendations:

1. That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership agree this business case
2. That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership agree to fund the implementation of this business case to the value of £90,000 from the Housing and Growth Deal Capacity Fund

Introduction

1. The Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership is a county-wide group that brings together employers, business, education, community groups and local government – to share knowledge, expertise and resources, and create links between different areas of work. Our aim is to work together to create a more equal region that creates opportunities and benefits for all people within the county. Our focus is on tackling areas that really need attention, which will have impact and will really make a difference.
2. The Oxfordshire Growth and Housing Deal included a proportion of revenue funding to support the delivery of the aims of the deal. This capacity funding was intended to support the stated intentions of the Growth Deal, including addressing long term skills needs, developing prosperous places and communities, and generating good jobs. Many of these themes have since been carried forward through work of the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership. One area of increasing convergence across the councils is to look for ways to leverage and account for social value in procurement activity – increasingly councils are seeking to capture additional social and community benefits from council contracts, local development, and the wider economy in general. The social value working group of the OIEP has been looking at ways to bring consistency and clear messaging on this across the county.

Social Value Brokerage

3. Different local authorities are at different stages of maturity in their social value approaches but conversations through the OIEP Social Value and Procurement Anchor Network and the Joint Oxfordshire Business Support (JOBS) forum suggest an openness to joining up approaches where it makes sense to do so. One such opportunity would be to jointly commission a countywide social value brokerage platform. This could be of benefit to all contracting authorities including Local Authorities, universities, health and other local anchors.
4. A well-integrated Social Value Brokerage platform brings a number of benefits:
 - Makes it easier for suppliers to find community projects to support
 - Enables contracts of any size to consider the inclusion of social value in their delivery
 - Ensures that genuine community needs are visible to social value providers.
 - Tracks and the delivery of social value
 - Provide a shared place to triage skills and employment opportunities arising through procurement, skills programmes, and CEPPs
 - Provides businesses and community projects with publicly visible case studies to share on their impact
 - Drives/gamifies social value competition across businesses wanting to be seen as the lead in the local area

There are a number of reasons for extending the rollout of a social value brokerage platform across the county. A shared platform with single registration would:

- offer greater clarity on process and simplify messaging to businesses and community projects
- provide a single aggregate view social value impact of procurement activity across the county alongside individual accounts for each authority
- reduce the administrative overhead within each individual authority
- achieve economies of scale on licensing and commissioning
- be simpler for local partners to signpost and communicate
- provide a shared Oxfordshire-wide platform for triaging CEPP commitments, skills programmes and job and training opportunities.
- drive healthy competition across different authorities and local businesses by publishing statistics and case studies on delivered social value
- OIEP Charter Signatories can be referred to the platform to find local causes to support.
- contributes to the delivery of the Oxfordshire Anchor Network social value ambition
- supports the delivery of multiple outcomes of the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision for Long Term Sustainable Development

For these reasons, it's being considered as a scalable solution to bring consistency of practice in social value across the county.

Communications

- The OIEP website oiep.org.uk

Financial Implications

- In year 1 the total cost for Match my Project at Oxford City Council would be £10,187, falling to £7,188 in subsequent years – year 1 includes a mandatory additional cost for onboarding and launch. Match my Project recommend a minimum 2 year term to allow time for the system to embed and deliver impact but will agree to a 1 year term on the understanding that the full benefit may not be realised until later.
- We recommend that the platform provides a single access brokerage service across the county but that each authority should retain a level of sovereignty over its own social value activity on the platform. This would need each authority to have its own access to the system, meaning at least 6 licenses are needed – one for each Local Authority. There is likely to be a significant economy of scale on the licencing costs compared to a single authority purchasing the platform alone. We estimate that the licensing cost for a shared platform (with 6 individualised licenses) would be between £30k and 50k but this needs to be explored/confirmed through a procurement process.

Staffing/support costs

- Although the platform is simple and easy for organisations to use, there are additional capacity requirements needed to make effective use of the platform. There is a need for some dedicated capacity to ‘handhold’ community projects and businesses, to ensure well-scaled requests which will generate good ‘matches’.
This includes:
- Internal capacity – tasks include approving new projects; promoting internal and external use of the platform; checking in with newly registered organisations; approving resource requests, matches and project feedback; liaising with contract managers.
External capacity – tasks include: promoting the platform to businesses and suppliers across their networks; advising new and existing organisations on effective use of the platform; and helping to generate ‘matchable’ requests and lasting social value relationships that can be tracked through the platform.
- It is strongly recommended that both types of additional capacity should be factored into the implementation costs alongside licensing costs and commissioning costs. The project costs estimate the need for £30k over the period.

11. Project Costs

	Status (Secured/ Not Secured)	£
Gross Cost		£70-90k

Revenue	Platform development/licensing costs (TBC through procurement)	£30,000 to £50,000
	Commissioning and contract management (not secured)	£10,000
	Support capacity (for external and internal resources)	£30,000
Capital		
Total		£70,000 to £90,000

Legal Implications

12. There are no immediate legal implications associated with the content of this report.

Other Implications

13. There are two possible procurement routes which require further discussion and agreement:
- Option 1 – Oxford City procure on behalf of the other Local Authorities
 - Option 2 – OxLEP act on behalf of the Local Authorities to procure and contract manage the system.

We have recommended option 2, it provides a more neutral approach to procurement and reduces unnecessary burden on one Local Authority.

Conclusion

14. There are a number of reasons for extending the rollout of a social value brokerage platform across the county. A shared platform with single registration would:
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 - reduce the administrative overhead within each individual authority
 - achieve economies of scale on licensing and commissioning
 - be simpler for local partners to signpost and communicate
 - provide a shared Oxfordshire-wide platform for triaging CEPP commitments, skills programmes and job and training opportunities
 - drive healthy competition across different authorities and local businesses by publishing statistics and case studies on delivered social value
 - OIEP Charter Signatories can be referred to the platform to find local causes to support

- contributes to the delivery of the Oxfordshire Anchor Network social value ambitions

15. For these reasons, it's being considered as a scalable solution to bring consistency of practice in social value space across Oxfordshire , with widely varying social value policies, practices and ambitions.

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