

**Evaluation of the PoP+ Grants Programme  
funded through the  
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation  
Change Programme**

**Review and Recommendations Report**

Clarity CIC  
[www.claritycic.org](http://www.claritycic.org)  
September 2018

**Clarity.**  
Clear Solutions for Social  
Purpose Organisations

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Evaluation participants

Grants Awarded Round 1 - 2018

## 1 Brief

1.1 Clarity CIC was commissioned in June 2018 to undertake an external review and evaluation of the first phase of small grants funding which forms part of the five-year change initiative funded by The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and managed by POP+<sup>1</sup>.

1.2 The main aims of the evaluation were to:

- explore the difference the small grants could make, whether their impact aligns with the overall objectives of the programme and whether there could be better ways of using the funds; and
- examine to what extent the processes used in managing the small grants funding contributed to the overall strategic aims and objectives of the change initiative.

1.3 Clarity's review focussed on the first "round" of small grants funding which was open for applications from 15<sup>th</sup> March to 27<sup>th</sup> April 2018. Applicants were notified of decisions in June 2018.

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## 2 Context and Background

2.1 In 2017 The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation awarded POP+ a five-year grant to "*make change happen in the city*". The grant was for £1.3m over five years; with £0.3m to help POP+ build its capacity to co-ordinate and deliver the funding and £1m for "*whatever was felt would make a real difference to the city and its people*". The initiative was to run from September 2017 to September 2022.

2.2 The over-arching outcomes for the Esmée Fairbairn initiative as a whole, based on consultation by POP+ with the voluntary and community sector and other stakeholders were:

- A Participatory City – where everyone is more involved in local decision making.
- A Compassionate City – where everyone is more caring, kind, considerate and respectful.
- A Sustainable City – where decisions always consider the balance of impact of social, economic and environmental change.
- Our City – where communities of Plymouth can decide their own future and celebrate together.

2.4 A key feature of the overall initiative was to be the openness and participatory nature of the processes. POP+ stated that "*at the heart of this change is that decisions happen bottom up, not top down.... everything will be openly discussed and decisions on spending will be taken by the sector, or representatives of the sector.*"

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this report we refer to the overall Esmée Fairbairn Foundation *initiative*, which has a number of components including grants, and the small grants *programme* itself

2.5 Following an initial “exploring” phase involving a series of visits to other parts of the country to gather ideas and inspiration, the initiative then moved into an “experimenting” phase. This has involved investing in a partnership across the city for an *Our Plymouth* website <https://ourplymouth.co.uk/> so “that everyone can be informed and take part” and funding to support cross sector working.

2.6 It was also decided to establish an initial grants programme. Further consultations with communities, groups and organisations and other stakeholders shaped the focus of this programme and identified the following key outcomes:

- addressing the needs of people in Plymouth including through better services;
- a stronger voluntary and community sector - improving the quality of the local community and voluntary sector and its capacity to change Plymouth for the better
- more effective and equal partnership between the community and voluntary, public and private sectors to achieve change in the City

2.7 It was agreed to allocate £140,000k for the grants programme in the first year, which would have two components:

- *Making it Happen* grants for projects that “make a change happen”; and
- *Working Together* grants focussing on building the networks that “enable everyone to feed their ideas in”

2.8 This evaluation and report focuses on the impact and processes of these grants and is designed to inform the design and delivery of any further grant funding through the initiative.

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### 3 Methodology

3.1 Clarity’s methodology for this evaluation involved the following key stages:

- Familiarisation - including desk research and discussions to clarify the aims and objectives of the overall initiative and the role of small grants funding within this context.
- Desk review of place-based funding initiatives in other areas including reviewing processes used and evidence of their impact.
- Attendance at small grants panel (decision-making) meetings to understand how the processes worked in practice and gain insight into the experiences and perspectives of participants.
- An on-line survey of stakeholders (applicants, panel and POP staff/Trustees), to assess the extent small grants will help achieve the strategic aims of the initiative and the quality of the processes used.
- Telephone and face-to-face interviews with a small number of key stakeholders to add further depth to the evidence

## 4 Approaches to Place Based Funding

4.1 The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation funded initiative in Plymouth is regarded as an example of *place-based funding*, a concept which has been gaining traction amongst policy-makers and funders in recent years.

4.2 Approaches to *place-based funding* vary but common, though not universal, features, most of which apply to the Plymouth initiative, are:

- a particular geographical focus;
- a desire to have a strategic impact, for example around a particular field of work such as young people, or to strengthen the voluntary sector as a whole rather than (simply) supporting individual organisations and projects;
- collaboration between funders, local authorities and other key stakeholders to ensure a coordinated approach and maximise collective impact
- providing a mix of funding (of different type and scales) with capacity building and other support; and
- co-design of the funding approach and programme with local stakeholders including communities and community groups.

4.3 While research has been conducted on different models and approaches to *place-based funding*, most notably by IVAR (see <https://www.ivar.org.uk/our-research/place-based-funding/>) there is relatively little independent research into the long term impact of such approaches. Given the emphasis on “strategic impact” this is frustrating. It also means there are no established measurement tools or comparisons that can be used in the Plymouth context.

4.4 As part of its research IVAR has published the following useful documents, although it is not clear to what extent POP+ has drawn on this material when designing the approach adopted in Plymouth:

- *A Framework for Place-Based Funding* – effectively a guide for agencies wishing to design and implement a place-based approach.
- *Working in Place: collaborative approaches to funding* – which captures the learning from five cases studies across the UK.

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## 5. Aspirations and Intentions

5.1 The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, POP + and the majority of stakeholders engaged in consultations have clearly wanted the approach to funding not to follow a conventional small grants programme model. These aspirations and intentions are reflected in the “framework” below, produced by POP+ as part of an internal planning “think piece”. We provide a commentary in sections 6 and 7 on the extent we feel the first round of grant funding has been in line with these intentions.

	What is it not	What it is
A	It is <b>not</b> a small grants programme	It <b>is</b> money to effect long term change
B	It is <b>not</b> a commissioning programme	It <b>is</b> a way to begin using participatory and democratic decision-making processes in the VCS sector
C	It is <b>not</b> money to be paid to individual organisations.	It <b>is</b> to help the change to collaboration and collective decisions on what is best for the city.
D	It is <b>not</b> to fund existing projects that need grant funding (unless they have a clear place in a collaboration)	It <b>is</b> to break barriers, to allow innovation and risk, and to encourage participation.
E	It is <b>not</b> to take over work statutory organisations do.	It <b>is</b> for use in partnership with statutory and private sector organisations on projects that effect change in the city.
F	It is <b>not</b> enough money to fund major changes alone	It <b>is</b> to leverage in other contributions to meeting the objectives above.
G	It is <b>not</b> to routinely fund networks simply for existing.	It is to build a VCS sector where all contribute to agreed directions, and key people are rewarded.
H	It is <b>not</b> to support competitive working	It <b>is</b> to build a sector where resources are shared and fully utilised.

5.2 The intentions of the programme are also well summarised in the following extract from and internal POP+ document<sup>2</sup>.

<p><b>Purpose:</b> The first phase of POT is ‘explore, investigate, experiment’</p> <p><b>Priorities:</b> We will focus the following four issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Learning from what others have done</li> <li>- Using the assets of the sector so that all the expertise is used to unblock barriers and keep us moving forward.</li> <li>- Strengthening and supporting grassroots and neighbourhood community organisations</li> <li>- Improving ways in which all sectors (statutory, private and VCS) work together for the good of the City</li> </ul>
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5.3 An important and distinctive feature of the grants programme was to be the involvement of a panel of people, recruited through the local sector networks to assess and make decisions on individual applications. This was seen as an important demonstration of the overall commitment to a more participatory, democratic, open and engaged “way of doing things” and desire to address concerns about “top-down” decisions made by a small group of unaccountable leaders.

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<sup>2</sup> POT is the descriptor used in internally within POP+ for the overall Esmée Fairbairn Foundation initiative

## 6 Strategic Impact – Overview

6.1 It is important to recognise that the implementation of the Esmée Fairbairn initiative is still in its early stages and it is therefore difficult to make a clear assessment of the its long-term strategic impact at this point. Furthermore, the first phase of grants was only awarded in June 2018 and some projects and activities supported through a grant have not been completed. (A list of grants awarded is in Appendix 2.)

6.2 The extent to which these grants have contributed to achieving the initiative’s overall strategic outcomes cannot be properly judged until the funded activities have been implemented and their individual impact assessed. However, on the basis of the feedback obtained to date from a range of stakeholders it is possible to provide a commentary on the programme’s direction of travel and to what extent the current approaches appear to be helping or hindering achievement of strategic impact.

6.3 This section provides a general overview on the grant programme followed by a summary and analysis of feedback in relation to each component of the initiative’s overall strategic vision.

### Overview

6.4 An overarching theme that has emerged from stakeholders is that they did not want or intend the grants programme to be “just another traditional or classic small grants programme”. What was meant by this was not made explicit, but it is reasonable to assume that people wanted to avoid providing grants which simply focussed on individual projects and organisations in isolation from each other and did not address strategic issues such as collaboration, leadership, innovation and long-term capacity-building.

6.5 But the reality is that for the initial phase, the grant programme in most respects did look like a fairly conventional grants programme; application forms and grant making criteria for example followed a relatively conventional pattern.

*It was in this initial phase in effect, a small grants scheme rather than a funding pot to develop real and lasting change across the VCS in Plymouth. [POP Staff/Trustee]*

*There were not enough large strategic applications [POP Staff/Trustee]*

6.6 The thrust of the overall Esmée Fairbairn Foundation funded initiative, including the grants component, strongly reflects the personal vision of the then POP+ Chief Executive. There is a sense from stakeholder discussions and feedback that this strategic vision was not fully translated into the operations and processes of the grants programme. It does appear that the grants programme was designed and put in place with some haste (one stakeholder referring to “urgency”) because it was felt there was increasing pressure to “get money out the door” and being spent in the community.

6.7 Much of the work of designing the detail of the grant programme was led by a POP+ trustee and it maybe that there was insufficient time to ensure it was aligned with the overall strategic vision for the initiative.

*I think these projects are too random to have any effect on change really. They do not link to any themes or directions.... [POP Staff/Trustee]*

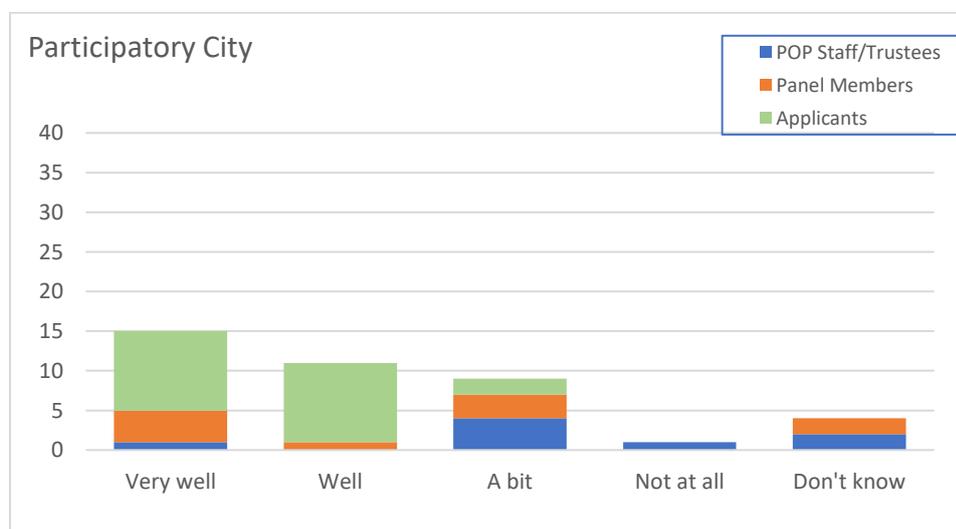
6.8 Generally, feedback from applicants showed that POP+’s running of the programme was well regarded. The participatory approach to decision-making was particularly welcomed, being seen as real attempt to break from past practices. In general applicants felt this grant scheme, in comparison to others, was:

- more collaborative in its focus;
- more straightforward;
- more participatory; and
- Plymouth focused.

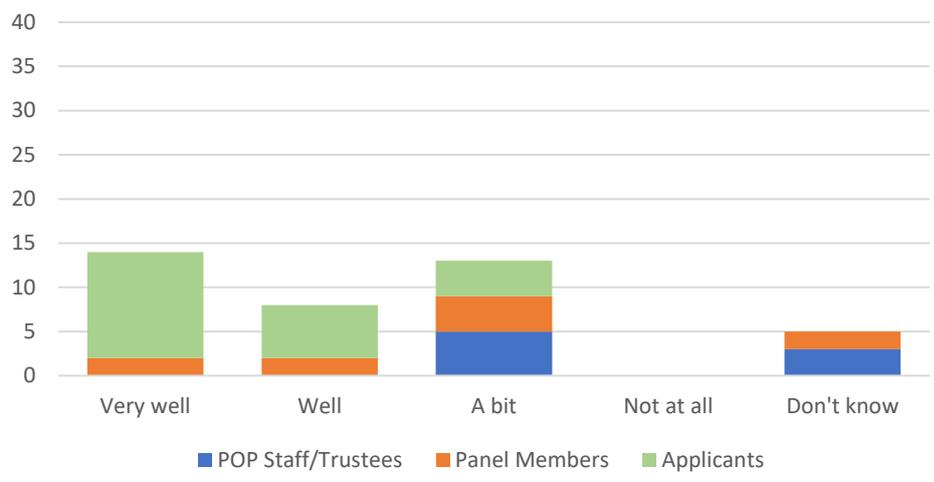
*This is an excellent initiative and the people running it don’t seem to have their own agendas, but work on behalf of the sector in the city. Everyone has a voice. [Applicant Feedback]*

6.9 In the following sections, the views of different stakeholder groups on the performance of the grants programme in relation to the overarching vision for the whole programme are summarised. (See Appendix 1 for a note on the different stakeholders engaged.) The data show how stakeholders responded to the question asking *how well they thought their / or all the applications met the individual vision aims*.

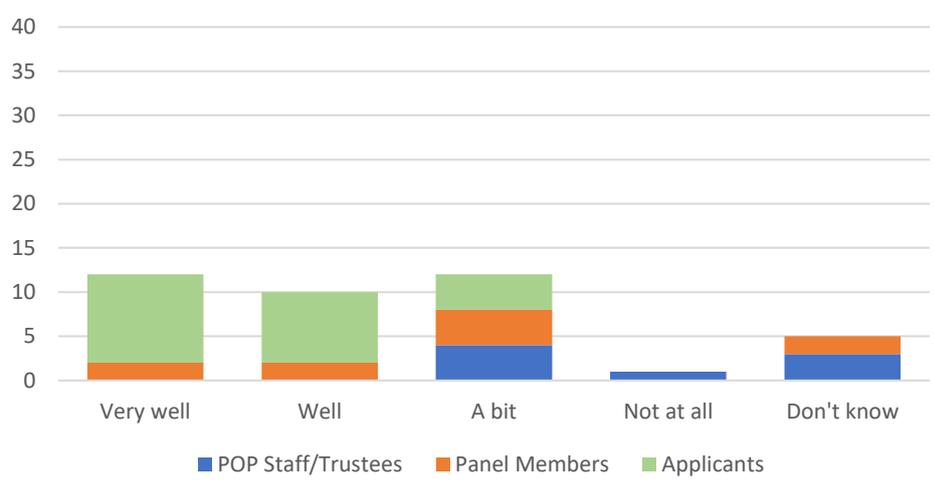
6.10 The charts show that concerns about the potential strategic impact of the grant programme were more commonly voiced by POP+ staff and trustees, and to a lesser extent by panel members. Applicants, possibly not surprisingly given their interest, felt applications were better at meeting the strategic vision than other stakeholders. (No applicants responded “not at all” or “don’t know”.) Conversely only one POP+ trustee or staff member responded “very well” or “well” – and even then only in relation to one vision priority. Certainly, the feedback shows those who might be expected to have a clearer view on the programme as a whole expressed considerable caution on the extent to which the grant funding was addressing the overall vision.



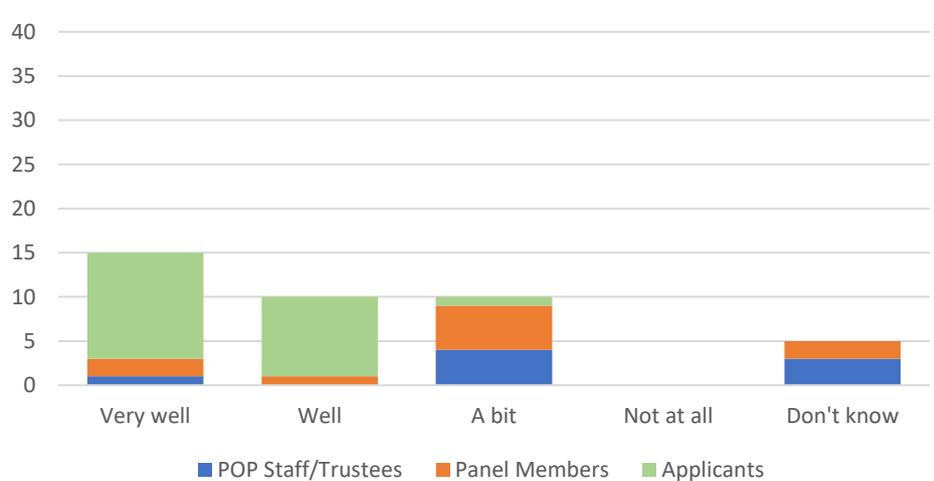
### Compassionate City



### Sustainable City



### Our City



6.11 However there was feedback from across all stakeholder groups on the importance of a grant programme addressing strategic priorities as the following comments illustrate.

*The main bulk of the funding should be allocated strategically to develop a citywide network of neighbourhoods across the whole city. This should be supplemented by a limited pot for a small grants scheme to fund specific community-based projects*

*Clarity of purpose in the small grants programme, rather than assuming that project/community-based work can really meet the 3 EF<sup>3</sup> outcomes*

*I think what would have helped is for the decision-makers to have been better informed and more understanding that the EF fund was 'different' and less-conventional to other funds that, perhaps, they were more familiar with. There may have been little appreciation of why the EF had 'picked' Plymouth to receive this money and how the EFF had 'intended' it to be spent i.e. to take risks, transform and innovate [Panel Member]*

*Better guidance and more clarity about outcomes. The fund was promoted as 'not a grant application programme for everyday activities' but the list of bids awarded seems to be very close to that. Would have liked to see more strategic work funded [Applicant]*

*A more strategic approach that takes lessons from this year's spending and look at the strategic priorities of the wider city and encourages more input from statutory agencies [Applicant]*

6.12 We do not have any hard data on stakeholder views about the reach of the grants programme, including to what extent organisations across the city were aware of its existence and felt equipped to apply. However, the range of applicants (and awards made) is broad and embraces different types of organisation, different communities of geography and interest, and different areas of need. The following comments illustrate the differencing perspectives of stakeholders:

*Impressed with the varied groups and projects that replied [Panel member]*

*It would be great to see 'new faces' enthused and inspired to bring about change in their communities. How can we inspire individuals other than the regular audience and conventional organisations who may not even know about the fund and the opportunities (for change) it can bring [Panel member]*

*I hoped to see more enterprising applications. There were many excellent innovative, creative, and socially-beneficial proposals, but few which looked genuinely self-sustaining [Panel member]*

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<sup>3</sup> EF refers to The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

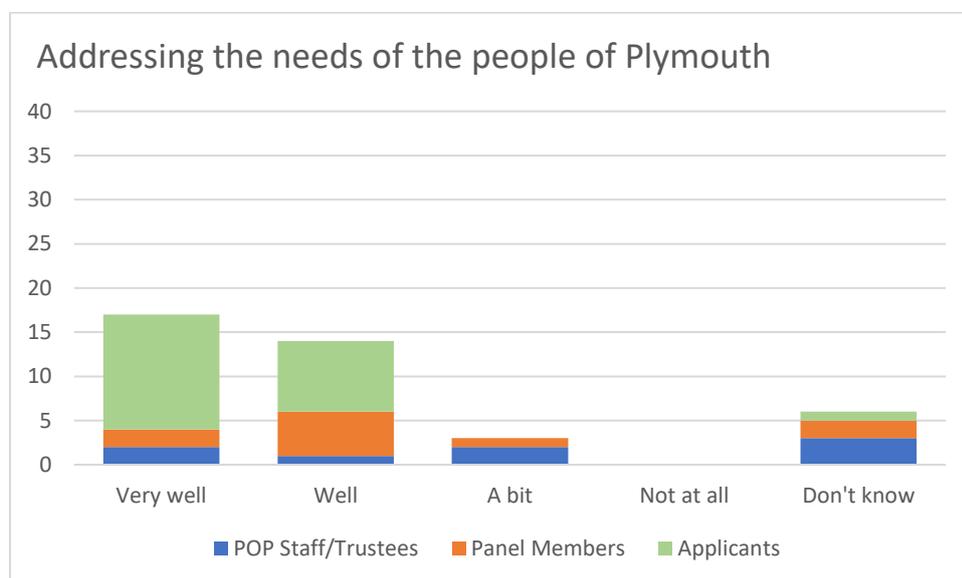
## 7 Strategic Impact – Specific Priorities

7.1 The following section summarises the feedback from stakeholders in relation to each of the grants programme’s specific priorities. For each priority we provide a key challenge question and reference the relevant statement in the “aspirations and intentions framework” set out in the previous section.

### Addressing Need

*Is the programme addressing the key needs of the people in Plymouth and seeking to effect long term change? (A, E in framework)*

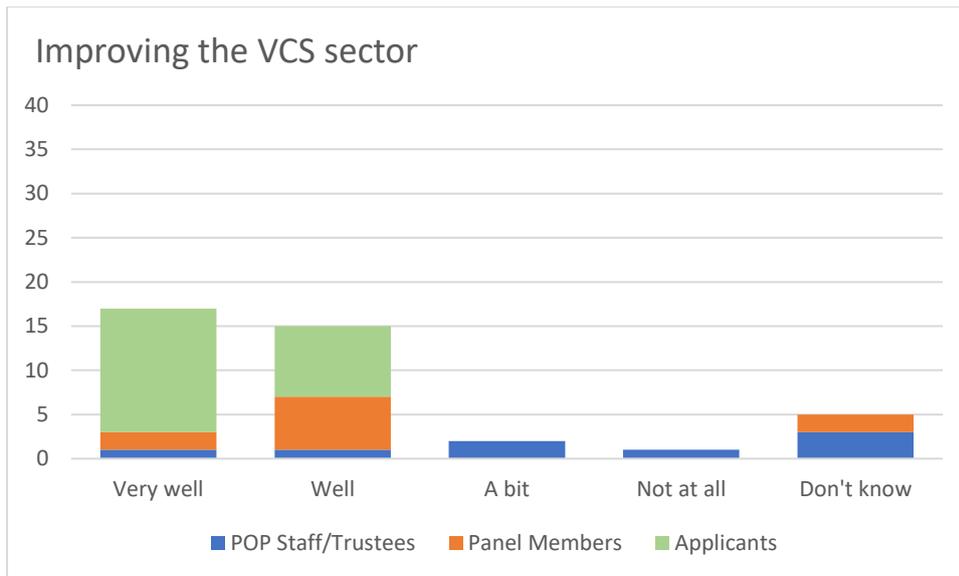
7.2 As shown in the chart below, while applicants generally have a positive view that the programme is addressing need, POP+ staff and trustees are more uncertain – with the majority of this group saying “a bit” or “don’t know”.



### Voluntary and community sector capacity and quality

*Is the programme helping to improve the quality and capacity of local voluntary sector? Ref G*

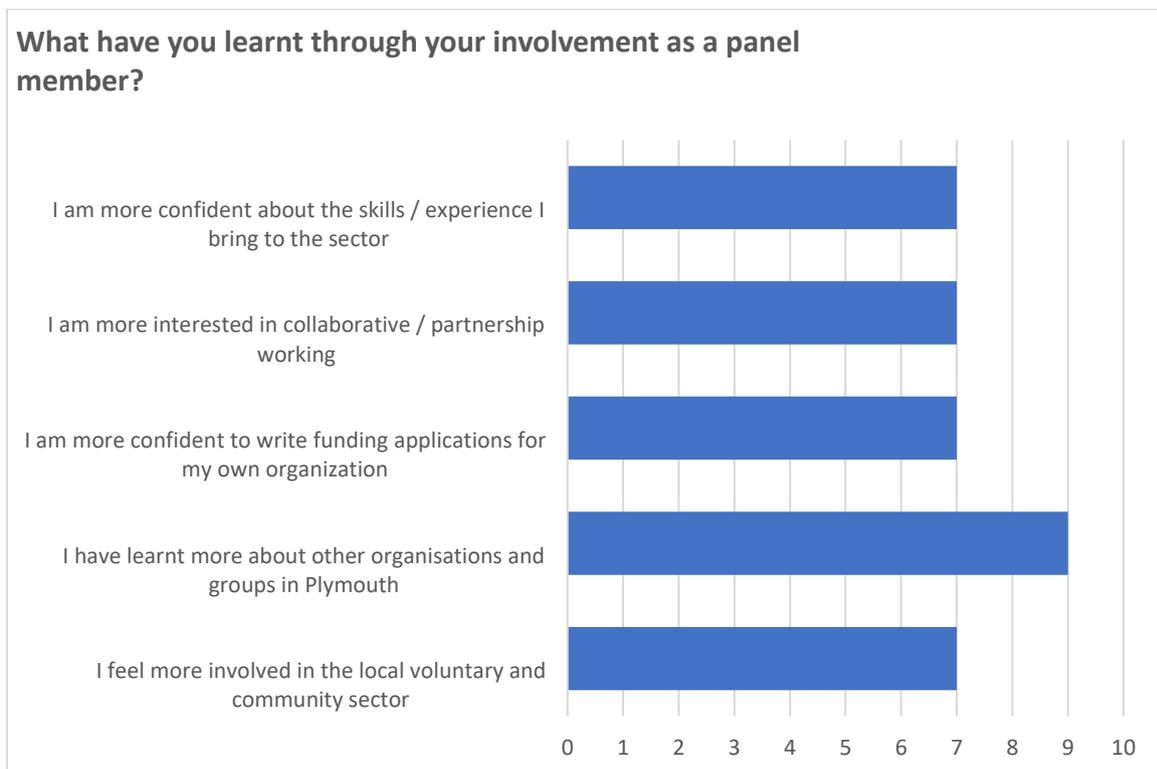
7.3 As illustrated in the chart below all applicants who responded felt that the programme was helping to improve the voluntary and community sector and most panel members agreed. POP+ staff and trustees were more uncertain.



7.4 Feedback, summarised in the table below, indicates that just under half of applicants who responded felt that the programme has had some positive impact on their confidence in what they bring to the sector.

Changes (Applicants)	Yes	% Yes
More confident about the skills & experience I/we bring to the sector	10	45%
More confident to write other funding applications	7	32%

7.5 Panel members were positive about how the programme had improved their own confidence and benefitted them in other ways, as illustrated in the chart below.



*As a learning experience, being on the panel was a privilege and extremely effective for ALL of the above. I can't speak highly enough about the benefits of this experience - THANK YOU. [Panel member]*

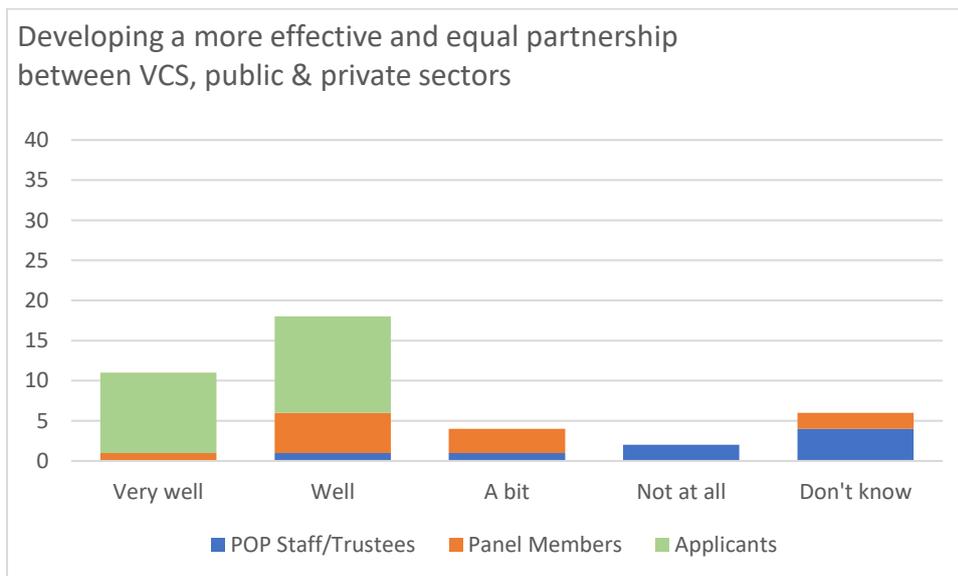
## Collaboration

*Is the programme facilitating/enabling more effective partnership working? Ref C, G, H*

7.6 There was a generally positive response from applicants on the extent to which the grant programme has encouraged an appetite for partnership and greater collaboration, as summarised in the table below.

Changes - Applicants	Yes	% Yes
More interested in collaborative/ partnership working	14	64%
Learnt more about other organisations and groups in Plymouth	13	59%
Working with new partners	13	59%
Feel more involved in the local voluntary and community sector	11	50%

7.7 POP+ trustees and staff, were more uncertain, with most stating “not at all” or “don’t know”.



## Innovation

*Is the programme stimulating innovation/new approaches? Ref D*

7.8 Thirteen applicants who responded (59%) said the application process had given them the opportunity to try out new ideas or services. However, although it is not possible to fully assess how far the grants programme has stimulated innovation without a detailed assessment of each project, a brief review of the grants awarded (see Appendix 2) indicates

a mix of fairly conventional and more innovative approaches and projects have been supported.

*I remain disappointed that there were not more bids for innovative projects – many were from existing groups/ charities/ organisations. Where were the applications from communities wanting to bring about greater change etc? [Panel Member]*

*Quite a few [applicants] were very closely linked to POP and their networks. I would like clarity on how the fund was promoted outside of the networks. [Panel member]*

7.9 It is encouraging that applicants included a range of organisational structures including CICs, partnerships, networks, charitable companies and community groups and embraced traditional mainly grant funded as well as social enterprise business models.

### **Leverage**

*Is the programme unlocking individual funding/investment? Ref F*

7.10 Applicants were not required to demonstrate they had or were seeking matched funding and in practice there was some uncertainty amongst panel members about how to factor in this aspect to their decision-making.

7.11 There were some examples where funding from this programme was being used to match with other funding, but this was not identified as a key area within the decision-making process. The role of their award in levering in additional funding should form part of the feedback gained from grant recipients when they have completed their projects.

### **Participatory decision-making in the VCS**

*Is the programme using and testing participatory and democratic decision-making processes in the VCS sector? Ref B*

7.12 The participatory approach to decision-making on grants, involving panels recruited from the thematic networks, can rightly be regarded as innovative and reflecting an objective of the overall initiative. Feedback from a range of stakeholders highlights this aspect of the grants programme as a strength. Those who took part gave a considerable amount of time to the programme and this should be valued by POP and the sector.

7.13 Despite approaches to all of the networks, a number did not provide representatives. The process this year, provides a good starting place for involvement, and the 'network of networks' should be further developed to include wider representation.

7.14 From observing the panels in action, the decisions made were fairly risk averse and showed a tendency to focus on the detail and budgets of individual applications rather than on the bigger strategic picture.

7.15 Panel members fed back that as a result of being involved they are more aware of the (sometimes poor) quality of applications and the need for more support and training for groups. Some thought that Plymouth might be losing out in grant funding from other sources because of poor applications.

7.16 In some cases it appears that panel decisions reflected an inaccurate interpretation of the information supplied. Certainly, there is a general view that the panels' task could have been helped by clearer guidance (for themselves and applicants) and an improved application form. Observations suggest that the panels' discussions could have benefitted from greater input and clearer guidance from POP+ staff in some cases.

*Despite not being on the final panel I feel I understood the decision-making process and felt able to express my thoughts and be heard [Panel member]*

*I support the intention of fostering an innovative testing bed for delegating decision-making into the hands of VCSE networks. This is a really positive direction and should be continued in the future. However, on reflection I think that the process for this funding round was rushed, and as a consequence there was not sufficient cross-checking of decisions [Panel member]*

7.17 POP+ staff and trustees had differing views on the participatory nature of the programme - three feeling that it was more collaborative and participatory than the norm and two that it was a more straightforward programme. Two felt it was no different to other grant schemes.

*It provides a unique opportunity to adopt a truly collaborative approach, strengthen the VCS across Plymouth in the long term [POP]*

*Emphasis on collaborative working and decisions made by a diverse panel representing the sector [POP]*

*It was based on how it has always been done [POP]*

## **Fantasy Funding**

7.18 Stakeholders were asked in the online survey the question: *if you were given £140k for the voluntary sector in Plymouth what would you do with it?* The responses, presented in the table below, are instructive, especially over how they compare for different stakeholder groups. Interestingly there is relatively limited support, even amongst applicants, for funding for individual organisations or a “*similar general grant scheme*”. There is however significant support across all stakeholders for supporting collaboration, in various forms, including networking. The responses to this question should encourage POP+ to consider a re-think of its approach to allocating funding, as recommended later.

Category of response	Number (%) of applicants [16]	Number (%) of staff [7]	Number (%) of panel [10]
Funding for individual organisation's work	3 (19%)	1 (14%)	0
Funding for a hub or joint working space(s)	6 (38%)	0	2 (20%)
Sharing good practice & promotion of the sector	3 (19%)	0	0
Collaboration within a subsector (eg youth, environment)	2 (13%)	2 (29%)	1 (10%)
Network based support (neighbourhoods or sector)	0	3 (43%)	1 (10%)
A similar general grant scheme	0	1 (14%)	3 (30%)
Other	3 (19%)	0	3 (30%)

NB %s are from the number of people giving feedback to this question [in square brackets]

## 8 Grant Processes

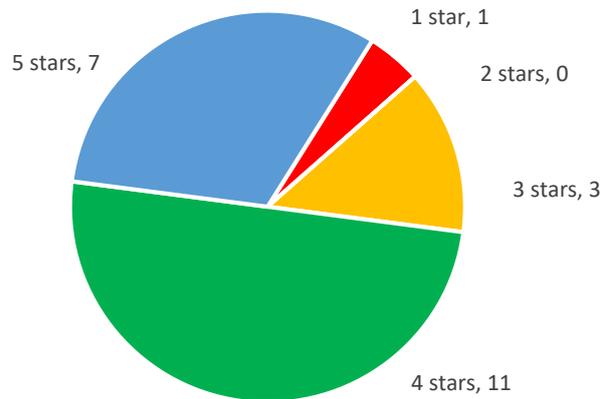
8.1 This section reviews the “mechanics” of the grant programme; on how well the processes and procedures worked and what improvements could be made for any future programme. Feedback from applicants, panel members and POP+ staff and trustees was obtained on the overall running of the grant programme and the specific processes involved.

### Feedback on Grant Processes

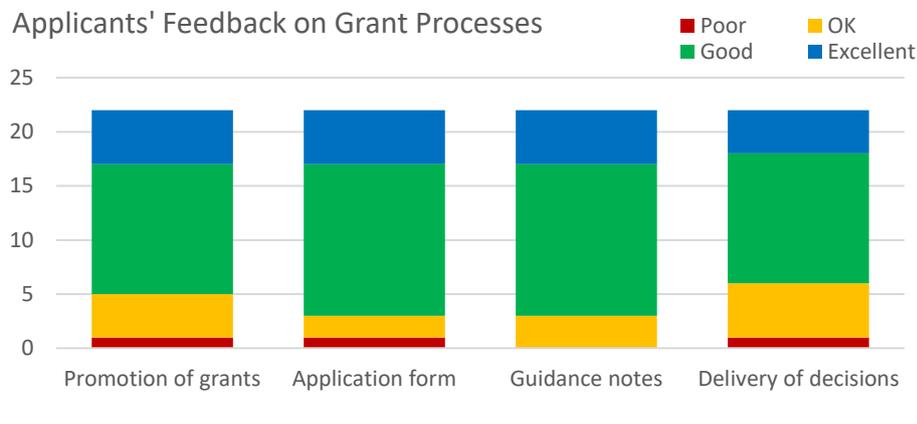
8.2 Generally, feedback shows that the programme processes were well regarded. For example, eighteen of the twenty-two applicants gave the programme 4 or 5 stars (out of 5) and the overwhelming majority of applicants regarded individual processes as *good* or *excellent*.

8.3 All four individual processes reviewed were regarded as good or excellent by the majority of applicants. There was only one *poor* rating for three of the processes; and no *poor* rating for the fourth.

Overall Rating of Grant scheme (1 to 5 stars) by applicants

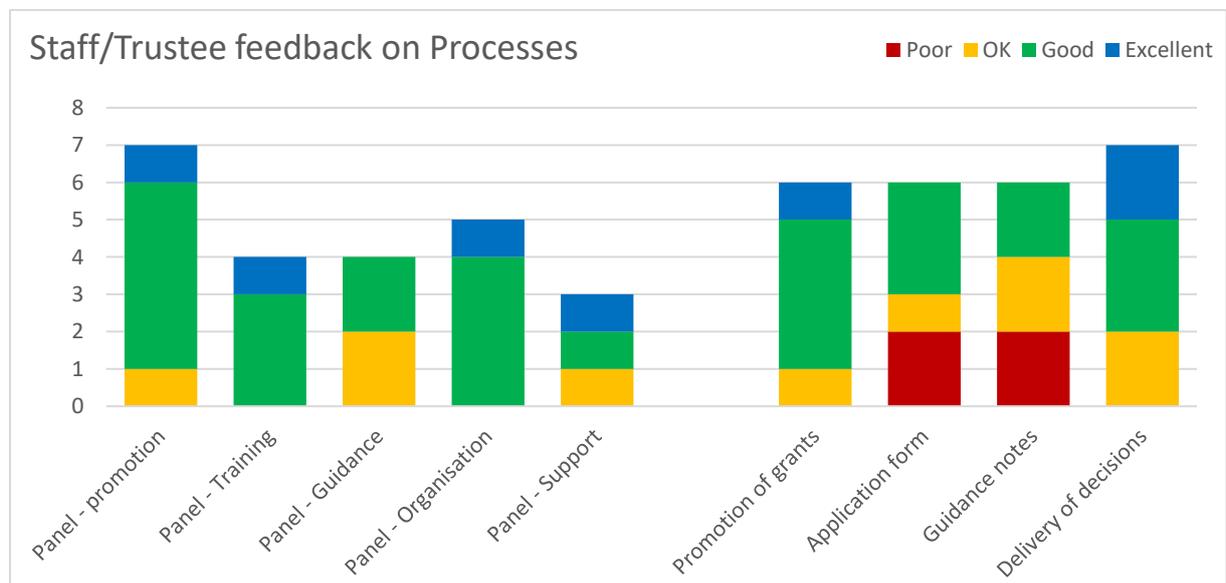


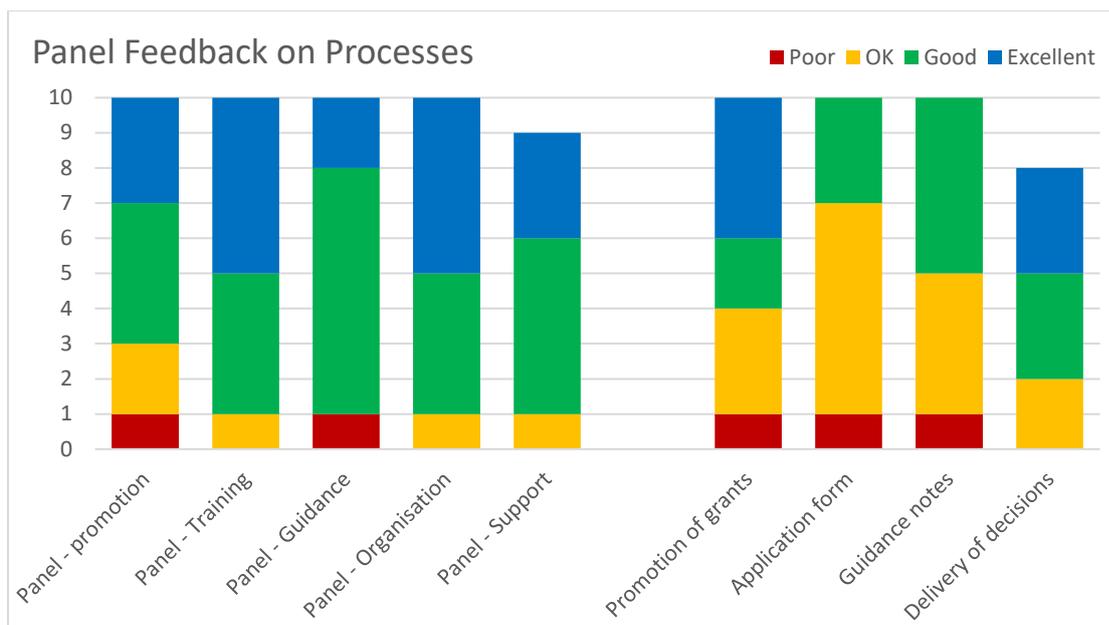
Applicants' Feedback on Grant Processes



8.4 Feedback from POP+ trustees and staff and panel members was also generally positive on the different processes involved in the grants programme. Promotion of the grant programme, promotion of the panel, the guidance notes for applicants and the application form itself are the elements of the programme which some appear to think require improvement.

Staff/Trustee feedback on Processes





*The application process was straightforward, there was a reasonably quick turnaround on the decision [Applicant]*

*More collaborative. Offering a Plymouth focus helps local projects [Applicant]*

*The focus is on community (collaboration/participation) [Applicant]*

*It is flexible and wants to bring others together [Applicant]*

## Panels

8.5 The organisation of the assessment and decision-making panels was generally well regarded, as reflected in the data above. However, respondents had mixed views on whether expertise was missing from the panels, as shown in the comments below.

*Good coverage of groups, age and experience of panel members. Various time of involvement with this work. Some old timers and some people new to the work - excellent! [Panel Member]*

*Shame there was not more involvement - however everyone was asked if they wanted to participate [Panel Member]*

*My experience was that there were individuals making decisions about networks/sectors about which they had little if any knowledge/expertise [Panel Member]*

*Some of the panel members did not have the knowledge or vision about some of the more innovative project ideas [POP Staff/Trustee]*

*Good to involve all types of people from varied groups. Also, many people involved had experience of applying for grants. This was better than just the great and the good making decisions! (in my opinion) [Panel Member]*

*Because it has been decided by a panel of possible applicants it felt very democratic [Panel Member]*

*I have little experience to comment but it appears different because the successful ones were chosen by people representing other people [Panel Member]*

*I think the panel could have met earlier as there was quite a long time between submitting the application and the panel meeting. I like two stage processes, where an expression of interest could save both the applicant and the panel time. I also like it when funders give the applicant the opportunity to address the comments of the evaluator. [Applicant]*

## **Other Improvements**

8.6 Applicants highlighted a number of improvements to grant-making processes they would like to see made in any future programme:

- Clearer guidelines (3)
- Clear timeline for process (3)
- More strategic approach (2)
- More time (1)
- Ensuring organisations receiving grants had good governance (1)
- Smaller grants being given out (1)

8.7 Panel members highlighted a need to:

- Improve the application form (5)
- Improve the guidance notes (3) and
- Provide a tighter time structure (2)

8.8 Stakeholder perspectives are also reflected in the following comments:

*It could be theme based, or link to some collectively perceived 'need'. It needs to be openly participatory....in some sort of pitching or solution finding meeting. With democratic decision making [POP Staff Member]*

*Some smaller pots of money like £1,000 and for more groups [Applicant]*

*I think the applications & guidance need some tidying up and clarification. Especially the EF key outcomes need to be better explained and understood by applicants & panel members [Panel Member]*

*I think POP+ needs to learn from other/similar organisations who are responsible for managing external grants and ensure appropriate procedures are in place for promoting/assessing/managing the fund. [Panel Member]*

*The form lacked clarity in places.... There needs to be a more rigorous cross-checking of decisions. The process needs more time and should not be rushed [Panel Member]*

*The application form was very easy to complete with limited detail required of the insight/evidence that the project was needed and would make a positive difference. There was no requirement to evidence where/how costings had been arrived at and no requirement for in-kind or matched funding. [Panel Member]*

8.8 POP+ staff and trustee feedback mainly focused more on the need to improve the strategic fit of the programme and ensure the processes enabled this to happen; as addressed in sections 6 and 7.

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## 9 Conclusions

9.1 The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation funding for Plymouth, managed through POP+, provided a great opportunity and considerable freedom to experiment, be innovative and try out new approaches to supporting the development of the voluntary and community sector and addressing the needs of Plymouth people. There was a clear overall strategic vision and objectives which provided a sound framework within which the grants programme would operate. POP+'s commitment to openness, participation and networking also provided a good foundation for a new and more engaged approach to grant-making.

9.2 However, our clear sense from the feedback obtained during this evaluation is that the grants programme represents something of a missed opportunity. While there was considerable emphasis, in the early stages of the grant programme's development that this would not be "just another classic small grants programme"; in practice the programme turned out to be fairly conventional in its structure and mechanics.

9.3 The one distinctive element in the programme was the recruitment of an assessment and decision-making panel through the existing VCS networks. This demonstrated a genuine commitment to a participatory and open approach and was well received by the majority of stakeholders.

9.4 While the participatory approach, using a panel of (effectively) applicant peers, was a clear strength of the programme, and we think should be continued, albeit with some modifications for any future grant programmes, it does present some challenges. Panel members tended to be relatively risk averse and conservative in their approach to new and innovative ideas and also appeared to focus more on the minutiae of particular applications than the bigger strategic picture. It may be that this is to some extent inevitable as the larger the group of people involved the greater the tendency to "revert to the norm". But with guidance, training and development support, panel members can be supported to really take a lead in future.

9.5 Overall, there appeared to be insufficient connection between the grants programme and the overarching strategic vision and objectives of the Esmée Fairbairn initiative. The grants programme may well have provided valuable funding for individual organisations and projects but there is a sense that the programme reflects something of a scattergun rather than a carefully targeted approach. It also provided support for some key networks. However, overall the grants programme could have had greater strategic impact.

9.6 There are likely to be a number of reasons for the lack of strategic focus in the grants programme; we have flagged earlier the relative haste with which the programme was

designed and implemented, the lack of testing and the limited involvement of POP+ staff and other stakeholders in the programme design. We wonder too whether there was a reluctance or lack of confidence within POP+ and other stakeholders to identify specific issues, themes or other priorities for funding for fear of the potential negative reaction from interests not regarded as a priority. This may well highlight a broader challenge for POP+; how to balance effective leadership with its underlying commitment to enabling, facilitating and networking the voluntary and community sector.

9.7 The experience of this initial grants programme has identified some process improvements that need to be made for any future grant schemes; for example, clearer application forms and guidance, longer timescales and improved promotion. These will build from this year and are all fairly straightforward - their implementation in any future grant programme should not be problematic.

9.8 The key challenge then for POP+ and stakeholders is on how it can best use and allocate the resources it has available from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation to achieve maximum strategic impact. This requires a preparedness to be open to new and different approaches to providing funding while drawing on the experience of the initial grants programme. Our specific recommendations are set out in the following section.

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## 10. Recommendations

10.1 Our overall recommendation is that:

- POP+ consults with Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and other stakeholders to review whether an “open” grants programme has the potential to be an effective way of achieving the overall vision and strategic objectives.

10.2 Our advice is that POP+ does not simply tweak and improve the first phase grant programme but takes a step back, focuses on the strategic impact the overall programme is seeking to make and considers alternatives to deploying the resources available. POP+ should draw on the research and guidance produced by IVAR from its review of Place Based Funding, referred to in section 4.

10.3 We recommend in particular that POP+ considers the following options, none of which are mutually exclusive:

- Allocating funding to sector **networks** for that network to identify key issues locally and how best the network members, working together, could address these.
- Identifying, through the POP+ network members, the **most pressing issues** facing the people and communities of Plymouth (eg food poverty, youth provision) and organising events and discussions to explore potential solutions which could then be funded. A different theme could be adopted for each of the remaining four years of the programme.
- Establishing a fund for supporting individuals and groups with very small grants (say up to £300) to test out really **innovative ideas**. Ideas and projects for funding could

be shared on line with public voting determining those that are funded. Other funders or sponsors might contribute to such an approach.

- Contributing funding from the programme to **enhance existing “live grant-making”** events, such as Dragons Den and Soup events, to build on existing approaches and mechanisms.
- Making some **larger “strategic impact” grants** to address key issues – possibly requiring collaboration and partnership between organisations.

10.4 Should POP+ wish to continue to manage some form of grant programme, then we make the following recommendations relating to the mechanics and processes involved.

- More **explicit reference to overall strategic vision** and objectives in all documentation and in guidance and training for panel members and applicants.
  - Continue with the concept of using **“openly recruited” panels** for grant assessment and decision-making but strengthen the guidance for panels and their facilitation “on the day”, and gaining wider membership.
  - Clarify the key **decision-making criteria** for grant panels and provide clear advice on what matters they should consider and what they should not. Carry out simple eligibility checks prior to panels.
  - Improve the **promotion** of any grants programme – with more time allowed for promotion and marketing before the deadline for applications.
  - More explicit requirements for information from applicants on the **impact and difference** they are seeking to make with the grant and how these align with strategic vision and objectives to assist Panel decision-making and help with the evaluation of the overall impact of the grants programme after (say) one year.
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## Appendix 1 Evaluation Participants

Feedback, using Survey Monkey, was obtained from the following stakeholders:

- Twenty-two grant applicants (out of 43 applicants); eight for Making a Difference grants; eight for Working Together grants; and three for both. Three were not sure.
- Ten grant panel members - from 17 nominated. NB 14 POP+ and other City wide networks attended training & development sessions, with 11 attending panels
- Eight POP + staff and trustees (drawn from a pool of 21 - 12 Trustees and 7 staff, 2 Associates working for POP + at the time the EF Funding Award process took place)

Further insight was obtained from interviews undertaken with: two members of POP+ staff, one POP+ Trustee, one representative of the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, and members of the decision panel whilst attending panel.

## Appendix 2 Grants Awarded 2018

Name of Organisation/Group/Project/Network	Amount of Award	Description of Activity or Idea Funded	Main beneficiaries
The ARC Community Project Ltd (a local partnership in Southway)	£5 000	An established community project (12 years) in Widewell and Beliver, wanting to reach into the Southway community. Building links and collaborations with others to reduce loneliness and isolation and improve community cohesion. To establish monthly stakeholder meetings. To co-ordinate an activity week that engages the whole community.	Working with community groups, to benefit people of all ages in Southway
CASSPLUS	£5 000 to match with £15 000 secured	A new partnership between CASSPLUS and Harbour. To employ a three day a week volunteer co-ordinator for one year as a trial. Developing information and resources for volunteers as well as further pathways of support into employment etc	Volunteers Service users becoming volunteers – drawn from diverse communities
Community Arts and Events Network (CAEN) – for Phase 1 of a three phase idea	£8 030	To facilitate public meetings, 6 times a year – increase engagement To be the collective, inclusive and authentic voice that advocates for grassroots arts and cultural events in the city – mapping what is out there Creation of an information and resource bank Creation of a Peoples Cultural Festival	Diverse arts and cultural individuals and community groups
Community Criminal Justice Network: Connecting Plymouth (lead organisation EDP Drug and Alcohol Services)	£9 882	This brings together at least 10 organisations working in Plymouth – connecting HMP Exeter prisoners with community organisations in Plymouth, supporting resettlement and reducing offending. This funding will part fund a worker to create a telephone link system, produce hoe to guides for prisoners and organisations, provide training on the process and to promote the system.	Ex –offenders, currently in HMP Exeter (25% of prisoners are from Plymouth) who are wanting to re-settle in Plymouth
Diversity Business Incubator (DBI) CIC	£4 500	Providing free business support to 15 individuals To support 5 existing small businesses owned by BAME individuals/partnerships Integration into community and City through commerce Use of innovative technologies	Refugees and migrants

Name of Organisation/Group/Project/Network	Amount of Award	Description of Activity or Idea Funded	Main beneficiaries
Environment Plymouth: Building Network Capacity (possibilities to bring in match funding)	£8 000	<p>There are 70 groups, 150 individuals and 6000 contacts in the network. This funding will support the monthly network meetings with the following aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To encourage and enable local decision-making and action</li> <li>To encourage collective action and ‘greener’ choices</li> <li>To share resources and expertise in academic and practical contexts, with a varied cross sector network in place, including many of the largest employers in the City</li> <li>To lobby and create strategic plans on issues such as air quality, tree cover, wildlife habitats</li> <li>To provide training and mentoring to other groups around the environment, sustainability and Plastic Free Coastline City</li> <li>To embed Sustainability Plans into strategic partnerships, such as the Waterfront and Mayflower 400</li> </ul>	Community groups and residents whose focus is on the environment. A City wide gain for Plymouth
Food Plymouth Partnership (CIC) Plymouth Sustainable Food City (Bronze – gained in 2015 - to Silver – by 2020 - Action Plan)	£7 500	<p>This network has over 30 groups, organisations and services involved already.</p> <p>Using co-design and co-production approaches the status of Plymouth’s Food City will be Silver by 2020. The funding will support 6 consultation events; web development and the launch of new web site (October 2018) and action plan. There is also a budget for evaluation of activities.</p>	Communities, organisations and institutions across the City of Plymouth
Friends of Wyndham Square	£5 000	<p>A project to engage local people, community groups, businesses and faith groups, with an intention to promote ‘Pride of Place’ in North Stonehouse. Work will be carried out to build consensus towards creating a proposal that would establish the area as Plymouth’s Cathedral Quarter.</p> <p>The project outline makes the link with Mayflower 400 capitalising on heritage assets and community histories.</p>	Local people, community groups, businesses, faith groups and other stakeholders in Stonehouse. The wider City.
Honicknowle Comnet Ltd: OASIS – Outreach 4 Autism Support and Information Sharing (a 12 month pilot)	£5 000	To fund weekly sessions delivered at The Phoenix Centre Informal activities such as ‘Tea and Toast’ in a cafe style delivery;	Parents and carers of CYP with autism/ASD

Name of Organisation/Group/Project/Network	Amount of Award	Description of Activity or Idea Funded	Main beneficiaries
		getting together, providing information and support, and as a platform for 'kick starting action for change'	
Hope in the Heart – Compassionate Action in Transforming Communities Hope in the Heart CIC , with Lifeplay Learning – Compassionate Plymouth Initiative	Two bids combined £12 000	8 half day workshops and training delivery to show how compassion and related virtues can transform the lives of individuals, families and communities Raising awareness of the global Compassion Movement – led by the Charter for Compassion International, linking Plymouth into that bigger picture Work to develop Plymouth as a Compassionate City, and recruit, train and support local people as Compassionate Champions Facilitation, co-ordination and support of a network of people committed to realising this, with Stage 1 being completed by December 2018-09-08 Working with others – Fairness Commission, Welcoming City and Safer Plymouth	Diverse communities Local people all ages Professionals Partners
Horticultural Therapy Trust: Inner City – Inner Space for Change	£3 412	This funding will support a HTT staff member and volunteer/participant travel for a yearlong project. This weekly gardening activity supports people to make positive change in their lives. This project is built around the concept of non-judgemental trustworthy relationship being the key to recovery and positive change for clients that have experienced trauma and chaotic life experiences. Working with THRIVE and at least 6 well known VCS organisations/services.	10 participants with housing and/or mental health support needs, or addiction or in recovery
Mountbatten Activities Centre CIO: Sea Water Activity	£9 540	A capital project that contributes to the charity's mission to improve access to the water for all. This will fund a replacement access hoist and undertake refurbishment work on a safety boat	CYP with additional needs Disabled young people
New 4You Youth Group, part of Methodist Central Hall	£3 000	Capital project – to install a DJ area in the youth area and an upgrade on the current sound system (last was 2006) Young people have previously raised £8 000 to revamp the cafe in the youth area.	Young people (often engaged in anti-social behaviour)

<b>Name of Organisation/Group/Project/Network</b>	<b>Amount of Award</b>	<b>Description of Activity or Idea Funded</b>	<b>Main beneficiaries</b>
Plymouth Area Disability Action Network (PADAN): Connect and Include Stage 2	£9 987	This project builds on a successful Connect & Include event held in 2017. This funding will support us to engage with more disabled people through a series of neighbourhood meetings; a visit to Chester; conversations with smaller impairment specific groups and an experimental event to explore collaboration with Disability Arts and History as a focus. The overall project outcome is that the disabled voice is strengthened and valued in the City.	Disabled people The City benefits as disabled people's collective voice(s) are heard
Plymouth Law Clinic: Plymouth Access to Justice (one year pilot, including evaluation)	£5 000	To establish a social justice and law hub, cascading legal educational expertise into the community, so that people are empowered to negotiate legal processes more effectively. This is a "group of individuals with legal expertise who want to find a way of reaching into the community, enhancing legal capacity and knowledge". A combination of law students, Plymouth Law Society, advice agencies and community organisations. Provision of 10 street law and justice workshops/training events in various locations	Varied communities Community groups Staff and volunteers
Plymouth Mental Health Network	£5 100	Support to encourage HE and FE institutions to work together with MIND and community mental health facilities. To co-design improved services to meet the needs of students.	Students over the age of 16 Mental health support
Plymouth Tree Partnership: Trees for Devonport	£5 000 [25 trees to be replaced at a cost of £8 061]	Replant trees where they used to be. "By acting as an exemplar for amenity tree revival, the project should inspire other communities to seek similar improvements for their neighbourhoods". This project will improve the physical and social environment, as well as community health and well-being. Decision-making involves residents and local community groups	Local people and community groups in Devonport
Revolutionary Women (a partnership between RW, Broadreach, Trevi House and Harbour)	£10 000	Women Working Together to Lead the Change: a project that empowers marginalised women to come together as a community that will advise on the RW programme. This collective voice will then be promoted to decision makers in the city.	Vulnerable women, with complex needs

Name of Organisation/Group/Project/Network	Amount of Award	Description of Activity or Idea Funded	Main beneficiaries
		Creating monthly spaces for women to gather together & becoming an advisory group for RW. Compassion and kindness are the cornerstones of the RW programme – “that will support women to make changes in their lives and become active citizens”. Aim to engage 50 women in the year.	
The Salvation Army: North Plymouth Community Money Advice Scheme	£2 500	Working closely with Barnardos in North West Plymouth and to cement relationships with Money Advice Plymouth and other advice agencies, such as CAB The project aim is simple – to provide local debt advice and counselling, using volunteers from the local community	All families living in poverty and where social isolation exists
Seadream Education CIC	3 000	Delivery of free STEM sessions, in 8 special needs schools developing essential life skills and building relationships in the community Working with STEM ambassadors as volunteers Four open days in communities/venues across Plymouth	CYP in special schools Adult volunteers
Stiltskin Arts & Theatre CIC	£9 960	Drama workshops with 5 local primary and secondary school, as well as bringing the children and families to the Soapbox Theatre, based in Devonport Park – increasing community involvement with cultural activities. Surveying the current use of Soapbox suggests that only 30% of those attending are from Plymouth, so there is a desire to increase local usage.	CYP from 0-19 Families in the local area – Devonport (one of Plymouth’s most deprived wards)
St Lukes (as host) – End of Life Compassionate Network	£5 000	To establish a city wide End of Life Compassionate Network – caring for all at a time of loss and crisis is everyone’s responsibility. To implement the Compassionate City Charter; raise public awareness of issues around death and dying; build emotional resilience in communities; increase compassion at end of life. This funding will support training delivery, co-ordination of network meetings and some time in developing a toolkit.	A city wide gain as everyone will face at least one aspect of end of life, including the loss and grief