

17th April 2020

Innovate UK COVID-19 Response Fund Application

By Cross River Partnership (CRP)

With CRP Board Chair Camden Town Centre Limited as the eligible applying Business

Outcome: 1st May 2020

Project Summary

This “Back to Business” project will support central London businesses to get back to business during the COVID19 pandemic, and to thrive post-pandemic. A key plank of this is the upscaling of home deliveries of different business products and services, by the early stage cargo bike industry.

The project will be led by the Camden Town Centre Limited. This Business Chairs the Board of Cross River Partnership (CRP), a body that has been bringing together Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), Local Authorities and sub-regional agencies (including the Greater London Authority and Transport for London) to address urban challenges via collaborative research and innovation for the past 26 years.

This “Back to Business” project is needed not just to support businesses out of the current lockdown, but also to ensure that businesses are fit for future anticipated lockdowns, and are enabled to switch seamlessly between Business as Usual and Lockdown modes frequently, at short notice, and for varying lengths of time.

As existing strong business-network organisations, BIDs are perfectly placed to co-ordinate this support to businesses, representing as they do over a million London employees between them.

The needs for this “Back to Business” support are multiple and over-layered. To illustrate: most of central London’s retail, hospitality and office

businesses are used to operating from physical premises; lockdown phases mean that access to / use of these physical premises is prohibited.

This “Back to Business” project will undertake experimental development research with the businesses, and with the communities that they serve. This will inform the production of Bite Size Toolkits that address specific challenges associated with the swap to virtual as well as physical product and service offerings.

Cross River Partnership has already witnessed / contributed to many of these virtual service offerings that have sprung up in response to the COVID crisis. This “Back to Business” project will support the responses to be more rapid, more widespread, and to generate more benefits. Examples facilitated already include home deliveries by pharmacies using sustainable transport methods e.g. cargo bikes; home deliveries of food bank supplies to hungry families; diversifying of hospitality / restaurant services e.g. deliveries of both prepared meals and raw ingredients; flexibility in uses of physical premises at different times of day.

The innovative aspects of this project include the complex network of organisations involved in ensuring the finalised support to businesses is simple; digitisation of business support and business offering; supporting businesses, communities, families and individuals simultaneously.

The lessons learnt in central London will be disseminated across the whole of London and beyond, across the UK.

Public Description

This new Innovate UK “Back to Business” project will support central London businesses to get back to business during the COVID19 pandemic, and to thrive post-pandemic.

The six-month project will be led by the Camden Town Centre Limited. This Business Chairs the Board of Cross River Partnership (CRP), a body that has been bringing together Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), Local Authorities and sub-regional agencies (including the Greater London Authority and Transport for London) to address urban challenges via collaborative research and innovation for the past 26 years.

This “Back to Business” project will not only support businesses out of the current lockdown, but also ensure that businesses are fit for future anticipated lockdowns, and are enabled to switch seamlessly between Business as Usual and Lockdown modes frequently, at short notice, and for varying lengths of time.

As existing strong business-network organisations, BIDs are perfectly placed to co-ordinate this support to businesses, representing as they do over a million London employees between them.

The needs for this “Back to Business” support are multiple and over-layered. Most of central London’s retail, hospitality and office businesses are used to operating from physical premises; lockdown phases mean that access to / use of these physical premises is prohibited.

This “Back to Business” project will start by researching directly with the businesses themselves, and with the communities that they serve. This will inform the production of Bite Size Toolkits. These will address specific challenges associated with the swap to virtual, as well as physical, business product and service offerings to communities, including how they are delivered (including via cargo bikes).

Cross River Partnership has already witnessed / contributed to many of these virtual service offerings that have sprung up in response to the COVID crisis. This “Back to Business” project will support the responses to be more rapid, more widespread, and to generate more benefits. Examples

facilitated already include home deliveries by pharmacies using sustainable transport methods e.g. cargo bikes; home deliveries of food bank supplies to hungry families; diversifying of hospitality / restaurant services e.g. deliveries of both prepared meals and raw ingredients; flexibility in uses of physical premises at different times of day.

The lessons learnt in central London will be disseminated across the whole of London and beyond, across the UK.

For further information, please contact CRP's Director Susannah Wilks
M. 0771 444 7465

June 2020

Scope

This “Back to Business” application has been put together by London collaborative research and innovation body Cross River Partnership, to support the broad retail, hospitality and office sectors, which to date have relied heavily on a commercial physical premises presence.

The “Back to Business” project will not only support businesses out of the current COVID-19 Lockdown, but also ensure that businesses are fit for future anticipated Lockdowns, and are enabled to switch seamlessly between Business as Usual and Lockdown modes frequently, at short notice, and for varying lengths of time.

Cross River Partnership brings together Business Improvement Districts and Local Authorities in central London to deliver projects that benefit both businesses and communities simultaneously. Cross River Partnership’s Board is Chaired by the Business Camden Town Centre Limited.

This “Back to Business” project will start by researching directly with the businesses themselves, and with the communities that they serve. This will inform the production of digital Bite Size Toolkits. These will address specific challenges associated with the swap to virtual, as well as physical, business product and service offerings to communities.

Cross River Partnership has already witnessed / contributed to many of these virtual service offerings that have sprung up in response to the COVID crisis. This “Back to Business” project will support the responses to be more innovative, more rapid, more widespread, and to generate more benefits.

Examples facilitated already include home deliveries by pharmacies using sustainable transport methods e.g. cargo bikes; home deliveries of food bank supplies to hungry families; diversifying of hospitality / restaurant services e.g. deliveries of both prepared meals and raw ingredients; flexibility in uses of physical premises at different times of day.

The lessons learnt in central London will be disseminated across the whole of London and beyond, across the UK.

Our “Back to Business” project proposal encompasses solutions relevant to all of the following specific Innovate UK themes:

- community support services
- couriers and delivery (city based)
- hospitality
- remote working
- retail
- transport
- urban living
- wellbeing

Our project is also aligned to the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund (ISCF) in that it will make specific and tangible contributions to employment levels, earning power and business productivity achieved, via changes enabled in business working practices.

Cross River Partnership and it’s partners have the capacity and capability to deliver this “Back to Business” project successfully and on time during the work restrictions of COVID-19, via remote working of existing, experienced staff members.

We are ready to start the project as soon as instructed, and certainly no later than 1st June 2020. We understand that the project lifetime is six months, up to 31st December 2020.

Question 1.

Have you received funding from Innovate UK before as a project partner?

Yes

Cross River Partnership is currently delivering Innovate UK-funded project No. 41132, Electric Vehicle Fleet-Centred Local Energy Systems (EFLES), over the next 12 months. This will use artificial intelligence software to optimise hundreds of energy variables at UPS's Camden depot for its electric delivery trucks. The project involves public, private, statutory and non-statutory, global corporations and start-ups.

Cross River Partnership has also successfully completed Innovate UK-funded project No. 103254, Smart Electric Urban Logistics (SEUL). This project met all of its original objectives and installed a smart charging facility for electric delivery trucks that contributed to smoothing out the peaks and troughs in energy demand overnight at local network level. The project was specifically designed to be simultaneously good for business and good for the environment – win-win.

Question 2. De Minimis

De Minimis form attached.

Question 3. The Idea

What is the problem you wish to solve, who is it a problem for, and what is innovative about the approach or technology?

Project need and project beneficiaries: Most of central London's retail, hospitality and office businesses are used to operating from physical premises. COVID lockdown phases now and in the future mean that access to / use of these physical premises is prohibited.

This "Back to Business" project has been designed to support businesses to be able to operate during multiple Lockdowns, and to enable flexible and repeated switching between Lockdown and Business as Usual modes. This will improve the lives of the communities that the businesses are serving, in both the immediate and longer terms.

The specific innovation: Co-ordinating the complex network of organisations involved in ensuring support to businesses; digitisation of business support and business offering; sustainable cargo bike deliveries; supporting businesses, communities, families and individuals simultaneously.

These innovations are different and better than existing forms of business support, which tend to be characterised by:

- bureaucracy, which small businesses in particular often lack the resources to tackle;
- siloed approaches within individual organisations, which don't offer clear solutions in business-friendly ways e.g. flexibility in uses of physical premises at different times of day / on different days may require permissions from Landlords **and** Local Authorities as a minimum;
- unwieldy digital platforms, which can be difficult for businesses to access and understand / operate;
- a 'bricks and mortar' approach to business, which now more than ever needs to be challenged, in the form of supporting businesses to take a full digital plunge if they are to survive and thrive;
- business-only benefits, which can creatively be expanded to achieve wider community simultaneously e.g. more business / retail services

being delivered to communities on cargo bikes, via their front door-step.

Previous work and freedom to operate: CRP and its partner BIDs have already been Business Planning in response to the post-COVID behaviour shifts identified in the Board of Innovation's report on a Low Touch Economy. These include factors such as people being more anxious, lonely and depressed; travel restrictions continuing on and off (including within the UK); delivery of everything (a retail revolution).

The potential freedom to operate in meaningful ways by CRP and its partners is excellent, given that the partnership encompasses both statutory service providers (Local Authorities) and BIDs, with their extensive and close business networks.

Market size and market route: The innovation delivered by the project will be of interest / applicable to businesses across the broad retail, hospitality and office sectors throughout the UK. The route to market proposed is via existing business-engaging organisations, including Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and Local Authorities.

Question 4. Deliverables and added value

What will be the specific outputs and outcomes of your project, how will society benefit, and why do you need public funding to help you succeed?

Project outputs: The project will deliver a series of bite size toolkits that will facilitate speedy transitions of physical premises-based businesses to businesses that wholeheartedly embrace and maximise the benefits of diversified business models (e.g. direct business to home deliveries by cargo bikes, bypassing the need for permanent, full-time physical premises), across the broad retail, hospitality and office sectors.

The innovation to be achieved will be businesses enabling communities to access their services on an ongoing basis, including through current and future COVID lockdown periods.

Expected impacts: This “Back to Business” project is expected to positively impact society and communities by enabling successful and safe access to all goods and services even during Lockdown phases, complying with all social distancing regulations. This will remove considerable community anxiety burdens that led to the recent panic buying of such household sundries as toilet rolls.

Businesses being supported to be able to operate through current and future Lockdown phases will of course benefit the economy enormously. BBC News estimates on 16/4/20 predicted the scale of the impending recession to be of a depth not seen for 300 years.

In terms of environmental impacts, an April 2020 “Science Focus” article showed that emissions are lowest for home delivery from a physical shop (Page 23).

In terms of negative impacts, High Street vacancy rates could increase, although this process had already started prior to the COVID crisis. Instead, this project is supporting a more flexible use of commercial physical premises, that combines traditionally separate retail, hospitality and office uses with each other and with different, innovative community-facing uses e.g. co-working spaces, 24 hour use of spaces, re-purposing of central London product storage / display / retail spaces.

New or enhanced products / processes / services: The enhanced products and services that will be made available by businesses to communities via this project include many that are currently accessed via physical retail premises. These will be newly available via processes including direct cargo bike home deliveries, digital platforms etc.

Why public funding: Public funding is needed for this project because it will fill the gaps that currently exist between government business support and access / take-up / relevance to all business communities, in practical, simple ways.

Value for money: This project represents value for money because it will enable more businesses to quickly get “Back to Business”, thereby maintaining employment levels, increasing Britain’s competitiveness globally, and building resilience so that the shocks from future pandemics are better prepared-for.

Question 5. Business planning and resources

Who is the project team, what is your capability to deliver a solution, and what other support might you need?

Current business / added value: Cross River Partnership (CRP) is a body that has been bringing together Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), Local Authorities and sub-regional agencies to address central London's urban challenges via collaborative research and innovation for the past 26 years – Delivering London's Future Together. Its Board is Chaired by the Camden Town Centre Limited.

CRP specialises in the fields of Health, Environment, Energy and Transport.

CRP is a mature partnership of over 30 organisations that are used to delivering collaborative and innovative projects of mutual value together, overseen by a strategic level Board at which all partners are represented.

This new Innovate UK “Back to Business” project would add significant value to CRP's existing project delivery portfolio by bringing laser-like focus to the threats and the opportunities posed by the COVID crisis, to businesses, and to the communities that they serve.

The full list of CRP's partners is:

BIDs: Angel, Better Bankside, Brixton, Camden Town Centre Limited, Cheapside, Euston Town, Hammersmith, Hatton Garden, Marble Arch, Northbank, Paddington, South Bank, Team London Bridge, Fitzrovia, Vauxhall, Victoria, plus Cadogan Estates

Local Authorities: Camden, City, Islington, Kensington and Chelsea, Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark, Westminster

Sub-regional agencies: Greater London Authority, Groundwork London, London and Partners, Network Rail, Port of London Authority, Transport for London

Resources: CRP will bring a number of experienced Project Managers and supporting Officers to this intervention, supplemented by senior level

expertise spanning the business, BID, community, local authority, transport, cargo bike, academic and charity sectors already known to CRP.

Timeframe: CRP and its partners are able to deliver this “Back to Business” Innovate UK project over the required 6-month period to 31st December 2020, informed by needs and issues occurring as part of CRP’s existing project portfolio.

Beyond the life of the project: Outcomes and impact will continue to be delivered on an increasing scale beyond the lifetime of the Innovate UK funding. This will be led by CRP and its strong existing network of more than 30 different public and private sector organisations that are all already used to working with each other, and sharing further afield. The Innovate UK intervention will kick-start clear, tangible, ongoing forms of support offered from all of the 30+ partner organisations, that will continue to be implemented and shared into 2021 and beyond.

Wider support needed: CRP and its partners would appreciate introductions from Innovate UK to other cities around the UK, in order to expedite quick and efficient roll-out of the effective solutions developed by this new project.

Question 6. Workplan and costs

What you will do with the grant funding and, how will you manage the project effectively, and manage risks appropriately?

Project work plan: CRP's project work plan will flesh out the following main components of project spend:

Technical approaches –

The technical approaches of this project relate to the digitisation of the business-facing toolkits to be produced, plus the digital back-up support to the toolkits e.g. webinars, on-line Q and A sessions, smartphone downloads. All of these digital tools and approaches will need to be effectively communicated to businesses and their community customers, some of which may not be yet fully used to operating in a digital / virtual world.

Main work packages (WPs) –

These will be:

WP1 – Research phase;

WP2 – Toolkits design;

WP3 - Toolkits implementation;

WP4 – Dissemination;

WP5 – Project management.

Specific milestones –

June 2020, project inception meeting / project steering group formed;

June/July 2020, business and community needs research phase – experimental development research method, incorporating cargo bike focus;

August 2020, bite size toolkits designed in response to identified needs and existing partnership knowledge of these (specific topics);

September 2020, existing CRP Board meeting to guide the project;

September – November 2020, 3-month rolling programme of issuing, implementing, revising, disseminating digital toolkits (minimum of 6);

December 2020, project completion / final steering group meeting, dissemination plan launched, final funder reports / monitoring submitted.

Project management (WP5) –

The project will be managed from within the CRP team (existing staff, all qualified to post-graduate degree level).

Risks: The main project risks are associated with the current (and potential future) Lockdown periods within the overall project lifetime. The CRP team and all of the CRP delivery partners are already working 100% effectively from separate home locations, using office lap tops and mobiles to communicate fully via emails, Microsoft Teams, Zoom video-conferencing etc.

The business and community audiences that this project seeks to engage with and influence are slightly more challenging. However, CRP and its BID and Local Authority partners have good, recent experience of communicating directly with targeted sections of these groups while observing appropriate social distancing, including via social media (Twitter, Instagram), letters / door drops, leafletting / posters, local newspaper articles etc.

Roles:

BIDs / Local Authorities – Research, Implementation, Dissemination

Design agency – Toolkit Design

CRP – Research, Implementation, Dissemination, Project Management

Costs / value for money:

WP1 – Research phase - £6,000

WP2 – Toolkits design - £14,400 tendered to an external design agency (£2,400 per each of 6 toolkits, based on similar toolkits / functionalities / inter-actions commissioned by CRP in the recent past)

WP3 – Toolkits implementation via BIDs and others - £21,600

WP4 – Dissemination - £3,000

WP5 – Project management - £5,000

Total - £50,000