



Recommendations to Pen y Cymoedd, responses from Pen y Cymoedd and Actions

Each year our Monitoring and Evaluation consultants complete an annual report and part of that are recommendations to the Pen y Cymoedd Board. When recommendations are made, the PyC Board meet to discuss and prepare initial responses that are then shared with M+E consultant and published on the PyC website. This table records recommendations, when they were made, PyC's original response and updates and actions.

The PyC Board are committed to engaging with these recommendations and will review progress again in April 2022. If you have any questions about these recommendations and actions, please do not hesitate to contact the staff team.

Recommendation Detail and Date	Pen y Cymoedd Responses to Recommendations	Update November 2021 <i>We will next update this in April 2022</i>
<p>2021 Recommendation The potential to use the refresh of the Prospectus as a basis for developing a set of principles or values (rather than a strategy or business plan) that the used to guide how the Fund is utilised should be explored.</p>	<p>PyC see the Prospectus refresh as an opportunity to: revisit strategic aims of PyC / re-engage with communities in a variety of methods to ensure real penetration and assess impact and delivery to date.</p>	<p>Action From this, we will develop a plan for the next 5 years that aligns with opportunities identified by communities. This will neither be a list or simply a set of values and principles but a real working document that details strategic direction.</p>
<p>2021 Recommendation The separate scoring of Micro Fund applications by Board members and staff should be compared for a round of applications to assess how many decisions would have been different if only assessed by members of staff.</p>	<p>We do not agree with this recommendation. The staff assessments and decisions made by MF Sub Panel Directors are more and more aligned with each round and this demonstrates a consistency in approach of staff and Board that we have worked hard to achieve. We acknowledge that very little changes when Board make final decisions. However, PyC Board and staff have discussed this at length and firmly believe that there must remain a segregation of duties and do not support this recommendation. This protects staff relationships with communities and applicants and protects Directors who are responsible for distribution of the fund.</p>	<p>We now consider this recommendation closed.</p>
<p>2021 Recommendation The reason why a significant proportion of jobs created by the MFB fund are being lost should be explored. Alongside</p>	<p>We refute this recommendation as we have evidence to the contrary. We will work with Wavehill to agree definition of fixed term / permanent / jobs created / jobs safeguarded</p>	<p>As a fund we often fund fixed term posts that allow organisations or businesses time to deliver projects or develop income generation to sustain posts themselves.</p>

<p>this, the potential to update the definition being used to differentiate between ‘fixed term’ and ‘permanent’ jobs created should be explored.</p>	<p>and apply this to all monitoring. This should provide more accurate data at next evaluation.</p>	<p>Action We will carry out review of jobs supported through MF (Business and Community) and consider what learning we can take from that and actions to improve. We will also record and monitor jobs created post funding due to success of initial PyC investment. It is worth noting that COVID pandemic will have meant many companies and organisations have closed or lost staff.</p>
<p>2021 Recommendation Options for potentially ‘levelling’ out the level of investment being made across the area of benefit should be explored.</p>	<p>We do not agree with this recommendation, it has always been an aim of the fund to distribute funding equally across area of benefit over the lifetime of the fund whilst acknowledging the very different areas and population numbers. Levelling though is also about perception rather than measurement as vastly differing results can be arrived at depending on the criteria applied, as shown within the report regarding totals of projects/funds giving a totally different perspective than per-capita spend/investment.</p>	<p>The Board have sought further clarity in how levelling up within the report is intended – if looking on a per capita basis, PyC feel the fund is achieving this, however we are committed to supporting projects in a fair and equitable way above and beyond the geographical divide.</p> <p>We now consider this recommendation closed.</p>
<p>2021 Recommendation Reasons for the lower percentage of MF Business applications being approved should be explored with a view to increasing the percentage approved in future years.</p>	<p>We acknowledge that the percentage of business applicants supported is low. We have seen a round on round increase in the number of MFB applications. Often, these are speculative and have had little or no contact with staff team prior to submitting proposal. We do not want to stifle creativity and entrepreneurship, but the staff team will be proactive to ensure all applicants discuss proposal and those that are not supportable at present will be advised before time spent on application. We want to work to drive up quality of applications.</p>	<p>We work to give feedback and often see applicants return with stronger proposals in subsequent rounds. We will also monitor and record how many micro fund business applications deemed supportable have gone on to fail. The fund does not want to support poor quality business applications simply to level up successful applications.</p> <p>We now consider this recommendation closed.</p>
<p>2020 Recommendation Further, regular, analysis of management information could be undertaken with more analysis of outcomes being achieved</p>	<p>There will be a full examination of the various strands of data collected to both avoid duplication of effort and ensure best use is made of the data collected. We will examine what data is currently collected, directly by PyC, via the M+E and Supporting Communities team work along with other working partners. It will be looked at from the point of view of what is collected and how it is used/interpreted.</p>	<p>Action An integral part of the 5-year review in 21.22 is engagement and consultation with stakeholders/ communities to understand the measures they would value being monitored. This engagement will take place via the citizen’s panel and other less formal interactions. This review will inform future strategy and ambition for the fund.</p>
<p>2020 Recommendation The analysis of the monitoring data has found differences in the number and types of applications being submitted from different parts of the area of benefit. The potential need for a different approach to activities such as the promotion of the Fund in different areas should therefore be considered, to account for those differences. Is there a need to consider a specific approach in each of those areas?</p>	<p>The Board acknowledges the differences between areas and will use the community profiles, which have been put in place by the PyC funded Supporting Communities’ team, to identify if a specific approach is required.</p>	<p>The Board are pleased with the spread of PYC funding to date and the aim of the fund is to achieve a fair geographical spread of funding across the lifetime of the fund.</p> <p>We will continue to monitor this and will keep this recommendation open.</p>

<p>2020 Recommendation Word of mouth is the main way in which applicants say that they have found out about the Fund. On that basis, it is important that the marketing and promotion of the Fund engages with those in a range of different 'social networks' within the area of benefit. Ensuring that the fund engages with those in a range of different social networks is therefore important – should engagement targets certain areas and groups?</p>	<p>This is linked to the Data Review that is taking place and the Board will need to consider all information before we can target specific groups effectively.</p>	<p>We will consider gaps in who the fund is reaching (i.e., employed/unemployed, social diversity etc). We are committed to consulting with communities to gauge their 'perception' of the success of the fund if it is felt there are gaps in the funds provision.</p>
<p>2020 Recommendation A relatively high proportion of applications would have been submitted regardless of the support received the potential to target the support being provided to applicants (during the application process) at those that need it the most should be considered with a view to Whilst 52% of proposals would have submitted without support, would those proposals have been supportable?</p>	<p>The Board has always recognised that with a small staff team we do need to ensure that time is spent where it will have maximum effect.</p>	<p>As the fund has progressed the team have developed their contacts and methods to ensure they carry out an assessment of the level of support needed at ensuring that as broad a range of organisations can develop projects and apply for support. early stages of meeting an applicant and then signpost them effectively to specialist organisations that can offer the correct support at that time (i.e., CVCs / Business Advisers).</p> <p>We now consider this recommendation closed.</p>
<p>2020 Recommendation The evaluation has found that being involved with the Fund has a positive impact on the ongoing plans of organisations and encourages new projects/ideas to be developed. On that basis, the potential to actively target previous applications that have delivered successful projects (especially Micro Fund grant recipients) to encourage them to develop further (and more ambitious) ideas and projects should be considered.</p>	<p>This recommendation is interesting, and we need to take action to stimulate discussion with grantees about their next steps and plans for progression and development.</p>	<p>To do this, we need to work closely with our CVC colleagues and take a more blended approach of securing feedback from grantees on lessons learned and systematically capture success and next steps. There is potential to link different grantees together or to specialist developmental organisations to develop more ambitious projects, possibly in conjunction with others from within and without the area of benefit. Action PyC will consider options for stimulating that type of networking/ conversations</p>
<p>2020 Recommendation Steps need to be taken to ensure that there is an effective working relationship between the Board and the Executive</p>	<p>The Board realised that with only two staff members (at the time) the effective relationship between the Executive (staff) and Board is essential.</p>	<p>The clear understanding of the differing duties and responsibilities is paramount for the relationship to thrive. We will approach this relationship with trust, openness and ensure there is effective two-way communication.</p> <p>We now consider this recommendation closed.</p>
<p>2019 Recommendation Ensure that the feedback provided to unsuccessful applicants is as clear and useful as possible.</p>	<p>Pen y Cymoedd understands that having a proposal turned down is disappointing and we know that much work and time will have been invested. We accept this recommendation.</p>	<p>We understand how important it is that reasons are clear, and that advice is offered for any future submissions. We welcome feedback on this. If you are turned down and feel we were not clear in explaining the reasons why, please let us know. We have worked hard to improve feedback to applicants over the last year and will continue to do so. Feedback from applicants is that our feedback is now clear, and we engage with applicants well to discuss feedback.</p>

		We now consider this recommendation closed.
<p>2019 Recommendation Consider asking for more information and then undertaking a more robust assessment of Vision Fund applications at the 'expression of interest' stage so that projects that are unlikely to be funded can be rejected before a substantial amount of work goes into the development of the full application.</p>	<p>Whilst we agree with the recommendation, there will always be a small percentage of applications that pass-through expression of interest and then are not supported at Stage 2.</p>	<p>Both Board and staff members worked to improve early-stage feedback and assessments to ensure that applicants are clear about what's needed. We are always clear with applicants that proceeding to Stage 2 is not a guarantee of funding. We are clear with feedback, but the 2nd stage is an opportunity for applicants to expand and develop proposal and if that information at Stage 2 means the project is still not complete or strong enough, we will not support.</p> <p>We now consider this recommendation closed.</p>
<p>2019 Recommendation Consider inviting Vision Grant applicants into a meeting to present their application.</p>	<p>A Vision Fund management review resulted in a new application and assessment structure after we considered this recommendation.</p>	<p>There are now three categories and for applications over £150,000 or in exceptional circumstances there may be additional assessment processes which will involve meetings with/presentations to the Board. This has happened with three applicants and will continue.</p> <p>We now consider this recommendation closed.</p>
<p>2019 Recommendation The recruitment of future Board members needs to consider the need for diversity. Approaches to address gaps in the make-up of the Board need to be considered, potentially beyond simply adding Directors to the Board e.g., setting up advisory boards or a young people's panel to assess applications from youth groups.</p> <p>2020 Recommendation There remain some concerns about diversity at a Board level. Options should therefore be explored for engaging with different groups from within local communities that may not be represented on the Board. For example, setting up groups or panels to look at specific issues or be representative of specific groups within the community.</p>	<p>Whilst we accept that there are always ways to improve diversity at Board level, appointment decisions are based on candidates' skills and suitability and the current needs of the CIC</p> <p>Key Principles of the CIC's Succession Policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the recruitment procedure is transparent and open, and is fully compliant with the CIC's Equal Opportunities Policy - appointment decisions are based on candidates' skills and suitability and the current needs of the CIC. - at least two thirds of Board members live or work in the Fund's area of benefit. - all appointed Directors must have an in-depth understanding of the Fund's area of benefit. - all Directors have up to date role descriptions, and new members have a thorough induction to CIC business and practice. - appraisals are undertaken annually (of both individual and collective Board performance) - training and professional development opportunities are available to all members. 	<p>We will continue to monitor diversity to ensure we have true representation of the whole community wherever possible.</p> <p>The Board accepts that it should, as far as possible, be a true representation of the whole of the communities it serves. However, that must be balanced with size of Board and what skills and experience we need. We commit to develop a proportionate diversity tool at Board member application stage and develop a diversity statement applicable to the AOB, whilst examining the diversity of the existing board based on actuality rather than perception of individuals.</p>

	Before and after a Board recruitment exercise, a Skills Audit will be undertaken to identify current expertise (against an agreed and regularly updated schedule) and any gaps that need to be addressed.	
<p>2019 Recommendation The potential to set-up additional sub groups to the main Board to explore specific issues (reporting back to the main Board) should be explored.</p>	We agreed with this recommendation.	<p>A Human Resources Sub-Committee and a Micro Fund Sub Committee have both been established, helping to ensure that full Board meetings are focussed and efficient.</p> <p>We now consider this recommendation closed.</p>
<p>2019 Recommendation The need to employ or contract additional members to the Pen y Cymoedd team should be explored. As part of this, consider:</p> <p>a) Options for releasing the Executive Director from the ‘applicant support’ activities being undertaken (to allow other activities to be undertaken); and</p> <p>b) Developing a database of external experts / consultants that can be engaged as required to aid the assessment of applications / provide technical expertise. A database of external experts and consultants is being developed</p>	We agreed and accepted this recommendation.	<p>Following a review, we recruited a new Enterprise Support and Finance Officer as well as a Project Support Officer.</p> <p>All three roles have clear work programmes, and we believe that this structure suits the needs of the fund.</p> <p>We now consider this recommendation closed.</p>
<p>2019 Recommendation Consider options to increase the number of ‘pro-active’ actions being undertaken to encourage the development of strategically important actions / projects.</p> <p>2020 Recommendation As our understanding of the outcomes that are being achieved by the Fund emerges, the Board should consider a more proactive/thematic/targeted approach to inviting applications for support designed to achieve specific outcomes or specific strategic priorities.</p>	<p>We agreed with the recommendation, but it required available operational resources and would develop as further local knowledge is captured via, e.g., Community Profiles and the development of regional and thematic strategic plans.</p> <p>The Board have long aspired to develop thematic rounds, encouraging applications for proposals that address a particular need or opportunity in communities that has yet to be addressed. We can only do this with evidence, such as the community profiles, and having consulted with the communities concerned. There seem to be some areas/activities that seem to be emerging, supporting these areas could be our own pilot into taking a more proactive approach. Longer term the prospectus is due for renewal; we have a Citizen’s Panel, and our Supporting Communities team is holding Vision events across the AOB and so we are confident we will soon be ready to identify larger bold proposals to target.</p>	<p>Action As we reach 5 years of the fund operating and are reviewing strategic vision for next 5 years, we are now considering thematic rounds, commissioning, and direct investment.</p>

<p>2019 Recommendation</p> <p>Consider options for improving the consistency decision making at a Board level and allowing Board members to revisit the rationale for previous applications considered (approved and rejected) and decisions made.</p>	<p>At the time of recommendation, we agreed this needed to be addressed.</p>	<p>A suite of Guidance Notes for applicants is in place (and is regularly updated and added to) to reflect agreed approaches and policy in relation to specific issues.</p> <p>A database was compiled to record decision rationale and points which can inform guidance for applicants. Reasons for all decisions are carefully detailed, minuted and agreed at each Board meeting.</p> <p>We now consider this recommendation closed</p>
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