Analytics**C**ambridge

Review of the

Local Government Data Experts Programme

Prepared for the Local Government Association

29th July 2018

Summary

1. This is a review of the Data Experts Programme the aim of which was to develop the skills and capacity of local areas to transform services through greater and better use of data and intelligence.

2. The Data Experts Programme was launched in November 2016 with the aim that the outcomes from the projects should be well underway by March 2017. Fifty four Local Authorities submitted bids. Funding of up to £10,000 was awarded to eight projects. The review looks at potential benefits from extending the programme in the future and any improvements which could be made running it.

3. Interviews have been carried out with the eight Councils who were successful, four data experts who worked with these projects and four of the Councils whose bid for funding was not successful. The interviews are individually confidential - allowing the expression of views.

4. The large number of applications can be taken as a measure of positive demand for the programme. The majority of those interviewed who were not successful indicated they would bid again.

5. The application process was valued, for example the short application form. The relatively quick period between the programme being advertised and the submission date was generally welcomed.

6. The programme asked for monthly progress reports. This was seen as encouraging progress to be maintained. While some Local Authorities felt that slightly too much was asked for the view was also given that other programmes they had engaged with asked for too little.

7. The role of data experts was seen and experienced positively – by both the project leads and the data experts. A number of the successful projects had existing relations with the data experts and these had input in to the bid submissions.

8. Greater clarity and means could be given on making connections to data experts if these were not yet identified.

9. While the maximum funding of any single project was limited to £10,000 the large number of applications indicates this was not a barrier.

10. Successful projects viewed they had delivered the project outcomes. The majority that this was through the programme funding. Some gave additional, non-anticipated benefits from the project and these were around building firmer or additional networking connections.

11. The large number of applications and intention to re-apply is a also clear indication that the programme theme meets needs. It would be possible to run similar programmes on this topic again.

12. Networking was seen as a positive feature of the projects. The Data & Insight Authority Forum, itself a successful project, was named as one way that contacts had been made and experience shared.

13. Some successful projects were interested in communicating the lessons and success more widely.

14. Those interviewed indicated a programme engaged on a theme where there is demand. The way it is managed has significant benefits. There can be minor adjustments for further value. Working with data experts is seen as beneficial and more consideration can be given to enabling this where existing relationships are not yet in place. Networking and learning from others is a positive aspect of projects, ways in which this has been achieved can be part of a future programme.

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1 The Data Expert Programme review

1.1 Introduction to the review and how the report is structured

1.1.1 In November 2016 the Local Government Association [LGA] announced the Data Expert Programme within local government: a programme with the aim to develop the skills and capacity of local areas to transform services through greater and better use of data and intelligence.

1.1.2 This report provides an informal review of the programme. Views from those who have had engagement with the programme have been gathered to examine possible benefits from extending this strategy in the future, any better ways of running such work and opportunities if missed. The review does not assess outcome or finance. The value is the opportunity for the participants to indicate what might be changed, or kept, if the programme were run again.

1.1.3 The report starts with the aims of the Data Expert Programme, how it was implemented. It then gives a brief introduction to the projects funded. It sets out how the review was carried out. The next chapter summarises the views and opinions from those who took part in the Data Expert Programme. This includes those whose projects were awarded money and also some who applied but were not successful. It finishes with a summary of the views expressed which can be considered for future programmes.

1.1.4 Information on the aims of the programme, how applications were made and aspects of the way it was managed are given to provide context.

1.2 The aims of the Data Expert Programme

1.2.1 The background to the Data Expert Programme[1] was the perception that Local Authorities faced a lack of clarity on good practice in evidence-based decision-making. The programme was intended to help Authorities make better use of data - to develop the skills and capacity of local areas to transform services through greater and better use of data and intelligence. This could help generate efficiencies or savings, or change service design and so improve outcomes for local people.

1.2.2 Data has a key role in decision making and problem solving. However it can be held in silos, fragmented and either under-used or not released for wider use. The Data Expert Programme had the aim of helping Local Authorities to better manage, use, analyse and share their data. This could be supported by the opening up of shared working within authorities or across combined authorities, devolved areas, wider

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[1] More information is available through the Local Government Association website e.g.
http://about.esd.org.uk/news/grant-funding-data-experts-work-towards-better-use-local-data

partnerships or the open data community. Wider access to local data is seen as having the potential to encourage innovation in areas such as troubled families, strategic planning, housing, integrated health and social care and other programmes. It could allow more efficient systems and processes within an authority.

1.2.3   Programme funding was intended to encourage better use of data by authorities through the sharing of best practice and expertise to help build leadership, skills and capacity. It offered opportunities for Local Authorities, or groups of Local Authorities:

❖ who sought to gain knowledge, support or training to help better use of data and so put forward a project that would benefit from access to an expert facilitator

❖ who had a good track record and proposals to transfer their experiences, skills and capabilities to other local authorities who agree to partner with them.

1.2.4   Advice for applications[2] gave examples of potentially relevant topics and areas of support (examples in Table 1).

Table 1 Indicative areas for data expert projects

Topic	Examples of support
Data management and publishing	Data audit and inventories, publishing open data, managing information access and reuse requests, improving the quality of data, linking data
Release of data	Expertise and commissioning necessary to establish or extend a data platform for a local data hub
Data governance and sharing	Complying with data protection and data sharing, overcoming cultural barriers of information sharing, developing a data sharing framework
Data architecture (infrastructure)	Designing a technical infrastructure to supply and link data efficiently, data platforms, warehouses and dashboards, ensure technical interoperability and integration of data to foster an internet of things
Data standards	Understanding data standards, use of open data schemas and classifications to enable the reuse, linking and sharing of data across systems
Data analytics	Making better use of data, predictive modelling, geospatial analysis to inform decision making and prepare for early intervention
Data strategy and leadership	Develop a data strategy, enabling better data use in decision making problem solving, overcoming cultural issues of data silos, enhancing the understanding of data use in transforming and innovating services, engagement with the data community to foster wider take-up of data

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[2] https://about.esd.org.uk/news/grant-funding-data-experts-work-towards-better-use-local-data

1.2.5   The programme would make available a "modest grant" (of up to £10,000) for individual projects. The funding would be to project leads who were then responsible for commissioning data experts. The project would need to be fit for purpose to deliver outcomes within the time and cost limitations.

1.2.6   Proposals could be made for projects which would benefit from access to an expert facilitator. The application form noted that the expert did not need to be identified before the funding bid: "*the LGA will work with the successful project leads to agree on the appropriate individual data expert and on a process and timetable for that support to take place*"[3].

1.3   The application and selection process

1.3.1   The programme was announced by the LGA in November 2016 with the aim that project outcomes should be well underway by the end of March 2017. The closing date for applications was early December 2016.

1.3.2   Applying to the programme[4] requested contact details, the lead organisation, partner organisations (if applicable), the name of data expert or team and the amount of grant requested. It then asked for:

❖ a short description of the proposal

❖ the current status of the project (e.g. whether it was completely new, or building on existing activity)

❖ issues it was trying to address and the nature of the support wanted from data experts

❖ the total amount bid for, setting out how the grant would be broken down and dispersed during the programme

❖ the main strategy, activities, deliverables and proposed timescale

❖ any funding from other external sources

❖ expected outcomes – a high-level business case - including how it aimed to make better use of data which might deliver efficiencies/savings or service improvement or otherwise add value to the authority/authorities

❖ how evaluation might be carried out or success measured

1.3.3   The applications used a form limited to four pages.

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[3] http://about.esd.org.uk/news/grant-funding-data-experts-work-towards-better-use-local-data
[4] The form (where it is now noted that the closing data has passed) is available: http://e-sd.org/OA7gF

1.3.4   The LGA started with the consideration that five or six projects might be possible and these would draw on grants of up to the maximum of £10,000.

1.4   Summary of bids and successful projects

1.4.1   The review of the programme was also asked to seek the views and experience of some of the Local Authorities who had made non successful bids.

1.4.2   After the call for projects 54 proposals were received. Table 2 and Table 3 show the bids received: by Local Authority type and region. Bids were from all types of Council and from all parts of England.

Table 2 Number of bids received by type of Local Authority

Type of Local Authority	Number of bids received
County Council	9
District Council	12
London Borough	9
Metropolitan District Council	12
Unitary Authority	12
Total	**54**

Source: LGA note, January 2017, http://files.esd.org.uk/nk6NR

1.4.3   Eight projects were successful and the funding they bid for made available. Table 4 provides a brief description of each.

1.4.4   The information on the programme and possibilities had set out that £10,000 was the maximum for an individual programme. Of the eight successful bids five were for £10,000 each and three were for smaller amounts. The total made available to the successful Councils was £72,125.

Table 3 English region of Local Authorities who bid

Region of Local Authority	Number of bids received
North East	2
North West	7
Yorkshire and Humber	5
East Midlands	7
West Midlands	5
East of England	7
London	9
South East	7
South West	5
Total	**54**

Source: LGA note, January 2017, http://files.esd.org.uk/nk6NR

1.4.5   The successful Councils have a wide geographical spread, being located in six of the nine regions in England.

1.5   Management of the Data Expert Programme

1.5.1   One aspect of the programme was the need to shortlist the most suitable projects from the number who have applied. This was important given the 54 bids. The selection was undertaken by the LGA. The applications were scored and ranked by the team and given a Red/Amber/Green rating to help the selection of those to whom funding could be passed on.

1.5.2   Following the awarding of grants to Local Authorities requests were made for monthly progress reports - essentially from January 2016 to December 2017. While not every Local Authority submitted a report every month no concerns were raised. At the time of undertaking this review (January to March 2018) final reports had been submitted for two of the projects.

Table 4 LGA summary of successful projects

> **Ashfield District Council**
> Introduce improved geographical and spatial context to the data in use in the council and subsequently published openly for Ashfield citizens. Call upon developer and data designer experts to transfer their knowledge to local authority staff to underpin an improved data model within corporate systems and sustained release of open data using the council's own resources.
>
> **Bath and N E Somerset Council**
> Focusing on the data that underpins the delivery of services in support of people with Special Educational Needs and Disability and Learning Disabilities from early years into adult services. Calling upon local data expert academics to work with council staff to identify appropriate data, test its quality and suitability and develop data analysis processes to understand the causal factors behind the increases in demand which has been noticeable in the recent past.
>
> **Calderdale Metropolitan District Council**
> Working with all councils in Yorkshire and Humber region to develop a consistent approach to the preparation and publishing of self-assessment materials for Ofsted on children's services. Efficiency savings, wider examination across the whole region and (potentially) a model for national take-up is the vision.
>
> **Chorley Borough Council**
> Work with local academic staff and partner providers of services in north west to prepare and publish open data about health and well-being services. This underpins a wider local government initiative where a generic standard for online information about locally delivered services is in preparation - where the apps can emerge to discover and present appropriate services that meet the needs of citizens based upon circumstances and aspirations, irrespective of where they live.
>
> **Essex County Council**
> Review the vision and strategy of the Essex Data: Platform programme with independent data experts. This is an innovative initiative to transform the way data is shared and used across all public service organisations in Essex and aims to encourage wider data re-use and predictive analytics. Work also considers the many aspects of data sharing across organisations from technical, procedural and legal perspectives.
>
> **Leeds City Council**
> Share the experience and learning assembled through the creation of the Data Mill North open data portal with other local authorities and support increased publishing of open data by these councils using Data Mill North techniques. Promote the availability of Data Mill North content with the wider developer and user community through briefings and hack days.
>
> **Leicester City Council**
> Working with local delivery partners in the blue light emergency services and voluntary sector to collect and analyse the causes and sources of repeated use of blue light services by the same individuals. Follow-up strategies to predict other hot-spots and support services to teach and encourage repeat offenders in other ways to resolve their issues.
>
> **West Sussex County Council**
> Start a pilot network (through online communications and possible local events) for data managers in the public sector. Providing means for sharing ideas, issues and up-to-date information on activities, regulations and solutions. This will likely start locally but, if successful, is a candidate for wider rollout nationally by other groups in future months.

Source: http://files.esd.org.uk/nk6NR

2   How the work was carried out

2.1   Introduction

2.1.1   The aim of this chapter is to briefly describe how the views and opinions were provided. Together with the aim of the programme and how applications were made (as set out in Chapter 1) these should assist the interpretation and weighting of views and opinions given.

2.2   Who gave their views?

2.2.1   The intention was to speak to all of the successful projects, the data experts, and a number of those who made unsuccessful bids. Those who did give their views were[5]:

- ❖ from each of the eight successful Councils and engaged in the projects
- ❖ data experts with four of the funded projects
- ❖ the programme team at the Local Government Association
- ❖ from four Councils and engaged in non-successful bids

2.2.2   Those involved were told that opinions given in each interview would be treated as confidential. In the report comments and views would not be linked to any specific individual or specific project. Interviewees were given this assurance so they could be open and express dissatisfaction if felt.

2.2.3   Those interviewed were told that it was the opportunity to give experience and views so the LGA could consider these when running similar. The opportunity was to state what worked and what did not work or could be improved.

2.2.4   An introductory letter with the aims of the review was drafted and then sent by the LGA to the project leads. Requests for interviews then followed.

2.2.5   Each interview was written up and notes sent back to those interviewed with the invitation to make changes or additions. Seven of the twenty one who gave views made minor changes.

2.2.6   Applications for funding through this programme were invited from projects who either would access support from data experts or who would transfer their experiences, skills and capabilities into other local authorities who agreed to partner with them (as set out in paragraph 1.2.3). The projects who would transfer their

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[5] A full list is given in Appendix 2: detail on interviews:

experiences were not seen as requiring data experts and three of the successful projects fit into this category.

2.2.7   Data experts were named and worked in five projects. Four were interviewed. A revised introductory letter was drafted and sent to them. One data expert was unable to give a time for interview. Of those spoken to three hold positions at universities and one is the director of a company offering expertise.

2.2.8   There is variety in the type and location of Councils whose bids were *not* successful and who gave their views. As with the others approached for views, an introductory letter was sent. Of those able to give views, one is a County Council, one a District Council, one a Metropolitan Borough and one Unitary. They are each in different regions of England.

2.2.9   Interviews[6] were held from 19th January to 14th March 2018.

2.2.10 Progress on the review, by discussion or email, was held with the LGA on a weekly basis.

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[6] The term interviews is used for simplicity to include the views from two Councils who were not successful and submitted these by writing as this option was given to them

3   Views given on the Data Experts Programme

3.1   Introduction

3.1.1   The aim of this chapter is to report on the views given by those interviewed.   These are structured into three sections which reflect those interviewed: firstly from Councils projects given programme funding; secondly from data experts engaged in the successful projects; and thirdly from Local Authorities who made bids but which were not successful.

3.1.2   The differing views in this chapter should be each be taken as those expressed by one individual (rather than all interviewed). If more than one person gave a similar view then this is given with the opinion e.g. "two Councils stated".

3.1.3   The interviews were open: they did not provide a list of issues and ask Councils to rank these or say which they agreed with. The number making similar points does give an indication of the strength of the view. However possible implications should be considered in the context that there was no testing of choices that might need to be made to implement them. Another way of considering this is that some Councils gave the view that there would be advantages in projects with more funding. They were not asked how they might have felt about less chance of being successful if the overall programme had the same amount of funding.

3.1.4   When considering some of the comments made it could be argued that they are not correct: for example whether or not a data expert already known was essential. The project application form and other material state that the expert did not need to be identified before the bid for funding. However these comments and views are still reported here as they were given by those interviewed and so have a reality. One possible way through these observations could be to revise publicity or communications.

3.1.5   Most questions and discussions in the interviews were about the programme, its implementation and how it ran. The opening question was "if the programme were run again are there any changes or improvements that could be made?". Answers did not require any statements on whether the project itself was successful.

3.2   Given by successful Councils

3.2.1   Each of the successful projects was interviewed and gave their views on their experience of the programme.

3.2.2   The Councils spoken to considered their projects had been successful. One stated that their experience of being in the project had gone extremely well. The opportunity to access funding was very timely. One project reported that it had gone well. Another that it could be considered to be 90% successful, even if not "stress free" to run. If something similar were available they would look to put a bid in with others. Another Council also stated that if funding was available again it would make a similar bid. For another the overall view was that the programme did work "fairly successfully", more so in some parts and aspects. The programme did give valuable input to the project related to the time when the bid was made. For another "the project has been really successful". And a Council stated that the programme had been useful. It allowed connectivity with others to be built (this was confirmed by the data expert involved).

3.2.3   One Council gave a view on whether the project would have been carried out anyway. The aim of the work existed but it hadn't been possible to determine how to do it. Consideration of how the work should be carried out would not have been possible without the programme funds.

3.2.4   A slightly different view was from another Council that in order to find a project to put forward you had to have one that was "ready to go". And that there was already some contact with the experts it brought in more fully.

Applying for the funding and reporting progress

3.2.5   For one Council it took some time to resolve what the project needed to access. The LGA did not provide assistance, but the Local Authority "managed it" and benefits from the relations created will continue. Another Council felt it would have helped to have had a briefing from the LGA about going to data experts. However a partner involved did assist finding a suitable and helpful expert.

3.2.6   The application form was liked for its simplicity. And there was a quick turnaround time between applying (and being successful) and the funding becoming available.

3.2.7   The experience of the programme has been better than some other programmes where grant money has been offered. It was run more rigorously e.g. the monthly reports. This made you (the Local Authority) concentrate, kept you on the ball and moving forwards. Their experience of some other projects was that they simply gave the money and just "handed over" without much communication afterwards. Another Council felt that the monitoring of the project was more than they considered necessary, but they also felt that some other programmes had project management which was too "light touch". One project had the view that the

progress reports to the LGA were not 'really helpful' for the project (though in some ways this project made more reference to the value of LGA contributions through activity).

3.2.8   The position on feedback with the LGA was slightly contradictory. One Council said they felt they had not any feedback from the LGA while the project was running. Then they gave an example of where they had feedback and specifically stated that the LGA request was "reasonable."

3.2.9   Another Council noted little feedback from the LGA after the monthly reports. They also thought their project had worked well. Another stated that the role of the LGA had been good, the payments from the LGA worked as did the monitoring. What was required and happened after application was very efficient. Having been awarded the funding this provided focus.   The monitoring was needed to help the timescales which had been set out. It pushed the project on, those who handled data in their day jobs would now focus on the project as it had been successful.

3.2.10 One project noted the communications support from the LGA helping to achieve its aims.

<u>Working with Data Experts</u>

3.2.11 One project noted that they had not been able to engage with the data expert as much as they would have liked because of the short time required to put in the application. However the problems this caused were resolved.

3.2.12 One Council stated that the data expert worked well for the project. They did bring in perspectives and broadened the range of outcomes the project considered. Another also held that the data expert "did a good job" and was good to work with.

3.2.13 There was discussion on whether the data expert who worked with the project met the needs identified or gave it some energy. Possibly the consultancy days sought for the project could be linked to specific outcomes to be delivered.

3.2.14 A difficulty was noted in matching the project to academic sequencing – often timescales considered for academic work were longer – perhaps three years. A possibility suggested was to have an "open bid pot". This would be less constrained by time in that you could make a bid when you had a project to offer. And the timescales for carrying out the work could be longer and negotiated with the LGA.

<u>Size of funding for each project</u>

3.2.15   A Council discussed the issue of whether the funding was sufficient. There was a feeling that academic time had to be "begged and borrowed". This raised the question as to whether the amount of funding for individual projects should be increased. There was the recognition that there would be only fewer successful projects. The Council who gave these points did feel their project had been successful in what it achieved. Another did wonder whether it would be better if the programme only offered one larger grant for a single project. In simple financial terms this was a large Council.

3.2.16   The views are varied though on whether future funding would be better with fewer projects with more resource for each. One project was of the opinion that larger individual project funding had been the approach of previous programmes. But having fewer projects limited the spread of lessons and benefits across Local Government – the award of smaller sums of money (to more projects) was more effective.

3.2.17   Another Council used the phrase the "small amount of money" – that received through the programme. They felt some project success was delivered by the money from the programme, but resourcing had not made a "fundamental difference".

<u>Networking</u>

3.2.18   One Local Authority said that what they had achieved was transferable to others, though they did not say how this might happen. Two stated that they had found the Data Insight Forum[7] useful as a way of building contact with other Local Authorities. For one it included voices not usually heard and there was enthusiasm for networking. For another it brought people together to work on solving practical problems. Support for this network in the future could have greater benefits than simply funding small scale pilot projects.

3.2.19   Three Local Authorities felt that a benefit to them from the project came through joining networks and making more contacts. For one the experience of wider perspectives which gave perspective on their local project. The project had worked and given extra capacity. This would not have happened without the funding.

3.2.20   One Council felt that the benefits from the project were now available to other Local Authorities. Another that more could be done by sharing learning between those engaged in the other projects, and also with others.

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[7] https://www.datainsightauthorityforum.co.uk/

3.3   Views from data experts

3.3.1   This section gives the views from four data experts who worked with successful projects. Three are with Universities.

Contribution to application

3.3.2   One data expert noted the value in helping draw up the bid. The discussions refined the questions that need answering by the project and how the answers could be found. A suggestion was made that one improvement could be through the LGA running some workshops on bid development.

3.3.3   Another data expert did contribute and have some engagement through the supporting statement for the bid. For one project the data expert was put forward although they were not available for engagement with the submission of the bid. There can be issues in submitting a bid without being able to test out timescales and project scope with the data expert. However the data expert did have an existing relationship with the Council.

Funding and costs

3.3.4   The view was given that the LGA role in the way the project was run was good. The point was made that the funding was valuable; the project was given a clear start and finish (it was time limited); and there was a flexibility in arrangements.

3.3.5   One data expert said that what they (as an organisation) put into the project was more than it would have cost. The project and their role came through an established relationship. They saw it as a small project. The project did work. And one result is that it has increased the appetite for continuity in the relationship after the project has finished.

3.3.6   Another data expert noted the unforeseen costs that could be experienced – the example they gave was the length of time and effort it might take to get engagement with partner organisations for the project.

Working as a Data Expert

3.3.7   One problem encountered, and not foreseen, was the difficulty in having access to the Council data and systems. The work with the data sets involved was possibly slower and required the use of different computer systems.

3.3.8   A data expert noted that the project did find "interesting" things in the data – issues that were different to what the policy makers would have expected. This is a positive result from using an outside data expert.

3.3.9   Three of the data experts spoken to were engaged with the projects. One was not extensively involved – they took part in some elements of the project but were not sure about the project outputs. Staff change was felt to be one reason for this.

<u>Possible changes to future programmes</u>

3.3.10 If a change was possible to future programmes then there would be advantage in ways of enabling longer term collaboration (between the data experts and Councils). One solution expressed was for fewer projects with greater funding. This could be associated with longer term projects.

3.3.11 One data expert gave the view that the opportunity was there for a similar or follow-on project that could build on what the successful one had achieved. This could take forward what has happened e.g. explore standards. Two other data experts did state that the projects they were engaged with were successful.

3.3.12 There would be benefit from an event at the end of the programme to show what can be learnt from the projects. Another data expert also saw that the benefits from projects would be greater if the messages were "got out".

3.4   From Councils not successful

3.4.1   This section gives the views from four Councils whose bids were not successful.

3.4.2   The theme of the programme (data experts) was a good idea. It raised the profile and interest in the project within the Council. This is a positive impact from the programme.

3.4.3   Two gave some information on the projects they put forward. One was that the work had been carried out four years earlier and the aim was to help the method and application be used by other Councils. Another Council stated that they had not proceeded with the project they bid for after the bid was made. It was seen as important but not "business critical" and it is still "on the list" of work to be done.

<u>Bidding process</u>

3.4.4   Two Councils thought the bidding process was short – indicating they would have preferred a longer period. Though, as one Council said, the length of time to bid goes from when they heard about it to when it closed – so internal communications

could be part of this. One of these Councils stated that the tight turnaround time made it difficult to dedicate the time they would have liked to the bid. To give a different perspective another Council gave the view that it was useful that there was only a short bidding period. This could be expressed as: 'you show it to your manager and say "I have just seen this and we need to do it …"'.

3.4.5   The programme's short application form was considered helpful.

<u>Selection process</u>

3.4.6   Looking at the size of the potential funding available for a successful project, one Council would have preferred the potential for greater funding (i.e. more than the maximum of £10,000). The project (which they did put forward) would have involved the cost of releasing officers' time for six months and this would have put a strain on resources. A larger sum of money would support projects where someone could be "taken out of their day job". And if more money was available the Council would have put more effort into the bidding.

3.4.7   One Council thought that the programme was weighted to those who already had connections with data experts. Related to this, the amount of money available for successful projects was felt to be small to seek engagement from a data expert if that connection was not already made.

3.4.8   The decision letter was intended to make it clear that the LGA would provide feedback if this was wanted and those who had applied should contact the LGA. They did provide feedback to "8 or 10" applicants in this way. Two of the unsuccessful Councils who were interviewed did express the view that it would have been helpful if some feedback had been given on what would have made the bid stronger (and more likely to have succeeded). It could have improved making a bid on a similar project in the future[8].

3.4.9   One Council progressed with their project that was not successful - because it was "needed and could not be delayed".

<u>Would bids be made again?</u>

3.4.10 Differing views were given on whether the same projects would be put forward to a similar programme. One Council gave the view that it would be less likely to put forward the same project if the programme ran again. Though this Council said they were still interested in being able to draw on new or additional funding for the work. Contrary to this, a different Council gave the view that in another "round" it would be easier to apply for now that now the process had been seen.

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[8] This could be applicable to funding from other sources on the project.

4   RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1.1   This part of the report sets out key findings and recommendations for consideration for future programmes. These come from the views expressed by the successful projects, data experts and also the unsuccessful projects spoken to.

4.1.2   The context of the recommendations is the programme to which there were 54 applications. This is an indication that the theme, resourcing and application process was found suitable and usable by a large number of Local Authorities.

4.2   Application process

4.2.1   Having a short application form (4 pages) was welcomed.

4.2.2   The relatively short period between the announcement of the project and the close of the application date was also welcomed.

4.2.3   The speed between making the application, being notified of whether it had been successful and making the funding available seen as positive[9].

4.3   Managing the projects

4.3.1   The monthly project reports were generally welcomed - they were seen as encouraging progress. No comments were made about the amount of information asked for. Some comments were made on a lack of feedback after submitting reports – though this was available and made by the LGA to those who asked for it.

4.4   Role of Data Experts

4.4.1   The role of data experts was seen and experienced positively. There was a little uncertainty on being able to apply without a known data expert. That this was possible was stated in the application process. The communication and possibility could be strengthened.

4.4.2   An additional option would be for the LGA to establish a "panel of data experts" to be called on by those putting in bids.

4.5   Size of funding for individual projects

4.5.1   Views were given that the funding for individual projects could be made bigger – with the understanding that within fixed overall funding this would mean fewer successful projects. However these were not tested with the consequence that

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[9] This could be interpreted as weeks rather than months.

there would be a smaller chance of being successful. Some projects felt the funding offered was enough. The recommendation is not to change the amount offered with a programme of similar size.

4.6   Potential improvements

4.6.1   The role of the Data & Insight Authority Forum, set up through one project, was welcomed by a number of successful projects. Consideration should be given to maintaining it if the same programme theme continues.

4.6.2   Successful Local Authorities were not sure how the lessons from the projects could be made more widely available. Consideration could be given on how this might happen. A variety of means exist from publishing the project reports, having simple findings and lessons made available for quick reading or access.

4.7   Should a future programme have the same theme?

4.7.1   An extensive testing of topics was not made with Local Authorities. However the large number of applications indicates that it met needs. If it was possible then there is demand for the topic.

Appendix 1: introductory letter for interview to successful projects

Sent by email to

Dear xxx

Twelve months ago, you were successful in your bid to the Local Government Association to participate in the Data Experts programme. This was a pilot project with modest funding to encourage local authorities to work more closely together or with other experts (public and private) in progressing initiatives of a data theme. It encouraged freedom of approach, work areas and project objectives. We had some 54 proposals and yours was one of 8 successful projects to receive funding for 2017/18.

The funding was provided by Department of Communities and Local Government in its revenue support grant to the LGA. We need to review projects to determine whether they were successful, areas where improvement is possible and a general review of other lessons learned. This is important for the Data Experts programme so we can assess merit in working towards a wider rollout of similar approaches in future years. It will help us develop strong business cases for future funding sources and project incentives.

As a result, we have commissioned an independent review of the programme to take place in January and February 2018. This will be carried out by an independent research specialist called Richard Potter of Analytics Cambridge. We have asked him to carry out a short interview and discussion on your project and the role that your team, your organisation and your allotted data expert played in the progress you made during the year. He will also interview members of the team at the LGA to determine how the project was conducted and identify where we can make improvements in future years to ease the role of participants like yourself.

We welcome any information you can give Richard and thank you for your support. I hope you will be honest in your responses and I stress this is not an audit on your project or an independent check on your work. We are using the review to assess if this way of working is successful and with potential for future improvements in the future.

The LGA board and DCLG is also keen to collect case studies of your achievements in this week and so an LGA researcher will be making contact with you during March to interview you in their mission to document a case study that we can publish and share with others.

Yours sincerely

Appendix 2: detail on interviews

Category	Project name	Organ-isation	Who gave their views	Role of those who gave views	Date views given	How views given
Successful LA	Digital Data Management and Dissemination project	Ashfield District Council	Gillian Bradley	Corporate Information Analyst	19 January 2018	Interview
Successful LA	Connecting Data in Bath and North East Somerset: understanding social care demand	Bath & North East Somerset Council	Jon Poole	Research & Intelligence Manager	21 February 2018	Interview
Successful LA	Self Assessment for Children's Services Inspection	Calderdale Council	Graham Mozley	Performance Officer	20 Feb. 2018	Interview
Successful LA	Placed based personalised needs to services	Chorley Council	Victoria Willett	Performance and Partnerships Manager	31 January 2018	Interview
Successful LA	Essex Data Programme	Essex County Council	Liz Ridler	Delivery and Evaluation Lead	22 January 2018	Interview
Successful LA	Collaborating across the North	Leeds City Council	Stephen Blackburn	Data Innovation Manager	2 Feb. 2018	Interview
Successful LA	Braunstone Blues Partnership Sharing Agreement	Leicester City Council	Lynn Wyeth	Head of Information Governance and Risk	2 Feb. 2018	Interview
Successful LA	Creation of LG Data Expert Network and annual Conference to share best practice	West Sussex	Ellen Gayler	Community & Customer Insight Analyst	19 January 2018	Interview
Programme Management	LGA Programme Management	Local Government Association	Tim Adams	Programme Manager	23 January 2018	Meeting
Programme Management	LGA Programme Management	Local Government Association	Juliet Whitworth	Research and Information Manager	23 January 2018	Meeting
Supporting Expert	Self-Assessment for Children's Services Inspection	Calderdale Council	Carole Brooks	Director, Carole Brookes Associates	22 Feb. 2018	Interview
Supporting Expert	Braunstone Blues Partnership Sharing Agreement	Centre of Excellence for Info. Sharing, Sunderland Univ	Stuart Bolton	Engagem't Manager	15 Feb. 2018	Interview

Category	Project name	Organ-isation	Who gave their views	Role of those who gave views	Date views given	How views given
Supporting Expert	Placed based personalised needs to services	Lancaster University	Nick King	Business Dev'ment Manager	14 March 2018	Interview
Supporting Expert	Connecting Data in Bath and NE Somerset: understanding social care demand	University of Bath	Julie Barnett	Professor of Health Psychology	26 Feb. 2018	Interview
Non-successful project	Evaluation of publication of information listed under CON 29	Nottingham City Council	Laura Pullen	Information Rights & Insight Manager	26 Feb. 2018	Interview
Non-successful project	Data Retention and Standards	Pendle Council	Marie Mason and Kathryn Halton	Corporate Client & P'formance M'ger, & Web Co-ordinator	6 March 2018	E-mail
Non-successful project	Standards and consistency in opening up planning applications	Salford City Council	John Gibbons	Senior ICT Consultant	16 Feb. 2018	Interview
Non-successful project	Peer support for development of Surrey Integrated Data Platform	Surrey County Council	Julie George	Consultant in Public Health	15 Feb. 2018	E-mail

Note:

The name of the organisation of those interviewed and job title reflect those at the time of interviews.

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