

Ken Skates AM

Minister for Economy and Transport

Welsh Government

13 June 2019

Dear Ken,

Fund to support hyper-local news

I am writing to ask for more details on the fund to support hyper-local news. The fund, launched in March, is intended to support 'journalists seeking to set up their own business in hyper-local news' and develop 'skills and networks help to sustain and grow the sector, allowing existing hyper-local journalists to broaden their scope and reach within their communities.'

The Committee is keen to see the fund succeed and deliver on the recommendations of our report 'Read all about it'. I have recently been approached by people working in the sector who inform me that the application process for funds is complex and has the potential to be off-putting.

Please can you let me know the criteria for allocating grants and what the decision-making process is? Can you outline how is the fund being promoted to the sector? Will the fund be reviewed, and, if so, will you be seeking the views of the sector to see how it can be improved?

I am concerned about the feedback I have received that the fund is difficult to access and has not been well promoted. I would be grateful if you could reply to my letter by 9 July to allow me to respond those who have contacted me.

Yours sincerely,

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
Y Pwyllgor Diwylliant, y Gymraeg a Chyfathrebu

National Assembly for Wales
Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee

Bethan Sayed.

Bethan Sayed

Chair of the Committee

Ken Skates AC/AM
Gweinidog yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth
Minister for Economy and Transport



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Our ref/Ein cyf: MA-P-KS-2398-19

Bethan Sayed AM
Chair
Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee

9 July 2019

Dear Bethan,

Thank you for your letter of 13th June asking for more details on the fund to support hyper-local news.

The Independent Community Journalism Fund (Fund) went live on 1st April to provide revenue grant funding to independent community publications, also known as hyper-local publications, based in Wales to support the sustainability, development and growth of their publication. The Fund is available during the 2019/20 financial year.

The Fund is aimed at independent community publications that are based in Wales, have been operating within their community in Wales for at least 6 months and are members of the Independent Community News Network (ICNN).

Eligible activity includes actions to improve business processes; increase income streams; increase readership; technical improvements; accessing specialist digital expertise; and training. Salary costs for three months are also eligible. This list is not exhaustive and the Welsh Government will consider alternative activities that will contribute to increased business resilience and sustainability or growth if suitably evidenced. However, the funding is for revenue only, therefore capital expenditure such as equipment is ineligible.

The Fund was promoted to the sector via a press notice, social media channels and Business Wales, and we will continue to highlight the Fund on social media. In addition, the Centre for Community Journalism (C4CJ) have promoted the Fund amongst their ICNN members, network and the wider sector.

The application process is light touch and applicants are required to provide brief details about their publication, confirmation of eligibility and details of what the funding will be used for. My Officials are available to discuss applications and eligibility prior to application submission and are on-hand to guide applicants through the process.

There is no restriction on the amount of grant funding that can be applied for, subject to due diligence checks and value for money considerations. In addition, multiple applications can be made during the 12 months period to allow greater flexibility to undertake smaller consecutive projects and to help manage cash flow. The grant funding can be paid in arrears or advance, and also smaller staged payments.

As there is a limited amount of funding available, applications are evaluated on a case-by-case basis by a Welsh Government Panel to ensure it meets the eligibility criteria and is considered value for money. To assist with the evaluation process, each eligible applicant has provided consent for their application to be shared with the C4CJ. The C4CJ is acting in an advisory capacity as experts in the field of hyper-local journalism to provide comment on the proposed activities; however, they are not part of the approval process.

Each grant award will be monitored after six months and the impact of the grant will be evaluated after 12 months. The evaluation will assess how the grant has impacted on the publications and the sector, and will inform any potential future funding. In addition, an independent piece of research is proposed by Professor Karin Wahl-Jorgensen at the C4CJ to look at how the Fund may impact on policy, which will include interviews with the sector in Wales.

Yours sincerely,



Ken Skates AC/AM

Gweinidog yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth
Minister for Economy and Transport

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.