



## UKSPF Northern Ireland Partnership Group

4<sup>th</sup> July 2022 13.30-15.00

### Meeting Note

#### Members attending:

Name	Organisation	Sector
Sue Gray (Chair)	Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities	UK government
Colin Perry	NIO	UK government
Adrian McCreesh	SOLACE (Mid Ulster District Council)	Local government
Lisa Toland (representing John Greer)	SOLACE (Belfast City Council)	Local government
Professor Ian Greer	Queen's University Belfast	Higher education/skills
Seamus McAleavey	NICVA	Voluntary and community
Valerie McConville	CO3	Voluntary and community
Maeve Monaghan	NOW Group	Social enterprise
Ann McGregor	NI Chamber of Commerce	Business

#### Secretariat

The meeting was supported by DLUHC officials: Christine Robinson, Chris Taylor, Barrie Doherty, Hannah Henderson and Mike Ward.

#### Chair's welcome and introductions

- The Chair welcomed all members to the first meeting of the Northern Ireland UKSPF partnership group. Each member introduced themselves and the organisations and sectors they were representing.
- The group noted the need for transparency and managing potential conflicts of interest. No specific conflicts of interest were declared given the introductory nature of the meeting.

#### Overview of UKSPF and Northern Ireland strategic context



- The Chair outlined the purpose of the Partnership Group and the role of its members in designing the UKSPF investment plan for Northern Ireland. She emphasised the commitment to close working between the UK government (UKG) and local partners in designing a plan that delivers for Northern Ireland.
- UKG and the NI Partnership Group will work together to determine the UKSPF priorities and interventions that are most appropriate for Northern Ireland, including the scale of delivery and project selection approaches.
- The Chair invited representatives from UKG to share key details and the strategic context of UKSPF in Northern Ireland.

### **Terms of Reference and Partnership Group membership**

- Terms of Reference (ToR) were shared with members prior to the meeting. They set out the purpose of the group and our commitment to designing the NI investment plan with the group's members, drawing on local intelligence and insight across NI, and supported by a programme of engagement with wider stakeholders.
- Following comments from members, the ToR will be updated to clarify certain responsibilities and recirculated in advance of the next Partnership Group meeting.
- Members described the need to work closely with Northern Ireland Executive departments and the Northern Ireland Civil Service to ensure complementarity with UKSPF funding and avoid funding duplication. The Chair responded that we are continuing to engage with NIE and NICS, and UKG is open to their participation in the Partnership Group or other engagement to maximise the impact of the fund.
- Members raised the issue of political representation within the Partnership Group and the need to engage politically in Northern Ireland along with organisations such as NILGA. The Chair noted this and described our broader engagement plan to engage politically in parallel to official-level engagement in the Partnership Group.

It was resolved that:

- The Partnership Group would be officials-led, and that political engagement would be undertaken separately.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

- The Chair noted that we are planning a programme of extensive engagement with partners and sectoral representatives across NI.
- As part of this, DLUHC proposes to produce a recorded briefing for wide dissemination, as well as general and thematic engagement with key sectors and



interested parties. DLUHC plans to work with Partnership Group members to engage with their sectors, and identify appropriate organisations to engage.

- This programme of engagement with local partners will take place over the summer to inform plan development, and will include political engagement as the plan develops.

### **Partnership Group discussion**

The Group considered the overall fund parameters, scope and funding profile. Members noted:

- A need for flexibility for the first-year funding allocation. The Chair recognised this concern for members and DLUHC will engage across government to explore opportunities and implications of any adjustment to the funding profile.
- The importance of recognising the regional differences within Northern Ireland itself, between east and west and rural and urban areas. The Chair noted the need to consider intra-Northern Ireland differences in the plan and that a plan at Northern Ireland level can facilitate this.
- The need to work with existing and upcoming funding streams and ensure complementarity between Northern Ireland Executive funding, Peace Plus, Levelling Up funding and other sources of match funding for UKSPF spend.
- The need to consider scale and geographic scope of each intervention, and consider inter-related/packaged interventions (for example, a business intervention supported by a skills intervention).
- The scope for capital activity, particularly for communities and place and supporting local business interventions.
- The productivity challenge for Northern Ireland and the close links between numeracy and literacy and productivity in the context of Multiply. Members also noted the challenging funding profile for Multiply across each year of the programme

Members discussed the proposed arrangements to deliver funding to organisations and whether projects would be funded directly. DLUHC confirmed that all routes to market would be examined through the investment plan process, and the most appropriate method would be chosen depending on the investment priorities. This may include, for example, commissioning where there is a defined lead body, or project competitions.

### **Actions and Next Steps**

It was agreed that:

- DLUHC will provide a recorded presentation for Partnership Group members and wider stakeholders to use to engage and inform their sectors/partners.
- DLUHC will engage with Partnership Group members to develop wider stakeholder engagement plans.



Department for Levelling Up,  
Housing & Communities

- The Partnership Group will operate at the official level and final membership will be reviewed by DLUHC and circulated.
- DLUHC will share an updated ToR prior to the next partnership meeting.
- A register of members interests will be shared and completed in advance of the next Partnership Group meeting.
- DLUHC will engage with colleagues across government to explore opportunities and implications of any adjustment to the funding profile, and feedback at the next Partnership Group meeting.
- DLUHC will continue to engage with NICS and will explore the opportunity for alignment and/or complementarity with other funding streams. Feedback to be provided at the next meeting.
- The next meeting will be held in early August following a round of engagement activity. Date to be advised.