

Project Overview

Participatory Grant Making (PGM)

A feasibility study to explore the potential for PGM in North Yorkshire

Supported by North Yorkshire Council and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund



Council Lead:	Marie-Ann Jackson, Head of the Stronger Communities Programme
Research Lead:	Alan Graver, Skyblue Research Ltd (York)
Summary description	This is a feasibility study into the scope of PGM with the aim of providing recommendations for expanding PGM in North Yorkshire if the conditions are appropriate. The study will explore whether the UK Shared Prosperity Fund awards of community grants could function as experimental participatory grants in at least one location (potentially multiple) in North Yorkshire where the pre-conditions are assessed to be appropriate.
Geographical focus	North Yorkshire though the research will draw in practice from the UK
Timeline	1st June 20203 to 31st December 2023

Project Details

Background

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund Prospectus for North Yorkshire makes a commitment (section 1.1c) to deliver community grants. Conversations with the Stronger Communities Team in early 2023 have identified an opportunity to explore the feasibility of orienting these community grants to be more participatory in their design as a considered move towards creating more community empowerment and building capacity, skills and confidence for residents to be more involved in deciding what could make a difference to their lives locally. However, it is currently unknown:

- How much participatory grant making (PGM) is happening in North Yorkshire?
- Whether PGM is universally defined?
- How many PGM models there are?
- What that PGM activity looks like in practice – the mechanics and processes involved with PGM?
- Where PGM is happening – which localities, why and how long it has taken for it to be established, what the drivers were for trying PGM in the first place?
- PGM efficacy compared to any best practice that might be identified nationally or any evaluations?
- The pre-conditions that need to be in place for an effective PGM model including consideration of the lead time and resources required to establish a PGM model?
- What criteria one might need to consider before opting for a PGM approach compared to alternative community grant options available?
- The different scales of grant typically associated with a PGM approach and how that compares to existing community grants distributed across North Yorkshire?

In the absence of this feasibility study it is likely that the portfolio of community grant models available in North Yorkshire will continue as is.

Rationale and ambition for the study

The rationale for exploring PGM as an approach is as follows:

- There is increasing recognition at a national level that to shift (cede and share) power from traditional authority structures and commissioners to communities, new types of relationship and mechanisms are required.
- Participatory grant-making may be one such mechanism. In fact PGM is not just one model it is an umbrella term comprising multiple possible approaches but has a common ambition to cede grant-making power to affected community members and constituencies. In practice, it means placing affected communities at the centre of grant-making by giving them the power to decide who and what to fund [[Intro to Participatory Grant-Making | The Fund for Global Human Rights](#)].
- There is divergence in opinion it would seem in national debates about the extent to which PGM shifts power, as opposed to simply promoting an open and participatory process.

North Yorkshire Council has committed to an increase in community empowerment as part of its local government reorganisation, this it seems an opportune moment to explore mechanisms that could promote the conditions for such improved empowerment.

This study will provide an appraisal of PGM appropriateness for North Yorkshire by presenting a situational analysis, PGM merits and drawbacks and recommendations for if, how and where the proposed UKSPF community grants could be used to catalyse or accelerate PGM in North Yorkshire.

Objective and Scope

The study will therefore seek to:

- Define PGM and source any available evidence (e.g. published or peer-reviewed papers / impact evaluations) that provide a rapid understanding of PGM approaches and efficacy.
- Provide a situational analysis of PGM activity for North Yorkshire in 2023 – where it is already taking place, where it may have happened in the past with concomitant learning lessons and where it is being planned for in future.
- Provide PGM example practice from in and outside of North Yorkshire to understand the way that PGM is planned for, how it is typically / ideally developed and who and how PGM parameters and scope is set?
- Provide a set of best practice pre-conditions / ingredients for successful PGM based on the evidence reviewed and stakeholders insights and example practice collated ·
- Present visual flow diagrams / descriptors of the processes associated with a PGM approach.
- Identify how PGM can complement (rather than displace) other place-based approaches aimed at building community capacity, skills and confidence and where local people are increasingly involved in decisions about who and what to fund.·
- Make recommendations as to the appropriateness of launching / catalysing / accelerating ‘Test and Learn’ PGM approaches in North Yorkshire using Shared Prosperity Fund allocations for community grants in 2024 and beyond.

The feasibility study may also conclude that the conditions are not optimum in the county yet and that a more traditional community grant approach is necessary given the timeframes associated with the Shared Prosperity Fund. The feasibility study may also conclude that PGM could be led by alternative ‘energy’ located in North Yorkshire, whether another investor or community as identified during the study.

Deliverables

- ☐ Interviews with up to 20 selected stakeholders with experience of planning, commissioning, co-designing and or delivering PGM models.
- ☐ Two place-based workshops (to be identified) with willing stakeholders that can share learning from past or planned PGM approaches in North Yorkshire.
- ☐ A learning workshop with the Stronger Communities Team to share and review the desk research and good practice being collected and consider its appropriateness in light of their knowledge of each locality's context, as well as consider the practicalities of supporting any PGM recommendations being made.
- ☐ Feasibility study summary and report with clear recommendations for the period from 1st April 2024.

How to get involved

If you would like to have a conversation with Alan to discuss your experiences of Participatory Grant Making, have some good practice you would like the Project to incorporate or wish to support one of the two place-based workshops (scheduled for October/November 2023) please contact:

Please get in touch! Alan Graver, Skyblue Research Ltd

T: 0794 000 4560 or E: alan@skyblue.org.uk