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Circular Economy  
Innovation Communities



# Formative Evaluation of the Circular Economy Innovation Communities (CEIC) Programme

Final Report

Swansea University

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## Formative Evaluation of CEIC: Final Report

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## Glossary

| Acronym/Key word | Definition                              |
|------------------|---|
| CEIC             | Circular Economy Innovation Communities |
| CoP              | Communities of Practice                 |
| ELE              | Experiential Learning Event             |
| ERDF             | European Regional Development Fund      |
| ESF              | European Social Fund                    |
| EW               | East Wales                              |
| HEI              | Higher Education Institution            |
| RET              | Regional Engagement Teams               |
| SDG              | Sustainable Development Goals           |
| WEFO             | Welsh European Funding Office           |
| WBFGA            | Wellbeing of Future Generations (Act)   |
| WWV              | West Wales and the Valleys              |

## **Executive Summary**

### **Introduction**

- i. This executive summary presents the findings of the formative evaluation of CEIC, a programme designed to support public and third sector organisations in Wales to develop new service solutions to enhance productivity and deliver circular economy benefits.
- ii. The Operation is part-funded by the ESF and the participating HEIs: Swansea University and Cardiff Metropolitan University.
- iii. The method for the evaluation included:
  - A desk-based review of documentation and monitoring data
  - Scoping interviews with key members of the CEIC delivery and project support team
  - A logic model and assumptions mapping workshop
  - Three focus groups with participants across SBR and CCR cohorts
  - Qualitative in-depth interviews with seven programme participants
  - Analysis and reporting – including the development of case studies

### **Operation Context (policy, needs and objectives)**

- iv. The contextual review undertaken as part of this evaluation demonstrated that the Operation's design appears highly coherent with the policy context surrounding the circular economy, innovation and regional thinking.
- v. Relatedly, the Operation's objectives appear to be coherent and relevant to the needs of public and third sector organisations in WWV and EW, including the need to:
  - Increase awareness of the circular economy
  - Bridge the gap in ambition and capacity
  - Use regional collaboration as a driver for problem solving.

- vi. Stakeholders were confident that the Operation is on track to meet its overarching objectives, with evidence that the programme is leading to demonstrable changes in innovation and circular economy thinking, working relationships and regional solutions to public sector challenges at this formative stage.

### **Operation design, delivery and management**

- vii. Feedback from operation stakeholders and programme participants suggest that the design, delivery and management of the CEIC programme appears to have been working broadly effectively to date, utilising the diverse mixture of experience and skills of its delivery team.
- viii. There was some concern amongst stakeholders about the culture of the programme, whereby its governance structure created bureaucracy, and collaboration had diminished between the universities since the start of the project. As a result, there was a desire from the project team for stronger alignment between the regions, and an opportunity to embed project management systems into their practices.
- ix. The delivery of CEIC has faced challenges, particularly with regards to recruitment of participants and retention of members of the delivery teams. In terms of recruitment, Covid-19 and a lack of a dedicated marketing strategy in the early stages of the Operation, were seen as key factors to recruitment issues experienced. One factor associated with the retention of staff was listed in part due to most members of staff being on fixed term contracts, and permanent jobs being viewed as more secure in the current economic crisis.
- x. Feedback from cohort participants demonstrated that the overall facilitation and content of the programme is working effectively. Participants spoke fondly of their relationships with facilitators, noting their patient, professional and supportive approach. The prescriptive nature of cohort themes was enjoyed by the CEIC programme

members, who found course content interesting and easy to digest. While sessions were seen as the right length and frequency, it was felt the course might benefit from running bite-size learning in-between monthly workshops for individuals who weren't able to attend a session. This was due to the volume of content included in one day, which set back participants significantly if they missed a workshop. Additionally, several participants felt the structure of CEIC would strengthen significantly by bringing forward the opportunity to apply theoretical tools much earlier on in the course, and to work on their solutions for a longer period.

- xi. Future support participants would like to see included the opportunity to receive support beyond the life cycle of cohorts, to check in on the progress of solutions and continue to collaborate with other organisations. There was also a desire for accreditation to help overcome barriers with programme drop out / commitment within CEIC.

### **Outputs – formative progress**

- xii. At the formative stage, the Operation has made some progress towards meeting its Operation-level output indicators. The Operation has met its profile target in WWV and EW for both the number of entities participating in projects and number of projects targeting public administration at a national, regional or local level.

### **Summary of CEIC Outputs:**

| Indicator  | Cumulative Achievement to Date (Aug 22) | Delivery Profile Target to Date (Aug 22) | Variance to Date (%) |
|--|---|--|----------------------|
| <b>WWV</b>   |   |  |                      |
| Number of projects targeting public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level. | 1                                       | 1  | 0%                   |



|  |    |    |       |
|--|----|----|-------|
| Number of methods, processes and tools being developed with support  | 2  | 7  | -71%  |
| Number of entities participating in projects target public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level | 32 | 16 | 100%  |
| Number of new methods, procedures, and tools developed and disseminated  | 0  | 4  | -100% |
| <b>EW</b>  |    |    |       |
| Number of projects targeting public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level.                       | 1  | 1  | 0%    |
| Number of methods, processes and tools being developed with support  | 1  | 6  | -90%  |
| Number of entities participating in projects target public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level | 32 | 10 | 220%  |
| Number of new methods, procedures, and tools developed and disseminated  | 0  | 4  | -100% |

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### Outcomes and impacts

- xiii. Feedback from Operation stakeholders and programme participants highlighted that CEIC is leading to multidimensional benefits for public sector and third sector bodies across the Swansea Bay and Cardiff Capital city regions.
- xiv. Evidence collected from participants demonstrates that collaboration with CEIC has led to emerging positive benefits at both the individual, organisational and regional level – particularly with regard to increasing innovation and circular economy knowledge, facilitating closer working relationships between public sector entities and creating strategic CoP with the knowledge and skills to co-create solutions to challenges in the public and third sector.

- xv. A number of participants shared how the programme had also enhance their leadership and project management skills, as well as reinforcing the importance of collaboration for fostering innovation thinking. A key impact of the programme was evidence of participants disseminating learnings and knowledge back to their organisations, to increase awareness more broadly and instil regional change. Examples of intended long-term impacts and benefits of solutions being developed by programme participants are outlined in five case studies:

- Case Study 1: Reimagining the value of Welsh wool products
- Case Study 2: Developing a tool for sustainable workforce development and tenant engagement
- Case Study 3: Developing a carbon literacy training programme (CLTP) adaptable to different areas of the public sector
- Case Study 4: Opportunities to certify sustainable materials for the development of social housing
- Case Study 5: Designing digital tools to support community growing

### **Recommendations**

- xvi. The formative evaluation stage identified several recommendations for the remainder of the funded period:

#### *Operational Recommendations*

- The Operation should consider including alumni cohort members within its governance group, to provide a voice for the needs of public sector entities across the two regions.
- The Operation should consider integrating a specific project management tool into its management processes, to increase transparency across the universities and allow team members to keep track of work and ownership of tasks.

- There is an opportunity for better shared learning across universities through HEIs sharing participant feedback from cohorts more regularly. This would support aligning programme delivery across the regions.
- The Operation should consider reviewing existing management structures to reduce perceived bureaucracy and provide a shift in programme culture.

#### *Marketing and recruitment recommendations*

- The Operation should consider the development of a targeted recruitment framework for the recruitment of remaining cohorts and future activity.
- Allocate dedicated resource focused on marketing and recruitment to provide effective implementation of the framework in future activity.
- The Operation could benefit from producing a short video or summary infographic outlining the benefits of participation in CEIC, that can be shared with prospective applicants to increase understanding and used to cascade promotion deeper into organisations.

#### *Course delivery recommendations*

- The Operation should explore how they can use baseline information collected through participant application forms, and through innovation audits, to identify and monitor individuals who might need additional support through the programme.
- Consider facilitating recap sessions in-between monthly workshops for participants who missed sessions to catch up and maintain engagement / commitment to the programme.
- Consider building in additional time for the practical application of theory, bringing this content further forward into the structure

of cohort delivery so that participants have longer time to work on their solutions.

- Look at potential ways of offering post-programme support to cohorts, potentially in the form of 3-6-month completion check points, to monitor CoP progress and provide light-touch support in the form of signposting or advice to aid future progression.
- Explore the possibility of developing 'pitch-it' sessions, that offer advice to public sector entities on how to pitch solutions back to their organisations, and secure buy-in and resources sometimes required to embed learnings at an organisational level.
- Alongside its existing conferences, the Operation should explore options for developing an Alumni network or similar, whereby current and past participants can share resources, contacts, questions, as well as best practice on how solutions have been able to continue to progress.
- Explore options for securing accreditation of the CEIC programme, to offer an additional incentive for current and future cohort participants.

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of the formative evaluation of Circular Economy Innovation Communities (CEIC), undertaken between February and September 2022.

### **Background to CEIC**

- 1.2 CEIC is a £3.7m Operation supported by the Welsh Government and European Social Fund (ESF), designed to support public and third sector organisations in Wales to develop new service solutions to enhance productivity and deliver circular economy benefits.
- 1.3 The programme is delivered in collaboration between Swansea and Cardiff Metropolitan Universities and is fully funded over a 10-month period for participants. It comprises of 14 cohorts, seven held for Swansea Bay region and seven for Cardiff Capital region including a range of themes covering, but not limited to, areas such as decarbonisation of social housing, community growing and health and wellbeing.
- 1.4 The overall aim of the programme is to support the adoption of new methods and processes at a regional level through developing Communities of Practice (CoP) that foster public service collaboration and intra-regional, inter-organisational knowledge and skill sharing. A CoP is a group of people who have a common goal, sharing their knowledge and learning with each other to further the education of the entire group. In the CEIC programme CoPs work with each other collaboratively over the 10-month period to stimulate open innovation and identify circular solutions to their service / organisational challenges. The approach stimulates open innovation through taking advantage of the different backgrounds, knowledge and experience of individuals within each CoP.
- 1.5 The CEIC programme is facilitated by specialists in the field and comprises a range of learning experiences for participants, including

monthly experiential workshops, residentials, guest speakers, action learning, peer learning and implementation support.

- 1.6 The CEIC programme is funded under Priority Axis 5: Public Services Reform and Regional Working and falls under Thematic Objective 11, Institutional Capacity Building, which aims to increase the efficiency of public administration through strengthening institutional capacity.

### **Background to the evaluation**

- 1.7 The Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) requires European Union-funded operations to be evaluated by an external party. In February 2022, Miller Research was appointed by Swansea University to undertake a two-part external evaluation of CEIC. This includes a formative evaluation, and a final summative evaluation to start in February 2023.
- 1.8 The purpose of the formative element of the evaluation is to gather data on the performance of the Operation in terms of:
- Fit with the intentions and delivery profile stated in the Business Plan and fulfilment of the requirements in the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (both living documents)
  - Performance in relation to the expectations of the funders
  - Benchmarking against other known effective practice.
- 1.9 As such, key objectives of the evaluation are to measure progress towards CEIC's outputs, aims and objectives, and the effectiveness of project management and operational processes. It is also key to understand the mechanisms and impact of the CEIC operation.
- 1.10 The outcomes of the formative evaluation are to make suggestions to improve the Operation during the remainder of the funded period. Further details of the methodology for the formative evaluation, and key evaluation questions, are enclosed in **Annex A**.

## **Structure of the document**

1.11 This report is structured as follows:

- Section 2 provides a review of the strategic context and rationale for CEIC
- Section 3 describes the delivery and management of the Operation
- Section 4 provides an insight into programme activities, including feedback on delivery of the cohorts
- Section 5 reviews the Operation's mid-term progress against its output indicators
- Section 6 presents a comparison of other known practices in the UK and internationally
- Section 7 summarises the emerging outcomes and impacts of the Operation, including the presentation of case studies on the stories from CEIC
- Section 8 presents the conclusions of the evaluation and outlines recommendations for improvements in delivery over the remainder of the funded period.

## **2. Operation context**

- 2.1 This section of the report presents the strategic context for CEIC including an assessment of its alignment with policy and consideration of the rationale / need for the Operation from the perspectives of stakeholders.

### **Policy Context**

#### *European policy drivers*

- 2.2 The CEIC programme is funded through the European Commission's (EC) European Structural Funds, formed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF). The programme is aligned with the Thematic Objective (TO) 11, Institutional Capacity Building, and with Priority Axis (PA) 5: Public Services Reform and Regional Working. The Thematic Objectives were established by the EC and designed to inform intervention logic for the investment framework of 11 ESF funding initiatives. The CEIC programme falls under TO 11, which aims to increase the efficiency of public administration through strengthening institutional capacity.
- 2.3 The funding is also informed by a number of Priority Axes, designed jointly between the ESF, ERDF and the respective national governments. The investment package of PA5 is focused on structure, human capital, systems and tools in the public sector to root more efficient organisational processes, modern management and a motivated and skilled work force. An essential feature of the CEIC intervention is to foster knowledge and skills around innovation and practices in the circular economy; increasing knowledge on a topic that will only become more relevant and important with time and will result in a more robust and capable public workforce that is able to provide accurate and efficient services in future circular economy developments at a regional level.



- 2.4 Published in 2020 by the European Commission, the *Circular Economy Action Plan*<sup>1</sup> is the strategic agenda to accelerate the adoption of a circular model at the European level. The plan introduces numerous actions and principles that will help adhere Europe to the regulatory framework set out in the Green Deal, as well as help nations produce coherent, updated and streamlined policies regarding a circular economy.
- 2.5 The plan identifies the need to update the Skills Agenda at the national and regional level within Europe to support the delivery of circular strategies. The document states that the implementation of circular economy mechanisms needs to be a joint effort between design, public and social stakeholders. It also notes that the investments required for learning, upskilling and social and public innovation will be carried out by the ESF, which is one of the funding streams supporting the CEIC programme.
- 2.6 The plan also highlights the role of public entities in procurement, which accounts for 14% of European GDP. The public sector therefore has substantial influence on supply chains and the nature of purchases and can be an effective lever in fostering product innovation. As a result, it is highly advised that those part of the decision-making and spending process are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to utilise public money in a way that is sustainable, becoming a driving force to embed circular economy principles within the public sector.

#### *Wales level policy drivers*

- 2.7 Originally published in 2017 and updated in 2019, the *Prosperity for All*<sup>2</sup> policy document is an economic action plan that outlines the way in which Wales wishes to pursue economic growth. It sets out

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<sup>1</sup> [https://environment.ec.europa.eu/strategy/circular-economy-action-plan\\_en](https://environment.ec.europa.eu/strategy/circular-economy-action-plan_en)

<sup>2</sup> <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-02/prosperity-for-all-economic-action-plan.pdf>

different strategies that are expected to deliver the desired economic growth pathways, including updated economic contracts to stimulate business growth and a consolidated financial support tool that has been simplified to offer support for businesses.

- 2.8 The plan is supported by seven social and economic pillars: Supporting people and driving prosperity; Skills for a changing world; Focus on long-term sustainable growth; Ambition and lifelong learning; Stronger regional voice; Modern connected infrastructure; and Wales in the world. Most of these concepts are mirrored in the principles of circularity.
- 2.9 Overall, the document establishes a strong commitment to sustainable development, an increase in skills, knowledge and learning that will foster prosperity in the long term, and to strengthen the economy and capacity at a regional level, stressing the importance of a regionally focussed economic model. These principles are overarching ambitions of the CEIC programme. Furthermore, one of the key aims of Wales, as stated in this policy document, is to benefit from the opportunities that will arise from shifting to a low carbon, sustainable economy. By providing regional public services with the tools and knowledge required to transition to and benefit from circular mechanisms, the CEIC programme represents a key step towards these broader Welsh Government aims and an important progress towards strengthening regional capacity and capability.
- 2.10 The *Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act*<sup>3</sup> (WBFGA) is a holistic legislative document that sets out guidelines and pathways to ensure nationwide long-lasting positive outcomes, and tackle issues such as health, poverty and climate change in Wales. Influenced by the *UN Sustainable Development Goals*<sup>4</sup> (SDGs), it is revolutionary in

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

the sense that it enforces a legal obligation for public bodies within the objectives outlined in the plan, which include: A prosperous Wales; A resilient Wales; A healthier Wales; A more equal Wales; A Wales of cohesive communities; A Wales of vibrant culture and Welsh language; and, A globally responsible Wales.

2.11 The Welsh Government outlines its commitment to ensuring a prosperous future for Wales, to which sustainable development is paramount. It states the necessity to have long-term views on current decision-making at the public policy level, as well as taking action to prevent ongoing environmental impacts or avoid new ones from occurring. It is therefore imperative for the successful adoption of this policy document to imprint sustainability principles at all levels and ensure that those responsible for decision-making are equipped with the necessary tools and knowledge to guide the country towards its sustainability targets. This is one of the core messages driving the CEIC programme.

2.12 To support the completion of the wellbeing goals, the *Programme for Government 2021 to 2026: Well-being statement*<sup>5</sup> presents a list of ten objectives set out by the Welsh Government to meet the statutory requirements established in the WBFGA. The objectives have been created to showcase the priorities for the Welsh Government regarding economic development, environmental protection and wellbeing of society. In general terms, the design of the objectives was informed by the sustainable development principles outlined in the WBFGA, which are: Long term, Integration, Prevention, Involvement and Collaboration. In this sense, the objectives are, influenced by the sustainability aspirations of the Welsh Government, and thus the CEIC initiative directly supports these overarching

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<sup>5</sup> <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-06/programme-for-government-2021-to-2026-well-being-statement.pdf>

objectives. There are six objectives that are particularly mirrored in CEIC's programme:

- Provide effective, high quality and sustainable healthcare system
- Build an economy based on the principles of fair work, sustainability and the industries and services of the future
- Build a stronger, greener economy as we make maximum progress towards decarbonisation
- Make our cities, town and villages even better places in which to live and work
- Embed our response to the climate and nature emergency in everything we do, and
- Lead Wales in a national civic conversation about the constitutional future.

2.13 The Welsh Government declared a climate emergency in 2019, drawing attention to the magnitude and significance of evidence from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on the effects of climate change. Following this declaration, Senedd Cymru approved several policies and statutory commitments for Wales to reach net-zero by 2050. The Welsh Government has committed to achieving a carbon neutral public sector by 2030 and to coordinating action to help other areas of the economy make a decisive shift away from fossil fuels. This shift requires involvement from all areas of society including academia, industry and the third sector.

2.14 Adopting a circular economy is an essential part of Wales' climate ambitions, using the public sector as a fundamental driving force in the implementation and wide-reaching adoption of circularity.

### *Beyond Recycling*

2.15 Released in March 2021, *Beyond Recycling* is Wales's circular economy strategy and a major driving force for any circular economy

projects in Wales. The document establishes the government's commitment to transition towards a circular economic model.

- 2.16 The document sets out the multiple positives of adopting a circular economy, notably the environmental, social and economic benefits, fostered by reduced carbon emissions, reversed biodiversity loss, limited resources exploitation and shorter and more domestic supply chains. The Welsh Government has a long-term objective to reach zero waste by 2050 and this directly aligns with its goal of a net-zero carbon Wales.
- 2.17 Two of the headline actions for the adoption of circular economy at a Welsh level are to support the public sector to become more resource efficient and to provide tools to enable community action. This falls within the overall objectives of the CEIC programme, particularly since strengthening the capacity and knowledge of public service institutions will enable knowledge spill overs and project support around circular economy. This will have a cascading effect over non-policy sectors within Cardiff and Swansea, with the aim of leading to a higher adoption of circular initiatives and a greater understanding of the necessities for the implementation of circular strategies at the regional level.

### **Need / Rationale for CEIC**

- 2.18 In order to justify the resources for an intervention, there needs to be a clear rationale behind the Operation. This includes identifying areas which exhibit market failure that the CEIC programme can address, but also areas of opportunity and strength to exploit and enhance in the future.
- 2.19 The need for the CEIC programme is underpinned by a decisive cultural shift to mainstream circular economy principles in Wales and their potential to bring environmental, economic, and social benefits to public service providers and beyond.

- 2.20 In the sections below, we outline a number of key themes identified through a review of documentation and by operational stakeholders regarding the need for the programme.

*Why promote a Circular Economy?*

- 2.21 As outlined in the policy review, there is a clear overlap between Welsh Government's climate ambition and the CEIC programme's short and long-term objectives, which can be summarised as solidifying and guiding the adoption of circular economy principles and guidelines in public sector bodies.
- 2.22 In this sense, the need for a Circular Economy is evident in Wales' most recent policy documents and publications. Given the notable environmental benefits of abandoning a linear economic model, circularity appears in response to the urgent need to halt and reduce carbon emissions, by any means possible, to slow down and limit the impacts of anthropogenic climate change.
- 2.23 As outlined in the policy section of this report, Wales ranks highly in its commitments, ambition and legally binding obligations to reaching net-zero and becoming a fully sustainable nation. This has resulted in the creation of rigorous targets relating not only to GHG emissions, but also to wider environmental impacts (including resource use, EoL and waste management strategies).
- 2.24 This is an important differentiation, particularly given the policy scope of *Beyond Recycling*, which urges citizens to reflect on the wider system and consider sustainability as holistically and wide-reaching as possible, taking into account all the possible environmental impacts generated by human activity and finding solutions to minimise and revert them. Circular economy strategies respond to this cross-cutting climate ambition, and it is thus key to instruct and equip members of the public sector with the necessary tools to drive forth circularity and abandon the existing linear economic model. This is

more so the case because, as the fieldwork revealed, there is currently little support available to guide the move to CE.

*Bridging the gap between ambition and capacity*

- 2.25 There is also an acknowledged gap between the ambition to embed circularity in the public sector, and the present capability to do so.
- 2.26 Firstly, there is currently seldom a consensus for what constitutes circular economy: there are over 150 versions and definitions of circularity found in academia. This lack of consensus permeates across governing bodies, resulting in an absence of unity and clear-cut action planning, since there will be multiple and varied interpretations of the same notion across different sections of one organisation.
- 2.27 This leads to a misconception of the meaning of circular economy and the nuances of implementing circular strategies and circular thinking in the public sector, which becomes a clear impediment to embedding circular economy at multiple levels of Welsh Government. Stakeholders from the CEIC team shared that there is currently a lack of understanding around what circular economy means and unveiled an overall limited knowledge about circular strategies amongst public sector bodies.
- 2.28 Furthermore, there is a growing body of research that evidences the fact that the success of regional investments is hindered by institutional capacity at the regional level. Strengthening the capacity, arrangements and mechanisms at the regional level is thus projected to increase the value of investments and render a better outcome of projects and policies both collectively and individually. Whereas this has been flagged for European investments, enhancing the capacities and capabilities of regional public services will be a very important step in the success of any future policy developments, regardless of the level from which they are implemented.
- 2.29 Against this backdrop, there is a clear need to promote learning and innovation programmes that will help accelerate the implementation of

circular economy principles in public bodies, as well as ensuring that this is done in a consistent and orderly manner.

*Regional Collaboration as the driver for problem-solving*

- 2.30 As has been mentioned, there is fragmentation at the interpretation level, which affects how circular economy is implemented and supported across sections of the public sector. There is however a subsequent fragmentation within and across the public sector as a whole, and at the sub-national, regional and sub-regional level.
- 2.31 As with the lack of conceptual consensus, this has equally led to a non-unified adoption of CE and a siloed approach to problem solving. Moreover, the public sector has incrementally been asked to do more with less resources, as a consequence of recent events that have affected the stability of the UK, such as Brexit and continued legislative changes.
- 2.32 In response to this, there is an identified need to empower the public sector at the regional level, creating reliable collaborative networks within and across Local Authorities through which problems and solutions can be dealt with in conjunction, rather than in isolation. The aim would be to generate a unified block of action, in which no region or area, regardless of size, is left behind.
- 2.33 The CEIC programme aligns directly into this collaborative approach, especially as one of the aims of the programme is to, through the learning of CE, accommodate and nurture collaborative opportunities between the participating public sector bodies by establishing Communities of Practice (CoP). These emerging partnerships could become a key step towards a more synergic approach and systemic thinking between Local Authorities and public sector organisations.

**Objectives of the programme**



2.34 To overcome the barriers and needs identified, the Operation has set out a core list of targeted objectives for the project. The core objectives of the CEIC programme outlined in the specification are as follows:

- **OB1:** Enhance innovation and circular economy knowledge and skills within public sector entities in the City Regions
- **OB2:** Facilitate and embed closer working relationships between public sector entities within the City Regions
- **OB3:** Create strategic and collaborative Communities of Practice with the knowledge and skills to co-create solutions to existing and new public sector challenges in City Regions.

2.35 The assumptions underpinning these objectives are that:

- Currently, there exists a lack of robust regional working mechanisms amongst public service entities in the city regions
- Public service entities in the City Regions have limited institutional capacity for innovation
- Existing approaches to innovation in public service entities do not sufficiently incorporate circular economy thinking
- The methods and processes introduced through the CEIC programme's experiential learning programme will increase the innovation capacity and circular economy knowledge relative to the baseline established at the beginning of the programme
- Bringing together representatives of public sector entities who are facing similar challenges in public service delivery will build Communities of Practice that exist beyond the lifetime of the programme
- Communities of Practice are effective in enhancing regional working within the public sector

2.36 Stakeholders from the CEIC delivery team were confident that the objectives closely align with the needs identified and the wider

context, and therefore that the overall rationale for the CEIC programme remains strong. There was also a strong consensus from Operational stakeholders that the programme is on track to achieve its objectives.

- 2.37 In order to evaluate the implementation and delivery of CEIC, the Operation's performance (evidenced through monitoring reports, available data, and qualitative fieldwork) to date is assessed against its objectives and its logic model.

### **3. Operation design, delivery and management**

- 3.1 This section of the report presents the findings of the formative evaluation relating to the processes and structures of the delivery and management of the CEIC programme.

#### **Funding & Resources**

##### *Finance*

- 3.2 The Operation is part-funded by £1.9m of ESF funding, £312,040 in match-funding from Swansea University and £76,662 in match-funding from Cardiff Metropolitan University.
- 3.3 Feedback from stakeholders highlighted that the budget for the programme was sufficient to achieve its objectives. Stakeholders were generally positive and felt that the Operation had managed its finances well to date, but on reflection, felt some funds could have been better allocated to different categories during the initial stages of the programme.
- 3.4 One example raised was a greater allocation of funding to marketing activity, in light of challenges experienced in the enrolment of programme participants (see Section 3.23 onwards). It was explained that initial allocations for this category were based on the assumption that recruitment into the programme would be straightforward, and so a smaller budget was initially allocated to this area.
- 3.5 Another area noted was around the allocation of IT equipment. It was explained that when the programme was first being developed, the team had assumed that delivery would be office-based in East Wales, which restricted the type and amount of equipment purchased for staff. Once remote working was enforced, this left the programme less agile as several staff members did not have the appropriate equipment to work from home.

##### *Recruitment and retention of project staff*

- 3.6 The CEIC project team currently consists of seven members of delivery staff<sup>6</sup>, assisted by six additional administrative members of the project support team<sup>7</sup>. The programme is further supported by seven academic research team members from Swansea and Cardiff Metropolitan Universities<sup>8</sup>.
- 3.7 While there was consensus from stakeholders that the operational team consisted of the right people and skills to deliver the programme, it was noted that this could have been strengthened by more technical circular economy expertise in the early stages of the project. It was explained that many team members entered the programme with limited or no prior circular economy knowledge, despite it being the overarching focus of the CEIC programme, which meant that people often had to learn content as the programme progressed. While some staff members enjoyed this way of learning, it was felt that it sometimes created team disturbances and slowed down productivity.
- 3.8 The programme has experienced some difficulties in the retention of key members of the project team. Operational stakeholders shared that the team has lost six staff members over a six-month period, including a Finance Officer and some lecturers for the programme. It was felt that issues with retention were in part due to most members of staff being on fixed term contracts, and permanent jobs being viewed as more secure in the current economic crisis.
- 3.9 Stakeholders were confident that aside from one recently vacated position, these recruitment gaps had been filled, but had created a knock-on effect for the project in terms of consistency, timescales and the volume of work now expected to be completed in the final stages of delivery.

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<sup>6</sup> Including one Project Director, three programme managers and three lecturers

<sup>7</sup> Consisting of four admin and two finance officers.

<sup>8</sup> Three researchers are based in Swansea University and four are based in Cardiff Met University.

### *Scale of the programme*

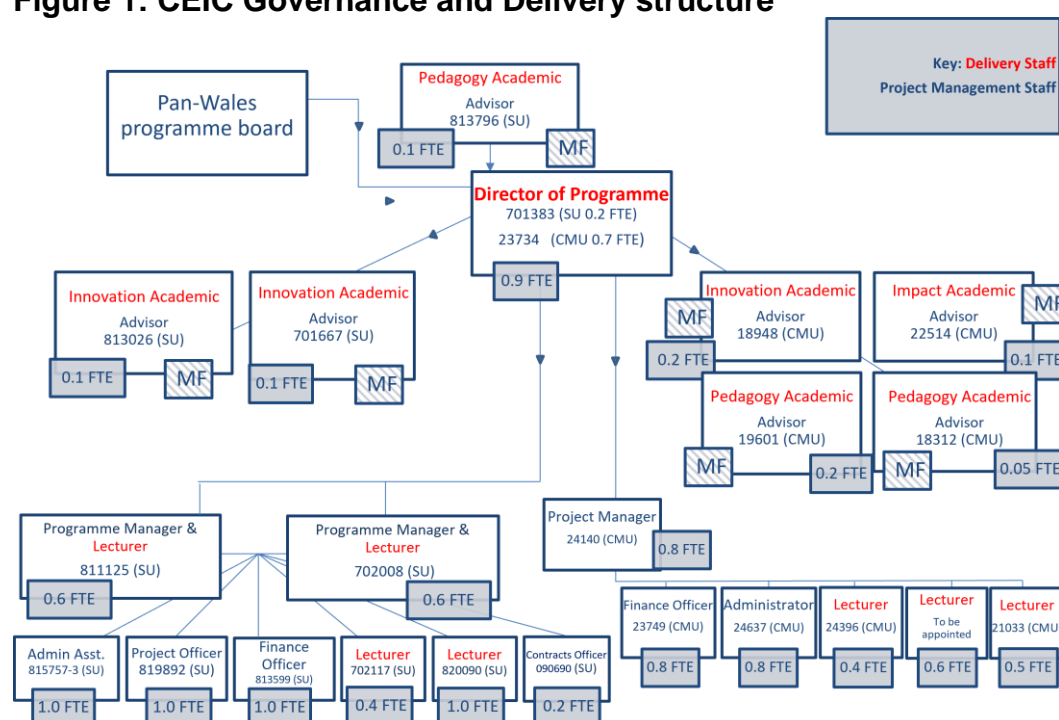
- 3.10 Stakeholders generally felt that the programme was of a sufficient size to make a difference but could benefit from being scaled to a pan-Wales project. A small number of stakeholders noted that in doing this, it could help minimise existing difficulties in the recruitment of cohorts. It was noted that the funding body only allows participants from the Swansea and Cardiff regions, but these border counties such as Powys and put artificial boundaries on the reach and impact that the programme can have.
- 3.11 The Operation is now considering how it can capitalise on its success to date, to make progress at a greater scale. The team is exploring these options by engaging with Bangor and Aberystwyth Universities, with a view to developing case studies for academic outputs and to discuss the possibility of how they can scale the project to be delivered across Wales.

### **Management and Governance**

- 3.12 Management and governance of CEIC appears to be broadly effective and utilises the skills and expertise of the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) involved.
- 3.13 The Operation is purposefully run as a whole project across the universities, rather than being delivered by two separate teams for each region (see organogram below). In terms of structure, a Project Director is responsible for the strategic function and delivery of the programme, and three Programme Managers, two based at Swansea and one in Cardiff Met, carry out day-to-day management of the Operation, including planning and delivery of the cohorts. Lecturers on the programme are responsible for managing cohort participants and the facilitation of content and tools, including new methods and processes.
- 3.14 The Operation is further governed by a project steering group who provide independent oversight of the programme. The group is

represented from by a diverse mixture of stakeholders, including Public Health Wales, Welsh Government, Swansea Bay and Cardiff Capital Regions, and representatives from each HEI. Feedback from stakeholders noted that the group plays an effective role in advising on the development of the programme and needs of stakeholders engaged. Some stakeholders saw the steering group as a potential tool for recruitment of future cohorts, by promoting CEIC and showcasing the impacts the Operation can have.

**Figure 1: CEIC Governance and Delivery structure**



Source: CEIC

3.15 In terms of communication, the programme has a structured meeting system in place to ensure overall project efficiency. This includes a regular weekly team meeting at each HEI and a fortnightly project catch up for all members of the delivery team. A weekly project management meeting is also arranged between programme managers and key personnel from both universities, to coordinate work and resources across the team.

3.16 There was consensus amongst stakeholders that the governance structure for CEIC is broadly working well, noting the strong mixture of

skills and backgrounds within the team. It was felt that the delivery team has been particularly successful at implementing solutions to issues that have arisen, and addressing unanticipated barriers, for example, supporting the pastoral needs of team members. Despite this, several comments were made on how management and governance of the programme could be improved for the remainder of its delivery period.

- 3.17 It was however noted that the culture of CEIC sometimes felt bureaucratic, and conflicting management styles ran the risk of impeding the work of project team members later down the line. It was felt that these issues were particularly magnified at the start of the Operation, while colleagues adapted to working in a Covid-19 landscape.
- 3.18 Other stakeholders felt that collaboration across the universities had lessened since the start of the programme. Stakeholders felt there could be better communication between the two universities, for example, through more regular meetings, sharing feedback on workshops and if there was a better platform for distributing resources and connections/contacts.
- 3.19 Another mild concern was on ensuring that the programmes across the two universities is better aligned in terms of content and delivery. This was considered essential for the consistency of activities and outputs across the cohorts. Although it was noted that relationships have been successful in the past, there was some concern that productive links initiated at the start of the Operation had been lost in recent months and that there is an opportunity for better shared learning across the partnership.
- 3.20 In terms of solutions to minimise these issues, there was a desire from members of the delivery team to use project management software, such as Asana or ClickUp, to increase transparency and allow team members to keep up to date on what everyone is working on and who has ownership of each task. It was also felt that

collaboration could be more effective, by each university sharing resources and feedback from workshops with each other more regularly, so that cohort delivery could be adapted to ensure it is aligned across the regions.

### **Marketing and promotion**

- 3.21 The marketing of the Operation consists of a variety of promotional activities including insight events, webinars, conferences, social media and email marketing.
- 3.22 The programme uses a number of digital media channels to promote its activities and recruit potential participants. This includes the CEIC programme website which hosts a small number of case studies and past success stories, and a Twitter and LinkedIn account with a collective following of 764 followers (Twitter at 365 followers and LinkedIn at 399 followers).
- 3.23 Alongside social media campaigns, the Operation also runs several insight webinars for prospective participants to learn more about the CEIC programme and the support it offers. The programme has held 41 insight events to date (of which five were specialist events) with 209 participants attending across the timetable.
- 3.24 Promotion of the programme also comes in the form of tailored content webinars on topics related to the circular economy, such as repair/reuse and the decarbonisation agenda. The monthly webinars involve inviting a high-profile speaker to run a presentation and Q&A session and advertising the event to current cohorts and prospective representatives of participating organisations. Recent events have included organisations such as:
- Orange Box
  - Too Good to Go
  - Kidd3r



- Fiberight.

- 3.25 The programme also runs conferences to allow organisations to meet each other and see what different cohorts are working on and review the progress of integrating solutions across organisations. Stakeholders viewed this as a successful way of helping promote cross-regional dissemination.
- 3.26 Alongside its own webinars and events, representatives of the Operation have also attended several key events and organisations to promote its work, such as the Next Steps Circular Economy Conference, Climate Emergency Education Group and Community Foundation Group.

*Recruitment of cohort participants: marketing approach*

- 3.27 The approach for developing a marketing response to recruit participants for the CEIC programme was regarded as a challenge for the project team, particularly during its first year of delivery when external factors such as Covid-19 created knock-on effects for face-to-face engagement with organisations to develop relationships.
- 3.28 Operational stakeholders had assumed from the outset of the project that recruitment of public and third sector participants would be straightforward, but the programme experienced less demand than anticipated in the early stages. It was explained that resource wasn't allocated to employ a Marketing Officer for the Operation, with responsibility falling to the wider team to recruit participants for the first few cohorts, in the absence of a strategy or previous marketing experience. Several team members noted their apprehensiveness towards this 'scatter-gun' approach, with many explaining that they did not feel comfortable cold-calling or emailing organisations to promote what were seen as relatively opaque structures for the programme at the time.
- 3.29 The Operation's delivery team has deployed a number of methods to respond to these initial challenges. It was explained that the Operation contracted digital marketing consultants to improve the

CEIC website – developed prior to engagement – and provide expertise on a marketing strategy to promote and drive prospective participants towards insight events. Upon reflection, some stakeholders noted that it would have been more efficient to bring in this resource earlier to ease pressures on the wider delivery team.

- 3.30 There were also some concerns over the suitability of using social media as a key driver for recruitment. Some team members felt the use of Facebook and Instagram advertising were not appropriate techniques for targeting senior public sector service representatives and encouraging them to apply. Instead, one suggestion was to focus on promoting the programme by tapping into contacts within existing networks, such as the project steering group or Regional Engagement Teams (RET), and focusing on planning, booking and advertising events/stands and webinars further in advance.
- 3.31 Despite issues with slow recruitment at the start of the Operation, stakeholders were confident that these issues are now being resolved, as people have become more comfortable working across organisations. It was felt that success has primarily been due to snowball marketing, whereby past participants have shared their experiences of the programme with others and recommended involvement to other colleagues and organisations. This has, however, impacted on the profile of participants taking part in the programme, with repetition of organisations represented in different cohorts.
- 3.32 In future, stakeholders noted that they would like to see a specific framework in place for recruitment and marketing, particularly if the programme is scaled into a pan-Wales project.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

- 3.33 Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of CEIC appears to be working effectively, underpinned by a detailed M&E plan and a dedicated M&E team who meet quarterly as the basis for continuous improvement of

the programme. The focus of the M&E process is to allow the delivery team to measure progress towards its outputs, aims and objectives, and the mechanism and impacts of the Operation.

- 3.34 Feedback from Operation stakeholders highlighted a comprehensive set of data collection methods used to monitor progress of the programme and the benefits for participants. The team has designed several interventions to collect the data they need. This includes data gathered from inception of the project through the website (using the expression engine), an interim and exit survey for participants, alongside feedback gathered over the 10-month period from each workshop and in shared presentations at the end of the programme. The delivery team also capture softer impacts through its Value Creation Framework, through which cohort leaders stay in close contact with participants and groups to capture data.
- 3.35 It was noted that there have been some challenges with the M&E plan acting as a 'living document' through the course of programme delivery. One stakeholder shared that there have been changes to M&E over the course of the programme that do not reflect the original goals that the delivery team designed the programme against, which creates a knock-on effect on the managerial strategy for the Operation. An example given was that although they use surveys for data collection, they are not monitoring progress against outputs of what the funder requires or feedback on individual enjoyment or benefit of the programme.
- 3.36 A small number of stakeholders felt there were some shortfalls in the types of data currently being collected, and that the programme isn't capturing as much participant feedback as it could. It was noted that while surveys monitor progress on individual enjoyment and benefits of the programme, there needs to be a stronger focus on capturing regional processes and tools being developed and how this is leading to an increase in regional innovation capacity. The CEIC conferences provide an opportunity to bring cohorts together, see how solutions are developing and what people are doing in their organisations. It

was suggested that these events could be used as an opportunity to track the progress and long-term plan for solutions more closely, to add an additional layer of feedback.

- 3.37 Further to this, the CEIC programme team have also recently begun to develop Case Studies for different challenge groups that outline their experience, the learning, and value created by the programme which are awaiting final approval from WEFO. These will be supplemented by the Case Studies that Miller Research will develop as part of the formative and summative evaluation, that will focus on capturing the long-term impact and plan for solutions developed.

### **Barriers and external factors**

- 3.38 Since the Operation commenced, CEIC has co-existed with unsettled events that have significantly disrupted public sector service providers and third sector organisations in Wales.
- 3.39 To supplement the information provided above, stakeholders listed a number of barriers and external factors which have had an impact on the Operation's delivery, including the Covid-19 pandemic, the recruitment of cohorts, the condensed timescale for Operational activity and additional factors, outlined below.

#### *Covid-19 pandemic*

- 3.40 The Covid-19 pandemic caused an array of issues for the delivery team during the early stages of the Operation. Due to the programme launching during the pandemic and government restrictions, the start of CEIC experienced a 6-month delay, and the delivery team were forced to quickly adapt the Operation's core cohort model into online delivery, resulting in shifts away from face-to-face activities. As the programme is based on experiential learning, stakeholders noted this was much harder to facilitate remotely within the first round of cohorts.
- 3.41 The pandemic has also caused significant delays in recruitment of cohort participants, due to the inability to undertake face-to-face

engagement activities. The regular networking opportunities that would happen prior to the pandemic to promote the programme were lost, making it more difficult to establish relationships with prospective participants and recruit them onto the programme. Stakeholders also noted that there was some drop out within earlier cohorts running during Covid-19 due to individuals having to focus on their response to the pandemic.

### *Recruitment of cohorts*

- 3.42 Another challenge noted by stakeholders was the difficulty in recruitment between the regions. It was felt that the Cardiff Capital region cohorts were harder to recruit than cohorts based in the Swansea Bay region for several reasons.
- 3.43 One reason cited was due to less resourcing at Cardiff Metropolitan University for the programme with only two lecturers in comparison to four at Swansea. This is due to Swansea University employing staff on fractional contracts whereby two FTE contracts<sup>9</sup> were split into four roles. Additionally, it was noted that there are external programmes which have an impact on the recruitment pool, including the Infuse programme run by Cardiff University, Nesta and Monmouthshire County Council targeted at the ten local authorities in the Cardiff area. In addition, the reputation that Cardiff Metropolitan University has in the city in comparison to Cardiff University was considered to be a factor. In contrast, it was felt that the reputation Swansea University has in the region was held in higher regard.

### *Other barriers*

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<sup>9</sup> 1 project manager and 1 lecturer

- 3.44 Additional barriers mentioned included the timing of the programme and scheduling of workshops, which sometimes led to drop out due to participants having limited capacity or competing with other priorities.
- 3.45 The regionalisation approach was also mentioned as a minor factor that sometimes impacted on the types of challenges cohorts explored. It was felt that because the challenge groups must be regionally represented, the cohorts are steered towards regional challenges in favour of sometimes more specific organisational issues for participants.
- 3.46 Another difficulty faced was sometimes in convincing participants to take part in the programme, if challenges weren't based around their existing knowledge and interests. Stakeholders noted that sometimes the programme has to engage organisations with specific challenges they want to work on, that could benefit from collaborative working with other organisations. They had seen success from this approach, sharing an example of a group formed after engaging with Green Health Wales, an informal group passionate about reducing carbon footprints within the NHS. As a result of these conversations, the team was able to market the CEIC programme within the health boards and recruited for the cohort based upon that interest.
- 3.47 Despite the issues caused by Covid-19, feedback from stakeholders felt these external factors had been well-managed by the Operation's delivery team.

## 4. Insights into programme activities

- 4.1 This section of the report provides insight into the activities of the CEIC programme, using feedback from participants and operational stakeholders. It includes the findings on delivery of the cohorts to date, alongside an assessment of the programmes overall delivery against the Cross-Cutting Themes (CCT).

### Delivery of thematic cohorts

- 4.2 A central element of the Operation's activity is the delivery of thematic cohorts that participants are involved in over a 10-month period.
- 4.3 The programme employs a design thinking process, that initially comprises of a two-day 'Experiential Learning Event' (ELE). The aim of the event is to encourage participants to think differently, explore the key tenets of innovation and the circular economy and work in collaboration with other participants outside of their organisation to form a CoP. The ELE is an opportunity for participants to form key partnerships whilst identifying how regional challenges across the UK could be solved. Following this, participants take part in monthly workshops where they can define their challenge and begin identifying, iterating and testing solutions in their CoP.
- 4.4 The CEIC programme comprises of 14 cohorts, seven held for Swansea Bay region and seven for Cardiff Capital region covering a range of themes such as decarbonisation of social housing, community growing and health and wellbeing. The progress of delivery for each cohort is outlined in the table below.

**Figure 2: Progress of cohorts to date**

| Region | Cohort                                | Delivery Stage |
|--------|---------------------------------------|----------------|
|        | <b>SBR 1 - Sustainable Innovation</b> | Complete       |

|                               |   |   |
|-------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Swansea Bay Region</b>     | <b>SBR 2</b> – Decarbonisation of social housing      | Complete <sup>10</sup>  |
|                               | <b>SBR 3</b> – Health and wellbeing                   | Complete – June 2022  |
|                               | <b>SBR 4</b> – Innovation towards Net-Zero            | In process  |
|                               | <b>SBR 5</b> – Circular Education                     | In process  |
|                               | <b>SBR 6</b> - Circular Solutions for Public Services | In process – start date Oct 22                                  |
|                               | <b>SBR 7</b> - Circular Solutions for Public Services | In process – start date Oct 22                                  |
| <b>Cardiff Capital Region</b> | <b>CCR 1</b> – Decarbonisation of social housing      | Complete  |
|                               | <b>CCR 2</b> – Money Matters                          | Complete - delivery amalgamated due to small numbers on cohort. |
|                               | <b>CCR 3</b> – Community Growing                      |   |
|                               | <b>CCR 4</b> – Water                                  | In process  |
|                               | <b>CCR 5</b> – Circular Solutions for Public Services | In process  |
|                               | <b>CCR 6</b> – Circular Solutions for Public Services | In process – start date Sep 2022                                |
|                               | <b>CCR 7</b> – Circular Solutions for Public Services | In process – start date Oct 2022                                |

4.5 In the following sections, we outline feedback on several areas of activity within the programme using the findings from focus groups and in-depth interviews with programme participants.

<sup>10</sup> Communication is maintained with past participants from both SBR 1,2 & 3 to monitor progress of challenges



*Participant recruitment process*

- 4.6 The two primary ways that participants heard about the programme was through word of mouth, and line manager referral.
- 4.7 It was felt that there was a disconnect between the marketing and communications of the programme and word of mouth. This was partly due to the difficulty of communicating what the Operation is. It was felt by both the CEIC delivery team as well as by participants that the Operation is difficult to describe. Therefore, it was observed that participants seemed to be there 'for different reasons'.
- 4.8 Furthermore, there was a general sense of "unknowing" amongst participants prior to the programme commencing, and that involvement was 'quite organic'. This demonstrates that some participants felt that they were unsure about what to expect from the programme. This was soon mitigated as participants' involvement in the Operation developed, where participants felt 'you soon get an idea of what's expected of you'. However, some participants noted that the reason they were unsure about what to expect from the programme was because not everyone was 'buying in'. This made them aware that the course was not targeted at all attendees. Therefore, a recommendation to consider for future cohorts is to learn from the experiences of participants and the delivery team in addressing the marketing gaps, and as part of this to produce a targeted recruitment strategy to ensure that the Operation is attracting and retaining the most suitable participants.
- 4.9 There was benefit felt by participants in recruiting multiple representatives from the same organisation, which was useful for both resourcing and understanding of the programme. It was agreed that sometimes participants' colleagues and managers know who best would benefit from joining the programme. As more cohorts progress through the programme, it is anticipated that this recruitment method of alumni referrals will only increase and provide a useful legacy of programme participants.

- 4.10 Despite difficulties faced in recruitment for the Operation, participants felt that the frequency of recruitment and onboarding communications sent directly to participants from the CEIC team were consistent. There were some minor comments that questions included in the application form were intimidating, related to using processes outside of their remit, and targeted at individuals of a higher operational level.

*Motivations for joining the programme*

- 4.11 Participants noted a number of motivations for joining the CEIC programme. Almost all participants referenced the opportunity to meet like-minded individuals as a key driver for their involvement in the programme. Networking through the Operation was seen as a unique way of developing partnerships and sharing knowledge and resources across organisations in the region. A few participants mentioned their desire to engage in discussions with fellow cohort members about wider issues that related to circular economy and other challenges. It was shared that the networking infrastructure creates a useful tool beyond the Operation's length, and several participants had already engaged with each other outside of their challenge group, to collaborate on various initiatives external to the programme.
- 4.12 Many participants also had an interest in sustainability or the circular economy and saw CEIC as an opportunity to learn more about these topics. For many individuals, the programme was effectively aligned with both their own interests and the objectives of their organisations. For example, some participants noted that decarbonisation, re-use, recycling and repurposing of materials was becoming more upfront on their company agenda.
- 4.13 For other participants, a key motivation for signing up to the programme was the opportunity to explore specific technical challenges they were experiencing within their services. It was noted by some individuals that the chance to go through a rigorous design-thinking process and to develop an interesting solution was a strong

driver into the programme. Many were also interested in the wider theoretical concepts and course content, including the application of circular economy theory. As such, many participants saw the programme as a key learning opportunity for their own personal development, including **how** to share information, discuss issues with colleagues and embed the tools, techniques and systems thinking approaches learnt back into their organisation.

#### *Community of Practice (CoP) approach*

- 4.14 The Community of Practice approach to the Operation was seen as a positive feature by most stakeholders. The way that this structure of the programme facilitated individuals taking the time to get to know each other was felt to be important. Working in teams in person was seen as highly beneficial and it was shared that this led to increased productivity.
- 4.15 Participants shared several insights into the benefit of the CoP approach, informed by previous experience in similar programmes. A unique feature of the CoP approach was that everyone contributed according to their skills and specialisms, namely specialists in technical knowledge who worked alongside individuals who were skilled with wider engagement. The mix of individuals who possessed a combination of useful hard and soft-skills across multiple sectors resulted in effective teamworking and learnings which could be applied to future professional scenarios.
- 4.16 The approach taken in allocating specific CoP roles was viewed as a strong mechanism for developing a governance system for the CoP that is fulfilled throughout the period of the cohort and which can sustain beyond the programme length. Participants shared that they were encouraged to adopt roles they wouldn't usually take, but instead found that people would assume roles that fit naturally to them and worked best with their own expertise and skills.

- 4.17 One participant felt that they did not enjoy the CoP approach, feeling it was pushed by the CEIC programme team, and undertaken 'just for the sake of it'. The thematic nature of the CoP facilitated collaborative working, but this participant felt that everyone needs to have the same vision / goal for it to be effective.

*Course content / design*

- 4.18 Participants were generally positive about the overall design and content of the CEIC programme. Operational stakeholders felt they had an established and sequential structure now in place, and were able to adapt elements of programme design as cohorts progressed.
- 4.19 The themes for different cohorts were said to have organically developed throughout the programme, and while generally broad were also narrow enough to galvanize interest from participants. Participants appreciated the prescriptive themes they were given for both their cohorts and challenges, as it allowed a diverse and wide-range range of ideas to be discussed.
- 4.20 In terms of course content, most participants appreciated that the content was not too academic or inaccessible for them. A small number of participants noted that the programme began very theoretically, which while most enjoyed, was sometimes challenging for people more confident with the practical elements of delivery. Participants pointed out that within their cohorts there was a mixture of experience levels, meaning that some people grasped the theoretical content quicker than others. It was suggested that a baseline assessment of where people are regarding their innovation and circular economy knowledge might help to organise people into cohorts better, and ensure facilitators are able to provide more tailored support for those who need it. It is worth noting that CEIC already collects information regarding participants' circular economy and innovation knowledge during the application stage and in the innovation audit. As such, the programme could benefit from

considering how these existing tools could be utilized more effectively to identify and monitor individuals who may require additional support.

- 4.21 The tools and techniques used during the CEIC programme were described as both interesting and useful to participants. The delivery team expressed that these were introduced in the first half of the programme, to embed learnings early in the process. Examples mentioned included innovation dynamics, as well as the empathy and stakeholder mapping exercises that involved looking at all angles of a challenge and exploring different perspectives of stakeholders. Many participants had started to replicate these methods in their own practices within their organisations.
- 4.22 Participants also appreciated the academic backing, validity and legitimacy that the course provided. Almost all participants felt that the content of the course had broadened their knowledge of circular economy, and also of innovation techniques.
- 4.23 Regarding the structure of the programme, participants agreed that sessions were of the right length and frequency. Individuals enjoyed the various phases of the course from refining challenges through to ideation and the design process. One minor criticism was that most workshops were content heavy, which meant that missing a session would set individuals back significantly, due to the time needed to recap all topics covered. Some people felt there was limited support for those who missed sessions and it was unclear **where** responsibility lay. It was suggested that the programme might benefit from bite-size learning, for example through hosting short recap sessions in-between monthly workshops, around key content that was missed.
- 4.24 Another criticism around course structure is that not enough time was allocated to apply the theory participants learned and to allow them make use of it. In terms of timing, it was agreed among a few participants that there was too much time before the solution or 'application' work began, leaving fewer sessions to implement theory

that had been learnt “5 months on”. As a process, it was felt it was important to have the time to go back and test principles of their solutions and refine the challenge if they needed to.

### *Facilitation of the programme*

- 4.25 Facilitation of the programme appears to be of a high quality and utilises the skills and expertise of its facilitation team. In particular, participants shared detailed insights into the effectiveness of residentials, the CEIC programme facilitators and face-to-face delivery.
- 4.26 The residential was mentioned multiple times across focus groups and interviews as participants’ favourite element of the 10-month programme. Participants described the team-building activities used during the ELE as fun and engaging, and that they helped establish strong relationships with fellow cohort members from the outset. Many individuals shared their enjoyment of the ‘active learning’ approach used during the trip, which encouraged participants to think differently and went beyond the traditional lecture style. Other participants noted their enjoyment of informal elements of the residential, including evenings and dinners where they had the opportunity to get to know other people on their cohort.
- 4.27 Participants spoke highly of the quality of facilitation throughout the programme, noting the approachable, friendly and supportive nature of cohort facilitators. The teaching received through the CEIC programme was regarded highly by participants, who shared how refreshing and inspiring it was to see facilitators truly invested and passionate about their role.
- 4.28 Many participants appreciated the helpful, open feedback they received from course facilitators during the process. Cohort members felt they had their own agency and that facilitators gave them the freedom to drive their challenges forward themselves, and not rely too

much on them. In this sense, they viewed facilitators as critical friends, who provided light touch support where needed throughout the 10-month period.

- 4.29 Furthermore, participants noted their enjoyment of the additional guests invited to present throughout the course. Many people felt the programme had found the right balance of external involvement, noting that the frequency of guest speakers worked well. One stakeholder felt that it might be more valuable to weight these speakers more heavily at the start of the programme, to further spark ideas amongst participants.
- 4.30 Regarding the style of delivery, participants enjoyed the face-to-face element of the programme, noting it was fundamental for building trust and strengthening relationships within their CoP and with facilitators. Some participants mentioned that they had attended both online and face-to-face sessions, and that certain types of activities did not lend themselves well to being carried out remotely. As such, most participants preferred the in-person nature of the CEIC programme and enjoyed the opportunity to have a day away from the office, and separate course work from working from home.
- 4.31 All participants engaged during the mid-term evaluation shared that due to the effectiveness and enjoyment of course delivery, they would undertake the programme again if given the opportunity.

#### *Barriers to engagement from participants*

- 4.32 In terms of barriers, participants noted a small number of issues that affected their engagement with the programme.
- 4.33 Firstly, some participants mentioned that managing their capacity between work and the CEIC programme was a challenge. It was noted that support from their own employer was often limited, which made it more challenging to commit time into certain elements of the programme. For example, being able to fill in time-consuming paperwork, as part of the Operation's monitoring for the programme,

such as surveys and reflection work. These issues were further heightened if participants missed a session and then had to catch up in their own time.

- 4.34 Another barrier to engagement for some participants was experiencing drop-out or lack of commitment within the programme. A small number of individuals noted that some members of their challenge group had left, which changed the group dynamic and personal experience for the duration of the course. When this happened, participants had to either join a different challenge group or combine with another to ensure sufficient numbers. While some participants noted some benefits to these situations, in that their challenge and solution became more focused, drop-outs had impacts on the momentum of ideas and being able to push them forward. For other participants, some group members who were responsible for setting the challenge and potential solutions, and who had also assumed key CoP roles, missed several sessions. This meant that other team members were left struggling to continue the work, particularly because they didn't fully understand that idea from the outset.
- 4.35 One participant expressed issues in the way that challenges were pitched / structured. It was felt that early on in the programme, participants were driven down the route of two challenges that didn't work for everyone in the cohort. In this sense, it was felt that the focus of challenges narrowed too quickly, without giving participants the opportunity to understand more about what they were doing and how that might align with their work. This left some participants in one group working on a challenge they didn't feel was that relevant to their organisation, creating a sense of an 'artificial CoP'. As a result, the participant hasn't been involved in the solution since the end of the course, and instead, has formed their own CoP of people drawn from outside the programme. It was suggested that future cohorts might benefit from having the opportunity to change challenge groups or by



having more challenges to work on from the outset, to ensure they are relevant to all participants.

- 4.36 While participants were confident that the solution's they had developed during the programme were strong, there was also some concern about the ability to execute and implement these after the programme ended due to capacity issues. One participant, for example, shared that the scale of their solution was too big to take forward on their own, while all working in full-time roles. As such, they wished to create a broader group of people or governing body who could oversee activities to develop the solution, for example, arranging meetings, scoping potential contacts / funding etc.

#### *Future improvements / support*

- 4.37 In addition to the comments outlined throughout this section, participants also shared a number of themes regarding potential future improvements and support they wish to receive from the CEIC programme.
- 4.38 Firstly, participants were keen to have more clarity over what to expect from their involvement in the programme from the outset. A simple issue that participants had was that they didn't quite understand what to expect from the programme and how to communicate about it. Some participants suggested that a short video or one-page summary infographic on the purpose and delivery of CEIC would be beneficial to share with prospective participants during the application / recruitment process. This could help better advertise the benefits of the programme, that weren't fully understood by participants until engaged:

*"If it was sold as something that could truly benefit your organisation for partnership working and saving money, it would probably go down a lot better in terms of understanding and engagement" (Participant – SBR2)*

- 4.39 Another area of support from CEIC that participants were eager to see was support that extended beyond the life cycle of the programme. Although many participants continue to collaborate in their CoP outside of the programme, it was shared that participants often leave with the beginnings of a solution that needs to be built on for much longer than the 10-month period. As such, participants had a desire for CEIC to offer post-programme support, such as a 3-6-month check points, to monitor CoP progress. Participants also shared that they would like support on how to pitch solutions back to their organisations and senior team members, to secure buy-in and sometimes resources needed to embed their learnings. Another suggestion was the opportunity to develop a platform for alumni and resource sharing. It was shared that it would be useful to have a Linked In group so that past / current participants can contact one another and share best practice on how solutions have been able to continue to progress.
- 4.40 Finally, participants shared that the opportunity for the programme to offer an element of certification or accreditation might give more gravitas to prospective participants and help maintain commitment within the programme. It was felt that accreditation are the kinds of incentives that people need when they are faced with competing priorities.

## 5. Operation progress

- 5.1 The progress of the CEIC programme is measured by nine Operational-level indicators, split across the two regions of East Wales and West Wales and the Valleys. These are set out in the tables below.
- 5.2 At this mid-point in its delivery, stakeholders are confident – despite some initial delays - that the Operation is on track and making good progress towards achieving its Operation-level output indicators.

### *Output indicators*

**Table 1: Progress against output indicators (WWV): cumulative achievement to date and delivery profile to date, August 2022**

| Indicators WWV |  |   |  |                      |
|----------------|--|---|--|----------------------|
| Indicator Code | Indicator  | Cumulative Achievement to Date (Aug 22) | Delivery Profile Target to Date (Aug 22) | Variance to Date (%) |
| 3425           | Number of projects targeting public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level                        | 1                                       | 1  | 0%                   |
| 3426           | Number of methods, processes and tools being developed with support  | 2                                       | 7  | -90%                 |
| 3427           | Number of entities participating in projects target public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level | 32                                      | 16                                       | 100%                 |
| 3428           | Number of new methods, procedures, and tools developed and disseminated  | 0                                       | 4  | -100%                |

Source: CEIC WWV progress report

**Table 2: Progress against output indicators (EW): cumulative achievement to date and delivery profile to date, August 2022**

| Indicators EW  |  |                                |                                 |                      |
|----------------|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| Indicator Code | Indicator  | Cumulative Achievement to Date | Delivery Profile Target to Date | Variance to Date (%) |
| 3425           | Number of projects targeting public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level                        | 1                              | 1                               | 0%                   |
| 3426           | Number of methods, processes and tools being developed with support  | 1                              | 6                               | -90%                 |
| 3427           | Number of entities participating in projects target public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level | 32                             | 10                              | 220%                 |
| 3428           | Number of new methods, procedures, and tools developed and supported   | 0                              | 4                               | -100%                |

Source: CEIC EW progress report

- 5.3 Because of delays and the ongoing nature of the cohorts at the Mid-term stage of evaluation, it cannot yet be claimed that certain output targets have been met. However, with four cohorts completed, and the others either in process or due to start imminently, it can be forecasted that there will be positive progress made by the Final Evaluation – boding well for the targets being met.

*Number of projects targeting public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level*

- 5.4 Both EW and WWV have hit the target for this output indicator.

*Number of methods, processes and tools being developed with support*

- 5.5 To date, the Operation has approved one output in EW and two in WWV for this indicator. The approval for CCR1 to be accepted for this indicator was given in June 2022 and for SBR1 on the 6<sup>th</sup> October 2022.

*Number of entities participating in projects target public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level*

- 5.6 Both regions significantly above target for this output indicator.

*Number of new methods, procedures, and tools developed and disseminated*

- 5.7 To date, no outputs have been claimed against the results indicator for WWV or EW. The CEIC team has developed case studies evidencing methods, processes and tools being developed and disseminated, but are currently waiting for final approval from WEFO before they can be officially claimed.

**Delivery against Cross-Cutting Themes**

- 5.8 The three cross cutting themes identified in the 2014-20 Programmes are Equal Opportunities and Gender Mainstreaming (including the Welsh Language), Sustainable Development and Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion.
- 5.9 The other output targets for the CEIC programme are part of the commitment to the CCTs, with sustainability as the most prominent cross-cutting theme encompassed by the development of an 'Eco-Code' and a local sustainable supply chain. The CCT of poverty reduction and social inclusion is also considered by having a homelessness charity on the cohort addressing wider societal issues.

- 5.10 So far, the delivery of the Operation has shown considerable cognisance of the CCTs and implemented practices throughout. The CEIC programme's key output targets/implementations for CCTs are as follows:

*Activity Supporting Speakers of the Welsh Language*

- 5.11 Internal administrative communications and external communications and marketing are in Welsh and English. The CEIC website is fully bilingual, Social Media posts on LinkedIn and Twitter are now in both English and Welsh. Emails are sent in Welsh between team members and WEFO. All electronic communication is sent with the text to inform the recipient that any interaction can be exchanged in Welsh without delay. This has been put into action for a representative of a participating entity for SBR Cohort 3, who is a Welsh speaker and requested all correspondence are written in the Welsh language.
- 5.12 As part of delivering the programme's activities, meetings are delivered in Welsh wherever possible, and incidental Welsh phrases are used as part of workshop delivery. Promotional flyers for Cohorts 2, 3 and 4 have been translated into Welsh, and this will be the practice for all future promotional flyers. All participant letters such as the Letter of Commitment, Welcome Letter, Health Questionnaire and Emergency Contact form are provided in Welsh and English.

*Developing an Eco-code*

- 5.13 The CEIC Eco-code has been co-created by the CEIC programme's team members from both universities. It was approved by WEFO in 2021 and is available to view on the CEIC website. Physical copies of the Eco-code were printed on durable canvas to ensure they are reusable for the lifetime for the project and sustainable. Copies of the Eco-code were on display at all in-person delivery days.

*Local sustainable supply chain development*

- 5.14 The CEIC programme holds an Ambassador Membership with 4theRegion – an alliance of people, businesses and organisations across South West Wales, and delivery days have been held and organised at event spaces that ensure locally sourced catering.
- 5.15 The CEIC programme continues to promote the use of local suppliers and the purchase of sustainable goods and services to everyone engaged with the project, from participants on cohorts to members of the Steering Group.

*Resource Efficiency Measures*

- 5.16 In delivering in-person workshops, all necessary physical resources are purchased in line with the CEIC Eco-code and the organisations' own procurement frameworks. Participants are encouraged to receive all resources digitally, however any paper resources are either 100% recycled or have high recycled content. Wherever possible, other resources are reused to prevent unnecessary purchases.
- 5.17 Digital equipment for delivery has been sourced from previous projects. Where this has not been possible, new equipment has been sourced responsibly in terms of durability and quality. In addition, workshop venues have been sourced based on the availability of digital delivery equipment to prevent unnecessary purchases. As a joint project across two universities, it has been possible to share the majority of equipment to ensure the consumption of materials is kept to a minimum.

*Developing / Engaging CCT Champion*

- 5.18 Eleanor Gardner (CMU) has taken on the role and thus a CCT champion is in place.

## **6. International comparison**

- 6.1 The purpose of this section is to outline a detailed analysis of Circular Economy Innovation programmes in England, Scotland, Wales and further afield in Europe and the United States. It presents information regarding the main objectives set in each country and organisation to identify best practice and learn from other models which may resonate with the CEIC programme.

### **Scotland**

#### *Circular Economy Investment Fund – Zero Waste Scotland*

- 6.2 The Circular Economy Investment Fund (CEIF), powered by Zero Waste Scotland has invested £12.5m in over 60 projects with small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to accelerate the transition to a more circular economy.
- 6.3 Zero Waste Scotland is committed to supporting businesses to implement circular innovations and recognises the impact that grant support can have as projects move towards commercialisation. The Fund is designed to help companies explore circular business practices.
- 6.4 The Fund adopts a place-based approach and is currently working in partnership with organisations as part of its circular cities and regions programme, delivering a tailored programme of business engagement to identify and exploit the key sectors and businesses for circular economy.



- 6.5 CEIF has been supported by the Scottish Government and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Support from ERDF is ending in December 2022. Zero Waste Scotland are currently comparing a successor programme with similar objectives to the CEIF, which will support projects commencing in 2023.

## **Wales**

### *WRAP Cymru*

- 6.6 WRAP Cymru works with governments, businesses and communities to deliver practical solutions to improve resource efficiency around the world. In Wales, WRAP Cymru deliver the Collaborative Change Programme (CCP) by offering strategic and technical support to help LAs develop and deliver detailed plans to achieve the outcomes of Wales' waste strategy and the Beyond Recycling strategy.
- 6.7 LAs may apply for a diverse range of strategic and technical support, as well as communications advice, including:
- Service change support to align delivery with Welsh Government strategies
  - Support for materials and marketing to make the most of waste collected for recycling.
  - Modelling recycling collections options to prepare business cases for innovative changes to service delivery
  - Providing facilities LAs need to ensure they can operate effectively
  - Targeted operational support
  - Communications support for recycling behaviour change and service change

In 2020, the programme supported two LAs to transition to kerbside recycling services. Nearly every LA in Wales is now achieving at least

a 64 per cent recycling rate, making further progress towards 70 per cent by 2025.

### *Circular Revolution*

- 6.8 Designed and led in partnership between Riversimple, Swansea University and the University of Exeter, Circular revolution is a £2.3m business-led Operation focused on circular thinking. The project is focused on helping the practical transformation and transition of businesses to new circular business models in WWV.
- 6.9 The project consists of two core strands of activity:
- 1) Business Outreach: a targeted programme designed to identify businesses in WWV who could benefit from the transition to circular thinking. These businesses are provided with innovation advisory support to help map out potential options for the transition to more circular practices.
  - 2) Innovation projects: six innovative pilot projects with partners to develop best practice solutions to key issues across the business supply chain. The findings of these pilot projects are then disseminated to businesses in WWV.
- 6.10 Unlike CEIC, Circular Revolution has a focus on private sector innovation and circular thinking.

### *Infuse*

- 6.11 Infuse (Innovative Future Services) is a £5.6 million programme led by Monmouthshire County Council, Cardiff University and Y Lab to support LA's in the Cardiff Capital Region to access new skills, methods and tools that improve their capacity and capability to innovate.
- 6.12 Rooted in real-life challenges, the three-year programme is designed to identify and work collaboratively to tackle two thematic areas of

high importance to the Cardiff Capital Region; Accelerating Decarbonisation and Supportive Communities.

- 6.13 The programme is delivered through three 'Labs' that have specific workstreams for participants:
- **The Adaption Lab** – where participants are provided with information and tools to help them understand how to adopt or adapt innovations successfully to suit their context and needs.
  - **The Data Lab** – where participants are provided with tools to help them ask 'good data questions' including data ethics, the different types of data and how these can help inform decision making and data science techniques.
  - **The Procurement Lab** – where individuals learn how to maximise the impact of public spending to achieve broader strategic goals, by providing tool and techniques to ensure value when commissioning or purchasing goods and services.

## England

### *Centre for Circular Economy and Advanced Sustainability*

- 6.14 The Centre for Circular Economy and Advanced Sustainability (CEAS) based at Aston University in Birmingham addresses global pressing challenges such as imposed climate change, rapid population growth, unprecedented degradation of ecosystems, and the limited availability of renewable and non-renewable natural resources.
- 6.15 The overall research approach of the centre is multi-disciplinary, but all the projects developed in the centre will have a clear circular economy context, application, and focus. The project has two main research projects: UKMSN and Low Carbon SMEs.
- 6.16 UKMSN is a £1m research project funded by the EPSRC to compliment the portfolio research networks in the Manufacturing the Future Programme.

- 6.17 Low Carbon SMEs aims to transform businesses for a sustainable future. The project develops a practical approach to making change happen by providing free, expert energy efficiency support and advice to SMEs.
- 6.18 The project brings together the best academic minds, industrial expertise, and a solid understanding of the low carbon drivers that impact upon SMEs. This results in a holistic approach to energy efficiency challenges, including specialist strategies and guidance to set businesses on a pathway to carbon reduction.

*The Circular Economy Innovation Network, Innovate UK*

- 6.19 The Circular Economy Innovation Network (CEIN) supported by Innovate UK aims to create stronger, more collaborative and resilient industries working together to create net zero through circular innovation.
- 6.20 CEIN have launched three new challenge communities (wool, aluminium, and chemicals) that will collaborate to co-create a Circular Innovation Action Plan in their Sector. The Action Plan will identify the key sectoral barriers to net zero and how the circular economy can be used as a framework to overcome these barriers.
- 6.21 Funding opportunities are open to UK registered businesses and can apply for a share of up to £1.5m to research, test and develop step-change circular economy approaches.

*Doughnut Economics Action Lab (DEAL)*

- 6.22 DEAL is part of an emerging global movement of new economic thinking and doing. The overall aim is to help create 21<sup>st</sup> century economics that are regenerative and distributive by design, to be able to meet the needs of all people within the means of the living planet.

- 6.23 DEAL was founded as a community interest Company in July 2019, and the online Community platform was launched in September 2020.
- 6.24 The Action Lab's approach to economic transformation is to: reframe economic narratives, influence strategic policy and to innovate with the pioneering changemakers of the deal community.

## Europe

### France

*The Institut de l'économie circulaire (French Circular Economy Institute)*

- 6.25 The Institut de l'économie circulaire has presented 10 initiatives implemented in four French regions (Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, Bretagne, Normandie and Nouvelle-Aquitaine) as part of a national programme to generate synergies between businesses (*Programme National de Synergies Inter-Entreprises - PNSI*).
- 6.26 This ambitious scheme was implemented with support from the French Environment and Energy Management Agency (ADEME) and the Environment ministry. The PNSI, launched in July 2015, has led to the formation of a network of more than 500 companies that have participated in a range of workshops to identify opportunities for synergies between businesses in the various territories. Operational support has also been provided to businesses, to help them seize the most promising opportunities.

### Denmark

*Kaospilot*

- 6.27 The Kaospilot school was founded in Aarhus in Denmark in 1991 and is based on a cultural and social youth organisation called Frontrunners, as a response to the emerging need for a new type of

education. The organisation has firm roots in activism culture and is inspired by the Danish folk high school and the Danish co-operative movement.

- 6.28 Kaospilot has now opened a range of schools across Europe, in Rotterdam, Bern, Oslo and Malmö.
- 6.29 Courses include a 3-year Enterprising Leadership Program, professional programs and bespoke consulting services. Kaospilot aims to create a dynamic interplay between the aspirations of students and participants, the learning objectives and the teaching projects. The teaching approach stems from a philosophical standpoint which is inherently interdisciplinary.
- 6.30 Kaospilot follows 4 key teaching principles; Experimentation, Exploration, Experience and Enterprise.

## **U.S.A.**

### *Grand Challenges Scholars Program*

- 6.31 The Grand Challenges Scholars Program (GCSP) is a global movement that advances a new education paradigm, helping students prepare to change the world for better. The GCSP is a combined curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular program with five competencies. The program is implemented at more than 50 schools around the world, with each institution developing its own specific initiative.
- 6.32 The GCSP helps students develop their research ability, multidisciplinary approaches and interdisciplinary perspectives, innovation and entrepreneurship mindset, global and intercultural competency and social responsibility.

### *Summary*

- 6.33 In summary, undertaking this international comparison (Section 6) has highlighted a lack of programmes operating within the UK and further afield which are of the same scale as the CEIC programme. Specifically, the absence of programmes which support public and third sector organisations to develop new service solutions to enhance productivity and deliver circular economy benefits is notable. As such, the Operation currently fills a niche area of circular economy support in Wales and is playing a fundamental role in upskilling public and third sector organisations.

## **7. Outcomes and impacts**

- 7.1 This section of the report presents the emerging findings of the mid-term evaluation relating to the CEIC programme's outcomes and impacts, those that occur as a consequence of an intervention's activity.
- 7.2 By nature, outcomes and impacts take time to be realised and reflected in data. This is the case in any evaluation undertaken whilst an intervention is ongoing, but is especially so in the case of the CEIC programme, in which many of the Cohorts and CoPs are ongoing.
- 7.3 The result of these factors is that the findings below are related to the *emerging* effects of the programme and will be developed in the final evaluation.

### **Outcomes of CEIC**

- 7.4 A logic model and assumptions mapping workshop was held in Spring 2022 with the CEIC delivery and project support team as an exercise to support the development of the programme. This included discussion of the anticipated outcomes of the programme which were then discussed during focus groups and in-depth interviews with participants.

7.5 The anticipated outcomes were listed as follows:

- OC1. Develop collaborative regional public and third sector innovation network partnerships that produce new methods and procedures that embed CE principles within partner organisations
- OC2. Enhance the innovation capabilities (skills and knowledge) of each partner organisation and in turn the Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs) of the sector and the region
- OC3. Enhance the innovation knowledge & skills of human resources within public sector
- OC4. Increase number of innovation active public sector practitioners
- OC5. Increase productivity in public service organisations and city regions
- OC6. Enhance the dynamic capabilities of public service organisations
- OC7. Develop regional collaborative Communities of Practice that become sustainable 'Regional Innovation networks'.<sup>11</sup>

7.6 When asked about the outcomes and impacts on an individual level, participants of the programme shared their involvement in CEIC had been very insightful. Fundamentally, all individuals echoed one participant's view that the programme had provided them with knowledge of CE they previously were unfamiliar with as well as professional workplace tools they can implement as a result of the programme.

7.7 With regard to leadership and management, participants felt they had the opportunity to reflect on their own styles through participating in

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<sup>11</sup> Where CoPs are a core part of the delivery of activities for the programme in each cohort, Regional Innovation Networks are what they create / contribute towards in a broader sense for the region by creating networks of Circular Innovation.



the programme. The way that some participants now think, engage with and lead people has pivoted, along with ensuring that solutions and ideas are driven by what the customer needs, rather than primarily informed by leaders in organisations.

- 7.8 The academic focus of the programme was evident in outcomes shared by participants, namely giving participants the ability to let the evidence, research and process generate something that's right for the right reasons within their organisations.
- 7.9 One important revelation which came out of speaking with participants was that the relationships that participants had made within cohorts was incredibly positive. One participant shared that their experience in their cohort reinforced the importance of sharing knowledge and experiences. Furthermore, several participants highlighted how useful collaboration with people who are working in the same field was in fostering innovative thinking. The shared experiences within the cohorts meant that all participants navigated things at the same time.
- 7.10 Furthermore, the group experience participants had was described by one participant as 'definitely the highlight' of the programme, and that they would do it again, in another cohort. This was because the programme 'gets people involved who don't usually think about wider issues and gives them the tools to employ them'. CEIC was described as the ideal vehicle for taking that forward. This has already been explored in more detail in Section 4.

#### *Unexpected outcomes*

- 7.11 In addition to the outcomes outlined above, CEIC also appears to be contributing to the realisation of wider, unexpected outcomes upon operational stakeholders.
- 7.12 From the perspective of the delivery team, the programme had led to an observable change in their own behaviour, as well as an increase in understanding of the circular economy. Several members of the delivery team shared that their involvement with the programme had

made them consider their own impact on the environment and had led to incremental behaviour changes in their personal lives such as remembering to switch off lights and reducing household waste. As such, the programme is having an impact on not only the knowledge and behaviour of its participants, but also those responsible for delivering the Operation.

## Impacts

7.13 Similarly, the anticipated impacts are listed below. These impacts were explored with regard to the assumptions that underpin the relationship between the impacts and outcomes.

- IM1. Enhanced regional working in public service entities
- IM2. Enhanced collaborative problem solving capabilities between PS entities
- IM3. Improved productivity of public service entities regarding environmental interventions, in particular those related with Circular Economy
- IM4. Enhanced dynamic capabilities & absorptive capacity of PS entities
- IM5. Reduced environmental impact of PS entities.

7.14 On an organisational level, a key impact of the programme is the dissemination of learnings and knowledge that transfer back to organisations, to increase awareness more broadly. The scale of interventions was discussed, with one participant sharing that awareness has been increased on two levels: making a change within their workforce, tenants and communities also contributes to greater understanding of the wider climate change issue. Further to this, they outlined how the content learned in their cohort will become a training resource for information dissemination across their organisation. The tenants communicating with the wider community will interpret this learning into issues applicable to their own stakeholders demonstrating a wider impact than just at a cohort level.

- 7.15 Another participant felt that the CEIC programme will not only result in a large impact on the wider food system in Wales, but also act as an enabler. It is anticipated that the programme in this context will unlock opportunities for smaller scale growing to supplement larger scale Agri-processes, demonstrating specific impact on this sector.
- 7.16 Examples of intended long-term impacts and benefits of solutions being developed by programme participants, are outlined in the case study section below.

#### *Intended long-term impacts*

- 7.17 The intended impacts refer to the longer-term, and, in some cases, more indirect changes arising as a result of the CEIC programme. This section includes long-term impacts identified through engagement with the CEIC delivery team, discussed in the logic model and assumptions workshop. At the summative stage, these anticipated long-term impacts will be reviewed.
- 7.18 Delivery team stakeholders shared anticipated long-term impacts to go beyond participants, and to start influencing policy makers. The lobbying role that the CEIC programme could have in future could put pressure on curriculum development.
- 7.19 It was anticipated by some stakeholders that intra-organisational development will also be of impact as a result of the CEIC programme, building upon cross-organisational connections made already to aid the programme's development and delivery. The ability to affect behaviour change more widely would address two of the listed impacts above.

#### **Counterfactual**

- 7.20 Exploring the counterfactual (that is, what change would and would not have occurred in the absence of the CEIC programme) will be

carried at the summative evaluation stage when a greater amount of quantitative data about the Operation's effects is available.

- 7.21 Initial feedback from participants of the programme suggests that they would not have been able to develop solutions and increased their innovation and circular economy knowledge in the absence of the Operation, due to barriers such as a lack of contacts, capacity, time and resources.
- 7.22 As explored in Section 6, the international comparison demonstrates the absence of other programmes which support public and third sector organisations to develop new service solutions to enhance productivity and deliver circular economy benefits.

### **Case Studies**

- 7.23 As part of the formative evaluation, the evaluation team engaged with a number of participants to explore their stories from involvement with the CEIC programme and the long-term plan and impact of solutions being developed.
- 7.24 In this section, we present five case studies of programme participants, covering their motivations for joining the CEIC programme, the challenge they worked to solve and current progress in the solutions that were developed during their time as part of the Operation.

Figure 3: Case Study 1 - Reimagining the value of Welsh Wool products



Circular Economy  
Innovation Communities

## CEIC Case Study: Reimagining the value of Welsh wool products

From the views of two participants within the **SBR 2: Decarbonisation of social housing** cohort.

- Neil Evans – Corporate Energy Officer, Carmarthenshire County Council
- Adam West – Research Manager, Coastal Housing Swansea

### MOTIVATIONS FOR JOINING CEIC

Neil and Adam wanted to join CEIC for a number of reasons. The programme presented the opportunity to meet like-minded people and transfer / implement lessons into their own work within their organisations.

For Adam, working at a housing association meant there was significant scope to talk about implementing circular solutions across different departments such as IT, HR and facilities. Working for a local authority, Neil felt CEIC came at the right time politically, due to the academic backing of the programme and its alignment with the agenda of Carmarthenshire Council and Welsh Government.



COASTAL  
Housing Group



### THE CHALLENGE

*"How might we..... devise an organisation co-operative for local authority, producers, residents/businesses so that local economic development is satisfied taking into account procurement law, value for money, foundational economy and sustainable practices."*

Neil and Adam described the organic process of working through their problem in their challenge group. Initial conversations for the challenge came from discussions around the quality of Welsh building stock, and how Wales has roughly 3 million people to 12 million sheep – equating to approximately four sheep per person.

These conversations were the beginning of ideation around how they could develop a circular solution to regenerate the rural economy in Wales. They explained that the wool market has seen a dramatic decline in recent years, with research suggesting that low costs leave little financial incentives for farmers to trade or sell wool products. It was from here that Neil and Adam's challenge group settled on the idea of finding a way to mainstream Welsh wool as material to use for housing / building insulation in Wales.

### THE SOLUTION

At the end of the programme, Neil and Adam's challenge group had developed an outline idea for a wool insulation product that served multiple circular purposes and could create a new market / industry. Firstly, it would be reusable insulation that could be removed from buildings and put into other housing stock. Secondly, the product could be re-purposed by putting it back into farms as compost, to effectively fertilise the land and support further, sustainable production. Finally, a broader use could be as recycled wool for clothing.

Neil and Adam shared that they were now looking at ways to turn their idea into a reality. They shared that their CoP they had been working in collaboration with Bangor University and a group in Anglesey to take the idea forward. This includes piloting the development of mobile scouring units on the ground, to begin generating a customer base for the solution.



**Figure 4: Case Study 2 - Developing a tool for sustainable workforce development and tenant engagement**



Circular Economy  
Innovation Communities

## **CEIC Case Study:** **Developing a tool for sustainable workforce development and tenant engagement**

From the views of **Amanda Toutt:**

- Organisational Development  
Business Partner at Hafod Housing
- Participant in the **SBR 2 - Decarbonisation of Social Housing** cohort

### **MOTIVATIONS FOR JOINING CEIC**

Amanda's initial attraction to CEIC was the opportunity to look at skill development for her own organisation. Amanda shared that she has done previous work with Academy Wales on where Hafod Housing can develop skills opportunities to incorporate into learning programmes.

Another draw into the programme was the chance to be involved in something that looked at two hugely applicable areas within her work: the circular economy and sustainability, topics that apply to all roles within Hafod Housing.

Amanda had a desire to use CEIC to think about what her organisation needed around skills development for sustainability in the housing sector, and how she could collaborate with other organisations to achieve this.



### **THE CHALLENGE**

Amanda initially joined a challenge group focused on developing an understanding and suite of resources for sustainable workforce development. Due to drop-out within her group, she merged with another challenge group looking at tenant engagement, which sparked ideas for how staff can engage tenants effectively around sustainability.

She described this as a happy accident, whereby the challenge ended up filling multiple purposes, looking at how they could develop a tool that would both engage tenants but also be used for workforce development.

### **THE SOLUTION**

Amanda described how her CoP ran multiple sessions looking at solutions that met multiple needs, were accessible and could be used by lots of people. In the end, her CoP decided to produce a collaborative video, from the views of different stakeholders, explaining information about retrofitting homes and what that means for tenants.

The **video** includes interviews with tenants about their understanding of climate change, and discussions around what the impact of changes will be moving forward. For Amanda, the video will form part of a suite of training resources that can be used during induction, but will also be available to Hafod's neighbourhood coaches, who can show the video to tenants and talk to them about any concerns they have.

As an output of CEIC, the video is something that Hafod can point their tenants towards, but also make the lives of their workforce professionals (including trader teams and surveyors) easier:

### **WIDER ACTION**

Alongside the solution Amanda developed in her challenge group, she has also written sustainability behaviours into Hafod Housing's Behaviour Framework, based on some of the things she learnt during her time on CEIC.

The framework is applicable to everyone in her organisation, including Executive and senior management teams. From April 2022, over 1243 employees were trained using the framework, that is now threaded throughout the organisations performance management systems, strategies and employee lifecycle. Amanda and her colleagues have established a communications plan and project group to ensure the framework embeds throughout the organisations practices, including recruitment, induction, commissioning and programme design.

**Figure 5: Case Study 3 - Developing a carbon literacy training programme (CLTP) adaptable to different areas of the public sector**



## **CEIC Case Study:** **Developing a carbon literacy training programme (CLTP) adaptable to different areas of the public sector**

From the views of **Amanda Davies**:

- Service Improvement Manager at Swansea Bay University Health Board (SBUHB)
- Participant in the **SBR 3 – Health and Wellbeing** cohort



### **MOTIVATIONS FOR JOINING CEIC**

Amanda initially found out about CEIC through being recommended to join the programme by her previous manager at Public Health Wales (PHW) who thought the objectives of the programme aligned with Amanda's personal and professional interests.

Amanda shared that she had a keen interest in sustainability. Her previous role at PHW included her leading on the procurement and repurposing of recycled and second-hand office furniture. Her focus in her current role is looking at people's health and well-being in the broader sense across a number of projects relating to the circular economy and sustainability. As such, she saw CEIC as an opportunity to expand her learning, as well as meet like-minded people working in the same space.



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Bae Abertawe  
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### **THE CHALLENGE**

Amanda described how her challenge group settled on their challenge about halfway through the programme. The idea for their challenge came from conversations around the genericness of existing CLTP and whether it would be possible to design a bespoke CLTP for the public sector that can be used and applied to different organisations.

Amanda shared that many existing CLTP do not contain granular detail for specific roles or industries. It was recognised that there could be a number of benefits from developing a CLTP with bespoke workstreams so that depending on which area of the public sector someone works in, whether it's a local authority or housing association or the NHS, they could have a specific element of CLT that would be applicable to their specific work area. For example, someone working within health might focus on inhaler recycling or facemasks, whereas someone working in housing might receive an element that looks at the reusing furniture.

### **THE SOLUTION**

At the end of the programme, Amanda's CoP developed a video forming part of a CLTP. As part of her workstream, she worked in collaboration with the NHS to develop a bespoke element of the training for healthcare staff, which has now been taken forward by her organisation.

As a result, when any new member of staff comes into the NHS, regardless of whether they're a porter or a cleaner or a consultant, they go through statutory induction training, which requires them to watch the video. The aim is that everyone can take away ideas about what it is that they can do within their roles to promote sustainability.

Amanda shared that this is only the start of the journey of their solution. At the moment, her CoP are trying to raise awareness of the video and give people the opportunity to have an active role in the training, as it develops. Swansea UHB are developing a sustainability page where the video will be posted, to promote better practices across the organisation.

## Figure 6: Case Study 4 - Opportunities to certify sustainable materials for the development of social housing

7.25 The views of two participants from the same challenge group have been merged to formulate this case study.



### CEIC Case Study: Opportunities to certify sustainable materials for the development of social housing

From the views of participants in the  
**CCR 1 – Decarbonisation of Social  
Housing** cohort:

- Anthony Williams: Technical Services Manager at Wales & West Housing (WWH)
- Gerald Charles: Contracts Manager Merthyr Valleys Homes (MVH)

#### MOTIVATIONS FOR JOINING CEIC

Anthony and Gerald wanted to join CEIC for a number of reasons.

Anthony initially joined the CEIC programme to build relationships with other people working in Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) and learn more about existing sustainability and decarbonisation research taking place across the sector. Prior to joining CEIC, Anthony didn't have any knowledge about the circular economy, but thought some of the tools and techniques being promoted by the programme aligned with the systems thinking approach that WWH use as a way of working.

Gerald was introduced to CEIC by his asset manager and shared that the opportunity to learn new knowledge and skills is never a missed opportunity for him, so he decided to sign up.



#### THE CHALLENGE

At the start of the programme, Anthony and Gerald's challenge group focused on how they could integrate decarbonisation work into normal routine maintenance, in order to improve homes, reduce bills, reduce carbon emissions and take into consideration the well-being of tenants.

The pair described the organic process of this challenge being refined, and in the end, their group decided to focus on something smaller and more specific to their organisations. As they learned and investigated more, they realised the original scope of the challenge was too large to solve in the timeframe for the programme. In the end, they chose to focus on the issues that RSLs currently face in sourcing sustainable, recycled products of both a high quality and sufficient price that could be used for developing social housing.

A key point raised by Gerald was the realisation that each member of their CoP came from a different housing association and different role, yet all faced the same challenges. As such, their involvement in CEIC was not just about developing a solution collaboratively, but what support they could offer each other outside of the programme across a range of issues.

#### THE SOLUTION

Anthony and Gerald's CoP developed an idea whereby they could prototype a 'Kitemark' for materials, so if RSLs wanted to use recycled products, service providers would have confidence that the products they were sourcing had gone through a rigorous accreditation process, and buyers were able to see the trail of its lifecycle.

In terms of developing a long-term plan for the solution, Anthony has begun the next steps for bringing the CoP together to look at ways the solution can be taken forward. It was shared that the group are likely to need a national, governing body to help maintain momentum, and to independently verify the methodology. Meetings are in the process of currently being arranged to explore these options.



**Figure 7: Case Study 5 -Designing digital tools to support community growing**



## **CEIC Case Study:** **Designing digital** **tools to support** **community** **growing**

From the views of **Thomas Marshall**:

- Lead Specialist Advisor (Commercial) at **Natural Resources Wales**
- Participant in the **CCR 3 - Community Growing** cohort

### **MOTIVATIONS FOR JOINING CEIC**

Tom shared a number of motivations for joining the CEIC programme, including the opportunity to develop a new network of contacts working in the community growing space.

He was driven by the opportunity to deliver something that had gone through a rigorous design-thinking process. Within Tom's role, he shared that he wouldn't usually be given the time to spend 10-11 months creating something innovative. As such, he saw CEIC as a rare opportunity to learn new skills and develop new, interesting solutions to community growing challenges.

The themes of CEIC were also viewed by Tom to align with a lot of the work NRW were undertaking at the time he joined his cohort. Within NRW, the organisation is looking at how they can improve links to community groups not just for growing food but for timber and woodland. As a result, the CEIC programme was seen by Tom as a means of pulling all of these areas together.



### **THE CHALLENGE**

The focus of Tom's challenge group was looking at how they could improve the level of information for community food growers to access land and space for growing in Wales.

Tom talked through the process of the challenge and its wording evolving naturally over the course of the cohort. Tom shared that his group ended up tweaking certain words, for example, by focusing less on **land** and more on **space**. His CoP felt that space could refer to something as simple as a warehouse unit or a building, compared to land that might be associated with big open pasture or grassland. The wording was also tweaked from growers to **community** growers, to make the solution less about large agricultural growers, but instead could be relevant to individuals or group of volunteers who want to develop a community growing project but might not know how to find space to do that.

### **THE SOLUTION**

Tom's CoP decided to develop an information portal / digital tool, to give people a place to go if they want to start a community growing venture to see who has land in Wales and who to speak to access it. The tool is designed to be supplemented by additional information on what individuals/groups might need to be successful, potentially in the form of case studies. In essence, their solution is focused on creating a link between growers and landowners.

In terms of the long-term plan for the solution, Tom's CoP have a prototype that's been created using google sites to illustrate what the solution would like to achieve. The next steps include handing this over to another organisation or consortium who can develop the tool and create something that will tangibly give benefit back to community groups and growers. At this stage, the group are creating a pitch that they can present to four or five potential organisations.

In terms of its benefit, Tom hopes the tool will have a wider impact on the food system in Wales and increase the opportunities for smaller scale growing to supplement larger scale agricultural processes.



## 8. Conclusions and Recommendations

- 8.1 This section of the report sets out the conclusions of the formative evaluation and recommendations for its delivery going forward.
- 8.2 The purpose of the formative evaluation stage was to gather data on the performance of the operation in terms of:
- Fit with the intentions and delivery profile stated in the Business Plan and fulfilment of the requirements in the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
  - Performance with relation to the expectations of the funders
  - Benchmarking against other known effective practice.
- 8.3 This report has addressed these key aims and the conclusions are structured both against the Operation's objectives (see Section 3 for discussion of these in greater detail) and against overarching themes of coherence, relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and added value.<sup>12</sup>

### Conclusions against Operation objectives

*Enhance innovation and circular economy knowledge and skills within public sector entities in the City Regions.*

- 8.4 The CEIC programme is evidently contributing to the realisation of increased **innovation** and **circular economy knowledge** and **skills** within the public sector. Feedback from participants at the formative stage demonstrates that the CEIC programme is not only reinforcing the importance of knowledge building and knowledge sharing for regional success, but actively equipping participants with the knowledge and skills required to change their ways of working.
- 8.5 Fundamentally, all individuals engaged with during the formative stage felt their knowledge of circular economy had increased because

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<sup>12</sup> These themes are elements of the EU Better Regulations Framework.

of their involvement with the programme. A significant outcome is participants sharing enjoyment of being encouraged to think differently and build their innovation thinking. Many participants shared examples of them transferring the tools and processes introduced to them during the programme into their own organisations, cascading their learning beyond their own CoP back into their workplace, raising awareness across public sector practices.

*Facilitate and embed closer working relationships between public sector entities within the City Regions.*

- 8.6 At this point in the Operation's delivery, there is also demonstratable evidence that CEIC is forming **long-term relationships** and **networks** between public sector entities. The relationships that public sector entities developed through their cohorts were described by many participants as overwhelmingly positive. A key driver for many individuals entering the programme was the opportunity to network and meet like-minded individuals. Upon reflection of their time on CEIC, the friends and long-term contacts established were listed as the most important benefit from being on the programme.
- 8.7 Participants grew not only as individuals, but shared they also grew as a CoP within their respective cohorts – demonstrating clear growth in trust and collaboration. The working relationships developed during participants' time as part of the CEIC programme have extended beyond the programme's length, with many participants still in contact and actively working with their CoP to embed the solutions they co-created regionally.

*Create strategic and collaborative Communities of Practice with the knowledge and skills to co-create solutions to existing and new public sector challenges in City Regions.*

- 8.8 At the end of their involvement with the programme, a key desire from operational stakeholders is that participants move forward on the

original challenge and achieve some outcomes from their collaboration. At this stage of the evaluation, the case studies produced with participants and outcomes and impacts described (section 7), demonstrate the development of **tangible solutions** as a result of CEIC, that address public sector challenges across the Swansea Bay and Cardiff Capital regions.

- 8.9 In some instances, these solutions are already having a demonstratable impact on the efficiency of public services and infiltrating circular economy literacy across public sector organisations.

## **General conclusions**

### *Coherence and Relevance*

- 8.10 The contextual review undertaken as part of this formative evaluation (see Section 2) demonstrated that the Operation's design appears highly coherent with the policy context surrounding the circular economy and innovation. Relatedly, the Operation's objectives appear to be relevant to the needs of public and third sector organisations in WWV and EW, including the need to increase awareness of the circular economy, bridge the gap in ambition and capacity, and use regional collaboration as a driver for problem solving.
- 8.11 Stakeholders were confident that the Operation is on track to meet its overarching objectives, with evidence that the programme is leading to demonstrable changes in innovation and circular economy thinking, working relationships and regional solutions to public sector challenges at this formative stage.

### *Efficiency*

- 8.12 As discussed in Section 3, the design, delivery and management of the CEIC programme appears to have been working broadly effectively to date, utilising the diverse mixture of experience and

skills of its delivery team. However, stakeholders engaged with through this formative evaluation also reported some concerns they would like to see change over the remainder of the funding period. These were mostly related to the culture of the programme, whereby its governance structure created bureaucracy and collaboration had diminished between the universities since the start of the project. Team members had a desire for stronger alignment between the regions through greater shared learning, and an opportunity to embed project management systems that would increase transparency and allow team members to keep up to date on what everyone is working on and who has ownership of each task.

- 8.13 The delivery of the Operation has faced challenges, particularly with regards to recruitment of participants and retention of members of the delivery teams. One factor associated with the retention of staff was listed in part due to most members of staff being on fixed term contracts, and permanent jobs being viewed as more secure in the current economic crisis.
- 8.14 In terms of recruitment, several considerations were raised as contributing factors to the issues experienced by the delivery team. Firstly, the Operation's launch during Covid-19 created knock-on effects for face-to-face networking opportunities to establish relationships with prospective participants. Secondly, the approach taken to market the programme during the early stages of the Operation involved a lack of strategy and dedicated resource to effectively engage public sector entities. This meant that team members without marketing experience were left responsible for recruitment, whilst the fundamental structures of programme were still being developed. This led to some confusion amongst participants who struggled to understand what was being sold to them during the initial stages of their engagement with the programme. As such, there was a demand from both operational stakeholders and the delivery team for stronger marketing approaches in the future, and

development of a recruitment framework if the programme is to be scaled.

### *Effectiveness*

- 8.15 Feedback from cohort participants demonstrates that the overall facilitation and content of the programme is working effectively and leading to a number of outcomes at both the individual participant and organisational level.
- 8.16 Participants spoke fondly of their relationships with facilitators, noting their patient, professional and supportive approach. The prescriptive nature of cohort themes was enjoyed by the CEIC programme members, who found course content interesting and easy to digest. While sessions were seen as the right length and frequency, it was felt the course might benefit from running bite-size learning in-between monthly workshops for individuals who weren't able to attend a session. This was due to the volume of content included in one day, which set back participants significantly if they missed a workshop. Additionally, several participants felt the structure of CEIC would strengthen significantly by bringing forward the opportunity to apply theoretical tools much earlier on in the course, and to work on their solutions for a longer period.
- 8.17 Future support participants would like to see included the opportunity to receive support beyond the life cycle of cohorts, to check in on the progress of solutions and continue to collaborate with other organisations. There was also a desire for accreditation to help overcome barriers with programme drop out / commitment within CEIC.

## Recommendations

8.18 In line with the findings outlined throughout this report, the evaluation team proposes a number of recommendations for the remainder of the funding period.

### *Operational Recommendations*

- Governance group: the Operation should consider including alumni cohort members within its governance group, to provide a voice for the needs of public sector entities across the two regions. Whilst the current group represent a variety of stakeholder voices, it does not have representation from individuals that the aim of the programme targets.
- The Operation should consider integrating a specific project management tool into its management processes, to increase transparency across the universities and allow team members to keep track of work and ownership of tasks.
- There is an opportunity for better shared learning across universities through HEIs sharing participant feedback from cohorts more regularly. This would support aligning programme delivery across the regions.
- The Operation should consider reviewing existing management structures to reduce perceived bureaucracy and provide a shift in programme culture.

### *Marketing and recruitment recommendations*

- The Operation should consider the development of a targeted recruitment framework for the recruitment of remaining cohorts and future activity, particularly if it is to be scaled into a pan-Wales project.
- In line with the recommendation above, the Operation should allocate dedicated resource focused on marketing



and recruitment to provide effective implementation of the framework in future activity.

- Additionally, whilst the recruitment avenues of word-of-mouth and personal referral have been successful in recent recruitment rounds, there is an opportunity to tap into existing networks to promote the programmes activity, such as the steering group to aid future activity.
- Future activity should also consider the application form content, ensuring questions asked are targeted specifically at cohort participants and their level of knowledge and understanding of their own organization.
- The Operation could benefit from producing a short video or summary infographic outlining the benefits of participation in CEIC, that can be shared with prospective applicants to increase understanding and used to cascade promotion deeper into organisations.

#### *Course delivery recommendations*

8.19 Participants outlined a number of potential improvements that might benefit the overall effectiveness and outcomes of the programme:

- The Operation should explore how they can use baseline information collected through participant application forms, and through innovation audits, to identify and monitor individuals who might need additional support through the programme.
- Consider facilitating recap sessions in-between monthly workshops for participants who missed sessions to catch up and maintain engagement / commitment to the programme.
- Consider building in additional time for the practical application of theory, bringing this content further forward



into the structure of cohort delivery so that participants have longer time to work on their solutions.

- Look at potential ways of offering post-programme support to cohorts, potentially in the form of 3-6-month completion check points, to monitor CoP progress and provide light-touch support in the form of signposting or advice to aid future progression.
- Explore the possibility of developing 'pitch-it' sessions, that offer advice to public sector entities on how to pitch solutions back to their organisations, and secure buy-in and resources sometimes required to embed learnings at an organisational level.
- Alongside its existing conferences, the Operation should explore options for developing an Alumni network or similar, whereby current and past participants can share resources, contacts, questions, as well as best practice on how solutions have been able to continue to progress.
- Explore options for securing accreditation of the CEIC programme, to offer an additional incentive for current and future cohort participants.

## 9. Annexes

### Annex A: Evaluation Methodology

The formative evaluation methodology was designed according to the Operation delivery team's requirements and preferences as outlined in the Invitation to Tender and during the subsequent inception meeting with the Miller Research evaluation team.

The formative evaluation involves the following activities:

- **Desk-based review** of Operation documentation and analysis of management and monitoring data, to develop a comprehensive picture of the programme
- Five **Scoping interviews** with key members of the delivery and project support team to assess delivery and progress, as well as emerging outcomes and impacts
- A **logic model and assumptions mapping workshop** with the CEIC team to discuss the logic model included in the CEIC business plan, gain consensus of progress to date and compile an updated Theory of Change. A copy of the logic model amended is included in Annex B.
- **Focus groups (x3)** with participants across SBR and CCR cohorts, to understand motivations for joining the programme, their experience of participating and emerging benefits / outcomes and impacts. The focus groups comprised of:

| Focus Group 1                | Focus Group 2            | Focus Group 3                |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| 8 June 2022                  | 21 June 2022             | 3 August 2022                |
| Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) | Swansea Bay Region (SBR) | Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) |
| Cohort 4                     | Mixed Cohorts            | Mixed Cohorts                |

- **In-depth interviews (x7)** with programme participants to develop case studies around the stories of CEIC and solutions developed / being developed.
- **Analysis and Reporting:** all fieldwork data collected during the formative stage was analysed qualitatively using mind mapping software to draw out key themes around the evaluations aims and

objectives. A draft report was produced for the CEIC team for the w/c 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2022.

## Annex B: Topic Guides

### *CEIC scoping interview topic guide*

| Intro   |  |
|---|--|
| Can you tell me about yourself and your role?   |  |
| What is your involvement with the CEIC programme?   |  |
| Needs   |  |
| Why is there a need for a programme like CEIC? What (if any) market failures does it look to solve? |  |
| What's the benefit of a circular economy approach to the public sector?                             |  |
| Why is it important to adopt a regional approach to innovation and CE delivery?                     |  |
| What has the demand been like for a programme like CEIC?  |  |
| Objectives  |  |
| How confident are you that CEIC will achieve their objectives?                                      |  |
| How important is cohort working / CoPs?   |  |
| Inputs/Resources  |  |
| How effective has management of the programme been so far?  |  |
| Does the governance structure work well?  |  |
| What is the relationship like between the partner universities?                                     |  |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Is the programme of the right scale to achieve its objectives?  |  |
| How effective has the monitoring and evaluation of CEIC been so far?  |  |
| Are resources adequate to deliver the objectives?   |  |
| Would you change anything about the design of the programme?  |  |
| How effective has marketing / promotion of the programme been?  |  |
| <b>Activities</b>   |  |
| <p>What has the process been like for recruitment of cohorts – level of interest within Public Sector orgs?</p> <p>Recruitment of third sector?</p> <p>What have been some of the barriers to more people engaging with CEIC?</p> |  |
| What does the profile of <b>participants</b> currently look like?   |  |
| <p>How successful has delivery been of the cohorts so far?</p> <p>Has covid had any impact on cohort delivery?</p>  |  |
| Does any inter-cohort collaboration take place?   |  |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| How did they choose the themes of the cohorts? Proposed by organisations or chosen by university then sent out? |  |
| How many cohorts have been able to take place?  |  |
| What wider activities are CEIC undertaking outside of the cohorts?<br>Academic research?                        |  |
| How does CE feed into the programme's design?   |  |
| <b>Outputs</b>  |  |
| What data is currently being monitored? – lifecycle of the programme?   |  |
| In your opinion, what data does the evaluation need to focus on capturing?                                      |  |
| Is the CEIC Programme on track to meet targets?   |  |
| <b>Outcomes</b>   |  |
| Have any outcomes resulted from publicity activities?   |  |
| What would be the ideal outcomes from CEIC? What does a successful CEIC programme look like to you?             |  |
| Have you seen any emerging impacts from the cohorts that have already been delivered?                           |  |
| <b>Cross Cutting Themes</b>   |  |
| Do you think CEIC is addressing wider issues and impacts? Such as poverty,                                      |  |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| sustainability, gender mainstreaming, Welsh language?  |  |
| How are the activities helping achieve the cross-cutting themes?   |  |
| <b>Barriers/External Factors</b>   |  |
| Can you think of any external factors or barriers which have impacted upon the delivery of CEIC and its activities?                        |  |
| <b>Recommendations</b>   |  |
| At this point, do you have any comments or recommendations on how CEIC can improve or alter its current activities to be delivered better? |  |
| <b>Close</b>   |  |
| Do you have any other final comments?  |  |

*CEIC Participant workshop topic guide:*

| <b>Theme 1: Motivations for joining the programme</b>   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>What were your motivations for joining the CEIC programme?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Probe for any specific challenges that participants were experiencing.</i></li> <li>- <i>Probe for thoughts on why they think CEIC is important.</i></li> </ul> |  |
| How did you find out about CEIC?  |  |
| Have you felt supported by your organisation in participating?  |  |
| What are you hoping to get out of participating in the programme?   |  |
| <b>Theme 2: Effectiveness of programme delivery &amp; teaching</b>  |  |
| Have you found the content / teaching on the programme to be accessible and understandable?   |  |
| Have you found the COP approach for cohort working to be successful?  |  |
| <p>To what extent is informal collaboration taking place within the cohorts?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Prompt for any benefits of this.</i></li> </ul>  |  |
| Has the in-person delivery been effective?  |  |
| <p>How would you describe the quality of the facilitation?</p> <p><i>Prompts:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Engaging?</i></li> </ul>  |  |



|  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Committed?</i></li> <li>- <i>Knowledgeable?</i></li> </ul>   |  |
| Do you think the programme is of a sufficient length and intensity to deliver what you were looking for?   |  |
| <p>What is your favourite aspect of the programme?</p> <p>What has been your least favourite aspect?</p>   |  |
| <b>Theme 3: Benefit and impact on participants / organisations</b>   |  |
| <p>In what way has the CEIC programme benefitted you?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Probe for examples of impact on participants own behaviours</i></li> <li>- <i>Probe for examples of impact at an organisational level</i></li> </ul> |  |
| <p>How have you used what you've learnt in the programme and applied it in your organisation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Probe for examples of methods / processes being developed</i></li> </ul>                                     |  |
| <p>Have you felt sufficiently supported by CEIC and by your employer in embedding what you've learnt into your organisation?</p> <p><i>N.B this may not be applicable to all participants.</i></p>   |  |

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  |  |
| How has your knowledge of the Circular Economy developed since you joined the CEIC programme?  |  |
| What do you think the legacy of your participation in CEIC will be?  |  |
| Have you learnt anything that you didn't expect?   |  |
| Do you anticipate continuing to work together with you COP / other cohort members after the programme?   |  |
| <b>Theme 4: Future of CEIC / improvements to delivery:</b>   |  |
| If you could make any improvements to delivery of the remainder of the programme, what would they be?  |  |
| Are there any other cohort challenges / themes you'd like to see CEIC explore?   |  |
| <p>Are you aware of any alternative programmes that you would consider joining, if CEIC didn't exist?</p> <p><i>Probe for thoughts on what they would have done if they hadn't joined the programme.</i></p> |  |
| Any other final comments.  |  |

*In-depth interview/ Case study Topic Guide:*

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>Background to participants:</p> <p><i>Introductory questions to learn more about how the journey with CEIC began – setting the scene.</i></p>   |  |
| Can you tell me about your role within your organisation, and in what sector it operates?  |  |
| Which cohort were / are you involved in with CEIC?   |  |
| How did you initially find out about the CEIC programme?   |  |
| <p>What were your motivations for joining the programme?</p> <p><i>Probe for any specific challenges that participants were experiencing / thoughts on why they think CEIC is important.</i></p> |  |
| What was the catalyst/ crux in the beginning of your journey with CEIC? (i.e., the point at which the participants committed)  |  |
| Did you have any pre-conceived assumptions about engaging in support programmes like CEIC?   |  |
| <p>Insights into the course:</p>   |  |
| What was the challenge(s) you identified in your challenge group?  |  |
| Who were the key people involved in your group?  |  |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| What were their roles? Did you allocate out specific responsibilities?  |  |
| (if applicable) How did your challenge evolve over the course of the programme?   |  |
| What method / tool used has been the most beneficial to your learning experience?   |  |
| Solution  |  |
| <p>Please could you describe your solution and how it works?</p> <p><i>(N.B. some participants might need to describe this more loosely, due to it being a new process)</i></p>                 |  |
| <p>Can you talk us through the journey of developing the solution you identified?</p> <p><i>I.e., What did this look like? Were there any difficulties? If so, how were these overcome?</i></p> |  |
| Was the solution something you would have expected? Or something completely new to you  |  |
| <p>What have been the keys to success in developing your solution?</p> <p>What will be the keys to success in ensuring it continues beyond the lifetime of CEIC?</p>                            |  |
| Outcomes and Impact   |  |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| In what way has the CEIC programme benefitted you?   |  |
| How have you used what you've learnt in the programme and applied it in your organisation?<br><i>If yes, how easy/difficult was this to implement?</i> |  |
| What (intended) impact has the development and introduction of this solution had at an organisational level?   |  |
| Will your solution have any impacts on things external to your organisation?   |  |
| How has your knowledge of the Circular Economy developed since you joined the CEIC programme?  |  |
| What is the long-term plan for the solution you've developed?  |  |
| Do you think your solution will have a lasting legacy?   |  |
| Looking to the future  |  |
| What have been the main lessons learned from your experience?  |  |
| Would you recommend the programme to colleagues in the future?   |  |
| If you could change anything about your CEIC experience, what would it be and why?   |  |
| Admin / End  |  |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Do you have any final comments?   |  |
| Do you have any photos of your time on CEIC that we could use for the case studies? |  |

| NEED  | INPUTS  | ACTIVITIES  | OUTPUT TARGETS  | OUTCOMES   | IMPACTS   |
|---|---|---|---|--|---|
| <p>Lack of robust regional working mechanisms, within Capital regions, amongst public sector entities</p> <p>Lack of robust public sector innovation institutional capacity: new solutions knowledge &amp; skills</p> | CoP facilitation knowledge & skills                 | Data gathering to frame challenges/ problems with LAS, HEIs, NHS & stakeholders   | Number of projects targeting public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level (1 WWV / 1 EW).                         | Develop collaborative regional public and third sector innovation network partnerships that produce new methods and procedures that embed CE principles within partner organisations | Enhanced regional working in public service entities  |
|   | Stakeholder engagement knowledge & skills           | Facilitated activities to identify knowledge and skills gaps.   | Number of methods, processes and tools being developed with support (7 WWV / 6 EW)  | Enhance the innovation capabilities (skills and knowledge) of each partner organisation and in turn the Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs) of the sector and the region              | Enhanced collaborative problem solving capabilities between PS entities   |
|   | Regional 'broker' reputation                        | Facilitated workshops to develop the Circular Economy knowledge & skills of participants                                  | Number of entities participating in projects target public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level (16 WWV / 10 EW) | Enhance the innovation knowledge & skills of human resources within public sector  | Improved productivity of public service entities regarding environmental interventions, in particular those related with Circular Economy |
|   | Existing relationships with public service entities | Facilitated workshops to develop innovation management knowledge & skills   | Number of new methods, procedures, and tools developed and disseminated (4 WWV / 4 EW)  | Increase number of innovation active public sector practitioners   | Enhanced dynamic capabilities & absorptive capacity of PS entities  |
|   | Innovation tools                                    | Co-creation of new tools and procedures within the Regional Innovation Networks that address identified CE challenges     |   | Increase productivity in public service organizations' and city regions  | Reduced environmental impact of PS entities   |
|   | knowledge input                                     | Creation and facilitation of action learning sets to support participants with implementation of new tools and procedures |   | Enhance the dynamic capabilities of public service organizations'  | Behaviour changes through experiential learning for individuals and their organisations   |
|   | Effective teaching of innovation tools              | Facilitated test & learn 'on-site interventions'  |   | Develop regional collaborative CoP that become sustainable 'Regional Innovation networks'  |   |
|   | Co-creation knowledge                               | Best Practice visits to innovative organisations  |   |  |   |
|   | Facilitation skills                                 | Facilitated participant 'workplace exchange' visits   |   |  |   |
|   | Action Research (Test & Learn) input                | Innovation coach support to provide 1 to 1 innovation support   |   |  |   |
|   | Knowledge transfer input                            | Creation of 'innovation champions'  |   |  |   |

## Annex C: CEIC Logic Model