

Dadansoddi ar gyfer Polisi



Analysis for Policy

Social research

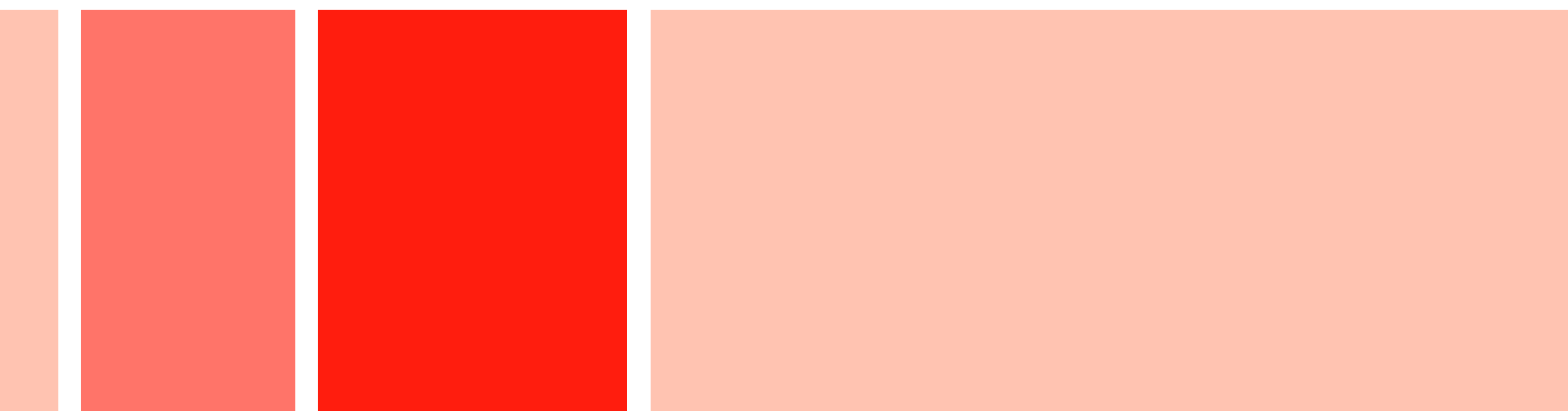
Number: 08/2012



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Invest-to-Save Fund: Interim Evaluation



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Interim Evaluation

Knowledge and Analytical Services

Welsh Government

For further information, please contact:

Ian Jones

Knowledge and Analytical Services

Welsh Government

Cathays Park

Cardiff

CF10 3NQ

Tel: 029 2082 5540

Email: ian.jones2@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Welsh Government Social Research, 2012

ISBN 978 0 7504 7096 4

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Key messages

Invest-to-Save applications and distribution of funding

- Over the first four rounds of the Fund, £39.5 million has been paid to successful applicants, with individual awards ranging from £62,000 to more than £7.3 million. The majority of funded projects (59 per cent) were awarded less than £500,000.
- Many of the projects supported have been collaborative in nature, however, where it is possible to assign these to a specific sector it can be reported that a total of £22.1 million has been paid to NHS projects and £12.3 million paid to local government projects. A further £4.3 million has been paid to projects involving local government in collaboration with other sectors. The differences in levels of funding may, in part, reflect the alternative options for borrowing that are available to local government, but not to the NHS.

Delivery of projects against forecast benefits

- While it is too early to provide a comprehensive assessment, there is no suggestion that the anticipated cost savings of funded projects will not be achieved. There are encouraging signs given that repayments of Invest-to-Save support are being made by some of the projects funded in the early rounds of the Fund.
- Project managers generally reported that the service improvements achieved by their projects to date had been equal to, or greater than, what was expected at the outset.

Additionality of Invest-to-Save funding

- Managers of funded projects tended to report that it was difficult to give a definitive answer as to what would have happened to their projects without Invest-to-Save funding. However, the regulations that limit borrowing options in health services mean that the Invest-to-Save Fund is particularly critical for NHS projects.
- Most projects had been developed to some extent prior to bidding for Invest-to-Save funding – the Fund acted mainly as an enabler to get planned projects off the ground.
- There was a broad consensus among stakeholders interviewed that the provision of Invest-to-Save funding was more beneficial than using the budget for alternative interventions to further agreed objectives.

Bidding process

- Managers of funded projects were mostly very positive about the bidding process. Interviewees from non-funded projects tended to be less positive, with some viewing the bidding process as quite onerous, and the timescale for submitting applications being too short.
- It was suggested by some interviewees that themes could be introduced for each bidding round, allowing the Welsh Government to focus on certain priorities, and applicants to make an informed decision about whether it was an appropriate round in which to bid.
- Some (though not all) stakeholders thought it would be a good idea for the Invest-to-Save officials' panel to include a member drawn from outside the Welsh Government in order to provide an external perspective.

Collaborative working

- The Fund is considered by stakeholders to be successful in encouraging collaboration between organisations. However, there was a perception from some stakeholders that more could be done by the Welsh Government to encourage enduring collaboration across regions and sectors, and that the Fund could play an important role in this.

Impact within funded organisations

- The implementation of Invest-to-Save projects was considered to have more positive than negative impacts within funded organisations.
- Many project managers reported that the time commitment to implementing and maintaining the project was more than they expected. Reasons for this included over-simplification of the project at the outset; internal workforce resistance; and, not anticipating that the project would evolve and grow.

Advocacy and good practice

- All 22 respondents from the funded projects survey would recommend applying for Invest-to-Save funding to other similar organisations. Advocacy from respondents to the non-funded projects survey, while not as high, was still broadly positive.
- Some interviewees from non-funded projects said that if they were to apply again, they would give more consideration to the financial aspects of their bid, and not just concentrate on service improvement.

Recommendations

- Seven recommendations are made, based on the research findings. The rationale for these recommendations can be found in the full report.

- **Recommendation 1:** There is strong support for the continuation of the Invest-to-Save Fund to support cash-releasing public service improvement projects across Wales and as such, commissioning an independent evaluation of actual project outcomes in 12-18 months time (between early and mid 2013) is recommended.

- **Recommendation 2:** Given the borrowing restrictions that govern the NHS, the appraisal of Invest-to-Save bids should recognise how key the Fund can be in supporting projects involving the NHS.

- **Recommendation 3:** There is a continuing need to promote local government engagement with the Fund, but recognising that the sector has access to alternative sources of funding.

- **Recommendation 4:** Consideration should continue to be given to the number and value of projects funded in future rounds and the impact this has on maximising efficiencies.

- **Recommendation 5:** While there are no significant issues with the bidding process as it stands, the evidence suggests that the following refinements might be considered:
 - a) Introducing themes for each round of bidding to target specific Welsh Government priorities.
 - b) Introducing an external member from outside the Welsh Government on the Invest-to-Save officials' panel.
 - c) How Invest-to-Save bids are appraised alongside other forms of Welsh Government support, such as Centrally Retained Capital funding.
 - d) Reviewing the timescale for submitting expressions of interest.

- **Recommendation 6:** The additionality of Invest-to-Save funding should be explored in more detail in the any future independent evaluation.

- **Recommendation 7:** Consideration should be given to how project managers could be encouraged to self-evaluate their projects, with support offered in the form of guidance and/or standardised tools and techniques to demonstrate benefits and savings.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Invest-to-Save Fund was introduced by the Welsh Government in May 2009. The Fund aims to support the delivery of public sector improvement projects that will result in significant cash-releasing efficiency savings through the delivery of effective and citizen-centred services. Investments made from the Fund are fully repayable, but there are no interest charges and there is flexibility on the payback period.

The Invest-to-Save officials' panel agreed in principle that there is a potential future requirement to independently evaluate Invest-to-Save Fund projects when more are completed and there is a richer evidence base around outcomes to draw from. In the meantime, the panel commissioned a small-scale interim evaluation to be undertaken in-house by Welsh Government analysts, the findings of which would inform any future evaluation requirements.

1.2 Research aims and objectives

The aim of the interim evaluation is to consider the progress being made by the Fund and by the projects it has supported; capture any emerging lessons regarding implementation and administration; and identify themes and considerations for any longer term evaluation of the Fund. Specifically, this interim evaluation aims to provide a snapshot of:

- Progress towards the delivery of forecast benefits including efficiency savings;
- The impact of funded projects on applicant organisations and wider public sector improvement;
- The nature and scale of funded projects and the distribution of support across Wales and the public sector;

- How the Fund is implemented and administered (including administrative overhead for the Welsh Government and Fund beneficiaries);
- Benefits and/or dis-benefits of the repayable grant approach as an incentive to change compared with alternative funding options; and
- Experience of applicants, including those that were unsuccessful with their bids.

1.3 Report structure

The rest of this report is organised into a further three chapters. In Chapter 2, the methodology of the research is outlined. Chapter 3 – which makes up the bulk of this report – presents the findings of the interim evaluation, discussing in turn:

- Analysis of applications and distribution of funding
- Delivery of projects against forecast benefits
- Additionality of Invest-to-Save funding
- Bidding process
- Collaborative working
- Impact within funded organisations
- Advocacy and good practice

An overview of the key findings is provided at the start of each sub-section of Chapter 3. Finally, Chapter 4 provides concluding remarks on the interim evaluation and makes recommendations based on the research findings.

2. Methodology

The interim evaluation considered the first four funding rounds of the Invest-to-Save programme and was divided into three stages:

- Stage one: surveys of successful and unsuccessful applicants.
- Stage two: secondary analysis of available data.
- Stage three: qualitative interviews with successful applicants, unsuccessful applicants, and stakeholders.

The methodology for each of these stages is now discussed in turn.

2.1 Stage one: surveys of successful and unsuccessful applicants

Online census surveys, administered using Questback online survey service, were conducted to capture the views of managers from funded and non-funded projects (see Appendices A and B). Two separate questionnaires were developed, designed to capture the views of successful and unsuccessful applicants to the Fund.

Following the development of the questionnaires for the survey stage, three respondents, chosen for their dissimilar roles or experiences of the Fund, took part in a pilot in July 2011. After some small amendments had been made, the fieldwork for the surveys took place over three weeks, from 5 to 23 September 2011.

Initially, the survey attracted a poor number of responses. In order to address this, it was decided that the online survey would be complemented by a telephone survey to capture more responses. This was successful in boosting the number of responses for the funded projects survey, which received **22 responses** from the 48 funded projects (a response rate of 46 per cent). The non-funded projects survey received **nine responses** from 127 non-funded projects – low but not surprising given the precedent of HM Treasury's 2002

evaluation of the Invest-to-Save Budget, which received ten responses from 265 unsuccessful applicants¹.

A profile of the respondents by sector is shown in Table 2.1 (below).

Table 2.1: Responses by sector		
	Number of responses	
Sector	Funded projects survey	Non-funded projects survey
Local Government	11	2
Health	8	5
Other	2	2
TOTAL	22	9
<i>Source: Funded projects survey and non-funded projects survey</i>		

Survey responses were collated and analysed to draw out pertinent and significant findings, which could be further explored during the follow-up qualitative interviews.

2.2 Stage two: secondary analysis of available data

This stage involved analysis of available data on successful and unsuccessful project applications to the first four rounds of the Invest-to-Save Fund, primarily drawn from the Welsh Government's Invest-to-Save Fund database. This allowed a basic quantitative profile to be provided of:

- the number and value of projects awarded funding;
- how applications are distributed across the public sector service areas and regions; and
- the breakdown of funding across public service sectors and regions.

¹ SQW Ltd (in association with MORI). 2002. *Programme Evaluation of the Invest to Save Budget*. London: HM Treasury.

2.3 Stage three: qualitative interviews with successful applicants, unsuccessful applicants, and stakeholders

This stage involved semi-structured interviews with a purposively selected sample of representatives from:

- funded organisations;
- unsuccessful applicants;
- Invest-to-Save Officials' panel members; and
- other relevant stakeholders.

In total, **20 interviews** took place (see Table 2.2). The purpose of the interviews was to explore in more detail, and test the veracity of, the significant themes, questions and issues arising from the survey findings. Being semi-structured, there was also scope to explore issues that were not anticipated or not picked up in the online survey stage.

	Number of interviews
Funded projects	6
Non-funded projects (withdrawn)	3
Non-funded projects (rejected)	3
Stakeholders	8
TOTAL	20

Interviews were mostly conducted face-to-face, but where this was not feasible they were carried out over the telephone. The interviews were conducted by a team of four social researchers from the Welsh Government's Knowledge and Analytical Services.

Three distinct interview topic guides were prepared for: funded projects; non-funded projects; and stakeholders (see Appendices C, D and E). The topics explored in depth in the interviews are set out in Table 2.3, below.

Table 2.3: Topics explored in semi-structured interviews			
Topic	Funded projects	Non-funded projects	Stakeholders
Project origins	.	.	
Bidding process	.	.	.
Collaborative working	.		.
Project benefits and drawbacks	.		
Additionality	.	.	.
Wider impacts	.		.
Best practice	.	.	
Advocacy	.	.	
Success of the Fund			.

At each interview, it was explained that the interview would be audio taped to allow for accurate transcription and analysis. Interviewees were assured that their answers would be anonymous and that they would not be identified in reported findings. The interviews took place during October and November 2011.

3. Findings

3.1 Analysis of applications and distribution of funding

Key findings

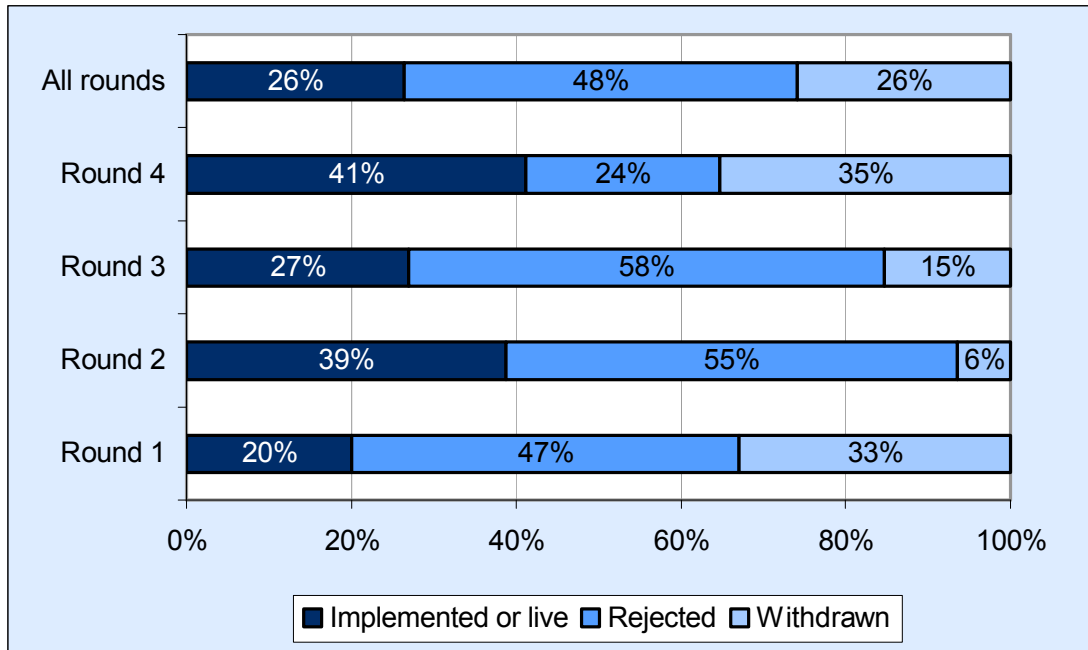
- Over the first four rounds that the Invest-to-Save Fund has run, around one quarter of applications have been successful.
- Since Round One, the number of applications has declined in each round but the number of successful applications appears to be levelling off. The decrease in the number of applications could be partly attributed to the introduction of a minimum project value threshold of £100,000 following Round Two.
- £39.5 million has been paid to successful applicants over the first four rounds of the Fund, with individual awards ranging from £62,000 to more than £7.3 million. The majority of funded projects (59 per cent) were awarded less than £500,000.
- Applications from the NHS have been the most numerous (106) common, followed by local government (52, including those that include partners from other sectors). In total, £22.1 million has been paid to NHS projects compared with £16.6 million for projects involving local government. This may, in part, reflect the alternative options for borrowing that are available to local government, but not to the NHS.

3.1.1 Invest-to-Save Fund applications

Figure 3.1 (below) shows the breakdown of applications and funding awarded. It shows that:

- around one quarter of all applications to the Fund have been successful;
- around half of applications have been rejected; and
- Rounds Two and Four had the highest proportion of successful applications, with around four in ten applications being awarded funding.

Figure 3.1: Project status

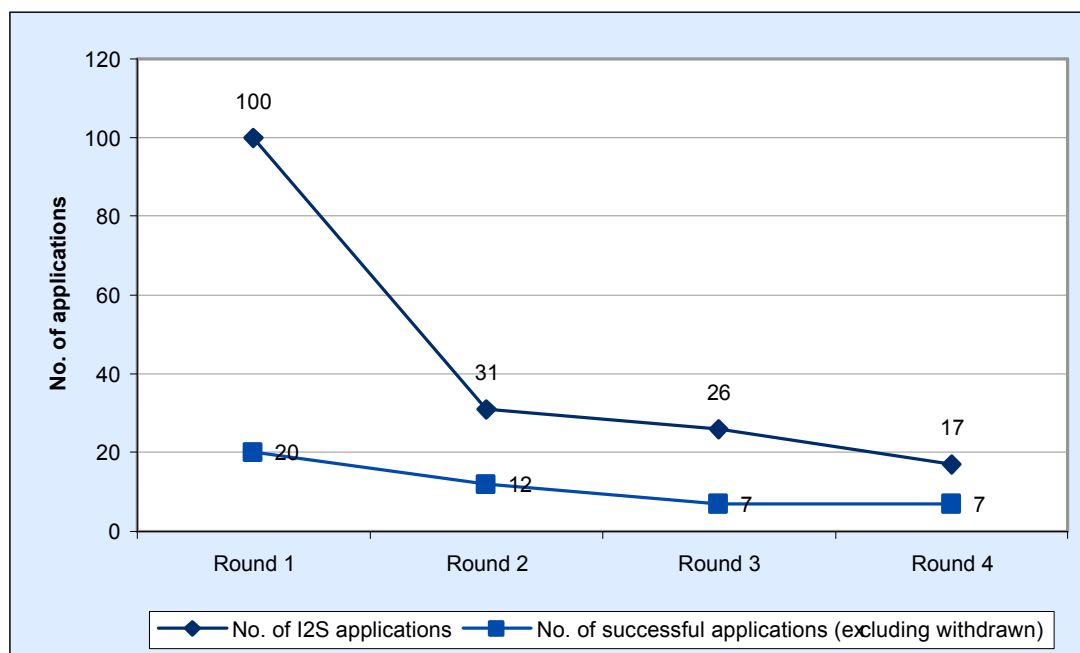


Source: Invest-to-Save Fund database, Welsh Government (2011)

Figure 3.2 (below) charts the number of applications to the Fund over the first four rounds, and how many of those applications were successful. Round One attracted 100 applications – more than the following three rounds put together. However, only 20 of those applications were successful.

Since Round One, the number of applications has declined in each round, but the number of successful applications appears to be levelling off. The decrease in the number of applications could be partly attributed to the introduction of a minimum project value threshold of £100,000 following Round Two – a decision that was taken by the Invest-to-Save officials' panel following to encourage greater focus on strategic projects and improve value for money.

Figure 3.2: Invest-to-Save Fund applications per round



Source: Invest-to-Save Fund database, Welsh Government (2011)

3.1.2 Invest-to-Save funding

As Table 3.1 shows, **£39.5 million** has been paid to successful, with individual awards ranging from £62,000 to more than £7.3 million. Mean and median averages are also shown.

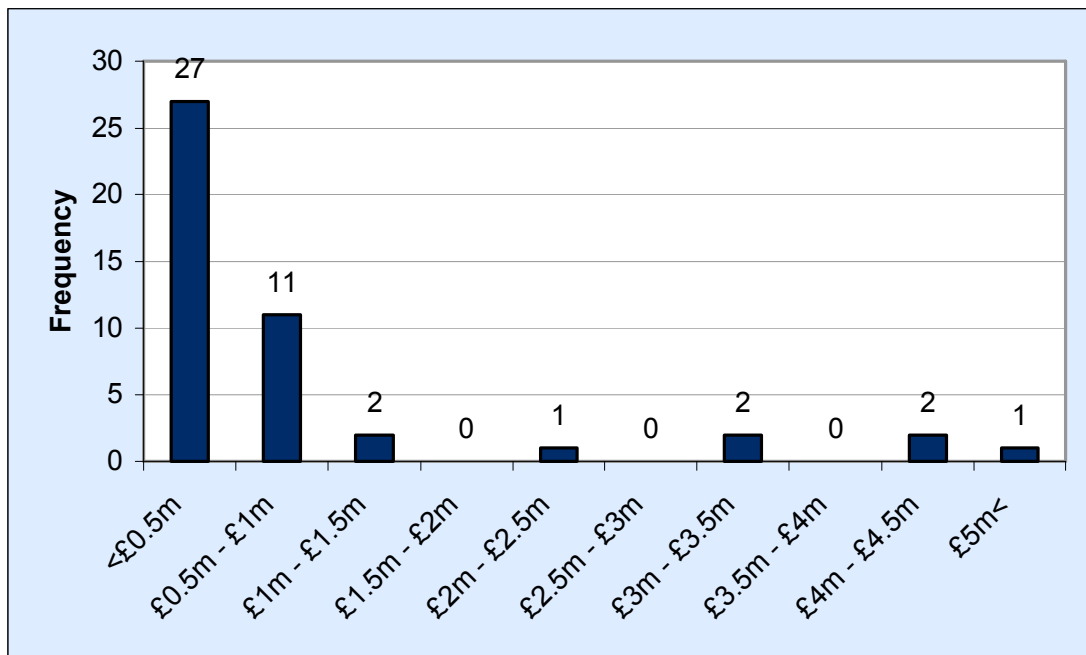
Least	Most	Mean	Median	TOTAL
£62,000	£7,314,000	£857,909	£347,500	£39,463,816

Source: Invest-to-Save Fund database, Welsh Government (2011)

Figure 3.3 shows the number of projects that were paid different levels of funding. The majority of projects (59 per cent) were paid less than £500,000 funding², while at the upper end of the scale, five projects were paid £3 million or more.

² Of the 27 projects paid less than £500,000 funding, 17 were awarded in Rounds One and Two, prior to the introduction of a minimum project value threshold of £100,000.

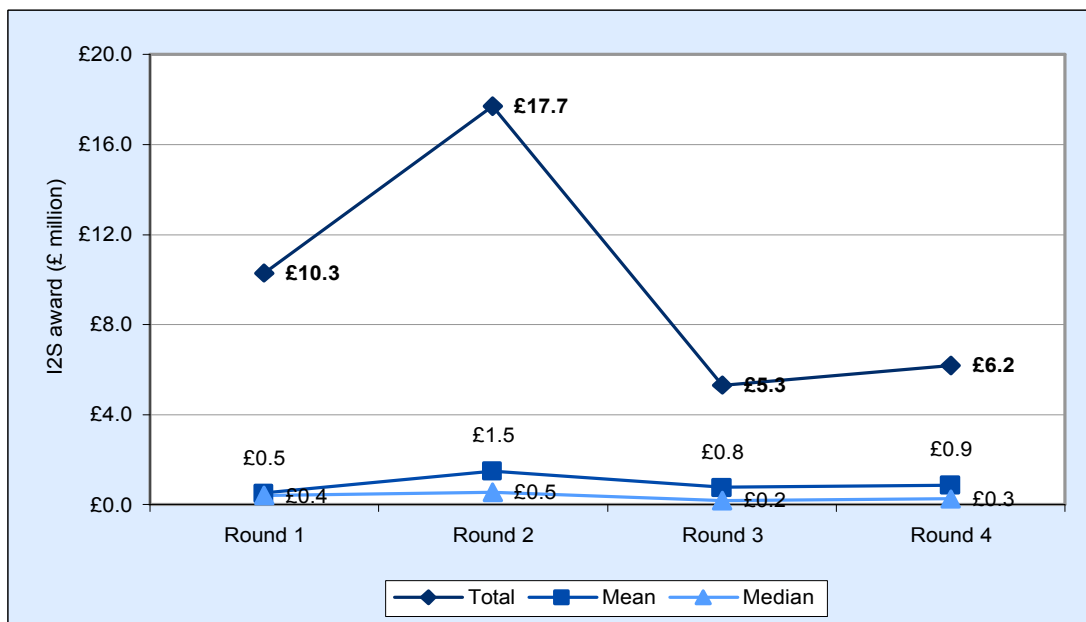
Figure 3.3: Distribution of funding awarded (all rounds)



Source: Invest-to-Save Fund database, Welsh Government (2011)

Figure 3.4, below, shows the total and average amounts invested by the Fund over the rounds. The total amount invested peaked in Round Two at £17.7 million.

Figure 3.4: Invest-to-Save Fund awards



Source: Invest-to-Save Fund database, Welsh Government (2011)

3.1.3 Invest-to-Save Fund applications and funding by sector

Applications from the NHS have been the most numerous (106 applications), followed by local government (52 applications, including three with partners from other sectors). However, the number of successful applications is much closer – 23 for NHS and 21 for Local Government (including two projects with partners from other sectors).

Table 3.2, below, shows how Invest-to-Save funding has been distributed by sector. Over half (56 per cent) of the funding invested has gone to NHS projects – £22.1 million in total. This compares with a total of 42 per cent of funding (£16.6 million) that has been paid to local government, or local government and partner projects.

	Funding awarded	% of total funding
NHS	£22,074,641	56%
Local Govt	£12,287,225	31%
Local Govt and partners	£4,263,000	11%
Other (incl. Higher Education)	£838,950	2%
TOTAL	£39,463,816	100%

Source: Invest-to-Save Fund database, Welsh Government (2011)

3.1.4 Distribution of Invest-to-Save funding across regions

Of the £39.5 million funding provided £10.4 million has been invested in projects that cover all Wales or multiple regions. Excluding all-Wales and multiple region projects, projects in Gwent have received more funding than other regions (£12.8 million), while projects in Cwm Taf have received the least (£800,000)³.

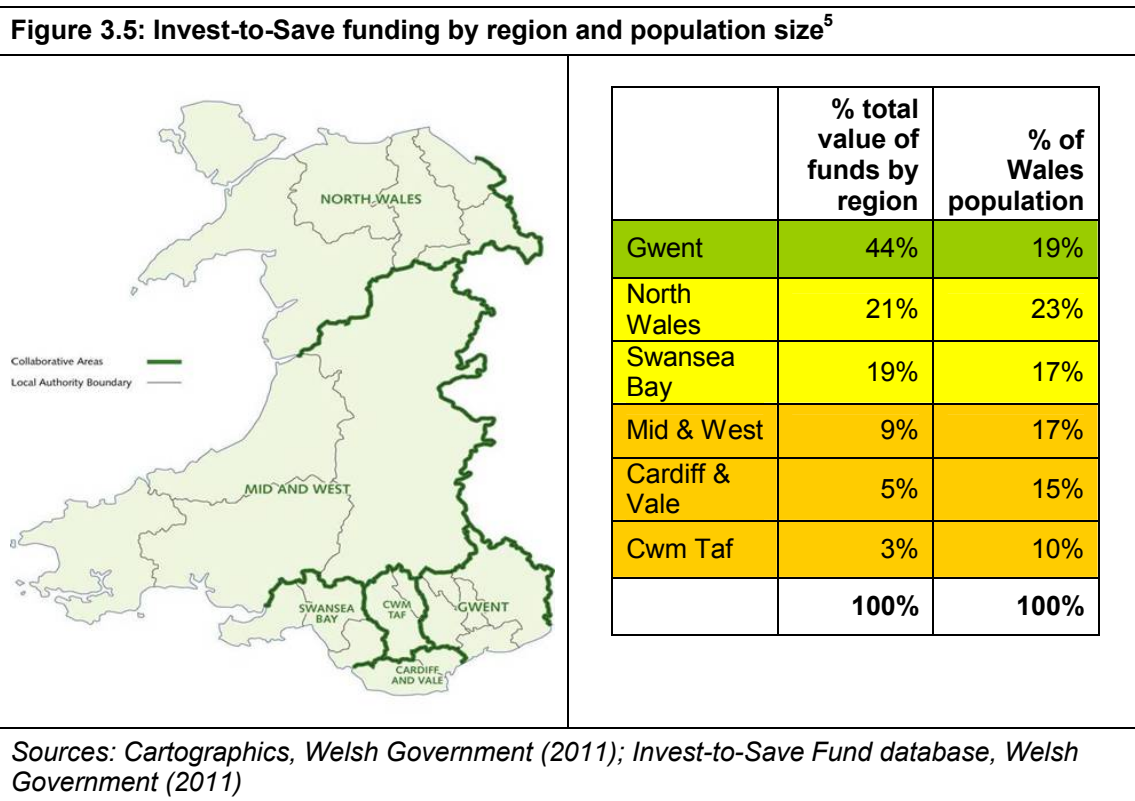
As the regions of Wales have different population sizes, Figure 3.5 (below) shows how closely the proportion of funds allocated to each region (excluding

³ It should be emphasised that geographic targeting of Invest-to-Save funds is *not* part of the Fund's criteria.

all-Wales and multiple region projects) match the population share of that region. It shows that:

- the proportion of regional funding paid to North Wales and Swansea Bay closely matches their population share;
- the proportion of regional funding paid to Gwent is substantially greater than the region’s share of the population⁴; and
- the proportion of regional funding paid to Mid & West, Cardiff & Vale and Cwm Taf is substantially lower than their population share.

Again, it should be emphasised that geographic targeting of Invest-to-Save funds is *not* part of the Fund’s criteria.



⁴ This figure, however, is heavily skewed by the £7.3m invested in the Gwent Frailty Project – the largest project over the first four rounds of the Fund.

⁵ Excludes all-Wales and multiple region projects.

3.2 Delivery of projects against forecast benefits

Key findings

- While it is too early to provide a comprehensive assessment, there is no suggestion that the anticipated cost savings of funded projects will not be achieved. There are encouraging signs given that repayments of Invest-to-Save support are being made by some of the projects funded in the early rounds of the Fund.
- Project managers generally reported that the service improvements achieved by their projects to date had been equal to, or greater than, what was expected at the outset.
- Most project managers believe that the overall advantages of their projects substantially outweigh any disadvantages.

3.2.1 Project cost savings

The surveys and interviews with funded project managers explored the issue of cost savings delivered by their project against what was expected at the outset. Many project managers responded that it was too early to tell if cost savings were on target. Others were confident that cost savings were on target.

One interviewee stated that they thought the project was achieving more cash savings than expected but reported that it was difficult to directly attribute the additional savings to the project. Another stated that they were slightly behind projected targets but expected to recover when the benefits of working collaboratively were more fully realised:

“In the short term, probably slightly less [cash savings than expected] but I expect that to catch up and actually improve because – of the issues that have come from not quite achieving all of the benefits of working together – that will improve later on.”

(Funded project, All Wales)

Corresponding to the views of funded project managers, there was a general consensus among the stakeholders interviewed that it was too early in the

existence of the Fund to assess whether all projects would be successful in achieving the full value of projected cash-releasing efficiency savings. However, some stakeholders expressed that they were encouraged that some of projects funded in the early rounds of the Fund were starting to deliver savings:

“[It’s] too early to say. We’re starting to get repayment which is good. There’s been some evaluation of the projects and there’s no reason to say projects aren’t on track [...] We need a longer period to look back on to give a more definite answer.”

(Stakeholder, Welsh Government)

“Difficult to tell but they are getting payback. I’m unsure how much value is being squeezed out. [...] It’s clear that momentum has been generated but less clear on savings.” **(Stakeholder, external)**

However, one Welsh Government stakeholder felt that, outside the Invest-to-Save officials’ panel, it could be difficult to assess the success of projects once they had been awarded funding:

“Once projects are awarded, for most of us across the office, they sink without a trace [...] I simply don’t know enough about where they’ve gone.” **(Stakeholder, Welsh**

Government)

Overall, while it is too early to provide a comprehensive assessment, there is no suggestion from project managers or stakeholders that anticipated cost savings will not be achieved – and there are encouraging signs from repayments of Invest-to-Save support being made by some projects funded in the early rounds of the Fund.

3.2.2 Service improvements

While it was generally too early to assess the cash savings of their project to date, project managers were more confident in assessing the non-cash savings and service improvements of their projects.

In terms of assessing improvements, respondents to the funded projects survey were asked whether they had consulted service users over their satisfaction with the service since the project began. As Table 3.3 (below) shows, eight of the 22 respondents reported that they had consulted with service users, while 12 said that they intend to but have not yet.

Table 3.3: Service user satisfaction				
	Yes	Not yet but intend to	No, and don't intend to	N/A
Have you consulted service users over their levels of satisfaction with the service since the project began?	8	12	1	1
<i>Source: Funded projects survey</i>				

The follow-up qualitative interviews suggested that the process of monitoring the views of service users tended to be ongoing, and conducted through channels such as consultations and feedback, and informal day-to-day engagement.

“We went through [various representative bodies] to get a feel of what [service users] needs and priorities were, which then informed the project. That process what it was we started with on this project. Since the project has got underway, there is an ongoing way for [service users] to feedback to us.” **(Funded project, Cardiff & Vale)**

“[Service users] are given an evaluation form to complete but another thing is as project manager I often just go down and chat to people and on a face-to-face level you get a feel of what they perhaps wouldn't write down.” **(Funded project, Mid & West Wales)**

3.2.3 Net benefits of projects

Overall, respondents were very positive that the advantages of their project outweigh the disadvantages:

- 18 respondents agreed that the advantages *substantially* outweighed the disadvantages;

- 2 agreed that the advantages and disadvantages are about equal;
- 2 did not answer.

Reasons provided for the advantages outweighing the disadvantages included the complexity of delivering the project being a small price to pay when weighed against the long term benefits:

“The complexity of delivering is hugely outweighed by the [...] wide ranging and tangible benefits [...] and efficiency from the implementation.” **(Funded project, Cardiff & Vale)**

“It has acted as an enabler to a huge cultural change in peri-operative practice across Wales. It has allowed Wales to be showcased as having a successful Programme on the international stage. Many hundreds and soon to be thousands of patients have benefited.” **(Funded project, All Wales)**

Some interviewees suggested that the net benefits of their projects had, in part, been due to identifying potential for further improvements to be made:

“[The service improvements] have been greater than expected. During the project we ended up taking on a lot more than we expected in the initial scoping of the project. The unsolicited feedback from the service users has been excellent.” **(Funded project, Cardiff & Vale)**

3.3 Additionality of Invest-to-Save funding

Key findings

- Managers of funded projects tended to report that it was difficult to give a definitive answer as to what would have happened to their projects without Invest-to-Save funding – but that there may have been difficulty in finding alternative funding.
- The alternative options for borrowing that are available to local government but not the NHS means that the Invest-to-Save Fund is particularly key for NHS projects. It was noticeable that non-supported NHS projects were far less likely to proceed than those that were not supported in local government.
- Most projects had been developed to some extent prior to bidding for Invest-to-Save funding, ranging from having a vague concept of what could be done to improve a service, to developing a detailed business plan. The Fund acted mainly as an enabler to get planned projects off the ground, rather than stimulating ideas for new projects.
- Amongst the stakeholders interviewed, there was a broad consensus that it would be more beneficial to keep the Invest-to-Save Fund than to use the money for other alternative interventions. However, some issues of concern raised by stakeholders included the perceived low take-up of funding by local government (despite extensive efforts by the Welsh Government to promote the Fund); and doubt over the additionality of smaller projects that had been funded.

3.3.1 Funded projects

Many managers of funded projects tended to report that it was difficult to give a definite answer as to what would have happened to their projects without Invest-to-Save funding. Some reported that their projects would have been less likely to go ahead – the main reason being that it would be difficult to find alternative sources of funding. Given the borrowing restrictions faced by NHS bodies, the availability of funding through Invest-to-Save was of key importance to some health projects, as one health project manager stated:

“Without Invest-to-Save, [we] would not be where we are today. It's been absolutely vital.” **(Funded project, North Wales)**

Other project managers (of non-health projects) reported that it was possible that their projects may have gone ahead on a smaller scale, or taken longer to get off the ground:

“It’s very difficult to say. It would probably have gone ahead on a smaller scale, yes. Or it would possibly have gone ahead on the same scale but we would have had to have gone to other funders.” **(Funded project, Mid & West Wales)**

When asked about the longer term prospects for the project once Invest-to-Save funding was paid back, nearly all project managers surveyed and interviewed reported that their projects are likely to continue or be mainstreamed within normal service delivery.

Stakeholders were generally positive that Invest-to-Save had supported projects that would not otherwise have gone ahead (particularly larger value projects), or would have gone ahead on a smaller scale given the financial climate:

“I suspect that a number of projects would have gone ahead but at a much slower pace and in slightly different format, especially in the context of reduced budgets.” **(Stakeholder, external)**

“I don’t know about individual projects but I suspect some wouldn’t go ahead. [...] Maybe others would but they would go ahead without that national focus being on them and as a consequence we would lose that learning, best practice and transferability.” **(Stakeholder, Welsh Government)**

However, it was also recognised that in the absence of counterfactual scenarios to compare with, it could be difficult to assess the additionality of Invest-to-Save funding:

“It’s difficult to know on the ground, especially as the counterfactual for each project is [unknown]. It’s hard to know what would have happened in the absence of the Fund.” **(Stakeholder, Welsh Government)**

The majority of managers reported that their projects had been developed to some extent prior to bidding for Invest-to-Save funding, ranging from having a vague concept of what could be done to improve a service, to developing a detailed business plan. This suggests that the availability of funding from Invest-to-Save has, mostly, enabled planned projects to get off the ground, rather than stimulating new ideas. However, where there was only a vague concept of a project, the announcement of Invest-to-Save funding could spark action.

3.3.2 Non-funded projects

The outcomes of projects refused or withdrawn from Invest-to-Save funding differed, with many going ahead unchanged (or on a similar scale); some not going ahead; and others still awaiting a decision. Of the projects that went ahead unchanged, funding was mostly found within their organisation's budgets, with savings having to be made elsewhere:

“The project has continued. It's just meant we've had to borrow more of the money [from elsewhere] to do the project.” **(Non-funded project, North Wales)**

“It is progressing and we have had to find another way of funding the initial expenditure locally. But it has continued on the same scale.” **(Non-funded project, Swansea Bay)**

Two interviewees – both from NHS bodies – reported that their projects did not go ahead at all after the Invest-to-Save funding was refused, reflecting the financial restrictions that prevent health services from borrowing from other sources (unlike local government):

“Without the extra staff that the funding would have given us, we haven't been able to take [the project] forward.” **(Non-funded project, Mid & West Wales)**

“In truth it's fallen flat. We weren't able to invest in it internally.” **(Non-funded project, Cardiff & Vale)**

3.3.3 Alternative uses of Invest-to-Save funding

Stakeholders were asked what else the Invest-to-Save resources could be spent on to drive efficiency and improve delivery in public services if the Fund did not exist. While some specific examples were given (such as putting more money into the Local Government Outcome Agreement Grant) there was a broad consensus that it would be more beneficial to keep the Invest-to-Save Fund than to use the money for the other alternatives that were mentioned:

“I can think of at least four other places where we could put the money but I think what we get from Invest-to-Save is that it does what it says on the tin and also helps [...] with the pressure on local government finances by putting money into innovative projects.” **(Stakeholder, Welsh Government)**

Stakeholders also discussed the main benefits and drawbacks of using a repayable grants approach. Stakeholders were largely positive about the repayable aspect of the fund, particularly in regard to the alternative of providing grants without the need for repayment. Many stakeholders interviewed found it difficult to think of any significant drawbacks to the repayable grants approach. The main issues discussed are summarised in Table 3.4 (below).

Table 3.4: Benefits and drawbacks of a repayable grants approach

Benefits	Drawbacks
Supports a shared agenda between Welsh Government and wider public sector	Overheads for smaller projects can be disproportionately costly
Enforces discipline into benefits realisation as funding needs to be paid back	Cannot be used to fund schemes that deliver service improvements but no cashable savings
Negates the need to be constantly searching for new sources of funding	
Encourages cultural change through promoting collaboration and investing to save in financially difficult times	
The alternative (giving out grants) would require more checks and balances, and would possibly be more bureaucratic and risk averse	
<i>Source: Interviews with Invest-to-Save stakeholders</i>	

The main enablers and barriers that have helped to determine the success of the Fund in achieving its aims were also discussed by stakeholders. The main issues are summarised in Table 3.5 (below).

Table 3.5: Determinants of success of the Fund

Enablers	Barriers
Dedicated Invest-to-Save team that has ongoing dialogue with funded organisations	Bids are sometimes rushed (could be mitigated by announcing the cycle of bidding rounds in advance)
Regular feedback and monitoring of projects	Doubt over the extent of additionality of smaller projects
Rigorous but flexible bidding process	Local government not on board as much as wished – they have the option to borrow from elsewhere and sometimes low interest rates may be preferable to the repayment terms of Invest-to-Save
Ministerial buy-in and leadership has helped build profile of the Fund	
<i>Source: Interviews with Invest-to-Save stakeholders</i>	

3.4 Bidding process

Key findings

- Managers of funded projects were mostly very positive about the bidding process, particularly about the guidance provided by the Welsh Government, and the clarity of what was expected at each stage.
- Interviewees from non-funded projects tended to be less positive, with some viewing the bidding process as quite onerous, and the timescale for submitting applications being too short.
- Stakeholders tended to view the rigour of the bidding process proportionate to the amount of money on offer.
- It was suggested by some interviewees that themes could be introduced for each bidding round, allowing the Welsh Government to focus on certain priorities, and applicants to make an informed decision about whether it was an appropriate round in which to bid.
- Some (though not all) stakeholders thought it would be a good idea to include a member from outside the Welsh Government on the Invest-to-Save officials' panel, in order to provide an external perspective.

3.4.1 Survey findings

Respondents to the funded and non-funded project surveys were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed to a number of statements about the Invest-to-Save bidding process.

Respondents to the funded projects survey were most positive about the guidance provided by the Welsh Government, the clarity of what was expected from them at each stage of the bidding process, and that the process of putting together the bid strengthened their project (Table 3.6).

Table 3.6: Bidding process (funded projects)			
	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
I found the guidance provided by the Welsh Government helpful when putting together the bid	14	8	0
It was clear what was expected from our bid at each stage of the bidding process	16	6	0
The process of putting together the bid strengthened our project	14	7	1
The bidding process was too onerous	2	11	9
The bidding process is beneficial, irrespective of the outcome	10	10	2
Overall, I was satisfied with the bidding process	16	6	0
<i>Source: Funded projects survey</i>			

Respondents to the non-funded projects survey were less positive about the bidding process, particularly about the statement 'The bidding process is beneficial, irrespective of the outcome'. However, respondents were still largely positive about the guidance provided by the Welsh Government, and the clarity of what was expected from them at each stage of the bidding process (Table 3.7).

Table 3.7: Bidding process (non-funded projects)			
	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
I found the guidance provided by the Welsh Government helpful when putting together the bid	6	2	1
It was clear what was expected from our bid at each stage of the bidding process	7	0	2
The process of putting together the bid strengthened our project	2	4	3
The bidding process was too onerous	3	4	2
The bidding process is beneficial, irrespective of the outcome	2	3	4
Overall, I was satisfied with the bidding process	4	2	3
<i>Source: Non-funded projects survey</i>			

Many of the comments from non-funded project applicants on how the bidding process could be improved focussed on the timescales involved in putting together a bid:

“It would perhaps be useful for the bid to be open throughout the year as with a multi-organisational bid which we entered the ability to ensure governance in each organisation was met within a six to eight week timeframe was difficult.” **(Non-funded project, Mid & West)**

3.4.2 Views on Welsh Government guidance

The follow-up qualitative interviews shed more light on views on the bidding process. While not all of the interviewees for the funded projects were directly involved in the bidding process, those who were found the support provided by the Welsh Government helpful:

“The key thing we’d stress [...] was how helpful the Invest-to-Save team has been. You have a question, it was very easy to ring them up and say ‘what are you aiming for here?’ and I found that really useful.” **(Funded project, All Wales)**

Interviewees tended to feel well prepared for the presentations to the Invest-to-Save officials’ panel although one interviewee stated that they were given the wrong impression of how the presentation and discussion with the panel would be conducted:

“The panel were very supportive in assisting us in what we were trying to do but the one thing that was quite unhelpful was the nature in which we thought we were going to have to engage – it ended up being a lot better and less formal than we expected. It was a bit behind the curtains – we didn’t really know what we were walking into.” **(Funded project, Cardiff and Vale)**

When asked how useful the guidance provided by the Welsh Government was, interviewees from non-funded projects were generally positive, reporting that the guidance was straightforward, helpful and easy to follow. However, some interviewees felt that the timescale for submitting an expression of interest was too short:

“Putting the bid together itself wasn't too difficult because the guidance was there to follow. Timescale was the problem [...] it was quite tight from the expression of interest to getting the bid together. I think timescale was more of a problem than not having the information we needed.” **(Non-funded project, Mid & West Wales)**

“For a small service the time involved in putting the bid together and gathering evidence was quite a challenge.” **(Non-funded project, Mid & West)**

3.4.3 Rigour of the bidding process

Some of the interviewees from funded projects felt that the bidding process itself helped to strengthen their projects to a degree and make them more robust. As one interviewee stated:

“[The bidding process] certainly helped – it was a good aid. I think once we completed [the process] we felt that we had a fairly strategic plan rather than one that was a bit scattered around really. It pulled it all together very well.” **(Funded project, Mid & West Wales)**

There was a consensus amongst the interviewees from funded projects that the bidding process was not too onerous given the funding that is on offer, and that it was a fair process:

“It didn't feel as though [the panel] put in unnecessary hurdles. They were asking you why you wanted to do it, what you wanted do, how you wanted to do it, how you were going to fund it, what it looked like. And that's key information you should have anyway before you do a project. It was fair.” **(Funded project, All Wales)**

While the work involved in putting together the bid was viewed as being proportionate to the funding on offer, one interviewee complained that the reporting and monitoring after the award has been repetitive:

“The Welsh Government were very supportive in the bidding process but post the award and the project being implemented [...] it would be better for each project to update at an appropriate time [...] We are an academic institution, so there are

certain times of the year which would be more suited to asking for feedback. If a timescale for reporting was planned at the outset for each project, the Welsh Government would get more useful feedback.” **(Funded project, Cardiff & Vale)**

Overall, interviewees from non-funded projects generally viewed the bidding process as more onerous than interviewees from funded projects:

“We were asked to provide an awful lot of information to justify why we needed to spend the money and bear in mind this was not a grant we were applying for, it was money we would have to repay anyway [...] I found it overly onerous.” **(Non-funded project, Swansea Bay)**

3.4.4 Strengthening projects through the bidding process

Interviewees from non-funded projects were asked whether they found the experience of bidding for Invest-to-Save funding to be beneficial to the project. This question divided the interviewees, with three reporting that the experience was not beneficial or made no difference to the project. However, the other three interviewees responded that it was positive despite not getting funding (or the project being withdrawn) because it helped detect areas of weakness in the project, identify where more focus was needed, or question the rationale for applying for project funding:

“It helped us focus on being sure about why we were doing this [...] You've got to be doing the right thing, you can't just chase money and then throw it at something. It did make us reassess some of the foundations of what we were doing.” **(Non-funded project, North Wales)**

“No, probably not because the project was [already] well shaped. It wasn't a case of 'there's some funding available, what project can we put to it'. It was very much the other way round, in terms of 'we've got this project, we really want to deliver on it, if we could get external funding, it would really help us to accelerate the implementation of the project'.” **(Non-funded project, North Wales)**

3.4.5 Project managers' views on improving the bidding process

Interviewees from funded projects generally thought that the bidding process was effective and saw little need for it to change. However, one suggestion that was made was that the time between the bid and the announcement of successful projects should be reduced.

When asked if there were ways that the Invest-to-Save bidding process could be improved, suggestions provided by interviewees from non-funded projects included making better links to other forms of Welsh Government funding, and for the Welsh Government to inform applicants about what their priorities for funding are, so that applicants can make an informed decision of whether to apply for funding:

“The bidding process should be better linked to [capital investment] funds because if we got funding for the capital and Invest-to-Save for the revenue, we have a full package. It was a little bit of chicken and egg.” **(Non-funded project, North Wales)**

“I think really it comes back to what is the purpose of the Invest-to-Save pot. I think the Welsh Government needs to be much clearer on what it can be used for and what it's not there for. [...] The latest round seems to be much more into collaboration and that needs to be clear as well. If there isn't a collaborative element to it, is it worth pursuing it?” **(Non-funded project, Swansea Bay)**

3.4.6 Stakeholders' views on improving the bidding process

Stakeholders' views on the bidding process were also sought in the qualitative interviews. Not all stakeholders were in a position to give an informed opinion about the effectiveness of the bidding process. Those that were able to were largely positive but also identified some issue with the process for applicants (timescales for applying for funding) and the officials' panel (providing appropriate scrutiny to the projects):

“Timescales have seemed compressed and odd with little time for application. But the length of time for consideration [seems] much longer.” **(Stakeholder, external)**

“It’s difficult to provide appropriate scrutiny for a large number of schemes, and big schemes should have a lot of scrutiny. [...] This points to the solution: a small number of large projects.” **(Stakeholder, Welsh Government)**

Stakeholders that felt able to answer were asked for their opinions on how onerous the bidding process is for applicants. The dominant view amongst Welsh Government stakeholders was that the rigour of the bidding process is proportionate given the amount of money on offer:

“It’s probably about right. Not too onerous. That’s one of the strengths of the scheme – the idea of having low levels of administration and paperwork for that amount of money seems entirely proportionate and sensible.” **(Stakeholder, Welsh Government)**

“If you’re asking for millions of pounds, being a bit onerous isn’t too much to ask” **(Stakeholder, Welsh Government)**

One stakeholder felt that the rigour involved in the bidding process provided further reason for the fund to focus on larger scale projects:

“It’s fairly onerous which adds emphasis to the argument that the fund should be for large scale projects only.” **(Stakeholder, Welsh Government)**

When asked how the bidding process could be improved, suggestions from stakeholders included:

- Reconfiguring minimum project value thresholds (currently set at a £100,000 minimum) to encourage larger value applications.
- Introducing themes for each round, depending on which areas the Welsh Government wants to focus on improving.
- Introducing a member from outside the Welsh Government on the Invest-to-Save officials’ panel to provide an external perspective.

However, one stakeholder warned that external panel members would have to be carefully chosen given the nature of the discussions:

“It’s a good idea! [...] However, care must be taken to pick a suitable person as there are political discussions.” **(Stakeholder, Welsh Government)**

3.5 Collaborative working

Key findings

- The Fund is considered by stakeholders to be successful in encouraging collaboration between organisations. However, there was a perception from some stakeholders that more could be done by the Welsh Government to encourage enduring collaboration across regions and sectors, and that the Fund could play an important role in that.
- Managers of collaborative projects were mostly positive when asked to rate their experience of working with partner organisations on their project, and that most of the difficulties they had encountered had been completely or mostly overcome.
- The cautiously positive outlook from project managers on working collaboratively is reinforced by three quarters of survey respondents reporting that their experience of working collaboratively on this project has made them more likely to work on partnership projects in the future. Around one quarter reported that it made no difference, while none reported that it has made them less likely.

3.5.1 Collaborative working and the Invest-to-Save Fund

The Invest-to-Save Fund encourages collaborative working where it can be shown that this will lead to greater efficiency, although non-collaborative projects are also supported. While it is not a prerequisite, the majority of projects supported by Invest-to-Save have been collaborative in nature. The findings presented in this section discuss project managers' experiences of the benefits and challenges of working collaboratively, and stakeholders views on the role played by Invest-to-Save in promoting a culture of collaborative working.

3.5.2 Benefits of collaborative working

Respondents to the funded projects survey were asked to rate their experience of working with partner organisations on their project. As Table 3.8 shows, respondents were mostly positive, with none rating their experience as negative.

Table 3.8: Collaborative working			
	Positive	Neutral / NA	Negative
Overall, how would you rate your experience of working with partner organisation(s) on this project?	16	6	0
<i>Source: Funded projects survey</i>			

The qualitative interviews further explored the issues of collaborative working. When asked about the main benefits of working collaboratively, interviewees from funded projects tended to cite reduced duplication of work or improved efficiency. Other examples included:

- shared knowledge;
- improved quality of services through ‘fair challenges’ between partner organisations;
- improved working relationship with partner organisations and a better understanding of their role within a service; and
- the benefit of having a direct contact to talk to in a partner organisation.

3.5.3 Challenges of collaborative working

When asked about the difficulties faced in working collaboratively, interviewees from funded organisations gave the following examples:

- problems with managerial arrangements;
- difficulties in reaching agreements between all partner organisations;
- project taking longer to complete;
- lack of engagement from other partners; and
- concern that a regional approach would mean forfeiting ‘local knowledge’.

Interviewees that faced difficulties in working collaboratively generally felt that the problems had been overcome through ‘following up on issues straight away’, and ‘talking things through’ with partners. When asked whether their

experiences had made them more or less likely to work on partnership projects in the future, interviewees tended to be cautiously positive: '[It's made me] more likely, yes. There's not been huge issues'.

Of the survey respondents who had encountered difficulties from working collaboratively, 14 reported that the difficulties had been completely or mostly overcome; one reported that only a few difficulties had been overcome; and none reported that no difficulties had been overcome.

The positive outlook from project managers on working collaboratively is reinforced by **three quarters** of respondents reporting that their experience of working collaboratively on the project has made them more likely to work on partnership projects in the future. Around one quarter reported that it made no difference, while none reported that it has made them less likely.

Additional comments regarding collaborative working included:

"The difficulties need to be kept in proportion as the overall benefits far outweigh the minor difficulties." **(Funded project, North Wales)**

"You have to be prepared to confront and deal with any blockers. Initially we tried hard to resolve some difficulties very constructively but one key partner has proved to be very difficult." **(Funded project, Mid & West)**

3.5.4 Stakeholders' views on collaborative working

In terms of the wider impacts on the public sector in Wales, some of the stakeholders interviewed felt that the Fund played a valuable role in encouraging collaboration between organisations, both geographically, and by sector, particularly at a time of financial difficulty:

"[Invest-to-Save] actually encourages organisations and people within organisations to work together. It encourages collaboration around a particular project and we've seen one or two areas where Invest-to-Save has been the catalyst that's driven that forward." **(Stakeholder, external)**

However, stakeholders generally felt that more could be done by Welsh Government to encourage enduring collaboration and bring about more significant cultural change across the public sector in Wales – and that the Fund could play a valuable role in that.

3.6 Impact within funded organisations

Key findings

- The implementation of Invest-to-Save projects was considered to have more positive than negative impacts within funded organisations. The positive impacts of implementing the projects included sharing best practice with other parts of the organisation, and improved ways of working.
- The most common negative impact reported was resistance from staff to change the way a service is delivered but this was often viewed as being part of the process leading to improved working practices over the longer term.
- Many project managers reported that the time commitment to implementing and maintaining the project was more than they expected. Reasons for this included over-simplification of the project at the outset; internal workforce resistance; and, not anticipating that the project would evolve and grow.

3.6.1 Positive impacts within funded organisations

Respondents to the funded projects survey were more likely to say that the implementation of their projects had positive than negative impacts within their own organisation (Table 3.9).

	Yes	No	DK
Has the implementation of this project had any <i>negative</i> impacts within your own organisation?	4	13	5
Has the implementation of this project had any <i>positive</i> impacts within your own organisation?	17	1	4

Source: Funded projects survey

The positive impacts of implementing the projects included sharing best practice with other parts of the organisation, and improved ways of working:

“Many 'not in Invest-to-Save scope' services are seeing opportunities [...] to deliver efficiency savings to their services through similar rollouts.” **(Funded project, Cardiff & Vale)**

3.6.2 Negative impacts within funded organisations

When asked if the implementation of the projects had any negative implications within the organisation, the most common response was the resistance from staff to change the way a service is delivered; the need to re-train; and the practical implications of capacity issues:

“Staff resources have been stretched.” **(Funded project, All Wales)**

“Process of change [...] is unsettling in the short term.” **(Funded project, Cardiff & Vale)**

However, these negative impacts within organisations tended to be viewed as part of the challenge of implementation, and none of the interviewees considered the negative impacts to be of a greater magnitude than the positive impacts within the organisation. The general consensus was that the apparent negative issues were minor in comparison to the improvements to service delivery:

“There have been issues of training and staffing levels – that sort of thing but it’s been part of the challenge of this work. I wouldn’t say it was negative.” **(Funded project, Mid & West Wales)**

“[Some] people will be unhappy with change because ‘we always did it this way, we always did it that way’ and those are still ongoing and will be felt for some time but they’re minor in terms of the longer term quality improvements in my opinion.” **(Funded project, All Wales)**

Interviewees suggested that issues with staff could be overcome through effective communication, good management and ongoing discussions with staff. The only other apparent negative impact from implementing the project

was the burden of reporting on progress to the Welsh Government, suggested by one interviewee.

3.6.3 Time commitment

Respondents to the funded projects survey were also asked whether the time commitment to implementing and maintaining the project was more or less than expected. As Table 3.10 below shows, 10 respondents stated that it has been more than expected, and 10 as expected.

Table 3.10: Project benefits				
	More than expected	As expected	Less than expected	Too early to tell
Time commitment to implementing and maintaining project	10	10	0	2
<i>Source: Funded projects survey</i>				

Reasons provided for the time commitment being more than expected included:

“The complexity of the organisations involved and also the number of organisations involved. The extent of service change required as a result of the weaknesses identified through the work of the project.” **(Funded project, Mid & West)**

“Workforce resistance and training.” **(Funded project, North Wales)**

“More detailed requirements as project developed resulted in quite a lot more time being committed.” **(Funded project, Swansea Bay)**

In the follow-up qualitative research, interviewees almost unanimously reported that the time committed to implementing and maintaining their projects were underestimated. Reasons for this included over-simplification of the project at the outset, and because it was not expected that the project would evolve and grow:

“The classic thing was that the project was oversimplified at the start. When you actually come to do it, it's a lot more work. Then you say 'we don't have this or that information' and you realise the amount of work that needs to be done is much greater. It's a case of optimism.” **(Funded project, Swansea Bay)**

“[Time commitment] has been more than expected because the project has grown and grown. We had to appoint a full-time project manager to the role to give the project the attention that it needed.” **(Funded project, Cardiff & Vale)**

3.7 Advocacy and good practice

Key findings

- All 22 respondents from the funded projects survey would recommend applying for Invest-to-Save funding to other similar organisations. Advocacy from respondents to the non-funded projects survey, while not as high, was still broadly positive.
- The main benefits of the Fund were viewed as being the pump-priming of projects that would otherwise be difficult to get off the ground, and the balance of rigour and assistance from the officials' panel in the assessment process.
- Some interviewees from non-funded projects said that if they were to apply again, they would give more consideration to the financial aspects of their bid, and not just concentrate on service improvement.

3.7.1 Advocacy from funded organisations

All 22 respondents from funded projects would recommend applying for Invest-to-Save funding to other similar organisations, with 15 stating that they would 'definitely' recommend, and seven stating that they would 'probably' recommend.

In the follow-up qualitative interviews, interviewees from funded projects were unanimously positive when asked whether they would recommend applying for Invest-to-Save funding to similar organisations, outlining the benefits it brings of pump-priming projects that would otherwise be difficult to get off the ground, and improving the robustness of projects through a good balance of rigour and assistance from the officials' panel in the assessment process:

"It's a great concept. You need the capital to start something, so it's a good thing, definitely. It gets projects going. Quite a lot of things you look at you can see the potential but you might not otherwise have the capital to get the project going."

(Funded project, Swansea Bay)

Unprompted, two interviewees also expressed opposing views on what they saw as the relatively short payback period for the projects:

“I think it’s a good rolling system because the repayment is on a fairly short term basis so the money can go back into the pot to go back out again on a fairly quick rolling basis to other needy and deserving organisations.” **(Funded project, Mid & West Wales)**

“I think the payback period could be longer. I understand that it is a re-investment fund but some projects are not going to get the payback that quickly.” **(Funded project, Cardiff & Vale)**

In total, 17 of the 22 respondents to the funded projects survey had taken steps to publicise the existence of their project more widely. The most common means of doing so were through internal or external newsletters, dissemination events, and through the local press or media.

3.7.2 Advocacy from non-funded organisations

Advocacy from respondents to the non-funded projects survey, while not as high, was still broadly positive (Table 3.11).

Table 3.11: Advocacy of respondents from non-funded projects			
	Yes	Neutral	No
Based on your experience, would you recommend applying for funding from the Invest-to-Save Fund to similar organisations?	6	1	2
<i>Source: Non-funded projects survey</i>			

Despite not being successful in accessing Invest-to-Save funding, interviewees from the non-funded projects were largely positive when asked whether they would recommend applying for funding to similar organisations. Reasons for this included value of accessing funding which could be used to pump-prime projects to drive efficiencies, and the lack of alternative sources of funding for some organisations:

“Yes – absolutely. I think that local authorities and other public organisations are having to change the way they work now and I think that a lot of that change involves pump-prime funding which a lot of local authorities, for example, don't have in reserve to put forward. If they are not implemented, they are not going to make the savings at a later date.” **(Non-funded project, North Wales)**

“Yes, most definitely. [...] I think in the climate that we are in, it gives us the opportunity to find significant savings and additional effectiveness [...] not everyone will be able to get that funding without coming to the Welsh Government for it.” **(Non-funded project, Mid & West Wales)**

An interviewee from a non-funded project stated that they would recommend applying to the fund but warned about the importance of preparing the financial aspect of the bid:

“Yes, I would [recommend]. I would advise them to make sure that they have the financial part of the bid as watertight as possible and they are fully aware of how it all works [...] because I think that's where we fell down.” **(Non-funded project, Mid & West Wales)**

One interviewee from a non-funded project, although supportive of the fund, was critical about the purpose not being clear:

“I think having a national Invest-to-Save fund is a good idea but I think the Welsh Government needs to be very clear about what its main purpose is, and what types of projects it wants to support.” **(Non-funded project, Swansea Bay)**

Interviewees from non-funded projects were asked if they would do anything differently if applying for Invest-to-Save funding again. Generally, the interviewees responded that they would not have changed their approach a great deal, although some said they would give more consideration to the financial aspects of the bid, and not just concentrate on service improvement:

“I think the finance side of it and the understanding of that is important. [Other than that], I don't think there's much we'd change.” **(Non-funded project, Mid & West Wales)**

“[We would] have different discussions with the finance team about how we can move resources around internally and I think that's a real challenge [...] which is probably why we haven't progressed.” **(Non-funded project, Cardiff & Vale)**

3.7.3 Interest rates

When asked whether they would apply for Invest-to-Save funding in the future if interest rates were to be charged, interviewees from funded and non-funded projects responded negatively, with some stating that the interest free aspect of the Fund was one of its key attractions⁶. In addition, there was some doubt as to whether a rate of interest could legally be applied to NHS projects.

“We probably wouldn't have applied for Invest-to-Save had even a competitive rate of interest been charged. If you were able to borrow without, in all fairness, having to be managed and audited in this way, why would you? There had to be an advantage to going down the Invest-to-Save route.” **(Funded project, Cardiff & Vale)**

“It's quite possible that our finance director would say that we would go to the open market for it.” **(Non-funded project, Mid & West Wales)**

3.7.4 Good practice

Managers of funded projects were asked to share their most important good practice lessons from their experiences of bidding for and implementing Invest-to-Save projects. The main points raised are summarised in Table 3.12, below.

⁶ In addition, some doubt was expressed by one stakeholder as to whether a rate of interest could legally be applied to health projects given the borrowing restrictions that the NHS operates under.

Table 3.12: Good practice for Invest-to-Save applicants
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The objectives need to be realistic – do not overstate the benefits a project will bring.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Don't hold back on preparation work – do as much detail as you can.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Get the baseline data correct – establishing a robust baseline allows net benefits to be calculated at a later stage.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure full consultation with everyone likely to be affected.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Be flexible – setbacks that delay progress should be expected, and projects will inevitably evolve and change as they are implemented.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ When working collaboratively, make sure all stakeholders understand how the cost savings have been devised.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish agreed principles for collaborative working at the outset for governance arrangements.
<p><i>Source: Funded projects survey</i></p>

4. Recommendations

This interim evaluation set out to consider the progress that has been made to date by the Invest-to-Save Fund and the projects it has supported; capture emerging lessons regarding implementation and administration; and identify themes and considerations for any longer term evaluation.

Based on the research findings presented and discussed in Chapter 3, the following recommendations are made.

Recommendation 1: There is strong support for the continuation of the Invest-to-Save Fund to support cash-releasing public service improvement projects across Wales and as such, commissioning an independent evaluation of actual project outcomes in 12-18 months time (between early and mid 2013) is recommended.

Rationale: Overall, Invest-to-Save is viewed favourably by project managers and stakeholders, and its existence is considered to be vital for some of the projects it has funded, particularly those of larger value and those in the NHS. While it is too early for some project managers to assess cash savings, most are confident that Invest-to-Save has had a positive impact, with overall advantages substantially outweighing any disadvantages. Commissioning an evaluation of project outcomes in 2013 should allow time for cash savings from a greater number of projects to be realised and measurable, allowing for a richer evidence base to draw on.

Recommendation 2: Given the borrowing restrictions that govern the NHS, the appraisal of Invest-to-Save bids should recognise how key the Fund can be in supporting projects involving the NHS.

Rationale: Unlike the NHS, local government have alternative options for borrowing, reflected in the finding that almost half of Invest-to-Save funding (£22.1 million) has gone to NHS projects, compared with £16.3 million awarded to projects involving local government. In the research findings, it

was noticeable that non-supported NHS projects were far less likely to proceed than those that were not supported in local government.

Recommendation 3: There is a continuing need to promote local government engagement with the Fund, but recognising that the sector has access to alternative sources of funding.

Rationale: Being mindful of the availability of alternative sources of funding, and given that the Fund aims to support cash-releasing public service improvement projects across the public sector, there is reason to monitor and promote local government's ongoing engagement with the Fund.

Recommendation 4: Consideration should continue to be given to the number and value of projects funded in future rounds and the impact this has on maximising efficiencies.

Rationale: Following the second round of bids, the Invest-to-Save officials' panel decided to implement a minimum value threshold of £100,000 for bids to be considered – but over the first four rounds, more than half of the projects were awarded less than £500,000 funding. There is a perception that Invest-to-Save funding has been more critical to larger value projects, and it has been suggested that funding a small number of larger value projects would allow more scope for applying appropriate scrutiny to funded projects. In addition, there is a perception from stakeholders that more could be done by the Welsh Government to bring about significant cultural change across the public sector in Wales, and that the Invest-to-Save Fund could encourage this through funding fewer but larger value projects that may be more likely to involve enduring geographic and cross-sector collaboration. Therefore, further consideration should be given to where thresholds are set in future rounds, and how funding is distributed between larger and smaller value projects.

Recommendation 5: While there are no significant issues with the bidding process as it stands, the evidence suggests that the following refinements might be considered:

a) Introducing themes for each round of bidding to target specific Welsh Government priorities.

Rationale: This will allow the Welsh Government to focus on certain priorities, and applicants to make an informed decision about whether it is an appropriate round in which to bid.

b) Introducing an external member from outside the Welsh Government on the Invest-to-Save officials' panel.

Rationale: This would bring an external perspective to the bidding process.

c) How Invest-to-Save bids are appraised alongside other forms of Welsh Government support, such as Centrally Retained Capital funding.

Rationale: This could assist projects that will be reliant on additional funding streams to Invest-to-Save.

d) Reviewing the timescale for submitting expressions of interest.

Rationale: Some managers of non-funded projects and stakeholders perceived the timescale for submitting an expression of interest to be too short.

Recommendation 6: The additionality of Invest-to-Save funding should be explored in more detail in the any future independent evaluation.

Rationale: One of the tentative conclusions of this evaluation is that Invest-to-Save funding has been more critical to some (generally larger value) projects than others. However, there has been difficulty in establishing robust counterfactual evidence, and this would need to be explored in more detail if the additionality of Invest-to-Save is to be assessed.

Recommendation 7: Consideration should be given to how project managers could be encouraged to self-evaluate their projects, with support offered in the form of guidance and/or standardised tools and techniques to demonstrate benefits and savings.

Rationale: The methods with which service improvements are monitored differ across funded projects, although they tend to be conducted in an informal, or inconsistent basis. In addition, there has been apparent difficulty for some project managers in directly attributing cash savings to the funded projects. Therefore, providing project managers with self-evaluation guidance could allow for consistent reporting of costs and benefits across projects, and will support project managers in evaluating the success of their projects in achieving efficiency savings and service improvements.

Appendix A: Funded projects survey

Invest-to-Save Fund: Interim Evaluation

We would be grateful if you could contribute to the Welsh Government's interim evaluation of the Invest-to-Save Fund by completing this short questionnaire.

The aim of the survey is to help us assess the progress being made by the Fund and by the projects it has supported. It will capture emerging lessons about implementation and administration, and identify themes and considerations for longer term evaluation.

The questionnaire should take about **20 minutes** to complete. All answers are confidential and no individuals will be identified in reported findings.

Thank you.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 1) Project name:
- 2) Name of your organisation:
- 3) What is your role in the project?
 - Project Manager
 - Senior Responsibility Officer
 - Other, please specify
- 4) Which sector is your organisation in?
 - Local Government
 - Health
 - Further education
 - Higher education
 - Fire and rescue
 - Voluntary sector
 - Other, please specify

PROJECT CLASSIFICATION

- 5) In which round of Invest-to-Save did you bid?
 - Round 1 (announced May 2009)
 - Round 2 (announced November 2009)
 - Round 3 (announced July 2010)
 - Round 4 (announced February 2011)
- 6) Has the project been completed or is it in progress?

- Completed
- In progress

7) How many months, approximately, does the project have left to run?

8) How much is the total Invest-to-Save contribution to this project?

9) In which of the following areas is your project focussed? Please tick all that apply.

- Improving procurement of goods or services
- Transforming business processes
- Making better use of public estate
- Reducing cost of corporate services
- Improving efficiency of service delivery
- Introducing a new model of service delivery
- Other, please specify

10) Which of the following does your project incorporate? Please tick all that apply.

- Joint teams
- Shared budgets
- Joint management arrangements
- Shared objectives
- Joint consultation over objectives
- Information sharing
- Shared support infrastructure
- Other, please specify

ORIGINS OF THE PROJECT

11) Had any work started on developing this project prior to the Invest-to-Save bid?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

12) Why had the project not been developed prior to the Invest-to-Save bid? Please tick all that apply.

- Lack of alternative funding
- Project seen as too risky to go ahead
- Difficulties in collaborating with another organisation
- Other, please specify

13) How far had the project been developed prior to starting the Invest-to-Save bid? Please tick one option only.

- Vague concept but no specifics
- Initial thought given to project specification
- Feasibility study or business case prepared

- Approval already secured for a pilot
- Detailed business plan and costs developed
- Project was already being implemented
- Don't know

BIDDING PROCESS

14) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree; Strongly disagree)

- I found the guidance provided by the Welsh Government helpful when putting together the bid
- It was clear what was expected from our bid at each stage of the bidding process
- The process of putting together the bid strengthened our project
- The bidding process was too onerous
- The bidding process is beneficial, irrespective of the outcome
- Overall, I was satisfied with the bidding process

15) Based on your organisation's experience, do you have any recommendations for how the Invest-to-Save bidding process could be improved in the future? Please write in below.

COLLABORATIVE WORKING

16) Overall, how would you rate your experience of working with partner organisation(s) on this project?

- Very good
- Good
- Neither good nor poor
- Poor
- Very poor
- Not applicable - this was not a collaborative project

17) Have you experienced any of the following benefits from working collaboratively on this project? Please tick all that apply.

- Reduced cost of the project
- Reached objectives sooner
- Benefited from others' experience
- More creative ideas developed
- Take advantage of each others' resources
- Shared burden of working on the project
- Project would not have happened without partners
- Have developed more ideas since project was formed
- Other, please specify

18) Have you experienced any of the following difficulties when working collaboratively on this project? Please tick all that apply.

- Added to cost of project
- Project took longer to complete
- Too many opinions involved
- Project objectives became unclear
- Personality clashes
- Not all partners had equal opportunity to express views
- Too many meetings to attend
- Problems with financial arrangements
- Problems with management arrangements
- Problems concerning data protection
- Lack of understanding of the way partners worked
- Other, please specify

19) To what extent have the problems you have encountered been overcome?

- Completely overcome
- Mostly overcome
- A few problems have been overcome
- Not at all
- Not applicable

20) Has your experience of working on this project made you more or less likely to work on partnership projects in the future?

- More likely
- Made no difference
- Less likely

21) Do you have any further comments about working collaboratively on this project? Please write in below.

PROJECT BENEFITS

22) Overall, would you say the project is achieving more cost savings than expected, less than expected, or about the same?

- More than you expected
- As expected
- Less than you expected
- Don't know / too early to tell

23) What would you say are the main reasons for the costs savings being more than expected? Please tick all that apply.

- Cost of purchasing inputs was lower than anticipated
- We needed less inputs than anticipated
- We were more efficient in turning inputs into outputs than anticipated
- The outputs led to better outcomes than we anticipated
- Impact of project risks were over-estimated

- Other, please specify

24) What would you say are the main reasons for the costs savings being less than expected? Please tick all that apply.

- Cost of purchasing inputs was higher than anticipated
- We needed more inputs than anticipated
- We were less efficient in turning inputs into outputs than anticipated
- The outputs did not produce the desired outcomes
- Impact of project risks were under-estimated
- Other, please specify

25) Would you say that the time committed to implementing and maintaining the project has been more than expected, less than expected, or about the same?

- More than you expected
- As expected
- Less than you expected
- Don't know / too early to tell

26) What would you say are the main reasons for the time commitment being more than expected? Please write in below.

27) What would you say are the main reasons for the time commitment being less than expected? Please write in below.

28) Which of these statements is closest to your own opinion of the advantages and disadvantages of this project?

- Advantages substantially outweigh disadvantages
- Advantages slightly outweigh disadvantages
- Advantages and disadvantages about equal
- Disadvantages slightly outweigh advantages
- Disadvantages substantially outweigh advantages

29) What would you say are the main reasons for advantages outweighing disadvantages? Please write in below.

30) What would you say are the main reasons for disadvantages outweighing advantages? Please write in below.

ADDITIONALITY

31) Without any Invest-to-Save funding, the project would have:

- Gone ahead unchanged
- Gone ahead as a smaller scale project
- Been less likely to go ahead
- Definitely not gone ahead

32) If project would have gone ahead on a smaller scale, what percentage of the actual level of funding would it have been?

- Between 80% and 99% of the actual budget
- Between 60% and 79% of the actual budget
- Between 40% and 59% of the actual budget
- Between 20% and 39% of the actual budget
- Less than 20% of the actual budget

33) What is the main reason that the project would have been less likely to go ahead without Invest-to-Save funding?

- Difficulty in finding alternative funding
- Project idea may not have emerged without availability of Invest-to-Save fund
- Other, please specify

34) What is the main reason that the project would definitely not have gone ahead without Invest-to-Save funding?

- Difficulty in finding alternative funding
- Project idea may not have emerged without availability of Invest-to-Save fund
- Other, please specify

WIDER IMPACTS

35) Have you consulted service users over their levels of satisfaction with the service since the project began?

- Yes, we have consulted service users
- Not yet, but we intend to consult service users following project completion
- No, we do not intend to consult service users
- Not applicable

36) How did you consult with service users? Please tick all that apply.

- Face-to-face survey
- Telephone survey
- Online survey
- Postal survey
- Focus group(s)
- Feedback forms
- Informal consultation
- Other, please specify

37) Did the consultation find that satisfaction with the service had increased, decreased, or stayed the same?

- Satisfaction increased
- No change
- Satisfaction decreased

- Comparisons not possible

38) What were the reasons for this increase in satisfaction? Please write in below.

39) What were the reasons for this decrease in satisfaction? Please write in below.

40) What are the longer term prospects for this project once Invest-to-Save funding is paid back?

- Project is likely to continue
- Project is likely to be mainstreamed within normal delivery
- Project is likely to come to an end
- Other, please specify

41) Has the implementation of this project had any negative effects within your own organisation?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

42) What were the negative effects within your own organisation? Please write in below.

43) Has the implementation of this project had any positive effects within your own organisation?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

44) What were the positive effects within your own organisation? Please write in below.

45) Have any of the following steps been taken to publicise the existence of your project more broadly (within or beyond your organisation)? Please tick all that apply.

- Internal newsletters
- External newsletters
- Dissemination events
- Internet
- Conferences or seminars
- Local press or media
- National press or media
- Other, please specify

BEST PRACTICE AND ADVOCACY

46) Based on your experience, would you recommend applying for funding from the Invest-to-Save Fund to similar organisations?

- Yes, definitely
- Yes, probably
- No, probably not
- No, definitely not
- Don't know

47) What would you say is the single most important good practice lesson from your experience of this Invest-to-Save project?

48) What would you say is the single most important pitfall to be aware of from your experience of this Invest-to-Save project – a lesson which would be valuable for other projects?

49) Finally, do you have any other comments you wish to add about your experience of using the Invest-to-Save Fund?

Appendix B: Non-funded projects survey

Invest-to-Save Fund: Survey of Non-Funded or Withdrawn Bids

We would be grateful if you could contribute to the Welsh Government's interim evaluation of the Invest-to-Save Fund by completing this short questionnaire.

The aim of the survey is to help us to assess additionality of the Fund by indicating what happened to projects that were not funded, and to provide you with an opportunity to express your views on the bidding process.

The questionnaire should take about **10 minutes** to complete. All answers are confidential and no individuals will be identified in reported findings.

Thank you.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 1) Project name:
- 2) Name of your organisation:
- 3) What was your role in the Invest-to-Save bid?
 - Project Manager
 - Senior Responsibility Officer
 - Other, please specify
- 4) Which sector is your organisation in?
 - Local Government
 - Health
 - Further education
 - Higher education
 - Fire and rescue
 - Voluntary sector
 - Other, please specify

PROJECT CLASSIFICATION

- 5) In which round of Invest-to-Save did you bid?
 - Round 1 (announced May 2009)
 - Round 2 (announced November 2009)
 - Round 3 (announced July 2010)
 - Round 4 (announced February 2011)
- 6) How much was the total Invest-to-Save contribution you requested for this project?

ORIGINS OF THE PROJECT

7) Had any work started on developing this project prior to the Invest-to-Save bid?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

8) Why had the project not been developed prior to the Invest-to-Save bid? Please tick all that apply.

- Lack of alternative funding
- Project seen as too risky to go ahead
- Difficulties in collaborating with another organisation
- Other, please specify

9) How far had the project been developed prior to starting the Invest-to-Save bid? Please tick one option only.

- Vague concept but no specifics
- Initial thought given to project specification
- Feasibility study or business case prepared
- Approval already secured for a pilot
- Detailed business plan and costs developed
- Project was already being implemented
- Don't know

BIDDING PROCESS

10) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree; Strongly disagree)

- I found the guidance provided by the Welsh Government helpful when putting together the bid
- It was clear what was expected from our bid at each stage of the bidding process
- The process of putting together the bid strengthened our project
- The bidding process was too onerous
- The bidding process is beneficial, irrespective of the outcome
- Overall, I was satisfied with the bidding process

11) Based on your organisation's experience, do you have any recommendations for how the Invest-to-Save bidding process could be improved in the future? Please write in below.

ADDITIONALITY

12) What happened to the project after the Invest-to-Save bid was refused/withdrawn?

- Project went ahead unchanged

- Project went ahead on a smaller scale
- Project went ahead on the same scale but at a later date
- Project did not go ahead
- No decision made to date – project may still go ahead
- Don't know

13) What is the annual funding level and where does/did the funding come from?

14) What is the main reason that the project did not go ahead?

- No alternative funding available
- Project idea would not have emerged without availability of Invest-to-Save fund
- Other, please specify

BEST PRACTICE AND ADVOCACY

15) Based on your experience, would you recommend applying for funding from the Invest-to-Save Fund to similar organisations?

- Yes, definitely
- Yes, probably
- No, probably not
- No, definitely not
- Don't know

16) Is there anything you would do differently if bidding for Invest-to-Save funding in the future?

17) Finally, do you have any other comments you wish to add about your experience of bidding for Invest-to-Save funding?

Appendix C: Funded projects interview topic guide

TOPIC GUIDE 1: RESPONDENTS TO SURVEY OF FUNDED PROJECTS

Tailor around answers provided to online survey.

Name of interviewee:

Organisation:

Project:

Date of interview:

Origins of project

- Had project been developed at all prior to bidding for I2S funding?
 - If yes: How far had the project been developed prior to the bid?
 - If no: Could you tell me about the reasons why your project had not been developed prior to bidding for I2S funding? Specifically:
 - Was the availability of funding the main driver for developing the project?
 - Or was there a strategic need for the project, and the Fund helped facilitate its development?
 - (Depending on answer), would you take a different approach to any future projects?

Bidding process

- How helpful did you find the guidance provided by the Welsh Government in putting together your bid?
- Did you have a clear understanding of what was expected from you at each stage of the bidding process?
- Did you find that the process of putting together the bid strengthened your project in any way? Why / why not?

- Would you say that the bidding process was beneficial to your project irrespective of the outcome? Why / why not?
- How onerous did you find the bidding process?
- Based on your experience, how could the bidding process be improved?

Collaborative working

- Is the project collaborative i.e. are you working with partner organisations? **[if no, go to Project Benefits]**
- How did you find the experience of working with a partner organisation(s) on this project?
 - What were the main benefits of collaborative working? (Prompt e.g. reduced cost; saved time; benefitted from each others' experience; creative ideas; use of each others' resources)
 - What were the main difficulties of working collaboratively? (Prompt e.g. increased cost; took longer; too many opinions; personality clashes; difficult financial or management arrangements)
- How easily have any problems of collaborative working been overcome?
 - Can you give examples of how the problems have been overcome?
- Has this experience made you more or less likely to work on partnership projects in the future?

Project benefits

- Overall, would you say the project is achieving more **cost savings** than expected, less, or about the same?
 - Why? (Prompt: cost of inputs different to expected; outcomes different to expected; project risks over or under estimated)
- Overall, would you say the project is achieving more **non-cash benefits** than

expected, less, or about the same? (Prompt if needed: Can you think of any benefits from the project other than cost savings, such as improved service?)

- Why?
- Would you say that the **time committed** to implementing and maintaining the project has been more than expected, less, or about the same? Why?
- Overall, would you say that the advantages of the project outweigh the disadvantages or not?
 - To what extent?
 - Reasons why?

Additionality

- Without any I2S funding, what would have happened to the project? Would it have gone ahead unchanged / on a smaller scale / not gone ahead at all?
 - Reasons why? (Prompt: e.g. availability of alternative funding)
- Do you think you would have applied for Invest-to-Save funding if interest was charged?

Wider impacts

- Have you consulted service users at any stage of the project?
 - Before the project (e.g. baseline)?
 - During the project?
 - (If applicable) after the project?
 - If yes: How did you consult? What has been the impact of the project e.g. on satisfaction with the service? Reasons why?
 - Did you ask service users about their expectations of the service, or the changes being made to it?
- What are the longer term prospects for this project once Invest-to-Save funding is

paid back? (E.g. project will continue; come to an end; be mainstreamed into normal service delivery)

- Has the implementation of this project had any negative effects within your own organisation?
 - If yes: what have the negative effects been? Are they being overcome?
- Has the implementation of this project had any positive effects within your own organisation?
 - If yes: what have the positive effects been?

Best practice and advocacy

- Based on your experience, would you recommend applying for funding from the Invest-to-Save Fund to similar organisations? Why / why not?
- What would you say is the single most important good practice lesson from your experience of this project?
- What would you say is the single most important pitfall to be aware of from your experience of this I2S project – a lesson which would be valuable for other projects?

- Do you have any other comments you wish to add?

Thanks and close.

Appendix D: Non-funded projects interview topic guide

TOPIC GUIDE 2: RESPONDENTS TO SURVEY OF NON-FUNDED PROJECTS

Tailor around answers provided to online survey.

Name of interviewee:

Organisation:

Project:

Date of interview:

Origins of project

- Had project been developed at all prior to bidding for I2S funding?
 - If yes: How far had the project been developed prior to the bid?
 - If no: Could you tell me about the reasons why your project had not been developed prior to bidding for I2S funding?

Bidding process

- How helpful did you find the guidance provided by the Welsh Government in putting together your bid?
- Did you have a clear understanding of what was expected from you at each stage of the bidding process?
- Did you find that the process of putting together the bid strengthened your project in any way? Why / why not?
- How onerous did you find the bidding process?
- Would you say that the bidding process was beneficial to your project irrespective of the outcome? Why / why not?
- Based on your experience, how could the bidding process be improved?

Additionality

- What happened to the project after I2S funding was refused / withdrawn? Has the project gone ahead unchanged / on a smaller scale / not gone ahead at all?
 - Reasons why? (Prompt: e.g. availability of alternative funding; if so, where is the funding from?)
- Do you think you would have applied for Invest-to-Save funding if interest was charged?

Best practice and advocacy

- Based on your experience, would you recommend applying for funding from the Invest-to-Save Fund to similar organisations? Why / why not?
- Is there anything you would do differently if bidding for Invest-to-Save funding in the future?

- Do you have any other comments you wish to add?

Thanks and close.

Appendix E: Stakeholder interview topic guide

TOPIC GUIDE 3: I2S PANEL MEMBERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Tailor around interviewee's role in I2S e.g. panel member or stakeholder.

Name of interviewee:

I2S role:

Date of interview:

Success of the Fund

- How successful would you say the Fund has been to date in meeting its main aims of:
 - Achieving cash-releasing efficiency savings in the public sector in Wales?
 - Driving improvements in public service delivery in Wales?
- What have been the main enablers in helping the Fund achieve its aims?
 - Supply side: e.g. assistance from Welsh Government
 - Demand side: e.g. demand from public sector in Wales; willingness to implement change; collaborate with other organisations (if applicable)
- What have been the main barriers to the Fund achieving its aims?
 - Supply side: e.g. assistance from Welsh Government
 - Demand side: e.g. demand from public sector in Wales; willingness to implement change; collaborate with other organisations (if applicable)
- What do you think are the main benefits of a repayable grants approach as an incentive for driving improvement and efficiencies?
- What do you think are the main drawbacks of a repayable grants approach as an incentive for driving improvement and efficiencies?

Bidding process

- **[To non-panel members]** – Are you aware of how the bidding process for the I2S Fund works?
 - As a stakeholder, what do you think the role of the I2S panel should be?
 - Do you think it would be a good or bad idea to have a non-Welsh Government official on the panel?
 - **[continue to next section, ‘Additionality’]**
- What are your views on the effectiveness of the bidding process? Why?
- How helpful do you think the guidance provided by the Welsh Government is to bidders?
- Do you think the Welsh Government provides I2S bidders with a clear understanding of what is expected from them at each stage of the bidding process?
- Did you think that the process of putting together an I2S bid strengthens the projects in any way? Why / why not?
- How onerous do you think the bidding process is (for applicants, and for the panel)?
- Would you say that the bidding process is beneficial to projects irrespective of the outcome? Why / why not?
- How could the bidding process be improved?
- Do you think it would be a good or bad idea to have a non-Welsh Government official on the panel?

Additionality

- Overall, what are your views on the impact that the projects funded by I2S have had on:
 - Improving public services?
 - Improving efficiency / releasing cash savings?
 - Their strategic fit with Welsh Government objectives?

- If the I2S Fund did not exist, what do you think would happen to most of the projects?
 - Are you aware of any that would have gone ahead anyway, or on a smaller scale?
 - Are you aware of any where the I2S funding was critical?
- If the I2S Fund did not exist, in what other ways could resources be spent to help:
 - Drive improvements in public service delivery in Wales?
 - Invest in other ways to release cash-efficiency savings?

Wider impacts

- What do you think the main benefits of the Fund have been in terms of the wider impact on public service delivery in Wales?
- What do you think the main drawbacks of the Fund have been in terms of the wider impact on public service delivery in Wales?
- In what ways could the I2S Fund be improved?
 - (Prompt: introduce competitive interest rates?)
- Has your role in the administration of the I2S Fund had any negative effects for you, or for your own team / organisation?
 - If yes: what have the negative effects been? Are they being overcome?
- Has your role in the administration of the I2S Fund had any positive effects for you, or for your own team / organisation?
 - If yes: what have the positive effects been?

- Do you have any other comments you wish to add?

Thanks and close.