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Review of the Welsh Government Grant Scheme to Promote and Facilitate the Use of the Welsh Language

Executive summary

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of a review of the Welsh Government Grant Scheme to Promote and Facilitate the Use of the Welsh Language (the Grant Scheme). IAITH was commissioned by the Welsh Government to conduct the review. The research was conducted between December 2021 and October 2022.
- 1.2 The Welsh Government has implemented the current Grant Scheme since it was transferred from the Welsh Language Board in 2012. The aim of the Grant Scheme is to support a variety of organisations to facilitate the use of the Welsh language. In the 2021-22 financial year, the following organisations received funding through the Grant Scheme: Cymdeithas Eisteddfodau Cymru; Cymdeithas Cyfieithwyr Cymru; Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru; Wales Federation of Young Farmers Clubs and 12 Federations of County Young Farmers Clubs; Mentrau Iaith Cymru (MIC); 21 Menter Iaith; Merched y Wawr; 52 Community Newspapers (Papurau Bro) (MIC distributes the grant to Papurau Bro on behalf of the Welsh Government); Urdd Gobaith Cymru.

2. Aim of the review, and research methods

- 2.1 The aim of the review was to provide guidance for the Welsh Government as it designs a funding model and structures for the future to increase the use of the Welsh language. Mixed methods were used in undertaking the review, including:
 - a review of the Grant Scheme administration and implementation documentation;
 - desk-based research into the context of the Welsh Government's policy and strategy for the Welsh language;

- a review of the academic literature relating to ‘community’, ‘community empowerment’ and ‘a culture of partnership working’;
- desk-based research into methods of promoting language use through partnerships beyond Wales;
- a review of the academic literature and grey literature in the areas of community development and measuring the impact of policy interventions and community activity;
- an online survey distributed to all current grant recipients: 42 organisations and 52 Papurau Bro, with 53 responses;
- interviews with grant recipients (eight interviews) and Welsh Government officials;
- interviews with seven national and regional organisations working in partnership with grant recipients;
- interviews with officers and representatives from organisations who fund third sector organisations (three interviews);
- interpreting and developing a theory of change for the future Grant Scheme.

3. Findings, conclusions and recommendations

Implementing the current Grant Scheme

- 3.1 Current grant recipients have received this grant since 2015/16 when full Welsh Government applications were last made. Since 2016, the Grant Scheme’s funding has operated on a year-by-year basis, and grant recipients have submitted targets annually to the Welsh Government.
- 3.2 According to the evidence gathered in the review, the purpose of the Grant Scheme was clearly and unequivocally expressed in the Scheme’s documentation, and the Scheme’s contribution to the Welsh Government’s vision and objectives was clear to Government officials, grant recipients and the majority of Papurau Bro who contributed to the research.
- 3.3 Overall, the grant recipients who responded to the survey were satisfied with the clarity and content of the *Canllaw i Dderbynwyr Grant 2021-22 (Guidance for Grant Recipients 2021-22)*, agreed that it was easy to access information on how to receive grant funding, and that the guidelines on receiving a grant were easy to understand. Overall, grant recipients also believed that funding and eligibility criteria for receiving a grant were clearly set out in the Guidance and they were satisfied with the guidelines for receiving grant funding.
- 3.4 The majority of Papurau Bro who responded to the survey felt that the current arrangements of receiving the grant through Mentrau Iaith Cymru (MIC) were appropriate. According to the evidence from the survey, other grant recipients appreciated the contact between them and Welsh Government officials. In interviews with grant recipients, some expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of feedback from the Welsh Government but others mentioned receiving positive feedback which offered guidance to them.
- 3.5 The Grant Scheme must comply with the *Code of Practice for Funding the Third Sector*. The review showed that this is not evident in the current Grant Scheme documentation. The Third Sector Scheme details the Welsh Government’s responsibility of ‘Supporting structures to allow the Third Sector to flourish’ (Section 5). Similarly, the future documentation of the Grant Scheme should commit to the same responsibility for

maintaining structures that enable the sector that promotes and facilitates the use of Welsh to flourish. Aligning the Grant Scheme documentation with the *Third Sector Scheme* would be a way of expressing clearly the principles underpinning the collaborative relationship between the Welsh Government and the Third Sector bodies that operate to promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language.

Recommendation 1 : The Welsh Government should align the documentation of the new Grant Scheme with the *Third Sector Scheme* and the *Code of Practice for Funding the Third Sector*.

Arrangements for agreeing programmes of work and monitoring progress and performance

- 3.6 The objectives and targets agreed upon with Welsh Government officials for the grant recipients' programmes of work followed the national targets and strategic themes of *Cymraeg 2050*, with emphasis on the social use of the Welsh language. In general, grant recipients also set their targets and programmes of work in response to local requirements based on various sources of information, evidence and research methods.
- 3.7 This report showed that a procedure was in place to monitor progress and performance against the targets and outcomes agreed with each organisation in accordance with the *Standard Grant Letter (2021)*. Grant recipients are asked to use quantitative and qualitative methods to measure changes in use, confidence, ability, attitudes and awareness experienced by individuals, groups of people or organisations, as well as report quantitatively on the number and type of activities organised and the number of attendees at events. The majority of grant recipients and Papurau Bro who responded to the survey said that they had arrangements in place to understand and review how activities were making a difference in terms of increasing the use of Welsh.
- 3.8 The views of grant recipients varied regarding the suitability of the current arrangements for reporting on progress. Some agreed that the data collection and analysis requirements at different stages of the funding cycle were reasonable. Others believed there was too much emphasis on reporting on Government targets and data requirements, particularly if these did not fit with their local priorities.
- 3.9 Overall, the grant recipients who contributed to the survey and interviews were aware of evidence gathering methods and used them widely, but there was limited awareness of different types of evaluation methods amongst some grant recipients. The *Mesur Canlyniadau (Measuring Outcomes)* resource provides guidance on evaluation methods for grant recipients but needs to be updated to align with the targets and goals of *Cymraeg 2050* and incorporate the principles of community empowerment.
- 3.10 There was relatively little evidence that grant recipients implement the principles of community empowerment. These principles, already built into primary legislation, underpin the Welsh Government's proposed Communities Policy (Welsh Government 2022c). As the Welsh Government develops the new Grant Scheme it would be useful to ensure that it incorporates the principles of that policy.

Recommendation 2 : The Welsh Government should ensure that the new Grant Scheme incorporates the community empowerment principles that will underpin the proposed Communities Policy.

Recommendation 3 : In order for the principles of community empowerment to be central to the new Grant Scheme, grant recipients, in co-operation with the Welsh

Government, should lead on developing and implementing approaches that will enable them to understand and respond to the aspirations and priorities of their target populations.

Recommendation 4 : The Welsh Government should lead on updating the *Mesur Canlyniadau (Measuring Outcomes)* resource, so that it aligns with the targets and aims of *Cymraeg 2050* and incorporates the principles of community empowerment.

Planning and working in partnership

- 3.11 Many of the grant recipients were working with local, regional and national organisations and the survey and interviews highlighted numerous examples of grant recipients and partners supporting each other's work in order to promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language.
- 3.12 Evidence from the survey and interviews indicated that close collaboration between grant recipients and other partners was a key part of the efforts to achieve the aim and objectives of *Cymraeg 2050* and enabled grant recipients and their partners to achieve more than would be possible without collaboration, both at a strategic and operational level.
- 3.13 The majority of grant recipients were working with County Voluntary Councils but the relationship between the organisations and CVCs had not been fully developed in all areas.

Recommendation 5 : The Welsh Government should provide guidance on the most appropriate way of looking systematically at how grant recipients of the new Grant Scheme and County Voluntary Councils work together to promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language, as a basis for strengthening collaboration where necessary.

- 3.14 Many of the grant recipients were planning purposefully to encourage new participants to take part in the activities organised by them, with a great deal of the new audience engagement work involving building partnerships with groups, organisations and societies that represent particular beneficiaries. Many, but not all, grant recipients had arrangements in place to include people from diverse communities and identities in their activities including, amongst others, ethnic minority groups, LGBTQ+ people and disabled people.

Recommendation 6 : All organisations that receive a grant through the new Grant Scheme and that carry out activities with the public should ensure they have specific arrangements to include people from diverse communities and identities in their activities including, but not limited to ethnic minority communities, disabled people and LGBTQ+ people.

Contributing to the vision and objectives of *Cymraeg 2050* and related policy areas

- 3.15 The review showed that the Grant Scheme's contribution to the vision and objectives of *Cymraeg 2050* is central to the activities of the organisations funded by the Scheme. The majority of the organisations that contributed to the review contributed in different ways to the vision and objectives of the statutory Welsh Language Promotion Strategies implemented by Local Authorities. No evidence was received about grant recipients contributing to National Park Authority Promotion Strategies (although it should be remembered that not all grant recipients have the opportunity to contribute to the work of NPAs as they do not all work within a National Park area).

Recommendation 7 : The Welsh Government should hold a discussion with the office of the Welsh Language Commissioner to explore and agree on the most appropriate

ways for Local Authorities and National Park Authorities to work in co-operation with the grant recipients of the new Grant Scheme to develop and implement Welsh Language Promotion Strategies.

Alternative funding sources and the future operation of the Grant Scheme

- 3.16 A number of grant recipients noted that there was a shortage of other funding sources for promoting the use of Welsh, and a lack of opportunities to obtain funding from other Welsh Government grants for developing the use of Welsh.
- 3.17 The evidence gathered from officers and representatives from organisations supporting the third sector through grant funding highlighted a number of features of those grant schemes that could be adopted when administering the Grant Scheme in the future. The features that could be considered for administering the Grant Scheme in future include (but are not limited to): offering guidance and training for potential applicants on writing grant applications; setting expectations for applicants to work with beneficiaries to identify their needs and plan the scheme; providing support for the self-development of grant recipients regarding regulation, governance and administration issues; providing guidance and support to all grant recipients on monitoring and evaluation approaches including encouraging grant recipients to use peer assessment as part of the monitoring process; setting self-evaluation expectations for recipients of all sizes and having evaluations conducted by an external entity for larger grants. Adopting some of the highlighted features would better align the Grant Scheme with principles and approaches within the third sector.

Recommendation 8 : The Welsh Government should examine further the procedures of other bodies who provide grants to third sector organisations, to identify whether there are features that could be beneficial for the new Grant Scheme to incorporate, in terms of the grant application process, providing support to grant recipients, and evaluating the impact of grants.

- 3.18 The evidence collected about another of the Welsh Government's grant schemes provided information about a model that could be useful to examine in greater depth. The Third Sector Support Wales Grant provides core funding to third sector organisations through a partnership between the 19 County Voluntary Councils and the Wales Council for Voluntary Action, who distribute the grant to them. It could be beneficial to explore this model, or other similar models, in greater detail, to establish whether there are aspects of them that it could be useful to consider for a cluster of grant recipients operating in similar areas of work. In addition, it would be useful to consider whether such a model could be a way of providing guidance on developing collaborative approaches to evaluating and understanding the impact of activities.

Recommendation 9 : The Welsh Government should explore the model of the Third Sector Support Grant and other grant schemes that are implemented in a similar way, and consider whether there are features of these schemes that it could be useful to consider for the new Grant Scheme. This could include looking at ways of establishing a central point to provide support and guidance to grant recipients working in similar areas of work, and supporting grant recipients to develop the necessary skills to evaluate and understand the impact of their activities.

Developing a Theory of Change for the Grant Scheme

- 3.19 There was no pre-existing theory of change for the current Grant Scheme. The evidence gathered in relation to this review indicated that only two grant recipients were familiar with the concept of a theory of change and only one had developed a theory of change for its activities.
- 3.20 The review presents a theory of change in two parts: a theory of change for the implementation of the Grant Scheme and a theory of change which deals with increasing the use of Welsh through the Scheme. The high-level theory underpinning the Grant Scheme is that providing grant funding to a range of organisations and establishments to promote the use of Welsh in social and informal contexts across Wales can lead to an increase in the use of Welsh. The theory of change identifies a number of assumptions for a new Grant Scheme for the future. It is assumed that grant recipients' staff understand the needs of their communities and beneficiaries, and are able to plan appropriate activities for these communities on the basis of an understanding of beneficiaries' needs. It is assumed that forming partnerships with other organisations and/or partners can lead to an increase in opportunities to use Welsh. It is also assumed that organising activities and interventions will attract beneficiaries to use Welsh or use more Welsh. It is assumed that it is possible to prove an increase in language use as a result of the impact of the organised activities.
- 3.21 It is intended for this theory of change to be used as a basis for further refinement and more detailed work by the Welsh Government as it develops a new Grant Scheme for the future. The review of the research literature on community empowerment and the evidence gathered for the review showed that collaborating on developing a theory of change could provide a means of working inclusively in a way that empowers communities to plan strategically. It is therefore intended for this theory of change to provide a basis also for further refinement and development in a collaborative way with various beneficiaries.

Recommendation 10 : The Welsh Government and grant recipients of the new Grant Scheme should review and develop in a collaborative manner the initial theory of change presented in this report.

Recommendation 11 : The Welsh Government should ensure that appropriate support is in place for grant recipients of the new Grant Scheme to familiarise themselves with how to develop in a collaborative manner a theory of change with beneficiaries in their communities.

Developing the Grant Scheme for the future

- 3.22 The Grant Scheme in its current form is closed and there are no opportunities for groups that have not previously received funding through the Grant Scheme, or who are not currently receiving funding, to apply for financial support under the current conditions.
- 3.23 The Welsh Government announced that new grant schemes starting after April 2022 may include the option (depending on the policy area and what is most appropriate) to move to to a three-year award, followed by up to a further three years where appropriate.
- 3.24 Evidence gathered through interviews and theory of change workshops highlighted concerns amongst some grant recipients that a new funding model would encourage competition rather than collaboration between organisations and partners, thus having a negative impact on existing provision and partnership arrangements.

3.25 The types of organisations that currently receive funding through the Grant Scheme are highly varied in terms of their size, the nature of their activity and their ability to apply competitively for alternative sources of income. Failure to receive future grant funding could jeopardise their ability to exist and/or sustain the activities they undertake. In developing the Grant Scheme for the future, consideration will need to be given as to whether it would be appropriate to establish categories of bodies that need to be treated differently in terms of the financial support they receive from the Welsh Government.

Recommendation 12 : As part of the preparatory work for planning the new Grant Scheme the Welsh Government should undertake a thorough assessment of the implications of inviting grant applications from organisations not currently receiving funding through the Grant Scheme. This should include a risk assessment of changes to existing arrangements.

Report Authors: Buddug Hughes, Kathryn Jones, Rhys Jones and Huw Lewis, IAITH: the Welsh centre for language planning



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Views expressed in this report are those of the researchers and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government.

For further information, please contact:

Welsh Language Research Branch
Social Research and Information Division
Knowledge & Analytical Services
Welsh Government, Cathays Park
Cardiff, CF10 3NQ

Email: Research.Welsh@gov.wales

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