



# Evaluation of the Common Investment Fund

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## Research

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# Evaluation of the Common Investment Fund

<b>Audience</b>	Providers, Practitioners and Policymakers in Wales.
<b>Overview</b>	The aims of this evaluation are to develop the evaluation framework and evaluate Rounds One and Two of the Common Investment Fund.
<b>Action required</b>	None - for information.
<b>Further information</b>	Any questions on the evaluation should be addressed to: Jackie McDonald Research and Evaluation Team Welsh Assembly Government Ty'r Afon Bedwas Caerphilly, CF83 8WT Tel: 01443 663807 E-mail: Research2@wales.gsi.gov.uk
<b>Additional copies</b>	Further copies may be obtained at the above address. This document can also be accessed from the Welsh Assembly Government website at: <a href="http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills">http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills</a>
<b>Related documents</b>	The Common Investment Fund Evaluation Guide, to be found on the Evaluation Pages in the Education and Skills section of the website: <a href="http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/research-and-evaluation/124507/CIF-evaluation-guide">http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/research-and-evaluation/124507/CIF-evaluation-guide</a>

**Department for Children, Education,  
Lifelong Learning and Skills**

**Evaluation of the Common  
Investment Fund**



*Final Report*

# Evaluation of the Common Investment Fund

## *Final Report*



Submitted to:

Jackie McDonald  
Welsh Assembly Government  
Department for Children, Education  
Lifelong Learning and Skills  
Ty Afon  
Bedwas Road  
CAERPHILLY CF83 8WT

CRG Research Ltd  
25 Cathedral Road  
CARDIFF  
CF11 9TZ  
Tel: 029 2034 3218

Email: [consult@crgresearch.co.uk](mailto:consult@crgresearch.co.uk)  
[www.crgresearch.co.uk](http://www.crgresearch.co.uk)

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

In April 2006 CRG Research Ltd were commissioned by the former ELWa (now the Welsh Assembly Government Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills) to undertake an evaluation of the Common Investment Fund (CIF).

CIF was launched in March 2005 and was an integral part of the Strategic Investment stream of the National Planning and Funding System. Around £15.7 million was allocated to CIF, over two rounds, taking both capital and revenue spending together.

## Evaluation Objectives

The evaluation had 12 objectives:

- i. Whether the original justification (the 'intervention logic') for the Scheme was sound and whether it is still relevant
- ii. The extent to which the Scheme as a whole has been effectively and efficiently designed, marketed, bids assessed, delivered and managed by WAG
- iii. Whether bids were received and, if so approved, in those priority areas identified by what was then ELWa in the CIF Prospectus
- iv. To what degree CIF projects are based in practice on true learning partnerships
- v. If the inputs to the Scheme have resulted in the intended activities, outputs and outcomes of the Scheme (as identified in the Management Schedule 8)
- vi. If the Scheme as a whole represents 'value for money' (i.e. economy – inputs at lowest cost; efficiency – ratio of outputs to inputs; effectiveness – value of outputs against quantity of inputs)
- vii. The level if any, of additionality, factoring in evidence of deadweight, substitution and displacement created as a result of the introduction of the CIF Scheme
- viii. If the Scheme has met its aims of; improving quality and choice of post-16 learning which better meets identified learner needs; eliminating unnecessary duplication and gaps in provision; making best use of WAG's resources; and whether these aims are still appropriate
- ix. If there are unintended or unexpected effects from the Scheme
- x. What impact the CIF projects have had upon learners, partnership working and promoted learning
- xi. What has worked well, what barriers have been faced, and what could be improved

- xii. To make recommendations for the second round of the CIF Scheme regarding content, marketing, delivery and management of the Scheme and fit with developing WAG initiatives such as Geographical Pathfinders.

## Approach

The evaluation comprised of two phases:

- The Phase 1 evaluation commenced in May 2006 and concluded in July 2006 covered Round 1 Projects.
- The Phase 2 evaluation commenced in July 2007 and concluded in September 2007 and covered Round 2 Projects. Round 2 funding was broken down into three elements: CIF 1 Extension, CIF 2, and 15 – 19 Agenda. The evaluation covered a representative sample of all types of projects.

The methodology was broadly the same for both phases of the evaluation:

- i. Inception
- ii. Design of evaluation frameworks
- iii. Desk research
- iv. Interviews with Key Informants
- v. Interviews with Project Leads
- vi. Interviews with Project Partners (Phase 2 evaluation only)
- vii. Analysis, reporting and presentation

## Findings

Key findings from the evaluation include:

- CIF has enabled the development of provider partnerships. Where partnerships already existed they have been strengthened – traditional barriers to collaboration such as mistrust are gradually being overcome and partners are beginning to play to each others strengths.
- Collaborative outputs and outcomes such as joint curriculum development, timetabling and teaching have been achieved although the long term sustainability of these activities are yet to be seen and there is no evidence of 'hard' decisions being made e.g. providers 'giving up' learners.
- While projects did fulfil their objectives their longer term sustainability may have been compromised by short timescales with which to embed themselves.
- Issues were raised regarding strategic impact of funding small scale projects (particularly in terms of the capital elements)

- It is simply too early to quantify the impact of the Scheme on learner choice and learning delivery as many project activities did not commence until the current academic year. However anecdotal evidence would suggest that in most projects increased learner numbers and choice was expected.

## Recommmendations

On the basis of these findings, the report makes several recommendations to be considered for the delivery of future funding schemes which may involve the promotion of collaborative working:

- DCELLS to identify and disseminate good practice of collaboration particularly where 'hard choices' have been made.
- DCELLS to summarise the key characteristics of the partnership working to be expected from providers
- Models of partnership working should be used to guide further work to 'mainstream' collaborative working
- In the longer term DCELLS may wish to encourage the development of higher levels of project management skills amongst external project leads
- Delays in processing applications inhibited the ability of partners to deliver projects as planned. DCELLS should make every effort to ensure key functions are appropriately resourced.

If anything comparable to CIF is considered for the future we recommend:

- Ensuring clarity in definitions of key outcomes (e.g. *'what is collaboration?'*)
- Robust decision making processes, with minimal delays
- Setting firm parameters for what will be acceptable in terms of projects/ outcomes
- Including cross cutting themes in all decision making and monitoring
- Considering exit strategies and sustainability from the outset
- On balance, supporting fewer, larger projects – likely to have a higher long-term impact
- Building in requirements for definite outcomes in terms of learner experience
- Building in monitoring proportionate to size of project
- DCELLS staff 'keeping in touch' with projects to maximise learning and ensure key objectives remain firmly in view
- Training to be made available to ensure good project management skills in providers and appropriate monitoring expertise within DCELLS.



# 1. Introduction

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## Overview

- 1.1 CRG Research Ltd was commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government in April 2006 to evaluate the Common Investment Fund. The Fund was launched in March 2005 with around £15.7 million spread over two funding rounds.
- 1.2 CRG's evaluation of the first round was completed in September 2006<sup>1</sup>. This report describes the evaluation of the second round as well as considering findings and recommendations from both rounds to give overall conclusions and recommendations.

## CIF Objectives

- 1.3 CIF was aimed at promoting higher levels of collaboration and networking amongst post-16 learning providers, and was an integral part of the Strategic Investment Stream of the National Planning and Funding System (NPF5).
- 1.4 The objectives of CIF were to:

- Improve partnership working and networking amongst post-16 providers in order to enhance the quality and choice of learning available to learners;
- Promote, through common investment, the reorganisation of the post-16 learning network;
- Encourage and support innovative and collaborative ventures between providers; and
- Support activities which assist the Welsh Assembly Government to make best use of its resources and fulfil its obligations to:
  - eliminate unnecessary duplication and gaps in provision;
  - ensure value for money;
  - avoid disproportionate expenditure;
  - ensure responsiveness to learner needs.

### 1.5 CIF consisted of two rounds of funding:

- **Round 1:** consisting of two elements covering 103 projects:
  - i. A fund of £6 million requiring Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and Further Education Institutions (FEIs) to submit proposals on behalf of learning partnerships to show how they would use an allocated grant figure
  - ii. A fund of £300,000 targeted specifically at projects that promote Welsh medium/bilingual provision developments.
- **Round 2:** consisting of three elements with a total funding of £8.5 million for 76 capital and revenue projects:
  - i. 49 CIF Round 2 projects (revenue £2m; capital £2.5m)
  - ii. 22 14 – 19 Agenda Projects (Post 16 elements only) across all LEA areas (revenue £3m; capital £1m)<sup>2</sup>
  - iii. 5 CIF Round 1 extension projects (£371,832 of continuation funding)

1.6 A range of Post-16 providers (including Local Education Authorities, Further Education Institutions, and Adult and Community Learning providers), were allocated indicative funding and invited to submit project proposals that would support activities in response to a set of pre determined criteria.

## Evaluation Aims and Objectives

1.7 The evaluation commenced in April 2006 and was completed in August 2007. It has had the following aims:

- i. Develop an evaluation framework encompassing the first and second round of CIF
- ii. Carry out the interim evaluation covering Round 1
- iii. Carry out the final evaluation encompassing Round 1 and Round 2

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<sup>1</sup> CIF 1 was funded under ELWa. In April 2006, ELWa was merged in to the Welsh Assembly Government

1.8 The evaluation has the following objectives:

- xiii. Whether the original justification (the ‘intervention logic’) for the Scheme was sound and whether it is still relevant
- xiv. The extent to which the Scheme as a whole has been effectively and efficiently designed, marketed, bids assessed, delivered and managed by WAG
- xv. Whether bids were received and, if so approved, in those priority areas identified by what was then ELW<sup>a</sup> in the CIF Prospectus
- xvi. To what degree CIF projects are based in practice on true learning partnerships
- xvii. If the inputs to the Scheme have resulted in the intended activities, outputs and outcomes of the Scheme (as identified in the Management Schedule 8)
- xviii. If the Scheme as a whole represents ‘value for money’ (i.e. economy – inputs at lowest cost; efficiency – ratio of outputs to inputs; effectiveness – value of outputs against quantity of inputs)
- xix. The level if any, of additionality, factoring in evidence of deadweight, substitution and displacement created as a result of the introduction of the CIF Scheme
- xx. If the Scheme has met its aims of; improving quality and choice of post-16 learning which better meets identified learner needs; eliminating unnecessary duplication and gaps in provision; making best use of WAG’s resources; and whether these aims are still appropriate
- xxi. If there are unintended or unexpected effects from the Scheme
- xxii. What impact the CIF projects have had upon learners, partnership working and promoted learning
- xxiii. What has worked well, what barriers have been faced, and what could be improved
- xxiv. To make recommendations for the second round of the CIF Scheme regarding content, marketing, delivery and management of the Scheme and fit with developing WAG initiatives such as Geographical Pathfinders.

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<sup>2</sup> Funding was made available for all 22 14 – 19 Networks. Funding was steered to the LEA (as the main funding body) and used to develop projects that met the aims of the Network and be consistent with Annual Network Development Plans (ANDPs)

## Round 1 Evaluation Findings and Recommendations

1.9 The Round 1 evaluation commenced in April 2006 and was completed in July 2006. In brief the work programme consisted of:

- **Design of an evaluation framework** for carrying out the external evaluation as well as for use by the Assembly Government for projects self evaluation and monitoring.
- **Desk research** to assess the level of collaboration prior to the introduction of CIF and to review project bidding, management and monitoring documents.
- **Face to face interviews with key Welsh Assembly Government staff** involved in the Fund.
- **Face to face and telephone interviews with a sample of 40 project leads** across Wales

1.10 Key findings from the Round 1 evaluation included:

- CIF has had modest impacts mainly due to the small scale nature of projects and tight timescales.
- Many outcomes have been subtle and difficult to quantify, for example CIF has given many organisations the opportunity to come together and collaborate or work together to a greater extent than has occurred in the past.
- Implementation of projects has been difficult due to tight timescales.
- Overall, the fund was seen to lack a certain amount of clarity in its objectives, and to be excessively monitored. However local management and support from the Welsh Assembly Government has been seen as very constructive.
- Most projects were based on a sound rationale and identified areas of need, and have met the objectives set for the fund.
- Collaborative partnerships were generally successful but did face barriers such as mistrust between partners and time constraints.
- Concerns have arisen regarding the sustainability of projects and underlying partnerships - particularly in terms of the availability of continuation funding.

1.11 Several recommendations to be considered for the future delivery of CIF, as well other funding schemes, included:

- Funding needs to be more focused on clear priority outcomes (e.g. improving choice, reducing competition) and have more clarity in terms of what is required of projects. This may result in more transparent and less demanding management and monitoring processes.
- There needs to be an emphasis on long term strategic collaboration and this *may* result in a smaller number of larger projects.
- Projects need to be given time for a '*working up*' phase to ensure that consideration of long term objectives is built into proposals, resulting in more strategic sustainable projects.

## Round 2 Evaluation

1.12 The Round 2 Evaluation commenced in June 2007 and data collection was completed in the middle of August 2007. Key elements of the methodology and work programme included:

### Desk Research

1.13 This stage consisted of a review and analysis of electronic project documentation and a range of closure forms. Relevant Round 1 data was reviewed and the policy and literature review was revisited to see whether there had been any further reported developments regarding collaborative learning initiatives in Wales.

### Key Informant Interviews

1.14 Face to face and telephone interviews were contacted with the following (see Appendix I for Topic Guides):

- Senior Strategic Investment Manager
- Head of Bilingual Learning
- Seven Senior Learning and Network Development Managers
- Senior Learning Policy Manager

## Project Lead Interviews

1.15 The consultation process sought to conduct face to face and telephone interviews with Project Leads for a target of 40 projects (inevitably some project leads have managed more than one project). Learning and Network Development Managers were requested to suggest examples of ‘interesting’ projects. The sample was designed to reflect regional breakdown of projects as follows:

**Figure 1: Target Interview Schedule Breakdown**

Region	Total No Round 2 Projects	Sample Size	Total No 14 – 19 Agenda Projects	Sample Size	Total No CIF 1 Extension Projects	Sample Size
South East Wales	17	10	10	5		
North Wales	15	8	6	3	2	
South West Wales	11	6	4	2	1	
Mid Wales	6	3	2	1	1	1
All Wales					1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>

1.16 CRG interviewed **29** Project Leads regarding **39** projects. Efforts to make contact with Project Leads were hindered by the fact that the evaluation coincided with the end of the academic year meaning that contacts were either on annual leave or claimed to be too busy to speak to us. A number of contacts simply failed to return our telephone calls and e mails and every effort was made to substitute these contacts but inevitably our list was exhausted.

1.17 The table below shows the breakdown of the completed project interviews. Slight deviations from the targeted geographic and project type breakdown can be attributed to some Project Leads being responsible for more projects than we were previously aware of, and having to ‘top up’ the sample when contact lists in certain areas were exhausted.

**Figure 2: Achieved Project Interview Breakdown**

Region	CIF 2 Target Project Interviews	Achieved Interviews	14 – 19 Target Project Interviews	Achieved Interviews	CIF 1 Extension Target Interviews	Achieved Interviews
South East Wales	10	9	5	4		
North Wales	8	9	3	4	2	
South West Wales	6	6	3	1	1	
Mid Wales	3	3			1	1
All Wales					1	1
Total	27	28	11	9	2	2

1.18 As the overview of emerging findings later on will illustrate, in the main most Project Leads described having to face similar issues: although our sample is slightly lower than planned, we believe we have still managed to achieve a good coverage of projects - both by activity and by type of funding.

1.19 Topic Guides and a list of the projects included in the sample can be found in Appendices II and IV respectively.

**Project Partner Interviews**

1.20 Following initial briefing sessions with the Welsh Assembly Government it was agreed that it might be useful to approach project partners in order to gather further information about the collaborative partnerships. All Project Leads were asked to suggest Project Partners for interview (see Appendix III for Topic Guides). Eight Project Partner interviews were conducted - again some difficulties were experienced contacting partners due to the timing of the evaluation, but useful additional material did come to light.

## 2. Common Investment Fund Round 2: Overview

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### Context

#### The Emergence of the Collaborative Agenda

- 2.1 Collaborative responsiveness to learner need has been high on the educational change agenda in Wales at least since 1999, when the *'Educational Training Action Plan'*<sup>3</sup> (ETAP) identified the principle of provider collaboration as a means of achieving economies of scope and scale and ensure greater resource effectiveness and choice for learners. This strategy has been reiterated in subsequent policy documents: *'Learning Country'* (2001); *'Learning Country, Learning Pathways 14-19'* (2003); and the *'14-19 Action Plan'* (2003).
- 2.2 Focusing on collaboration is not restricted to the education and training sector in Wales and in *'Making the Connections'*<sup>4</sup>, the Welsh Assembly Government sets out its commitment to collaboration within public services across the board noting, *"through collaboration, organisations can best make use of specialised resources, overcome problems arising from limited capacity and provide an integrated service that is focused on the citizen"*<sup>5</sup>.

#### National Planning and Funding System

- 2.3 CIF was launched in March 2005 with an initial budget of £6m to support ELWa's<sup>6</sup> efforts to encourage collaboration between post-16 education and learning providers. CIF was an integral element of the Strategic Investment Stream of the National Planning and Funding System (NPFS) (the other streams being Learning Provision, Support for Learners, and Learner Commissioned Provision). The NPFS has the important overall role of helping modernise the post-16 learning network. The planning element of the NPFS will strengthen the link between learning needs and learning

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<sup>3</sup> Education and Training Action Group for Wales (1999) Educational Training Action Plan, Welsh Office, Cardiff

<sup>4</sup> Welsh Assembly Government (2004) Making the Connections: Delivering Better public Services for Wales - the Welsh Assembly Government Vision for Public Services, Welsh Assembly Government, Cardiff

<sup>5</sup> *ibid* (p.19)

<sup>6</sup> In April 2006, ELWa was merged into the Welsh Assembly Government and its activities have been continued under the remit of the Department of Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills and the Department of Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DECLLS) respectively.

delivery whilst the funding element will ensure that schools, colleges and training providers are funded on an equitable basis. The system is planned to result in:

- more choice for learners;
- more focus on quality learning;
- less wasteful competition amongst providers;
- better value for taxpayers' money; and
- further increases in the number of people in learning in Wales<sup>7</sup>.

2.4 The launch of CIF followed a series of conferences held during December 2004, designed to encourage collaboration amongst post-16 education and training providers. The collaborative approach has become a frequently referred-to tool capable of helping to meet the rising demand from learners. In recent years it has become increasingly apparent that institutions can no longer work in isolation if they are to satisfy the needs of learners.

2.5 Round 1 of the Fund required Local Education Authorities, Further Education Institutions and schools to work together (or with other learning providers) to put forward a collaboration plan that meets local needs such as workforce skills, e-learning, Welsh medium, community learning, informal learning and basic skills development. In addition CIF seeks to encourage Schemes that improve the quality of learning, enhance facilities, widen choice, promote equal opportunities or enable research into local learner preferences<sup>8</sup>.

## Overview of Projects and Partnerships

### Projects Overview

2.6 76 projects were funded by the second round of CIF broken down as follows:

- 49 CIF Round 2 Projects
- 22 14 – 19 Projects
- 5 CIF Extension Projects

<sup>7</sup> ELWa (2006) National Planning and Funding System: A Guide, ELWa, Cardiff

<sup>8</sup> ELWa (2005) 'Investing in New Area of Cooperation', Press Release , [www.elwa.org.uk/ElwaWeb/elwa.aspx?pageid=4053](http://www.elwa.org.uk/ElwaWeb/elwa.aspx?pageid=4053)

- 2.7 Round 2 and 14 – 19 Projects were often characterised by having several elements delivering a range of activities, in some cases the Round 2 Project would complement the activities of the 14 – 19 funded project and vice versa.
- 2.8 Round 2 and 14 – 19 Projects often delivered similar types of activities which are broadly detailed, together with examples of some projects below:

### ***Improving Learner Choice/ Experience***

- 2.9 The vast majority of projects involved improving learner choice/ experience and many of these used e-learning or video conferencing which will be discussed separately later. Other Projects used funding to extend choice or improve experience via a range of means:

- Deeside College CIF 2 project funded and A Level Consortium 6<sup>th</sup> Form Centre which provided a dedicated study area with IT equipment for students for consortium schools.
- Caerphilly LEA CIF 2 project targeted those not in education, employment or training (NEET) with the aim of encouraging them back into mainstream education by working with youth workers and offering taster courses in local colleges.
- Cardiff Council's 14 – 19 Project funded the establishment of a painting and decorating facility at a local high school (linked to the local college) and the development of a manufacturing virtual learning environment .

### ***E-Learning***

- 2.10 Elements of e-learning featured in many project activities in particular the establishment of Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs), examples include

- Coleg Merion Dwyfor's CIF 2 project provided online courses and 1:1 tutoring to local businesses and 1:1 tutoring facilities and e learning facilities in community locations.
- The development of a Modular Object Orientated Dynamic Learning Environment (MOODLE) or web portals were also common project activities - Coleg Ystrad Mynach CIF 2 project developed a MOODLE for local schools and colleges to access common learning materials in a number of areas identified in the Regional Statement of Needs and Priorities.

### **Video Conferencing**

2.11 Developing video conferencing facilities in schools were common project activities and many of these involved Post - 16 Providers developing integrated systems to enable joint timetabling. For example Gwynedd LEA used both CIF and 14 – 19 funding to work with providers (both schools and colleges) in the county to develop video conferencing to aid the establishment of interactive lessons for the Welsh Baccalaureate.

### **Adult and Community Learning**

2.12 Adult and Community Learning projects involved a range of activities, for example:

- Yale College partnered with local employers and trade unions to promote basic skills training in the workplace (CIF 2).
- Deeside College undertook preparation work for the adult and community learning common inspection framework including VLE community courses, mock inspection, taster sessions, staff development and a health and safety database for all community learning centres (CIF 2).
- Pembroke County Council project included the development of a quality framework and online shared information resource for ACL tutors in the county (CIF 2).

### **Geographical Pathfinders**

2.13 Launched in 2004, Geographical Pathfinders were also introduced as part of the drive to modernise and support learning provision, working towards the Welsh Assembly Government's Learning Pathways 14–19 Agenda. Operating as another key element within the National Planning and Funding System, each Pathfinder is expected to undertake an in-depth review of learning provision within a defined area, addressing configuration of learning delivery in each area leading to formal consultation on recommendations, after which the Assembly Government will work with stakeholders to implement approved options.

2.14 Key underpinning principles are collaboration, coherence and responsiveness. Collaboration is seen as a means of ensuring choice, quality and innovative responsiveness to learner need. This will require *“a paradigm and culture shift of the existing provider base from an unconnected and unduly competitive framework*

*towards that of a true network-interconnected, collaborative and working to a commonly shared vision*<sup>9</sup>.

- 2.15 Six areas were selected as Geographical Pathfinders: Merthyr Tydfil, Blaenau Gwent, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Dyfi Valley, Menai Corridor of Gwynedd/Ynys Mon and Pembrokeshire. These areas were chosen to reflect a cross section of the regions of Wales, also covering urban, rural and industrial valley areas.
- 2.16 Consultation exercises in each of the Pathfinders concluded at the end of February 2006 (with the exception of Gwynedd and Ynys Mon which completed in February 2007). The Pathfinders are now beginning to take forward and implement their strategies.

### Evidence of collaboration

- 2.17 Estyn's 2006 report, *'Collaboration between schools with sixth forms and Further Education Colleges to deliver high quality provision that expands choice and achieves value for money'*<sup>10</sup> builds on previous work undertaken in that area and explores how and why schools and FEIs are collaborating, what factors promote or inhibit their efforts and the effectiveness of different types of collaboration. It also includes some early stage conclusions on the impact of CIF on collaboration<sup>11</sup>.
- 2.18 Main findings show just how much work is going to be needed to build effective collaboration. In brief, the report found that only 36% of schools with sixth forms in Wales collaborate with FEIs, but where collaboration does take place it seems that schools have more to gain in terms of being able to retain more learners. Collaboration has mainly taken the form of joint provision of A Level courses; but there appears to be little collaborative activity for Welsh medium vocational options. There is acknowledgement that CIF has resulted in new collaborative activity, but the Estyn Report points to some uncertainty regarding the sustainability of activities once the funding ceases.
- 2.19 The report also identifies a number of reasons why, in some cases, collaboration has not occurred between schools and FEIs. These include: difficulties organising transport in terms of time and cost; competition for learners and lack of trust between partners; the preference of many schools to maintain their sixth forms in order to retain student and staff numbers; and the absence of a strategic body to plan provision across a geographical area. In addition existing funding mechanisms provide

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.elwa.ac.uk/elwaweb/elwa.aspx?pageid=3659>

<sup>10</sup> Estyn (2006) *Collaboration between schools with sixth forms and Further Education Colleges to deliver high quality provision that expands choice and achieves value for money*, Estyn, Cardiff

<sup>11</sup> As this report was published before the conclusion of many Round 1 projects we feel that it cannot offer a 'complete' view on the impact of such projects

obstacles to collaboration: there are different funding streams for pre and post-16 provision and *“the fact that 14–19 Local Area Networks do not control core funding are obstacles to more collaboration”*<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> p.4 Estyn (2006)

## 3. Key Informant Findings

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### Introduction

3.1 A range of DCELLS Officers across Wales were consulted for both the Round 1 and Round 2 evaluations on their views about the design, delivery and management of CIF and the 'way forward' regarding future similar schemes.

3.2 Round 1 evaluation findings from this group of informants included:

- The rationale for CIF was justified - collaborative learning provision has been hindered in the past by self interest and competition between providers and CIF was seen to offer tangible support for achieving attractive wider goals in terms of rationalisation, specialisation and overall effectiveness in learning provision.
- CIF 1 was seen to have been launched too quickly and possessing loose eligibility criteria.
- CIF 1 had helped make progress in terms of delivering collaborative learning opportunities however concerns were expressed regarding how sustainable these activities would be once funding had ceased.
- CIF was widely recognised to have given providers the strategic imperative to work together however it was acknowledged that there was still a long way to go.
- Further funding was seen to be needed to embed the changes to learner choice and quality
- Suggestions for future developments included: tighter focus on clearer priority outcomes; greater consideration of long term strategic projects rather than 'one off' actions; and greater time given to 'working up' projects.

3.3 The rest of this section will present the findings and issues that have arisen from the Round 2 consultation with DCELLS Officers.

## Context

### Rationale

- 3.4 The original rationale for CIF is still seen to be relevant; to some Officers it stands out as an important scheme in a funding environment which *“encourages competition”*.

### Design

- 3.5 Views regarding the design of CIF 2 projects were mixed. One Officer highlighted that learning networks are at different stages of development, and this may have impacted on the design of projects. Most projects were seen to be well thought out and based on identified need and had *“the partnership ethos in mind and built in collaboration”*. Video conferencing projects in Powys and Ceredigion were highlighted as good examples of responding to an identified need to provide choice for learners; a feasibility study evidencing and scoping the project has been undertaken prior to funding being allocated. These projects were also seen as good examples of where both CIF and 14 – 19 Agenda funding had been combined to provide equipment in schools and training for the college.
- 3.6 Not all projects were seen as having been well thought out, and it was felt by some Officers that certain projects had been put together in a short timescale in order to draw down the funding rather than being sufficiently thought through. In some cases this resulted in a lack of consultation between stakeholders within an organisation regarding the design of the project, which in turned subsequently jeopardised the planning of costings and degree of collaboration.
- 3.7 Concerns were raised regarding how strategic the capital elements of the projects were: *“there just wasn’t enough capital funding or time to achieve strategic change”*. One officer with an all Wales remit felt that most of the capital spend had funded equipment which was *“not a strategic nor effective spend”*.

### Assessment process

- 3.8 Several interviewees felt that many lessons had been learned from CIF 1 and the assessment process for CIF 2 projects had been designed to ensure a greater degree of consistency in proposal handling across Wales. A ‘tighter’ prospectus together with the establishment of an all Wales assessment panel allowed regional representatives to hear opinions about all projects and ensure that decision-making was more consistent across regions.

- 3.9 The assessment handling process for 14 – 19 Agenda projects was initially addressed on a regional basis with projects then receiving approval from an all Wales Panel. A number of officers felt that there were inconsistencies in decision-making that resulted in similar proposals being rejected in some regions and while being accepted in others. Although this was essentially seen as *“a problem at the margin”*, there was agreement that in future the scope for acceptable differences in regional approach should be better communicated to staff.
- 3.10 Concerns were expressed regarding the lack of consultation with the bilingual learning team (a Welsh Assembly Government cross cutting theme) at the prospectus development and assessment stage and one Officer with an all Wales remit commented *“the bilingual strategy was not consulted enough: there is a real danger that if specialists continue not to be consulted properly the strategy won’t move forward”*.
- 3.11 Several officers also pointed to some projects’ lack of consultation with the Welsh Video Network (WVN) and UK Education and Research Networking Association regarding the purchasing of video conferencing equipment. A central purchasing model for FE and HE institutions has been in place since 2002 to ensure that all video conferencing equipment purchased was compatible and that WVN was familiar with systems in order to provide maintenance and support. DCELLS were surprised by the number of providers who decided to undertake video conferencing projects and WVN found difficulty in terms of their capacity to respond. As a result, some officers felt that projects were not given sufficiently timely advice about purchasing WVN-compatible equipment, which may have resulted in the possibility of them buying incompatible equipment.

### **Delays in funding notification**

- 3.12 The delays in the Welsh Assembly Government issuing funding notifications for projects – which delayed the commencement of some projects by up to three months - was a commonly highlighted problem of this round of CIF funding. As the findings from the Project Lead and Partner Interviews illustrate in the next section, the delay in funding notification was the single biggest cause of complaint regarding the administration and delivery of CIF.

## Impacts and outcomes

### Successful projects

- 3.13 A longer-term view may be needed to attain an accurate assessment of the impact of CIF on learner provision, choice and quality. Embedding and mainstreaming projects is widely seen as essential for improving provision for learners, and it is simply too soon to assess the level of embedding that will emerge in the long term.
- 3.14 A number of Officers indicated that the most successful projects were those where all partners understood and signed up to the relevant strategic aims and objectives. Yale College's CIF 2 retail project was highlighted as an example of a project that also aligned with the positioning of retail as a sub regional priority. Better projects were also associated with well-established partnerships.
- 3.15 Interviewees felt that in general most activities funded by CIF wouldn't have happened without the funding: *"money is an important incentive"*.
- 3.16 In the long term, one Officer hoped that projects had made providers realise that *"they don't own the learner – there has to be more than one provider for a learner"* and that learners *"become more outward looking and not settle on what is on their doorstep"*.

### Collaboration: Success and Barriers

- 3.17 What constitutes collaboration was not strictly defined and very much left to the interpretation of individual project partnerships. DCELLS Officers acknowledged that the definition of collaborative partnership requires some further consideration.
- 3.18 Powys was highlighted as an area where the two streams of CIF funding drawn down by the college and LEA have resulted in two complementary projects enabling providers to be *"more collaborative"* in their video conferencing network project.
- 3.19 Collaboration was also seen to be hindered by institutional hierarchy: *"collaboration improves when the curriculum development officers come together – they are more interested in learners rather than the image of the institution that concerns principals and head teachers"*.

- 3.20 In some areas, although there was collaboration, some Officers were concerned that the ethos behind it *“didn’t entirely align with the aims of CIF to extend learner choice and reduce duplication.”*
- 3.21 Many Officers felt that barriers to collaboration still persist - mainly relating to the individual cultures of different providers, particularly in schools who are historically used to working on their own. For example, in some parts of Wales, it was reported that, although schools had been prepared to collaborate with colleges, they may not be prepared to collaborate with each other: one Officer stated *“the schools see themselves as empires... they are prepared to collaborate with other providers elsewhere in Wales but not set up common timetables within each county”*.
- 3.22 Fear of losing learners seems to be a common reason for providers being reluctant to work together: as one Officer said, *“in Mid Wales there are too many providers who don’t want to collaborate in fear of losing learners”*.
- 3.23 In rural areas some Officers felt that geographical distance *“makes it [collaboration] harder - but is often used as an excuse”* and again it is the fear of losing learners that is often the reason for this reluctance to collaborate.
- 3.24 Whether meaningful collaboration is sustained by some partnerships in the long term is likely to depend on the availability of funding. With regard to video conferencing projects, one Officer commented *“it’s too early to say - it depends on how well the equipment is used and who leads on what”*.
- 3.25 There were also suggestions that in some areas there is a lack of coordination between the LEA and 14 – 19 network, *“LEAs tend to be focussed on schools and are only just realising the importance of working with FEIs and work based learning providers”*.

### **Sustainable collaborative learning provision**

- 3.26 According to many Officers, the sustainability of activities funded by CIF depends on the personalities and desires of those involved. However if the activities triggered by the funding are seen to have been successful, providers may be more inclined to look to the long-term and explore how the activities could be continued through core funding. There were suggestions that other streams of funding need to be amended to encourage greater collaboration.
- 3.27 Some Officers felt that the CIF 2 prospectus and assessment process encouraged providers to ‘build in’ sustainability to their projects; some felt that the 14 – 19 process was not so clear on this issue.

## Issues for Further Consideration

- 3.28 There was support amongst all interviewees that CIF - or a funding stream with a similar remit - should be developed for the future. One Officer commented *“it gives providers the opportunity to enhance provision”*
- 3.29 There was some disagreement regarding the duration of a new scheme, with some officers stating that *“one year projects are fine – they kick-start activity that should be mainstreamed”*. Other Officers were adamant that three year funding cycles may be more appropriate and would allow time to ‘work up’ bids.
- 3.30 It was also felt that any future scheme could be complemented by, for example, ‘collaboration champions’. Furthermore providers such as schools have little experience of designing bids and project management – the provision of such support may be a useful element of any future scheme.
- 3.31 There were suggestions that DCELLS needs to identify and enforce more strongly what it means by ‘collaboration’ and what it wants from projects: *“a ‘soft’ guidance approach may generate more flexibility but the Assembly need to be clearer about what it wants if it is to enforce change”*.
- 3.32 Questions were also raised regarding a scheme of this nature continuing to have a capital element, with uncertainty about capital spend achieving effective strategic change on a collective basis: *“CIF is about feasibility and blueprints – working out what people want to do before bringing the capital on line”*.

## 4. CIF Project Leads and Partners: Interview Findings

### Introduction

- 4.1 29 Project Leads and 8 Project Partners were consulted for their views on the design, delivery and impacts of CIF Round 2.
- 4.2 Key findings from the Round 1 consultation included:

- Many Project Leads had worked collaboratively in the past, and in some cases CIF 1 had been used to build on and develop existing partnerships.
- The proposal process was seen by many to lack clarity and have too short a timescale to adequately consult all partners.
- Most projects involved one type of activity with *'developing a new curriculum activity'* and *'joint training of staff'* being the most common.
- Most projects were developed in response to pre identified needs or gaps in provision.
- Some Leads felt that they would be able to draw on other sources of funding with which to fund the CIF project in the future, however others felt there hadn't been sufficient time to embed the projects enough to do this.
- CIF was seen as a good catalyst for collaborative working; however barriers of competition and mistrust between providers were evident.
- Welsh medium and bilingual provision was seen to have been enhanced.
- Considerations for future development included: amendments to timing both in regard to time to *'work up'* and complete projects; sustainability of projects and continuation of funding; and less bureaucratic and time consuming monitoring procedures.

### Partnerships

- 4.3 The majority of partnerships consisted of a combination of the LEA, college/s and schools, with the LEA or college usually acting as a Lead. LEAs acted as Leads on all 14 – 19 projects. More interesting examples of project partnerships include a project led by Yale College partnered with several local employers and trades unions to

promote basic skills training in the workplace. Recognising the need to integrate training with shift patterns, the College also worked with Learndirect to develop access to basic skills training outside of core hours.

- 4.4 Most learning partnerships were loosely established with the CIF 2 funding allowing them to *“build on the evidence base and improve”*. In many cases while institutions or the LEA may have been nominated as lead for funding and administrative purposes, in practice all partners were *“more or less equal”*.
- 4.5 Partnerships tended to meet formally on a regular basis but a significant number tended to have more ad hoc meetings.

### Rationale for projects

- 4.6 Most projects' rationale was based on identified need and/ or priorities emanating from local or regional strategies. For instance in Neath Port Talbot, the CCET was a driving force for the aims and objectives of the CIF projects. Issues relating to low skill levels, low aspirations and high unemployment in the area had highlighted the need to increase the employability and work ethos of local people and had consulted with local employers and the voluntary sector to obtain their views.
- 4.7 A number of projects made reference to *‘Making the Connections’* when explaining their project's rationale, for example: Coleg Menai developed a *‘Memorandum of Understanding’* with Hyffordiant Mon to deliver motor industry courses after acknowledgement that there weren't enough learners to justify both providers offering courses; Neath Port Talbot mentioned the *“need to achieve efficiencies”* across boundaries was a consideration in the development of their project.
- 4.8 Rhondda Cynon Taf's CIF 2 Vocational Satellite Centre project was developed in association with Coleg Morgannwg to deliver vocational courses in a number of priority areas such as construction and building maintenance. Smaller satellite centres were seen to be more sustainable and less labour intensive than one large centre. In addition, the schools benefited through the retention of learners and the college gained a greater number of learners once they had completed the initial courses in the centre.
- 4.9 In North Wales, Denbighshire's 14 – 19 – CIF 2 projects aimed at extending options for 16 – 19 year olds was developed due to a recognition that there were *“poor standards and little learner choice”* in the authority. Newport Council's CIF 2 Outdoor Recreational Pursuits project was based on the need to expand post 16 informal and formal learning opportunities and achieve softer outcomes such as increased self confidence amongst learners.

- 4.10 A number of projects, e.g. Deeside College's Common Assessment Tool (CIF 2) and Caerphilly Council's *'Discovering Skills – Getting Back on Track'* (CIF 2) used collaboration between providers to share information about students to overcome information gaps when students transfer between providers. The development of an on-line system to store data means that students don't need to be assessed twice.

### Level of collaboration prior to CIF

- 4.11 The vast majority of Project Leads and Partners had undertaken a degree of collaborative working with a range of organisations prior to CIF. Types of collaborative venture appear to have differed between ad hoc European funded projects (e.g. under Urban II) to more ongoing initiatives. In some cases collaboration appears to have been dependent on the availability of money: CIF appears to have been the only source of funding where collaboration was both a process and *"an outcome"*.

## Management and delivery

### Proposal process

- 4.12 Most interviewees found the proposal process to be clear and straightforward particularly in comparison to other sources of funding - for example European Social Fund.
- 4.13 Some concerns were voiced that the application forms weren't 'joined up' enough with other streams and initiatives such as Geographical Pathfinders and CIF 1.

### Management and delivery

- 4.14 Inevitably the delays in issuing contracts have been flagged up by the vast majority of interviewees as a fundamental problem in the scheme resulting in projects having to complete in inappropriately tight timescales.
- 4.15 Monitoring and reporting requirements were seen to be straightforward and transparent initially. However in some cases Project Leads raised concerns that monitoring had become more time consuming towards the end of the funding period *"we found the constant communication and monthly reporting excessive. I have previously managed a £5 million European funded project which only needed 6 monthly reporting"*<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> DCELLS state that in some cases monitoring activities were increased towards the end of project funding period because some providers did not provide the necessary information agreed in the contract or that there were concerns that projects would not complete.

## Impact and Outcomes

### Success of project

- 4.16 All Project Leads and Partners acknowledged that in the short term at least their projects can be considered successful. More tangible evidence of success may not be evident for some time, particularly for those projects that involved video conferencing or VLEs and will not be implemented until the start of the 2007/ 2008 academic year.
- 4.17 For one Project Partner, a large company in North Wales, the basic skills project he was involved in *“was very successful. Many of our employees had been struggling with maths so the college sent out a tutor who assessed their needs and designed bespoke training – our company’s training budget does not provide funding for this kind of training”*.
- 4.18 One Lead of an e-learning project in Mid Wales felt that the short timescales resulted in *“difficulties meeting targets, it was a wonderful opportunity but it didn’t have time to take off”*.

### Project outcomes

- 4.19 Projects were seen to offer satisfactory value for money; one Project Lead stated *“the outcomes are very good and have created a lasting legacy”*. However many Project Leads felt that *“it was too early to tell”* whether their projects had impacted on learners and suggested revisiting them at the end of the 2007 – 2008 academic year to explore this element.
- 4.20 On the basis of initial interest by learners, good outcomes, particularly in terms of learner numbers, were predicted by Project Leads: the Project Lead of a retail and consumer services based project stated *“we hope to have 30 learners in the first year and 50 in the second, but its really too soon to commit to firm figures”*; a project which has developed vocational satellite centres for learners had already been well used by students and its Lead stated *“we expect interest will grow further as facilities get used and students see what they offer”*. In the long term it is envisaged that the project will increase vocational take up and *“refocus staffing priorities to needs”*.
- 4.21 The activities funded by Newport Council’s outdoor pursuits project is expected to be utilised by most of the primary schools in the area and has also attracted attention

from the voluntary sector and local companies indicating that the Project's activities will be self sustained in the medium term.

- 4.22 A project promoting basic skills training in the work place has increased accessibility and acceptability to basic skills courses and one Project Partner, an employer, commented *"it has reduced any perceived stigma attached to basic skills training. In addition participants can now help their children"*. Another Project Partner, stated that their company is now investing more money in basic skills training: *"we hadn't anticipated the huge costs and demands for basic skills training. The project has worked very well and ensured that there is no stigma attached to attending a basic skills course"*.
- 4.23 A project aimed at engaging individuals not in education, employment or training (NEETs) allowed partners to explore ways of how to work with this group, and identified suitable ways of integrating into future 14 - 19 delivery the Project Lead also states that they had also consulted participants for their views, which were mainly positive.
- 4.24 Most project activities would not have progressed to the extent they did without CIF, one project lead stated *"the project would have been more difficult without the funding we wouldn't have had the people to resource it, and going forward, it may be difficult to keep it at the level it has reached now"*.

#### **Collaboration: Success and Barriers**

- 4.25 Project Partners were generally happy with partnership arrangements and there is no evidence of people feeling 'left behind', suggesting that in this sense the partnerships were truly collaborative in nature.
- 4.26 A Project Partner from South West Wales stated that CIF *"enabled partners to work to strengths and capabilities and while the college led the project overall they were happy to let the LEA lead on some elements"*.
- 4.27 In one area it was suggested that a change in attitudes has been one of the major successes; *"providers are beginning to realise that they can't all have the same facilities"* contributing to some of CIF's key objectives to reduce duplication and create learner choice.
- 4.28 Most Project Leads acknowledge that what they achieved would only have been possible through a collaborative partnership, with the Project Lead commenting *"14 – 19 needs collaboration, no single institution could deliver it alone"*.

- 4.29 In one area, the cross authority project had encouraged providers to develop an understanding of each other and work with one each other, *“some schools saw themselves as quite independent - the project raised awareness and understanding of what happens Post 16 in colleges”*.
- 4.30 The sharing of information and good practice appears to have been a fundamental benefit to have emerged from the collaborative partnerships, for example one college Project Partner suggested that *“the collaboration enabled better information exchange helping both providers and learners”*. In one area the college was aware of work that had been undertaken with NEETs in West Wales and arranged a video conference for those involved, the lead stated that this wouldn't have happened without collaboration.
- 4.31 A Project Partner, a large employer, stated that *“the college has helped us find funding, it was frustrating before as we didn't know what was available”*. Likewise the College appreciates the fact that local companies are now more aware of its activities.
- 4.32 Inevitably the most common barrier mentioned by leads and partners alike was timescales. In one area CIF money had to be given back as building work was delayed by structural problems which could not be resolved within CIF timescales (this has now been funded under a separate grant).
- 4.33 Bureaucracy was commonly mentioned as a hindrance to collaboration, for instance one School, a Project Partner stated that they found *“liaising with college ‘hierarchy’ could be difficult due to the bureaucracy involved”*. A LEA Project Partner also found that *“the process was slowed as the colleges had to check with their boards over what could be done whereas the LEA see partnership as a priority”*.

### **Embedding collaboration**

- 4.34 Many Project Leads and Partners expressed a desire to continue collaboration however this in many cases would be dictated by finances – one school Project Partner stated *“we would all like the collaboration to continue in spirit but I and other partners need money to release staff”*. This feeling was iterated by another interviewee, *“we have benefited one off from this project – maintaining the partnerships without the money may be difficult”*. In one area the LEA project lead felt that some schools were still sceptical about collaboration and *“concerned about decline in learner numbers to realise the strength gained from collaboration”*.
- 4.35 For those areas where collaborative working has a long history, collaboration between providers seems to be integral to the provision of Post - 16 education and training in the area. A Project Partner in South East Wales commented that *“we are looking to keep the collaboration going, CIF has ‘oiled’ existing relationships and brought more partners into the pot”*.

- 4.36 Several examples of collaboration being continued beyond the conclusion of CIF were highlighted: The basic skills in the workplace project is now to be rolled out to other employers now that its success has been demonstrated; another collaborative partnership has already been taken forward and is joining with other local authorities, the retail and housing sector to put a bid for convergence funding to fund a capital project in Ebbw Vale.

### Issues for Further Consideration

- 4.37 CIF is widely regarded as an excellent means to encourage collaboration with one college partner stating *“mainstream funding is top sliced and so our ability to continue working with the wider community has been hampered, CIF enabled some continuity in delivery”*.
- 4.38 Most Project Leads felt that a revision to the timescales was required alongside a *“clear definition strategy, outcomes and incentives in place to move things forward”*. Echoing the views of some DCELLS officers, many leads felt that a three year funding cycle would be appropriate and would allow strategic planning and *“give time to embed actions and opportunity to drill down”*.
- 4.39 A number of Leads commented on the need to ensure that CIF and its outcomes are aligned with other DCELLS funding streams and initiatives; *“the Assembly doesn’t allow CIF to flourish and progress through its other programmes”*.
- 4.40 Consideration of regional needs is another element that many interviewees felt should be given greater consideration. Some interviewees when designing future programmes, there needs to be greater consultation with regional DCELLS officers who understand their local needs and partnerships; another Lead felt that regional CIF projects may be feasible to ensure that projects are aligned with CCET priorities.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

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### Introduction

- 5.1 This final report has revisited findings from the Round 1 evaluation and presented findings from the Round 2 evaluation. A number of common themes and issues have emerged from both sets of findings.
- 5.2 In this section, conclusions on both Round 1 and Round 2 of the fund are considered against the formal objectives of the evaluation – leading to recommendations for design and delivery of future programmes

### Conclusions

**Objective i: Whether the original justification (the ‘intervention logic’) for the Scheme was sound and whether it is still relevant?**

#### ***Round 1 Conclusions***

- 5.3 The Round 1 evaluation concluded that although a significant degree of collaboration had been occurring in many areas prior to the introduction of the fund, the scheme was both justified and relevant.
- 5.4 For those who had not collaborated previously, CIF had given the opportunity to bring organisations together and work in a way they had never done before. Where there already had been a significant degree of collaboration, CIF had allowed them to go further than they would otherwise have done. CIF had enabled greater depth in collaborative partnerships and gave reason to collaborate to those previously reluctant to do so.

#### ***Round 2 Conclusions***

- 5.5 Findings drawn from the Round 2 evaluation indicate that the intervention logic for CIF is still justified. In a funding system that would appear to encourage competition between providers, CIF represents an important opportunity to promote collaboration and increase learner choice while reducing costs.

- 5.6 The funding for this round has allowed existing partnerships to establish themselves better and gain a greater understanding of their aims and objectives. In many cases, the joint working arrangements for Round 1 projects were tentative and this second round of funding has allowed them to develop. Providers have a better understanding of each other; less suspicion has resulted in more effective collaboration.
- 5.7 Questions have to be raised regarding the strategic impact of allocating such small amounts of capital funding. The long term impact and sustainability of purchasing 20 lap tops for example may well be questioned. Furthermore concerns were also voiced that some capital elements funded by CIF may have duplicated the efforts of other funding schemes.

**Objective ii: The extent to which the Scheme as a whole has been effectively and efficiently designed, marketed, bids assessed, delivered and managed by WAG.**

***Round 1 Conclusions***

- 5.8 Despite generally good feedback, the Round 1 evaluation reported several issues: short timescales to submit and develop proposals; delays in approving bids resulting in shorter timescales for projects to complete; and excessive and time consuming monitoring and auditing.

***Round 2 Conclusions***

- 5.9 The Round 2 evaluation gathered few if any comments about the time to work up proposals; however concerns regarding the issuing of contracts and the bureaucratic nature of having to meet legal funding requirements were common. This led to many interviewees feeling that their projects did not have the opportunity to realise their full potential and resulted in increased burdens in terms of project management.

**Objective iii: Whether bids were received and, if so approved, in those priority areas identified by DCELLS in the CIF Prospectus?**

***Round 1 Conclusions***

- 5.10 The Round 1 Evaluation broadly concluded that bids were approved in all the priority areas identified by the Welsh Assembly Government with most being based on identified need.

**Round 2 Conclusions**

- 5.11 The development of a ‘tighter’ prospectus for the CIF 2 projects in this funding stream would seem to have led to more sophisticated, well-designed projects with greater reference to regional and national priorities.
- 5.12 However, concerns that the bilingual strategy was not sufficiently consulted - either at the prospectus development or bid approval stage - must be noted.

**Objective iv: To what degree CIF projects are based, in practice, on true learning partnerships?****Round 1 Conclusions**

- 5.13 The Round 1 evaluation noted that CIF had made a certain amount of progress in the development of ‘*true learning partnerships*’, with several partnerships continuing beyond the funding period. Where partnerships had existed prior to CIF they had been strengthened. CIF had helped initial feelings of mistrust between providers to be lessened somewhat. However it was acknowledged that there was “*still a lot of progress to be made*” and sustainability after the funding period was still to be fully demonstrated.

**Round 2 Conclusions**

- 5.14 As noted earlier we can conclude from the Round 2 evaluation that partnerships have begun to mature. Providers have gained a better understanding and played to each others’ strengths. However some groups of providers still seem to be better at partnership working than others. In certain areas, schools, for example, are still reluctant to partner with each other, or with other providers.

**Objective v: If the inputs to the Scheme have resulted in the intended activities, outputs and outcomes of the Scheme (as identified in the Management Schedule 8)?****Round 1 Conclusions**

- 5.15 The Round 1 evaluation noted that CIF led to many activities, outputs and outcomes identified in Management Schedule 8. Barriers to collaboration were overcome or at least addressed; changes in post-16 learning organisation occurred (or at the very least plans had been developed to do this); joint working in terms of curriculum development, teaching and timetabling had occurred (or the feasibility had been

explored); increased learner choice was enabled through the development of some curriculum activity; and significant measures were taken to improve Welsh medium and bilingual learning provision.

### ***Round 2 Conclusions***

5.16 Findings from the Round 2 evaluation broadly concur with the Round 1 position. However, long-term sustainability is not yet certain. In particular, it can still be argued that the point where 'hard' decisions are made has yet to be reached i.e. providers starting to 'give up' learners.

**Objective vi: If the scheme as a whole represents 'value for money' (i.e. economy – inputs at lowest cost; efficiency – ratio of outputs to inputs; effectiveness – value of outputs against quantity of inputs)?**

### ***Round 1 Conclusions***

5.17 Round 1 concluded that the majority of projects did meet their objectives and were widely seen as likely to be achieving value for money. Long term sustainability was a concern to both Key Informants and Project Leads, with many projects unable to continue due to lack of longer term funding. Short time scales also resulted in difficulties in 'embedding' projects.

### ***Round 2 Conclusions***

5.18 Broadly similar conclusions can be drawn from the Round 2 evaluation. Projects did meet their objectives - albeit in short time scales. However longer-term 'value for money' may have been compromised again by projects not becoming fully embedded in mainstream operations. In terms of funding for capital elements, issues regarding long term strategic impact still have to be identified.

**Objective vii: The level if any, of additionality, factoring in evidence of deadweight, substitution and displacement created as a result of the introduction of the CIF scheme?**

### ***Round 1 Conclusions***

5.19 CIF was not seen to duplicate the objectives of other funding schemes, though there were comments that it could have been better designed to complement schemes such as the Quality Improvement Fund and Geographical Pathfinders. There was little evidence of deadweight, substitution or displacement, and there was a general feeling

that CIF was encouraging activities and methods of working that would have not have been possible with other schemes.

### **Round 2 Conclusions**

5.20 Again, similar conclusions can be made following the Round 2 evaluation. Concerns regarding the potential for some of the capital funded activities duplicating other DCELLS activities such as schools improvement funding were raised and may need to be explored in greater depth in the development of any future funding programmes.

**Objective viii: If the Scheme has met its aims of: improving quality and choice of post-16 learning which better meets identified learner needs; eliminating unnecessary duplication and gaps in provision; making best use of WAG's resources; and whether these aims are still appropriate?**

### **Round 1 Conclusions**

5.21 The Round 1 evaluation concluded that there was evidence that the scheme has improved quality and choice – at least in the short term - and that the vast majority of projects were based on an identified need, or involved an assessment of learning provision to identify gaps and duplication.

5.22 Questions were raised regarding the success of collaborative approaches when '*hard choices*' have to be made, e.g. providers compromising and '*giving up*' courses and learners in order to eliminate duplication. It was acknowledged that CIF had made a small - albeit significant - step in reducing some of the traditional barriers between providers, such as mistrust and competition. However, in most cases, it was "*simply too soon*" for providers to begin to prioritise the needs of the wider agenda over their individual goals and survival, which will be needed if CIF's aims are to be wholly met.

### **Round 2 Conclusions**

5.23 The Round 2 evaluation pointed to continuing progress in these directions. There was certainly evidence of projects improving choice and quality for learners and eliminating gaps in provision. However evidence of '*hard choices*' is still to be seen.

**Objective ix: If there are unintended or unexpected effects from the Scheme?**

### **Round 1 Conclusions**

5.24 The Round 1 evaluation did report some unintended or unexpected effects such as additional expenditure, particularly in terms of staffing and purchasing capital

equipment resulting from the scheme. More positive effects included some bridging of the differences in culture and ethos between colleges and schools.

### **Round 2 Conclusions**

5.25 Perhaps reflecting the fact that the vast majority of Leads had participated in the first Round of funding and '*knew what to expect*', few if any significant unintended consequences were reported at this stage.

**Objective x: What impact the CIF projects have had upon learners, partnership working and promoted learning?**

### **Round 1 Conclusions**

5.26 The Round 1 evaluation reported modest impacts on learners, partnership working and promoted learning. Reasons for limited impact included:

- Small scale projects resulting in 'marginal' impacts
- Subtle outcomes such as improved collaboration, pooling resources, etc - which are difficult to identify or quantify;
- Implementation hindered by tight timescales;
- Projects having to overcome barriers caused by the 'entrenched' positions of partners, leading to limited identifiable progress
- Indications that support for 'off the shelf' projects resulted in issues relating to additionality.

5.27 The evaluation noted that **learners** had not been directly asked for their views and it was suggested that evaluation frameworks should provide opportunities for doing so in future.

5.28 Impacts related to **partnership working** were noted, with many project leads stating that they would like to continue working in this way and that collaborative delivery is vital for long term sustainability for colleges and providers.

5.29 The enhancement of learning delivery by some projects was noted and in some cases seen as sustainable in the long term.

### **Round 2 Conclusions**

- 5.30 Of those projects which were designed to have a direct impact on **learners** (e.g. those that developed VLEs, shared course materials, VC equipment), on the whole it is still too early to tell what kinds of impacts have been experienced. The outputs of many projects' activities will not be fully identifiable until new courses start to be delivered at the commencement of the 2007/ 2008 academic year.
- 5.31 This round of funding has allowed **partnerships** to mature and embed to a point where, in most cases, they will continue in some shape or form beyond CIF. There was evidence of Providers starting to realise how they can benefit from the approach.
- 5.32 In the short term, many projects have enhanced learning delivery. The widespread use of VLEs and VC will certainly enhance the learner experience. However the longevity of many of these activities will be dependent on the enthusiasm and resources of the partnership to maintain and update them.

**Objective xi: What has worked well, what barriers have been faced, and what could be improved?**

### **Round 1 Conclusions**

- 5.33 The Round 1 evaluation reported that, despite the 'steep *learning curve*' for some projects, the partnership working and collaborative delivery initiated by CIF had, on the whole, been a great success. The traditional barriers of mistrust and competition between learning providers at a local level had become somewhat less of a concern - although in most cases this was the start of a long process, and incentives such as additional funding were needed to keep the momentum going.

### **Round 2 Conclusions**

- 5.34 The Round 2 evaluation notes a definite '*step change*' in terms of barriers. While the traditional barriers such as mistrust and competition between providers do still exist, less emphasis was placed on them by interviewees and barriers such as short timescales appear to have had more prominence in this round of funding.

**Objective xii: To make recommendations for the second round of the CIF Scheme regarding content, marketing, delivery and management of the Scheme and fit with developing WAG initiatives such as Geographical Pathfinders.**

### **Round 1 Conclusions**

- 5.35 Recommendations made in the Round 1 Evaluation included:
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- Funding needs to be more focused on clear priority outcomes (e.g. improving choice, reducing competition) and have more clarity in terms of what is required of projects. This may result in more transparent and less demanding management and monitoring processes.
- There needs to be an emphasis on long term strategic collaboration and this may result in a smaller number of larger projects.
- Projects need to be given time for a 'working up' phase to ensure that consideration of long term objectives is built into proposals, resulting in more strategic sustainable projects.

## Round 2 Recommendations

5.36 Our recommendations are made within a context where a further round of CIF funding is **not** expected to be offered, but support with a number of similar characteristics **might** be considered at some point in the future.

5.37 Accordingly our recommendations cover learning points from CIF which might be adopted in any event, and more specific points which we see as relevant for any further interventions to promote collaborative working.

### Collaboration

5.38 Improving collaboration, following the spirit of *'Making the Connections'* etc, remains challenging and is likely to require long term efforts. At present, there seems to be some lack of clarity in what levels and types of collaborative working are being sought - particularly when the NPFS is still seen as promoting elements of competition between providers – and how appropriate changes may be implemented.

5.39 Looked at overall, therefore, we recommend:

- DCELLS identifying and disseminating what are seen as good examples of partnership working – particularly where 'hard choices' have been made or are under consideration
- DCELLS carrying out further work to summarise key characteristics of partnership working which is expected from providers – drawing on the work of the various Pathfinders, CIF, etc.
- These models of partnership working should be used within DCELLS to guide further work to 'mainstream' collaborative working – likely to be called for more formally by the National Assembly in any event

- Models of partnership working should be disseminated to providers and other partners to clarify the kinds of working DCELLS expects to see, and prepare the ground for any further initiatives which seek specifically to promote collaboration
- The principles of collaboration apply to links between DCELLS and learning providers too, but DCELLS may wish to consider taking a firmer line on requiring more effective partnership working in the future, including when 'hard choices' are needed, and seek responses from providers about how best this might be implemented
- With a number of important exceptions, limited project management skills and techniques were a constraint on some of the CIF projects. For the longer-term, DCELLS may wish to encourage the development of higher levels of skills in these areas in any event, but they should be considered specifically in any further programme (see below)
- Delays in processing applications inhibited the ability of partners to deliver projects as planned. DCELLS should make every effort to ensure key functions are appropriately resourced.

### Specific Funds

5.40 If anything comparable to CIF is considered for the future we recommend:

- Ensuring clarity in definitions of key outcomes (e.g. *'what is collaboration?'*)
- Robust decision making processes, with minimal delays
- Setting firm parameters for what will be acceptable in terms of projects/ outcomes
- Including cross cutting themes in all decision making and monitoring
- Considering exit strategies and sustainability from the outset
- On balance, supporting fewer, larger projects – likely to have a higher long-term impact
- Building in requirements for definite outcomes in terms of learner experience
- Building in monitoring proportionate to size of project
- DCELLS staff 'keeping in touch' with projects to maximise learning and ensure key objectives remain firmly in view
- Training to be made available to ensure good project management skills in providers and appropriate monitoring expertise within DCELLS.

**Appendix I:**  
**Topic Guide 1 – Key Informants**

## Welsh Assembly Government: Evaluation of Common Investment Fund Topic Guide 1: Key Informants

### Interviewer Briefing

The Common Investment Fund (CIF) was launched in March 2005 and supports the Welsh Assembly Government's Department of Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DELLS) efforts to encourage collaboration between post 16 education and learning providers. CIF funded around £15.7 million to run over two phases.

The objectives of CIF are to:

- Improve partnership working and networking amongst post 16 providers in order to enhance the quality and choice of learning available to learners;
- Promote, through common investment the reorganisation of the Post 16 network;
- Encourage and support innovative ventures between providers; and
- Support activities that help the Welsh Assembly Government/ DELLS make best use of its resources and fulfil its obligations to:
  - Eliminate duplication and unnecessary gaps in provision;
  - Ensure value for money;
  - Avoid disproportionate expenditure; and
  - Ensure responsiveness to learner needs.

Round 1 of the scheme provided £6 million between 103 projects and ran from September 2005 to March 2006. CRG completed an evaluation of this phase in July 2006.

Round 2 provided just under £9 million funding to approximately 63 projects between September 2006 and March 2007

Round 2 projects fall into three categories:

1. CIF Round 2 - (approx 49 projects) targeted at revenue (£2m) and capital (£2.5m) projects and three priorities
  - i. Regional Statements of Need
  - ii. Development/ extension of successful Round 1 Projects
  - iii. E learning
2. 14 – 19 Agenda (approx 22 projects) targeted at revenue (£3m) and capital (£1m) projects (CIF specifically funded activities for the **16 – 19** element)
3. Round 1 extensions (approx 12 projects) – Round 1 projects that had experienced a delay in funding and where a 'carry over' of funding could be justified. Account for £371,832 of funding.

**Interview Details**

**Name**

**Job Title**

**Telephone Number/ e mail**

**Organisation/ Division**

**Interview Time/ Date**

**Interviewer**

DELLS Project Manager: Jackie McDonald  
CRG Project Manager: Katy Skidmore

**Interviewer Introduction:**

My name is ..... from CRG. We are carrying out an independent evaluation of the Common Investment Fund (including the 16-19 CIF element). As a Regional Learning Network Development Head/ or other key informant (insert title as appropriate) I would like to talk to you about your views on the funding scheme and your involvement in it. The interview will last approximately 45 minutes and I will take notes that will be used to inform the overall evaluation of the funding scheme. I do need to stress that all individual replies will be kept confidential; our remit is to report on general trends and areas for improvement only. The report will be available on the Welsh Assembly Government website ([www.wales.gsi.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gsi.gov.uk)) in Autumn 2007.



## Section A: Interviewee Details

1. What is your role in your organisation?
2. What is your role in relation to the CIF and 16-19 CIF programmes?

## Section B: Context

3. Is the original rationale for the fund still relevant? (Interviewer to see Annex A for rationale)

*Please give reasons for answer*

4. How well do you think i) CIF 2 and ii) 16-19 CIF projects were designed?

*Prompt e.g. did they have?*

- *Good rationale (i.e. responding to identified need/ gaps in provision)*
- *Clear aims and objectives*
- *Measurable outcomes*

*CIF 2 Projects*

*16 – 19 CIF Projects*

5. How well managed was the proposal handling and assessment process for i) CIF 2 and ii) 16-19 CIF?

*Please give reasons for answer*

*CIF 2 Projects*

*16 – 19 CIF Projects*

6. To what extent do you think that regional and national priorities have been met by:

*CIF Round 2 Projects:*

*16 – 19 Agenda Projects:*

7. To what extent do you think the projects fit with other DELLS initiatives?

- *Which initiatives*
- *Please give reasons for answer*

## Section C: Impacts

8. Do you think CIF 2/ 16 – 19 Agenda Projects have been successful in developing a collaborative approach to learning?

*Please give reasons for answer:*

*CIF Round 2 Projects:*

*16 – 19 Agenda Projects:*

9. To what extent do you think ‘true’ learning partnerships have been developed?

*Prompt e.g.*

- *Were all partnerships ‘equal’?*
- *Did some partners take more of a lead than others?*

*CIF Round 2 Projects:*

*16 – 19 Agenda Projects:*

10. Do you think the projects have impacted provision on terms of:

- *Numbers of learners*
- *Transfer of learners between institutions*
- *Learner choice*
- *Quality of provision*
- *Provider specialisation*

11. Have some types of projects been more successful than others in meeting the funds objectives?

*Prompt:*

- *What types of projects*
- *Any examples of good practice/lessons learnt?*

12. To what extent do you think that CIF has encouraged sustainable, collaborative learning activities?

*Please give reasons for answer*

*CIF Round 2 Projects:*

*16 – 19 Agenda Projects:*

13. To what extent do you think that the activities funded would have happened without the availability of CIF funding?

*Please give reasons for answer:*

*Prompt e.g.*

- *To what extent*
- *How funded*
- *Who would deliver*
- *How would they have been delivered i.e. collaboratively or independently*

14. Do you think that the collaborative partnerships will continue once CIF funding has stopped?

*Please give reasons for answer*

- *To what extent*
- *Any examples*

15. Do you think that barriers to collaborative learning provision still exist?

*Please give reasons for answer*

16. Do you think CIF overlaps, duplicates or complements any other funding initiatives?

*Please give reasons for answer*

*Prompt: e.g.*

- *Which scheme(s)?*
- *Does it complement them?*
- *Is it more/less flexible?*
- *Does it overlap or duplicate them?*

## Section D: Future Developments

17. Do you think the CIF programme is a good way of encouraging collaboration amongst learning providers?

*Please give reasons for answer:*

18. Do you think CIF, or a funding stream with a similar remit should be developed for the future?

*Please give reasons for answer*

19. Can you suggest any ideas on how to improve collaborative learning in the future?

*Please give reasons for answer*

20. Any other comments?

## **Annex A: CIF Background and Rationale**

CIF is an integral element of the Strategic Investment Stream of the National Planning and Funding System (NPFS) (the other streams being Learning Provision, Support for Learners, and Learner Commissioned Provision). The NPFS has the important overall role of helping modernise the post-16 learning network. The planning element of the NPFS will strengthen the link between learning needs and learning delivery whilst the funding element will ensure that schools, colleges and training providers are funded on an equitable basis. The system will result in:

- more choice for learners;
- more focus on quality learning;
- less wasteful competition amongst providers;
- better value for taxpayers' money; and
- further increases in the number of people in learning in Wales<sup>14</sup>.

The launch of CIF followed a series of conferences held during December 2004, designed to encourage collaboration amongst post-16 education and training providers. The emphasis on collaboration has emerged as a key element of meeting the NPFS agenda for driving change through the post-16 learning network. The collaborative approach has also become a frequently referred-to tool capable of helping to meet the rising demand from learners. In

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<sup>14</sup> ELWa (2006) National Planning and Funding System: A Guide, ELWa, Cardiff

recent years it has become increasingly apparent that institutions can no longer work in isolation if they are to satisfy the needs of learners.

**Appendix II:**  
**Topic Guide 2 – Project Lead**

## Welsh Assembly Government: Evaluation of Common Investment Fund Topic Guide 2: Phase 2 Project Leads

### Interviewer Briefing

The Common Investment Fund (CIF) was launched in March 2005 and supports the Welsh Assembly Government's Department of Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DELLS) efforts to encourage collaboration between post 16 education and learning providers. CIF funded around £15.7 million to run over two phases.

The objectives of CIF are to:

- Improve partnership working and networking amongst post 16 providers in order to enhance the quality and choice of learning available to learners;
- Promote, through common investment the reorganisation of the Post 16 network;
- Encourage and support innovative ventures between providers; and
- Support activities that help the Welsh Assembly Government/ DELLS make best use of its resources and fulfil its obligations to:
  - Eliminate duplication and unnecessary gaps in provision;
  - Ensure value for money;
  - Avoid disproportionate expenditure; and
  - Ensure responsiveness to learner needs.

Round 1 of the scheme provided £6 million between 103 projects and ran from September 2005 to March 2006. CRG completed an evaluation of this phase in July 2006.

Round 2 provided just under £9 million funding to approximately 63 projects between September 2006 and March 2007

Round 2 projects fall into three categories:

4. CIF Round 2 - (approx 49 projects) targeted at revenue (£2m) and capital (£2.5m) projects and three priorities
  - i. Regional Statements of Need
  - ii. Development/ extension of successful Round 1 Projects
  - iii. E learning
5. 14 – 19 Agenda (approx 22 projects) targeted at revenue (£3m) and capital (£1m) projects (CIF specifically funded activities for the **16 – 19** element)
6. Round 1 extensions (approx 12 projects) – Round 1 projects that had experienced a delay in funding and where a 'carry over' of funding could be justified. Account for £371,832 of funding.

**Interview Details**

**Name**

**Job Title**

**Telephone Number/ e mail**

**Organisation**

**Project/s<sup>15</sup>**

**Project Type**

**Round 2**

**14 – 19 Agenda**

**Round 1 Extension**

**Interview Time/ Date**

**Interviewer**

DELLS Project Manager: Jackie McDonald

CRG Project Manager: Katy Skidmore

**Interviewer Introduction:**

My name is ..... from CRG. We are carrying out an independent

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<sup>15</sup> Some Project Leads will have managed more than one project where possible please ask them to describe each project, its impacts and outcomes individually.

evaluation of Round 2 of the Common Investment Fund (including the 16-19 CIF element). As a CIF project manager I would like to talk to you about your views on the funding scheme and your involvement in it. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes and I will take notes that will be used to inform the overall evaluation of the funding scheme. I do need to stress that all individual replies will be kept confidential; our remit is to report on general trends and areas for improvement only. The report will be available on the Welsh Assembly Government website ([www.wales.gsi.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gsi.gov.uk)) in Autumn 2007.

## Section A: Interviewee Details

1. What is your role in the organisation?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Had you undertaken other collaborative learning projects prior to this CIF Project/s?

*If yes, please give details (e.g. overview of project and partners):*

*If no, why not?*

3. If yes, have these been successful?

*Please give details*

## Section B: Details of CIF Project

4. Please can you give an overview of the CIF and 16-19 CIF funded project/projects that you have been involved with:

*Please ask for details on:*

- *Aims*
- *Objectives*
- *Measurable targets*
- *Delivery method*
- *Number of learners targeted*

5. What is/was the rationale for this/these project(s)?

*Please give reasons for answer:*

6. How does the project/s fit in with regional and national priorities?

*Prompt:*

- *Which regional priorities?*
- *Which national priorities?*

7. Please describe your CIF project learning partnership(s):

*Prompt:*

- *When established*
- *What other organisations are involved*

8. Through the course of the project/ projects, how often did your learning partnership(s) meet?

*Prompt:*

- *Frequency*
- *Location*
- *Any issues relating to organising meetings etc*

9. What were the roles of the different organisations in the partnership(s)?

*Prompt:*

- *What was the formal structure*
- *i.e. a lead body or all equal partnerships (need to find out if it was a true partnership)*
- *Any partners more active than others?*
- *Other general relationships and activity*

## Section C: Impact and Outcomes

10. Was your project(s) successful in meeting its/their objectives

*Prompt:*

- *How were achievements monitored and/ or evaluated?*

11. Was/Were the collaborative partnership(s) an effective method of undertaking this/these project(s)?

Please give details:

*Prompt e.g.: could the project have achieved its objectives without the collaborative partnership*

12. What has worked well in terms of the collaborative approach to undertaking this/these project(s)?

*Prompt: e.g.*

- *more choice for learners*
- *better quality learning provision*
- *more successfully meeting learners needs*
- *developed better understanding of the partners and thus be better placed/prepared to collaborate with them in the future, etc*

13. Did this/these project(s) result in increased learning provision?

*Prompt:*

- *Number of new learners predicted*
- *Number of new learners achieved*
- *Number of new learners from other institutions*
- *Quality of learning provision*

14. Do you think the project(s) will have any long term effects on learners, providers and provision?

*Please give reasons for answer:*

15. Were there any things that hindered or caused difficulties to the collaborative partnership(s)?

*If yes, please give details:*

*If yes, were you aware of these before the project commenced?*

16. As a result of your experience through this project(s), are you more, less or equally likely to collaborate with other organisations in the future?"

*Please give reasons for answer:*

17. Have members of the partnership changed the way they work together as result of this collaborative project(s)?

*Please give reasons for answer and examples where possible:*

18. Has the CIF funded project(s) had any implications for wider resource allocation?

*Prompt: e.g. recruitment of more staff, increased capital expenditure etc*

19. Were there any unintended or unexpected effects from the project (s)?

*If yes, please give details:*

20. Do you think your project(s) was allocated the right amount of money with which to reach its objectives?

*Please give reasons for answer*

21. Do you think your project(s) provided value for money?

*Please give reasons for answer:*

22. Will the project's activities continue after the CIF funding period has finished?

*Please give reasons for answer:*

*Prompt: If yes:*

- *How it will be funded and resourced*
- *Will the project be expanded/ developed*
- *How will it be managed and delivered (e.g. through the learning partnership?)*

23. Would any of the activities undertaken through this project(s) have been progressed without the CIF funding?

*Please give reasons for answer:*

*Prompt e.g.*

- *To what extent*
- *How funded*
- *Who would deliver*
- *How would they be delivered (i.e collaboratively or independently)*

24. How does CIF compare with other funding schemes?

*Prompt: e.g.*

- *Which scheme(s)?*
- *Does it complement them?*
- *Is it more/less flexible?*
- *Does it overlap or duplicate them?*

25. Would you have collaborated with other organisations without CIF?

*Please give reasons for answer*

*If yes: to what extent?*

## Section D: Management

26. Was the CIF proposal process clear?

*Please give reasons for answer:*

27. How well do you think the CIF scheme has been delivered and managed by DELLS?

*Please give reasons for answer:*

*Prompt:*

- *proposal process*
- *design of application forms*
- *assessment process*
- *overall management (and support provided?)*

**Section E: Future Development**

28. Do you think the CIF programme is a good way of encouraging collaboration amongst learning providers?

*Please give reasons for answer:*

29. Are there any areas for improvement that could be made to the design, delivery and management of future programmes that encourage collaboration and partnership between providers?

*Please give reasons for answer:*

30. Any other comments

31. We would like to arrange a short 10 minute interview with your project partners about the project and the success of the partnership approach. Could you recommend any good contacts to speak to:

<b>Contact</b>	
<b>Organisation</b>	
<b>Tel Number</b>	
<b>E Mail</b>	

**Appendix III:**  
**Topic Guide 3 – Project Partners**

## Welsh Assembly Government: Evaluation of Common Investment Fund Topic Guide 3: Phase 2 Project Partners

### Interviewer Briefing

The Common Investment Fund (CIF) was launched in March 2005 and supports the Welsh Assembly Government's Department of Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DELLS) efforts to encourage collaboration between post 16 education and learning providers. CIF funded around £15.7 million to run over two phases.

The objectives of CIF are to:

- Improve partnership working and networking amongst post 16 providers in order to enhance the quality and choice of learning available to learners;
- Promote, through common investment the reorganisation of the Post 16 network;
- Encourage and support innovative ventures between providers; and
- Support activities that help the Welsh Assembly Government/ DELLS make best use of its resources and fulfil its obligations to:
  - Eliminate duplication and unnecessary gaps in provision;
  - Ensure value for money;
  - Avoid disproportionate expenditure; and
  - Ensure responsiveness to learner needs.

Round 1 of the scheme provided £6 million between 103 projects and ran from September 2005 to March 2006. CRG completed an evaluation of this phase in July 2006.

Round 2 provided just under £9 million funding to approximately 63 projects between September 2006 and March 2007

Round 2 projects fall into three categories:

7. CIF Round 2 - (approx 49 projects) targeted at revenue (£2m) and capital (£2.5m) projects and three priorities
  - i. Regional Statements of Need
  - ii. Development/ extension of successful Round 1 Projects
  - iii. E learning
8. 14 – 19 Agenda (approx 22 projects) targeted at revenue (£3m) and capital (£1m) projects (CIF specifically funded activities for the **16 – 19** element)
9. Round 1 extensions (approx 12 projects) – Round 1 projects that had experienced a delay in funding and where a 'carry over' of funding could be justified. Account for £371,832 of funding.

**Interview Details**

**Name**

**Job Title**

**Telephone Number/ e mail**

**Organisation**

**Project/s<sup>16</sup>**

**Project Type**

**Round 2**

**14 – 19 Agenda**

**Round 1 Extension**

**Interview Time/ Date**

**Interviewer**

DELLS Project Manager: Jackie McDonald

CRG Project Manager: Katy Skidmore

**Interviewer Introduction:**

My name is ..... from CRG. We are carrying out an independent

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<sup>16</sup> Some Project Partners may have been involved in more than one project where possible please ask them to describe each project, its impacts and outcomes individually.

evaluation of Round 2 of the Common Investment Fund (including the 16-19 CIF element). As a CIF project partner I would like to talk to you about your views on the funding scheme and your involvement in it. The interview will last approximately 10 - 15 minutes and I will take notes that will be used to inform the overall evaluation of the funding scheme. I do need to stress that all individual replies will be kept confidential; our remit is to report on general trends and areas for improvement only. The report will be available on the Welsh Assembly Government website ([www.wales.gsi.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gsi.gov.uk)) in Autumn 2007.

## Section A: Interviewee Details

1. What is your role in the organisation?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Had you participated in any other collaborative learning projects prior to this CIF Project/s?  
*If yes, please give details (e.g. overview of project and partners):*  
*If not, why not?*

## Section B: Details of CIF Project

3. What were the roles of the different organisations in the partnership(s)?

*Prompt:*

- *What was the formal structure*
- *i.e. a lead body or all equal partnerships (need to find out if it was a true partnership)*
- *Other general relationships and activity*

4. Through the course of the project/ projects, how often did your learning partnership(s) meet?

*Prompt:*

- *Frequency*
- *Location*
- *Any issues relating to organising meetings etc*

## Section C: Impact and Outcomes

5. How successful do you think project/s was/were in meeting its objectives?

*Please give reasons for answer:*

6. Was/Were the collaborative partnership(s) an effective method of undertaking this/these project(s)?

Please give details:

*Prompt e.g.: could the project achieve its objectives without the collaborative partnership*

7. What has worked well in terms of the collaborative approach to undertaking this/these project(s)?

*Prompt: e.g.*

- *more choice for learners*
- *better quality learning provision*
- *more successfully meeting learners needs*
- *developed better understanding of the partners and thus be better placed/prepared to collaborate with them in the future, etc*

8. Were there any things that hindered or caused difficulties to the collaborative partnership(s)?

*If yes, please give details:*

*If yes, were you aware of these before the project commenced?*

9. As a result of your experience through this project(s), are you more, less or equally likely to collaborate with other organisations in the future?"

*Please give reasons for answer:*

10. Have members of the partnership changed the way they work together as result of this collaborative project(s)?

*Please give reasons for answer and examples where possible:*

11. Would you have collaborated with other organisations without CIF?

*Please give reasons for answer*

*If yes: to what extent?*

12. Will the collaborative partnership continue after CIF funding has finished?

*Please give reasons for answer:*

## Section E: Future Development

13. Do you think the CIF programme is a good way of encouraging collaboration amongst learning providers?

*Please give reasons for answer:*

14. Are there any areas for improvement that could be made to the design, delivery and management of future programmes that encourage collaboration and partnership between providers?

*Please give reasons for answer:*

15. Any other comments

**Thank interviewee and close**

# **Appendix IV: CIF 2 Projects**

No.	CIF Element	Region	Project Type	Project Lead	Project Title	Interviewed Part of Eval
1.	CIF 2	Mid	E Learning	Coleg Powys	E Learning Network Infrastructure	✓
2.	CIF 2	Mid	Video Conferencing	Powys LEA	Video Conferencing	
3.	CIF 2	Mid	E Learning	Coleg Merion Dwyfor	E Learning for the Business and Community	✓
4.	CIF 2	Mid	Bilingual	Coleg Ceredigion	Creating Innovative, Sustainable and Bilingual Vocational Pathways	
5.	CIF 2	Mid	Adult and Community Learning	Dysgu Bro Ceredigion	Improving and enhancing the quality of Ceredigion ACL provision	✓
6.	CIF 2	Mid	Video Conferencing	Ceredigion CC	Ceredigion VC upgrade	
7.	CIF 2	North	Improving Learner Choice/ Experience	Coleg Menai	Delivery of motor vehicle route within work based learning	✓
8.	CIF 2	North	Improving Learner Choice/ Experience	Yale College	Creation of a Learning Environment in a College based retail outlet, including a facility for a travel bureau	✓
9.	CIF 2	North	Basic Skills	Yale College	Basic Skills in the Workplace	✓
10.	CIF 2	North	E Learning	Wrexham LEA	VLE enhancement in post-16 learner settings	
11.	CIF 2	North	Adult and Community Learning	Deeside College	Improving Standards and the Management of Quality in Flintshire ACBL	✓
12.	CIF 2	North	Basic Skills	Deeside College	Flintshire Basic Skills Common Assessment Tool	✓
13.	CIF 2	North	Improving Learner Choice/ Experience	Deeside College	6th Form College Consortium	✓
14.	CIF 2	North	Adult and Community Learning	Coleg Harlech WEA	Sbardyn Accelerator	
15.	CIF 2	North	E Learning	Coleg Menai	Improve 14-19 provision through ICT	
16.	CIF 2	North	Improving Learner Choice/ Experience	Conwy CBC	Initiation of reconfiguration of aspects of post-16 course provision to achieve more flexibility for learners and wider options choice	
17.	CIF 2	North	Improving Learner	WCOH	Develop National Curriculum for Horticulture	

### Evaluation of the Common Investment Fund

			Choice/ Experience			
18.	CIF 2	North	Video conferencing	Flintshire LEA	Delivering and enhancing learning through VC	✓
19.	CIF 2	North	Improving Learner Choice/ Experience	Flintshire LEA	Developing Options for Post 16s	
20.	CIF 2	North	Improving Learner Choice/ Experience	Gwynedd LEA	Welsh Bacc developments	✓
21.	CIF 2	North	Improving Learner Choice/ Experience	Denbighshire LEA	Extending Learning Pathways	✓
22.	CIF 2	South East	Improving Learner Choice/ Experience	Coleg Gwent	The use of ILT to broaden learning opportunities	
23.	CIF 2	South East	Improving Learner Choice/ Experience	RCT CBC	Supporting Pathfinder Implementation in RCT	✓
24.	CIF 2	South East	Miscellaneous	Monmouthshire County Council	Project Scout Phase 2 Developing a Shared Vision, Strategy and Resources	
25.	CIF 2	South East	Improving Learner Choice/ Experience	Newport CC	Outdoor Recreational Pursuits	✓
26.	CIF 2	South East	Adult and Community Learning	YMCA	Providing access to community education	✓
27.	CIF 2	South East	Improving Learner Choice/ Experience	Barry College	The built environment: Painting & Decorating	
28.	CIF 2	South East	Improving Learner Choice/ Experience	Caerphilly CBC	Discovering Skills - Getting back on Track (NEETS)	✓
29.	CIF 2	South East	Improving Learner Choice/ Experience	Caerphilly CBC	Discovering Skills - Getting back on Track	✓
30.	CIF 2	South East	E Learning	Coleg Ystrad Mynach	Exploring Learning Technologies - A Curriculum Focus	✓
31.	CIF 2	South East	Improving Learner Choice/ Experience	Cardiff County Council	14-19 Developments	
32.	CIF 2	South	E Learning	Torfaen CC	Supporting collaboration through links with Coleg Gwent 5	✓

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		East			Counties bid focusing on development of VLE's	
33.	CIF 2	South East	E Learning	Coleg Glan Hafren	Feasibility & Technical Support Project	
34.	CIF 2	South East	Adult and Community Learning	WEA South Wales	Securing ACL through collaboration	
35.	CIF 2	South East	Improving Learner Choice/ Experience	Blaenau Gwent CBC	The Virtual Care Project	✓
36.	CIF 2	South East	Improving Learner Choice/ Experience	Bridgend LEA	Skills Centre	
37.	CIF 2	South East	E Learning	Merthyr Tydfil LEA	E-learning Project	
38.	CIF 2	South East	E Learning	St David's College	The Common Good	✓
39.	CIF 2	South West	Adult and Community Learning	Gorseinon College	Swansea Lifelong Learning - Quality Assurance	✓
40.	CIF 2	South West		Swansea College	SALIERI Phase II	
41.	CIF 2	South West	E Learning	NPT CBC	E-portal, Essential Skills & Quality Development for NPT	✓
42.	CIF 2	South West	Improving Learner Choice/ Experience	Pembrokeshire County Council	Developing the Pembrokeshire Learning Network.	✓
43.	CIF 2	South West	Improving Learner Choice/ Experience	Pembrokeshire County Council	Developing the Pembrokeshire Learning Network – Community Learning Developments	✓
44.	CIF 2	South West	Improving Learner Choice/ Experience	Pembrokeshire College	Developing the Pembrokeshire Learning Network.	✓
45.	CIF 2	South West	Adult and Community Learning	Pembrokeshire College	Community Learning Developments	✓
46.	CIF 2	South West	Bilingual	Carmarthenshire CC	Cydweithredu Sir Gar	

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47.	CIF 2	South West	Improving Learner Choice/ Experience	Swansea Council	Post 16 Planning & Collaboration through Study Centres	
48.	CIF 2	South West	Miscellaneous	Coleg Sir Gar	Raising Standards in FE through Self-Reg	
49.	CIF 2	South West	E Learning	Coleg Sir Gar	ILT CPD On-line for Wales	✓
50.	14 - 19	South West	Video Conferencing	Powys LEA	Powys Video-Conferencing Network	
51.	14 - 19	Mid	Video Conferencing	Ceredigion LEA	Ceredigion VC & Construction Project	✓
52.	14 - 19	North	Improving Learner Choice/ Experience	Wrexham LEA	Develop & Enhance Collaborative Delivery and Widen Curriculum options for Learners in Wrexham LEA	
53.	14 - 19	North	Video Conferencing	Ynys Mon LEA	Video conferencing suites for 16+ educational establishments	✓
54.	14 - 19	North	Video Conferencing	Gwynedd LEA	Extend option and choice for 16 to 19yr olds through development and implementation of VC equipment.	✓
55.	14 - 19	North	E Learning	Flintshire LEA	Flintshire E-learning Zone.	✓
56.	14 - 19	North	Improving Learner Choice/ Experience	Denbighshire LEA	Vocational options and basic skills 16-19 yr old in Denbighshire	✓
57.	14 – 19	North	E Learning	Conway LEA	Develop & Refine e-learning facilities across Conwy Learning Federation	
58.	14 – 19	South East	E Learning	Merthyr Tydfil LEA	Dev of ICT Technology Training Centre & Health Care and Early years Interactive Centres in Merthyr	✓
59.	14 - 19	South East	Miscellaneous	Cardiff LEA	Cardiff 14-19 Post-16 Capital Project	✓
60.	14 – 19	South East	Improving Learner Choice/ Experience	Vale of Glamorgan LEA	Learning Pathways at Bryn Hafren Comp, teaching facilities at Amelia Trust farm	
61.	14 – 19	South East	Miscellaneous	Torfaen LEA	14-19 Post-16 Capital project	
62.	14 – 19	South East	Improving Learner Choice/ Experience	RCT LEA	Vocational Satellite Centres Project	✓

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63.	14 – 19	South East	Improving Learner Choice/ Experience	Newport LEA	Construction Block Refurbishment	
64.	14 – 19	South East	E Learning	Monmouthshire LEA	Delivering Additional Pathways through Blended E Learning	
65.	14 – 19	South East	Improving Learner Choice/ Experience	Caerphilly LEA	Extending Vocational Opportunities	✓
66.	14 – 19	South East	Improving Learner Choice/ Experience	Bridgend LEA	Development of a Bridgend Skills Centre	
67.	14 - 19	South East	Improving Learner Choice/ Experience	Blaenau Gwent LEA	Learning Pathways	
68.	14 - 19	South West	E Learning	NPT LEA	To extend Learning Pathways for NPT learners by providing facilities, ICT suites.	✓
69.	14 – 19	South West	E Learning	Carmarthenshire LEA	Improving the Carms E-learning Infrastructure	
70.	14 – 19	South West	Improving Learner Choice/ Experience	Pembrokeshire LEA	Post-16 delivering additional pathways in Pembs	
71.	14 - 19	South West		Swansea LEA	No details provided	
72.	CIF 1 Ext	Mid	Improving Learner Choice/ Experience E Learning	Powys LEA, Coleg Powys	Joint bid between Powys LEA and Coleg Powys Four strands on 1. Preparation of an appraisal of options for the future of post 16 learning in Powys 2. Developing community learning networks. 3. Increasing capacity to support e-learning.	✓
73.	CIF 1 Ext	All Wales	Miscellaneous	Fforwm	Quality self regulation project	✓
74.	CIF 1 Ext	North	Adult and Community Learning	Deeside LEA/ Fforwm	Raising quality standards in Work Based Learning Deliveries	
75.	CIF 1 Ext	North	Adult and Community Learning	Deeside LEA/ Fforwm	Improving FEI's engagement with employers to meet their training needs.	
76.	CIF 1 Ext	South	Bilingual	Coleg Sir Gar	Lead LA Promoting Bilingualism	

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