

EQIA

Section A

1. Name of Activity (EQIA Title):

Kent and Medway Business Fund (KMBF)

2. Directorate

Growth, Environment and Transport

3. Responsible Service/Division

Growth and Communities

Accountability and Responsibility

4. Officer completing EQIA

Martyn Riley

5. Head of Service.

Steve Samson

6. Director of Service

Stephanie Holt-Castle

The type of Activity you are undertaking

7. What type of activity are you undertaking?

Service Change – *operational changes in the way we deliver the service to people.*

No

Service Redesign – *restructure, new operating model or changes to ways of working.*

No

Project/Programme – *includes limited delivery of change activity, including partnership projects, external funding projects and capital projects*

Yes

Commissioning/Procurement – *means commissioning activity which requires commercial judgement.*

No

Strategy /Policy – *includes review, refresh or creating a new document.*

No

Other – Please add details of any other activity type here.

8. Aims and Objectives and Equality Recommendations

The Kent and Medway Business Fund (KMBF) was established in 2017 as a vehicle to deliver investment in new and existing small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in Kent and Medway, delivering sustainable employment over the long term, creating and adopting innovative products, processes and services and improve their productivity.

The objective of the scheme is not to replace commercial sources of finance or offer operating subsidies. Rather it supports projects with strong business cases for which commercial finance is unavailable on viable terms (for example, because the product or technology involved is untested). The scheme will offer two types of investments, KMBF Standard Loans which will provide finance for up to 50% of project costs for investments between £100,000 and £750,000, and the KMBF Small Business Boost Loans (KMBF SBB) which will provide no more than 75% of finance for KMBF investment of between £26,000 and £99,000 with the remaining balance funded through private sources, including bank lending and are generally offered interest-free although arrangement charges will be levied to pay for administration cost.

The scheme also offered equity or convertible loans on a case-by-case basis and currently oversees a number of existing portfolios of equity investments in a range of business sectors. These portfolios are the KBREF(KCC Bespoke RGF Equity Fund) scheme, the DPTIF (Discovery Park Technology Investment Fund) and the KLSF (Kent Life Sciences Fund) Both DPTIF (until December 2025) and KLSF were third-party arrangements with a company called NCL whereby all the shares, contracts, payments, and responsibility for selling the shares, lie outside KCC.

The current structure:

KBREF focused on innovative early-stage, high-growth potential companies across the RGF eligible area. Managed by Maven Cognition (formerly Newable Ventures) under a 3-year contract and all shares held by KCC.

DPTIF focuses on innovative early stage, high-growth companies based in Discovery Park. Managed by NCL under a 10-year partnership arrangement (ended in December 2025, KCC is winding down this fund and returning the shares to KCC ownership).

KLSF focuses on early-stage companies with medical technologies and advanced therapeutics across KMBF eligible area. Managed by NCL under a 10-year partnership arrangement (ends Jan 2028) all shares are held in the name of the partnership.

Section B – Evidence

9. Do you have data related to the protected groups of the people impacted by this activity?

No

10. Is it possible to get the data in a timely and cost effective way?

No

11. Is there national evidence/data that you can use?

Yes

12. Have you consulted with Stakeholders?

Yes

13. Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?

To deliver the scheme, Kent County Council works closely with all the Kent District Councils and with the Unitary Authority of Medway Council.

The scheme is run in line with KCC's Equality & Diversity Policy Statement. As such we are committed to promoting equality, valuing diversity and combating unfair treatment. Equality and freedom from discrimination are fundamental rights we demonstrate leadership and commitment in promoting these rights.

KCC is in regular contact with local trade bodies for the business community and the local chambers of commerce, independent business advisors, and the Federation of Small Businesses. KCC manages the Kent and Medway Growth Hub from whom it receives some referrals to the scheme. All referrals are recorded and include some Equality data, in line with the Contract Framework. The Growth Hubs maintain extensive data sets to include business information for Kent and Medway, to which KCC have access. The Growth Hub reports on a regular monthly basis as part of their contracted obligations

We are committed to ensuring that current and potential business applicants, their employees and job applicants will not be discriminated against on the grounds of social circumstances, gender, race, disability, sexuality, age, religion/belief or any other protected characteristic.

Only limited data on protected characteristics is currently gathered by the application process, specifically age and gender and this is cross referenced to data held at Companies House. This data has been compared with the data reported in the House of Commons Research Briefing on Business Statistics dated 3 December 2025, which confirmed national statistics regarding leadership of businesses by gender.

The Office of National Statistics does not currently gather data regarding the age of business leaders or directors, so it is difficult to find comparative data on this factor. However, the Global Entrepreneurship Monitoring United Kingdom Monitoring Report 2024 states that those aged 25-34 are more likely to be involved in early-stage entrepreneurial activity than all other age groups, though the difference between other ages groups between 18-24 is not significant. In this regard, the KMBF scheme will offer loans to both established and early-stage businesses.

14. Has there been a previous equality analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?

No, previous EQIA 2022

15. Do you have evidence/data that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?

Yes. The scheme targets all sectors of the business community and information and application forms is made easy to access. There are multiple possible referral routes (chambers of commerce and the Growth Hub, business community groups) to reach the Kent & Medway business community. The project has strict perimeters in which it can operate. Businesses that are eligible for support have to be located within the eligible area - Kent and Medway. An analysis of the impact of scheme was undertaken in 2022, the scheme objectives remain the same in 2025-26.

The Standard Loan Scheme and the Small Business Boost Scheme have been supported by a range of web accessible marketing collateral which includes appropriate imagery reflecting the county business demographic. Hard copies of all documentation is available and alternative versions of the application documents can be made available. The delivery team have consulted with industry professionals to ensure the widest possible reach and ensure that representation is multi-faceted. Any physical engagement events will take into account meeting times to suit a range of needs and will ensure that there is full disability access to enable maximum engagement and opportunity. This new marketing collateral will be used as part of a wider marketing communications strategy to improve awareness and reach of the Kent & Medway Business Fund.

The scheme will make available services and make any possible steps to accommodate any circumstances or adjustment that is required to accommodate business directors with any of the protected characteristics. All online communications material is subject to a digital accessibility check to ensure that it meets the WCAG 2 recommendations (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines)

With regard to the limited equality & diversity data that the Kent and Medway Business Fund currently gathers the make-up of these businesses in terms of whether they are female led, male led or equally led are broadly in line with national statistics (source: House of Commons), though KCC will use targeted promotional activities to make direct engagements with members of the Kent Population with protected characteristics .

KCC now uses a voluntary equality and diversity survey at pre-application stage to gather anonymous data regarding applicant's protected characteristics. The response rate to this survey is currently 22.2%, the results indicate that the make-up of the applicants' businesses in terms of leadership sex and ethnicity are broadly in line with the national statistics recorded in the House of Commons Research Briefing, and that the applicants by age are also broadly comparable to national statistics.

All funding decisions are based on the business case and financial viability only. Support is provided to the Investment Advisory Board (including training if required) who make funding recommendations (the final decision lies with KCC) to ensure compliance with our equality duties.

It is a legal requirement of the scheme's funding agreement with the UK government to promote equality & diversity though opportunities for addressing equality issues outside of the eligible areas and activities defined within this contract are restricted. The programme management team are in a good position to promote equal opportunities and can provide examples of good practice.

Uploading Evidence/Data/related information into the App**Section C – Impact****16. Who may be impacted by the activity?**

Service users/clients

Yes

Residents/Communities/Citizens

Yes

Staff/Volunteers

No

17. Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?

Yes
18. Please give details of Positive Impacts
<p>The scheme targets all sectors of the business community and information and application forms will be easy to access. There are multiple possible referral routes (business associations (FSB, IoD), chambers of commerce and the Growth Hub, business community groups etc.) to reach the Kent & Medway business community. The project has strict perimeters in which it can operate. Businesses that are eligible for support have to be located within the eligible area - Kent and Medway.</p> <p>The Standard Loan Scheme and the Small Business Boost Scheme are supported by a range of web accessible marketing collateral which includes appropriate imagery reflecting the county business demographic. Hard copies of all documentation are available and alternative versions of the application documents can be made available. The delivery team have consulted with industry professionals to ensure the widest possible reach and ensure that representation is multi-faceted. Any physical engagement events consider meeting times to suit a range of needs and will ensure that there is full disability access to enable maximum engagement and opportunity. The marketing collateral will be used as part of a wider marketing communications strategy to improve awareness and reach of the Kent and Medway Business Fund.</p> <p>The scheme makes available services and takes any possible steps to accommodate any circumstances or adjustment that is required to accommodate business directors with any of the protected characteristics. All online communications material is subject to a digital accessibility check to ensure that it meets the WCAG 2 recommendations (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines)</p> <p>With regard to the limited equality & diversity data that the Kent and Medway Business Fund currently gathers the make-up of these businesses in terms of whether they are female led, male led or equally led are broadly in line with national statistics (source: House of Commons), though KCC will use targeted promotional activities to make direct engagements with members of the Kent Population with protected characteristics. With regard to the equality & diversity data that the Kent & Medway Business Fund currently gathers the make-up of these businesses in terms of whether they are female led, male led or equally led are broadly in line with national statistics (source: House of Commons), though KCC will use targeted promotional activities to make direct engagements with members of the Kent Population with protected characteristics. KCC will continue to use existing tools to gather equality & diversity data in their latest forms, while ensuring ongoing compliance with data protection policies in order to ensure that individual's data is kept private and anonymised.</p> <p>All funding decisions are based on the business case and financial viability only. Support is provided to the Investment Advisory Board (including training if required) who make funding recommendations (the final decision lies with KCC) to ensure compliance with our equality duties.</p> <p>It is a legal requirement of the scheme's funding agreement with the UK government to promote equality & diversity though opportunities for addressing equality issues outside of the eligible areas and activities defined within this contract are restricted. The programme management team are in a good position to promote equal opportunities and can provide examples of good practice.</p>
Negative Impacts and Mitigating Actions
19. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age
a) Are there negative impacts for Age?
No
b) Details of Negative Impacts for Age
Not Applicable
c) Mitigating Actions for Age
Not Applicable
d) Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions - Age
Not Applicable

20. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability
a) Are there negative impacts for Disability?
No
b) Details of Negative Impacts for Disability
Not Applicable
c) Mitigating Actions for Disability
Not Applicable
d) Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions - Disability
Not Applicable
21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex
a) Are there negative impacts for Sex?
No
b) Details of Negative Impacts for Sex
Not Applicable
c) Mitigating Actions for Sex
Not Applicable
d) Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions - Sex
Not Applicable
22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
a) Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender?
No
b) Details of Negative Impacts for Gender identity/transgender
Not Applicable
c) Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Not Applicable
d) Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions - Gender identity/transgender
Not Applicable
23. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Race
a) Are there negative impacts for Race?
No
b) Details of Negative Impacts for Race
Not Applicable
c) Mitigating Actions for Race
Not Applicable
d) Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Race
Not Applicable
24. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
a) Are there negative impacts for Religion and Belief?
No
b) Details of Negative Impacts for Religion and belief
Not Applicable
c) Mitigating Actions for Religion and belief
Not Applicable
d) Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions - Religion and belief
Not Applicable
25. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
a) Are there negative impacts for sexual orientation
No
b) Details of Negative Impacts for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
c) Mitigating Actions for Sexual Orientation

Not Applicable
d) Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions - Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
26. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
a) Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity?
No
b) Details of Negative Impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
c) Mitigating Actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
d) Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions - Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
27. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for marriage and civil partnerships
a) Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships?
No
b) Details of Negative Impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
c) Mitigating Actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
d) Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions - Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
28. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
a) Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities?
No
b) Details of Negative Impacts for Carer's Responsibilities
Not Applicable
c) Mitigating Actions for Carer's responsibilities
Not Applicable
d) Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions - Carer's Responsibilities
Not Applicable