

EQIA Submission – ID Number

Section A

EQIA Title

Kent and Medway Business Fund - KMBF

Responsible Officer

Sue Berdo - GT GC

Approved by (Note: approval of this EqIA must be completed within the EqIA App)

Steve Samson - GT GC

Type of Activity

Service Change

No

Service Redesign

No

Project/Programme

Project/Programme

Commissioning/Procurement

No

Strategy/Policy

No

Details of other Service Activity

No

Accountability and Responsibility

Directorate

Growth Environment and Transport

Responsible Service

Growth and Communities Accountability and Responsibility

Responsible Head of Service

Steve Samson - GT GC

Responsible Director

Stephanie Holt-Castle - GT GC

Aims and Objectives

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

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

No

It is possible to get the data in a timely and cost effective way?

No

Is there national evidence/data that you can use?

Yes

Have you consulted with stakeholders?

Yes

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.

Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?

No

Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?

Yes

Section C – Impact

Who may be impacted by the activity?

Service Users/clients

Service users/clients

Staff

No

Residents/Communities/Citizens

Residents/communities/citizens

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

Yes

Details of Positive Impacts

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.

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.

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)

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.

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.

Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions

19. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age

Are there negative impacts for age?

No

Details of negative impacts for Age

Not Applicable

Mitigating Actions for Age

Not Applicable

Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age

Not Applicable

20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability

Are there negative impacts for Disability?

No

Details of Negative Impacts for Disability

Not Applicable

Mitigating actions for Disability

Not Applicable

Responsible Officer for Disability

Not Applicable

21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex

Are there negative impacts for Sex

No

Details of negative impacts for Sex

Not Applicable

Mitigating actions for Sex

Not Applicable

Responsible Officer for Sex

Not Applicable

22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender

No

Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender

Not Applicable

Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

Not Applicable

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

Not Applicable

23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race
Are there negative impacts for Race
No
Negative impacts for Race
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Race
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race
Not Applicable
24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief
No
Negative impacts for Religion and belief
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief
Not Applicable
25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
No
Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
26. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
No
Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
No
Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
28. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
No
Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
Not Applicable

Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities
Not Applicable