

About You	
1.	Your Name
	Fergus Walker
2.	Your Employer / Organisation
	Argyll and Bute Council
3.	Your Position
	Revenue and Benefits Manager
4.	Your E-Mail at Work
	Fergus.walker@argyll-bute.gov.uk
5.	Your Address at Work
	Kintyre House, Snipefield Industrial Estate, Campbeltown, PA28 6SY
6.	Your Telephone Number at Work
	01586 555237
7.	Your Role in the Project
	Project Manager
An Introduction to the Project	
8.	Which partner organisations are involved in delivering the project?
	Argyll and Bute Council, various voluntary sector organisations inclusive of; Bute Advice Centre (BAC), ALIenergy, and 11 foodbanks through the Argyll and Bute Community Food Forum (CFF).
9.	Does the project have specific aims and/or objectives?
	Initial aim was to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on our citizens faced with food and fuel insecurities as a result of the pandemic, but now the focus is related to mitigating the effects of the cost-of-living crisis in remote rural and island communities.
10.	Does the project have a title?
	The Argyll and Bute Flexible Food and Fuel Fund (FFFF)
11.	When did it start?
	January 2021.
12.	Has it finished? Is it on-going? Does it have an end date?
	Ongoing, contract runs to 31 March 2025.
13.	Which groups of people, if any, are targeted by the service provided?
	No specific target groups (Argyll And Bute citizens faced with food and fuel insecurities.)
14.	How many people have been served by the project?

	By 31 August 2023, 1,171 cases have received FFF grant payments and are working with BAC & ALLenergy. 966 cases were rejected for an FFF grant. However, a referral is still made for support and advice, and the client gain includes these as well.	
15.	Where is it delivered?	
	Argyll and Bute (throughout).	
The Initial Idea		
16.	Who had the initial idea?	
	The idea came through issues faced during the pandemic highlighted by the Argyll and Bute Community Food Forum, particularly around the qualifying criteria for Scottish Welfare Fund and perceived barriers for eligibility. The fact that claimants were not following signposting on decision notices for longer term advice and support was also a factor that influenced the idea. Around the same time the Scottish Government highlighted a project in Moray incentivising engagement, and together the government and the council quickly devised plans for Argyll and Bute to run a project which would be effective in the area.	
17.	How did the idea for the project come about?	
	The driver for the project was an increasing demand at foodbanks to support customers with a clear need for welfare benefit advice and fuel poverty support.	
18.	Did you draw on any published reports / papers / research evidence or practice you had seen elsewhere to inform your plans?	
	Scottish Government reports on food and fuel insecurities were key. Their funding provided the support needed to get the project going and the key conditions around the use of the funds helped the team focus on what would work in the area and meet the conditions of the funding allocated.	
19.	Who was involved in developing the initial idea of the project?	
	Argyll and Bute Council, Bute Advice Centre (BAC), ALLenergy and eleven foodbanks through the Argyll and Bute Community Food Forum (CFF).	
20.	Were those with lived experience of poverty involved in developing the initial idea of the project?	
	No.	
21.	What funding was used, if any, to support the development of the initial idea of the project?	
	Scottish Government funding of £596,000 for food and fuel insecurities in 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 and UK Shared Prosperity Fund of £408,000 in 2023/2024 and 2024/2025.	
22.	What in-kind resources were needed when developing the initial idea of the project?	
	Facilities	Council and partner agency hubs.
	Equipment	IT platform for grant applications and advice.
	Local Knowledge	Intelligence from advice agencies, foodbanks and Council's benefits processing team.
	Food and Drink	Charity sector food banks.

23.	What, if any, barriers did you have to overcome when developing the initial idea of the project?	
	There were no substantial barriers, although there were some challenging conversations to be had to understand the gaps in customer needs but this was quickly resolved.	
24.	What, if anything, was helpful when developing the initial idea of the project?	
	Effective partnership working,	
25.	Did you conduct a feasibility study?	
	No	
26.	What was the timeline between the initial idea and the start of the project?	
	October 2020 to January 2021.	
27.	Who made the decision to introduce the project?	
	Argyll and Bute Council.	
Pilot Project		
28.	Did you run a pilot project?	
	No	
The On-going Development of the Project		
29.	Has FFF changed through time?	
	The council has added an extra F to the project title to bring more focus on the fuel mitigation aspect of the project although it has always been part of it. The grant award levels have just recently been uprated in line with rising costs.	
30.	In what ways has it changed?	
	Scale	After the first 6 months the project doubled in size due to the number of people requesting help.
	Location	The FFFF team travelled to island based communities and across Argyll and Bute's main towns to advertise the project and build key contacts in rural communities who could help with networking and get the message out that the project is there to help.
	Population	Circa 86,000 people in Argyll and Bute (NRS 2019)
	The Offer	This has stayed the same although the grant funds paid out have recently been uprated.
31.	What were the reason for these changes?	
	Feedback from customers and advice agencies discussing the need for the project to evolve and try to reach more people.	
Accessing the Service and Engaging with Service Users		
32.	Is there a referral process?	
	Yes. Council referrals for food and energy aid.	

33.	How are potential clients made aware of the project?
	Voluntary and third sector partner agencies such as citizens advice, Council website and council/partner agency benefit advisors. Pop up road shows.
34.	How do you keep in touch with service users? Do your service users have a preferred method of contact?
	The service users keep in touch with Bute Advice Centre via telephone and e-mail.
Working With People with Lived Experience of Poverty	
35.	Are those with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>delivering</u> the project?
	No.
36.	Are people with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>managing</u> the project, <u>supervision</u> within the project, or project <u>governance</u>?
	No.
37.	Are people with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>any other aspect</u> of the project?
	Case study support of project.
Leadership, Governance and Partnership Working	
38.	Who has overall responsibility for the project?
	Argyll and Bute Council.
39.	Is this the only responsibility of the person managing the project?
	Budget monitoring and performance management, onward performance reporting, assessing funding opportunities and submitting claims.
40.	Is there a Project Steering or Advisory Group or Organising Committee?
	No.
41.	If there is no Steering Group, what governance arrangements are in place to review strategy and performance?
	Project performance is discussed at a number of groups, operational matters are discussed at the Argyll and Bute Community Food Forum. Performance is reported to the Council's Financial Inclusion and Advice Group chaired by the Council Leader and the Head of Legal Services and the Child Poverty Action Group, chaired by the Chief Executive of the Health and Social Care Partnership.
Staffing	
42.	Are there any paid staff?
	Yes: The contract between the Council and Bute Advice Centre allows the advice agencies to employ a total of 4FTE per annum to deliver the contract.
43.	Are volunteers involved in delivering the project?
	No.
Links to Wider Policies, Strategies and Statutory Requirements	
44.	Is the project part of a wider anti-poverty strategy?

	Yes, it is part of the Child Poverty Action Plan	
45.	Is the project part of any other strategy?	
	No.	
46.	Is the project delivering a service that is a statutory commitment.	
	No.	
Funding		
47.	Who funds the project?	
	Scottish Government and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. No other details provided.	
48.	What is the budget for the project / how much does it cost to deliver?	
	Circa £300,000 per annum	
49.	Is future funding based on pre-agreed outcomes or outputs being delivered?	
	Yes, there is a commitment to support around 1,000 households per annum.	
Resources		
50.	What in-kind resources do you need to deliver your project?	
	Facilities	None
	Equipment	None
	Local Knowledge	Knowledge of the claimants and people in hardship in our area.
	Food and Drink	None
51.	For each of the in-kind resources listed above, who provides it?	
	Facilities	None
	Equipment	None
	Local Knowledge	Council benefits staff, Bute Advice and ALIEnergy staff, and managers of the foodbanks.
	Food and Drink	None
52.	Did you have to buy or develop new IT systems, software (databases, apps) or technology to deliver your project?	
	No, spreadsheets are used to deliver the project. The project has an online Drupal claim form.	
53.	Was additional staff training required to deliver your project?	
	Very light touch training delivered by a Benefits Team Leader in the council and by Bute Advice Centre management for advice agency staff.	
Formal Monitoring and Evaluation		
54.	What information, if any, do you collect about your project?	
	Number of users	Yes
	Profile of users	Yes

	Experience of users	Yes
	Anything else	The project's own spend, budget information.
55.	How often is data collected? Who collects the data?	
	Costs are monitored monthly by the project manager. The Manager from Bute Advice Centre provides a quarterly update called a rolling performance report.	
56.	Do you have baseline data on what things were like before the start of the project or before users started the project?	
	Only for those participants that have provided the project with case study information.	
57.	Do you produce an annual report?	
	No, only quarterly reports. However, a formal annual report would be a good improvement to consider.	
58.	In what ways, if at all, do you use the data that you collect to adapt the service that you provide?	
	None.	
59.	Have you employed an external organisation to formally evaluate your project?	
	No.	
60.	Do you intend to employ an external organisation to evaluate the service that you provide in the future?	
	No.	
Impact		
61.	What difference has the project made?	
	It's had a significant impact on the lives those that FFFF has been able to support in terms of helping mitigate poverty. Initially foodbanks reported seeing a reduction in some client groups using them for food support, however, numbers increased again as the cost-of-living crisis took hold.	
62.	How do you know this? What evidence demonstrates impact?	
	Number of users, value of the client gain in terms of extra benefit income received by users, or the value of energy cost savings. Interviews with satisfied customers and feedback from the foodbanks.	
63.	To what extent have the aims of the project been achieved?	
	It is hard to measure this given the challenges that householders face with inflationary increases to the cost of living.	
64.	How, if at all, has the demand for the service provided by FFFF changed since it started?	
	It has not changed much since its inception, apart from increasing the value of grant payments being made to users and working with MECOPP to provide more support for the Traveller Community.	
65.	If yes, has the project had the capacity to meet these changing conditions and demand?	
	The available financial resources have allowed FFFF to absorb cost increases to date in the value of grant awards made. There is very few people in Argyll and Bute	

	in Traveller Communities. However, they have unique and significant challenges to face so the support of the project is essential for them.	
66.	Has the project had any unexpected or unintended outcomes?	
	None that the team are aware of.	
67.	In your opinion, is the project having an impact on tackling poverty? If so, please describe in what ways.	
	Yes. The project facilitates access to Benefits that the clients are entitled to and in the short-term providing them with cash payments to support them with food and fuel purchases until they receive the increased benefits income. The monthly case study information confirms the importance of the service to its users.	
Learning from Experience		
68.	What is working well?	
	Joint working between the public and third sectors, working together to the benefit of the service users.	
69.	What, if anything, is working less well?	
	Outreach is the biggest challenge in Argyll and Bute. It is physically impossible to be in every part of such a large remote area and the stigma surrounding money and poverty often stops people who really need help from coming forward and asking for support. FFFF hopes that the networks of people who know about the project locally will help combat these challenges. It is through trusted relationships that people usually seek support.	
70.	What are the key learning points that you'd like to share with other practitioners?	
	Be open minded, try to keep things simple and be prepared to work together for the greater good.	
71.	What plans do you have to develop or expand the project in the future?	
	The FFFF team are considering opportunities to link up more closely with employability and housing going forward. Getting people into work and maintaining tenancies is another important aspect of the work the project is doing.	
72.	How easily do you think your project could be replicated in another setting?	
	Fairly easily.	
Social Media		
73.	Please enter social media contact details and weblinks to supporting documents or resources below:	
	Web Pages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/council-tax-and-benefits/money-advice/flexible-food-fund • https://www.buteadvice.org.uk/news • https://www.alienergy.org.uk/connections/argyll-and-bute-flexible-fuel-fund/ • https://www.mullhealth.com/the-argyll-and-bute-flexible-food-fund/

	Facebook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=2842634642669101&id=1485953655003880 • https://www.facebook.com/helensburghcommunitycouncil/posts/please-share-this-information-with-others-and-any-organisations-who-might-find-i/6121226581244852/ • https://www.facebook.com/therockfieldcentre/posts/information-on-the-flexible-food-fund%EF%B8%8F/5491778117576776/
	Instagram	No
	Twitter	No
	Tik-Tok	No
GDPR Consent (Add yes or no in the box)		
I give my permission to be named in the tackling poverty locally directory and associated public outputs.		Yes
I give permission for our organisation to be named in the tackling poverty locally directory and associated public outputs.		Yes
I give permission for me to be contacted by directory users.		Yes
I am willing to be contacted if more details are required		Yes