

RURAL ENGLAND CIC: BUSINESS PLAN 2022/25

1.0 OVER-ARCHING INTRODUCTORY COMMENT AND CONTEXT

Rural England Community Interest Company (RE) is a small organisation by any measure- taking the 21/22 Financial year estimates the Company has an estimated turnover of income generated in the year of just under £61000 and just one part time member of Administration/Support Staff.

The COVID-19 Pandemic did not have a significant impact on the Company's Business but created some delays in delivering projects – these were negotiated with 'external funders' where appropriate. That said because of national restrictions on travelling and face-to-face meetings there has been a beneficial impact on the budget. Virtual meetings will now become the norm.

Whilst the Company has significant aspirations those must be grounded in reality.

As set out in this Business Plan the Company will seek further Research Opportunities and Research Associates to increase research capacity- however, the Business Plan for 2022/25 needs to be based on the known resources (financial and human) at the time of writing (at May 2022).

One notable development is that Rural England is due to appoint a new Research Director, based at the University of Leicester, by June 2022, which will likely lead to some changes in approach and may well open up new opportunities.

In that context, **The Annual Outcomes as set out in this business plan can be summarised as being (at a minimum):**

- We would carry out the State of Rural Services (SORS) Research/Report every 3 years. The next is due to be worked on during 2024 and published by early 2025. SORS reports were produced by RE in both 2016 and 2018, which looked at recent trends and the current availability of a range of services (variously delivered by the public, private and VCS sectors) in rural areas of England. These reports were largely based on collating existing evidence, although some secondary analysis of data was included.

The shape of the 2021 SORS report (published in 2022) was different. Although some recent statistical evidence was included for context, the purpose of this report was to draw particular focus to the medium to long term impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and restrictions. This involved drawing on evidence and intelligence drawn from RE stakeholder organisations.

- In the years we were not doing SORS we would carry out other (detail to be determined each year) research. For 2022 this is likely to be a more in-depth follow - on report on an issue(s) raised by the 2021 SORS Report
- In each year for the years for which there are committed funds from the Supporters Rural Vulnerability Research Panel there would be a report on that research. 2022/23 is the third of those years. There is additional funding available in 2022/23 as a result of underspending in earlier years, - largely due to delays due to the Pandemic
- There would be a research report funded by the Calor Research fund (which may spread over 1 or 2 years).
- Each year there would be a Rural Vulnerability Day in Parliament. Wherever possible this will be the event at which Rural England Research Reports will be launched. These are likely to be virtual events. In January 2022 the event was the Launch Event for the SORS Report (both a Parliamentary Launch and a General Launch) and as part of the General Launch a briefing for delegates on the Exploring Rural Vulnerability from a Public Utilities' Perspective Report.
- We would participate in the utility company Supporters Vulnerability Panels as contracted
- Each year there would be a Supporters Day event (26th April in 2022) to outline our recently completed work and our plans for upcoming work.

2.0 BUSINESS PLAN VISION, OBJECTIVES, KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS, KEY PARTNERS AND CUSTOMER SEGMENTS

Vision and mission Better outcomes for rural people, businesses and communities, as a result of an improved rural evidence base.
Rural England aims to deliver this by: producing independent rural research and analysis; assisting networking among rural interest organisations; supporting the exchange of rural evidence; and encouraging informed policy debate.

- Objectives**
1. To undertake and publish robust research that focusses on the unique challenges or opportunities facing rural communities.
 2. To disseminate and promote the findings of published research to key decision takers and policy makers.
 3. To maintain and develop the relationship with the Stakeholder and Supporter Groups so that their members inform and use research undertaken by Rural England as appropriate.
 4. To seek to expand our research capacity.
 5. To maintain and secure income so Rural England can operate as a financially sustainable organisation.
 6. To put in place and develop policies and procedures relating to the good governance of Rural England Community Interest Company.
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Objective 1: To undertake and publish robust research that focusses on the unique challenges or opportunities facing rural communities.
Budget details in monthly budget reports to Directors

Key Partners	Key Performance indicators (KPIs)	Value	Customer Segments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of the RE Stakeholder Group. • Agencies (public, private and civil society sectors) with a particular topic interest. • The Rural Coalition Membership. • Rural Services Network and ACRE (as holders of rural services data). • Rural England Supporter Group members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State of Rural Services (SORS) Report to be commenced in 2024 and published by early 2025 • In the years where a SORS is not being undertaken, other (detail to be determined each year) research will be undertaken. For 2022 this is likely to be a more in-depth follow- on report on an issue(s) from the 2021 SORS Report • • Whenever possible two further research projects are commenced each year [for 2022/23 the Projects at the time of writing are unspecified but these will be a report funded by the Utility Providers Research Panel and one using the annual research funding from Calor. In 2022 a 	<p>To rural communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence that can inform better policy making appropriate to their wellbeing. <p>To RE stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mechanism for targeted engagement in the work of Rural England. • Evidence to support their own policy influencing activities. <p>To national and local policy makers and politicians</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence to support policy development and evaluation - leading to better policy making • Recommendations to improve rural evidence base. <p>Researchers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about rural evidence base and gaps within it. <p>To funding supporters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Profile for their support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government departments and agencies • Local authorities • Other service providers and commissioners • Rural interest groups • Parliamentarians

	<p>small piece of work on Community Agents schemes is being carried out (commenced early 2022) on behalf of the Utility Providers Research Panel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Task and Finish Group including RE Stakeholders is established for each research project (other than the Utility Company projects which have their own group) to shape the project and its communication strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of their Corporate Social Responsibility. <p>Publicity and profile</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Profile for Rural England as a research body. 	
	<p>Key Resources</p> <p>Annual funding from Calor Ltd for research Utility Providers Research Panel membership Researcher time Input from Other Directors and Associates Rural and research expertise In kind support from RE stakeholders Intellectual property RE & RSN Support Staff Potential to work with the NICRE Project</p>		

Objective 2: To disseminate and promote the findings of published research to key decision takers and policy makers. Budget details in monthly budget reports to Directors

Key Partners	KPIs	Value	Customer Segments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of the RE Stakeholder Group. • Members of the RE Supporter Group. • Agencies (public, private and civil society sectors) with a particular topic interest. • National and local politicians representing rural areas. • Academic and research institutions. • Funders and partner organisations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A high - profile launch for at least one piece of research as part of the Annual Rural Vulnerability Day event. • To give effect to the dissemination strategy adopted for each piece of research. • RE Directors, Stakeholders and Supporters are kept apprised of progress on research activity at appropriate intervals 	<p>To rural communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence that will inform better policy making relevant to their wellbeing. <p>To RE stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mechanism for targeted engagement in the work of Rural England. • Evidence that supports their own policy influencing activities. <p>To national and local policy makers and politicians</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence that supports the rural proofing of policies, strategies and plans – plus their evaluation - leading to better policy making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government departments and agencies. • Local authorities. • Other service providers and commissioners. • Funders where research is relevant to their line of work. • Parliamentarians. • Rural interest groups.
	<p>Key Resources</p> <p>Researcher time RE and RSN support staff time Rural and Research expertise. Intellectual Property. In kind support from RE stakeholders Professional PR assistance (Lexington) Intellectual property Professional PR assistance where appropriate</p>		

Objective 3: To maintain and develop the relationship with the Stakeholder and Supporter Groups so that their members inform and use research undertaken by Rural England as appropriate. Budget details in monthly budget reports to Directors

<p>Key Partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of the RE Stakeholder Group. • Supporter Group. 	<p>KPIs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The working arrangement agreed with the stakeholder group in 2019 is kept under review. <p>Each research project (other than the Utility Company projects which have their own group to scope and guide the projects and externally commissioned projects) is supported by a Task and Finish Group including with members drawn from the Stakeholder Group</p>	<p>Value</p> <p>To rural communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotes evidence that will inform better policy making relevant to their wellbeing. <p>To RE stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mechanism for targeted engagement in the work of Rural England. • Evidence that supports their own policy influencing activities. <p>To national and local policy makers and politicians</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence that supports better rural policy development, delivery and evaluation leading to better policy making 	<p>Customer Segments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government departments and agencies. • Local authorities. • Other service providers and commissioners. • MPs and Peers i.e., Parliamentarians. • Rural interest groups.
	<p>Key Resources</p> <p>RE Directors Researcher time RE and RSN support staff time In kind support from RE stakeholders Intellectual property</p>		

Objective 4: To seek to expand our research capacity. Budget details in monthly budget reports to Directors.

Key Partners	KPIs	Value	Customer Segments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Institutions • RE Stakeholders Group. • Research Associates and/or partner organisations. • Rural Services Network. • UK RPPRG Conveners (at CCRI, SRUC, QUB and Cardiff University). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the approved processes for appointing Research Associates. • Continue to seek additional Research Associates. • • Monitor new agreement with the University of Leicester, involving input from Uni temps/students. • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to conduct rural research which requires external skills. • Ability to undertake more research which exceeds in house capacity and where funding is secured. • Improved offer to commissioners etc. of research. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other service providers and commissioners.
	<p>Key Resources</p> <p>Contacts of Directors, Stakeholder and Supporter Group Members</p> <p>RSN Support to attendance at the Vulnerability Panels of Supporter Group Members with Extended Services or who are members of the Utility Providers Research Panel.</p>		

Objective 5: To maintain and secure income to support Objectives 1 – 4 and 6 and ensure Rural England can operate as a financially sustainable organisation. Budget details in monthly budget reports to Directors

Key Partners	KPIs	Value	Customer Segments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RE Supporters Group. • RE Stakeholders • Commissioners and funders of research • Charitable trusts, foundations and grant givers relevant to research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget Reports to Directors and Stakeholder Group. • Run an annual Supporter Group event to outline RE work undertaken and planned, and to understand better rural issues or opportunities for their sectors. • It is part of the Research Director role to promote and look out for appropriate commissioning opportunities, which have the potential to expand the profile and reputation of Rural England CIC. • 	<p>To rural communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence that may inform better policy making relevant to their wellbeing. <p>To RE stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence to support their own policy influencing activities. <p>To national and local policy makers and politicians</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence to support policy development, delivery and evaluation - leading to better policy making <p>To research commissioners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to rural evidence and recommendations directly relevant to their requirements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher education sector. • Commissioners of rural research and analysis. • Other rural research consultants or research bodies.
	<p>Key Resources</p> <p>In kind support from Directors</p>		

Objective 6: To put in place and develop policies and procedures relating to the good governance of Rural England.

<p>Key Partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RE Supporter Group • RE Stakeholder Group base or interest. 	<p>KPIs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce annual statutory accounts and Directors' Report in a timely manner. • Annual Review of Business Plan and Strategic Risk Register 2022 -2025 • Application of agreed policies and procedures – including in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Template contractual agreement/memorandum of understanding for research associates ○ Recruitment/selection procedure for associates for specific research projects ○ Working arrangements agreement with Stakeholder Group 	<p>Value</p> <p>To RE stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence that RE operates in a transparent, fair manner that conforms with any legal or regulatory requirements <p>To RE supporters/funders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence that RE operates in a transparent, fair manner that conforms with any legal or regulatory requirements 	<p>Customer Segments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private sector operating in rural areas. • Grant giving and research commissioning sectors.
	<p>Key Resources</p> <p>Director's time In kind engagement from RE Stakeholders and Supporters External RE appointed Tax Accountant.</p>		

