



Creating impact
Reducing inequalities
Transforming systems

Application pack for

FINANCE & OPERATIONS ASSISTANT

August 2025





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Our mission

To grow and scale the boldest and best innovations that deliver long term impact for people, address persistent inequalities and transform the systems around them.



About us

Innovation Unit is a not for profit social enterprise with a mission to grow and scale the boldest and best innovations that deliver long-term impact for people, address persistent inequalities, and transform the systems that surround them.

We have 17 years experience of doing this work with ambitious partners in local and central government, schools and hospitals, voluntary and community sector organisations, trusts and foundations.

We hold a bold vision: we want to see a world in which all people belong and contribute to thriving societies.

To achieve this vision, we must challenge and change the systems that people who experience disadvantage rely on most.



What it's like to work at
Innovation Unit?



Our team come from a wide variety of professional backgrounds and life experiences – researchers, service designers and programme managers work alongside colleagues with grass roots, community experience, as well as occupational therapists, social workers, and central and local government professionals, to design new solutions and take them to scale.

People who work at Innovation Unit share a core set of beliefs about enabling change that is owned and driven by the people it affects. We all work with the tools and methods from our tried and tested formula for innovation and impact.

Our 2024 areas of impact are:

1

Mental Health
Innovation

2

Tackling
Health
Inequalities

3

Justice and
Reducing
Violence

4

Children
and Families

5

Place based
transformation



Explore our recent work



Mental Health Innovation

Living Well UK

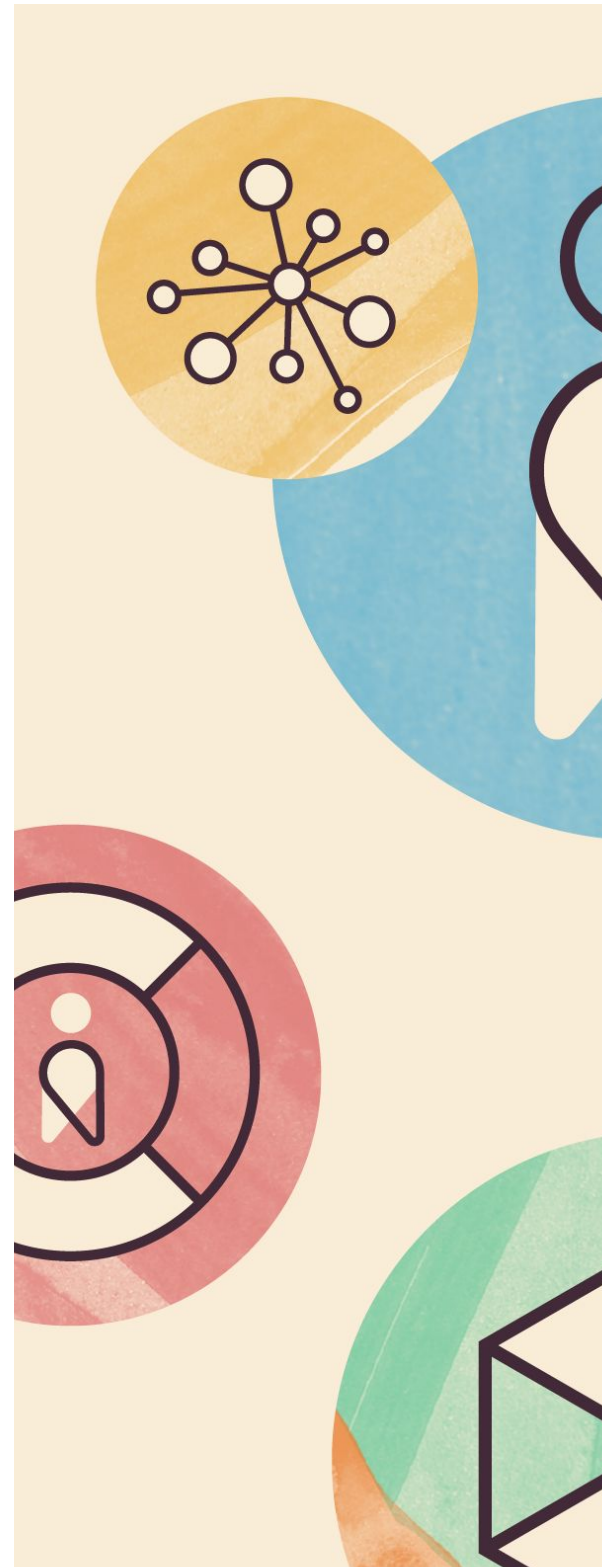


Living Well systems are designed to help people recover and stay well as part of their community. They are a response to mental health systems in the UK that have struggled for a long time to provide person centred, holistic support, where and when it is needed.

National Lottery Community Fund funded Innovation Unit to support four pioneering places in the UK to design and build Living Well systems of support for good mental health and wellbeing (2018-22), inspired by Lambeth Living Well, South London.

We helped our sites generate insights about people's lives, then used this new knowledge to co-design and prototype new multidisciplinary teams, implement them successfully, and, finally, scale (extend and grow) them across whole places. We coached leaders and their teams as they introduced difficult changes, and helped build local capabilities to ensure that new ways of working can be sustained long after our work is complete.

Since then, the movement has grown and is now influencing and supporting transformation of adult community mental health across Derby and Derbyshire County, Greater Manchester, Edinburgh and York.



Go to project website



Place based transformation

Good Lives GM

GoodLives GM grew from conversations with brilliant innovators across Greater Manchester. They identified common barriers to embedding community-led innovation. Together, we are exploring and learning how a system shifting capability could help them tackle these barriers.

GLGM is facilitated by a strategic partnership between Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Innovation Unit. Our work is steered by VCSE and public sector colleagues, working closely with the 10 GM localities.

We are currently working on behalf of GM in relation to Live Well, a programme of work aiming to reduce health inequalities by growing community-led support for healthy lives. The GLGM team have been supporting five GM localities to anticipate the system barriers they will encounter and design-in collaboration and experimentation to overcome them.

We are also working with four trailblazer localities regards Early Family Help to reduce inequalities through community-led support that helps families to flourish.

All underpinned by a new kind of leadership collaborative. Supported through 1:1 and group coaching and a programme of learning opportunities whilst trios of leaders conduct system shifting experiments to rebuild structures and cultures.



[Go to project website](#)



Our approach

We grow and scale the boldest and best innovations that deliver long-term impact for people, address persistent inequalities, and transform the systems that surround them.

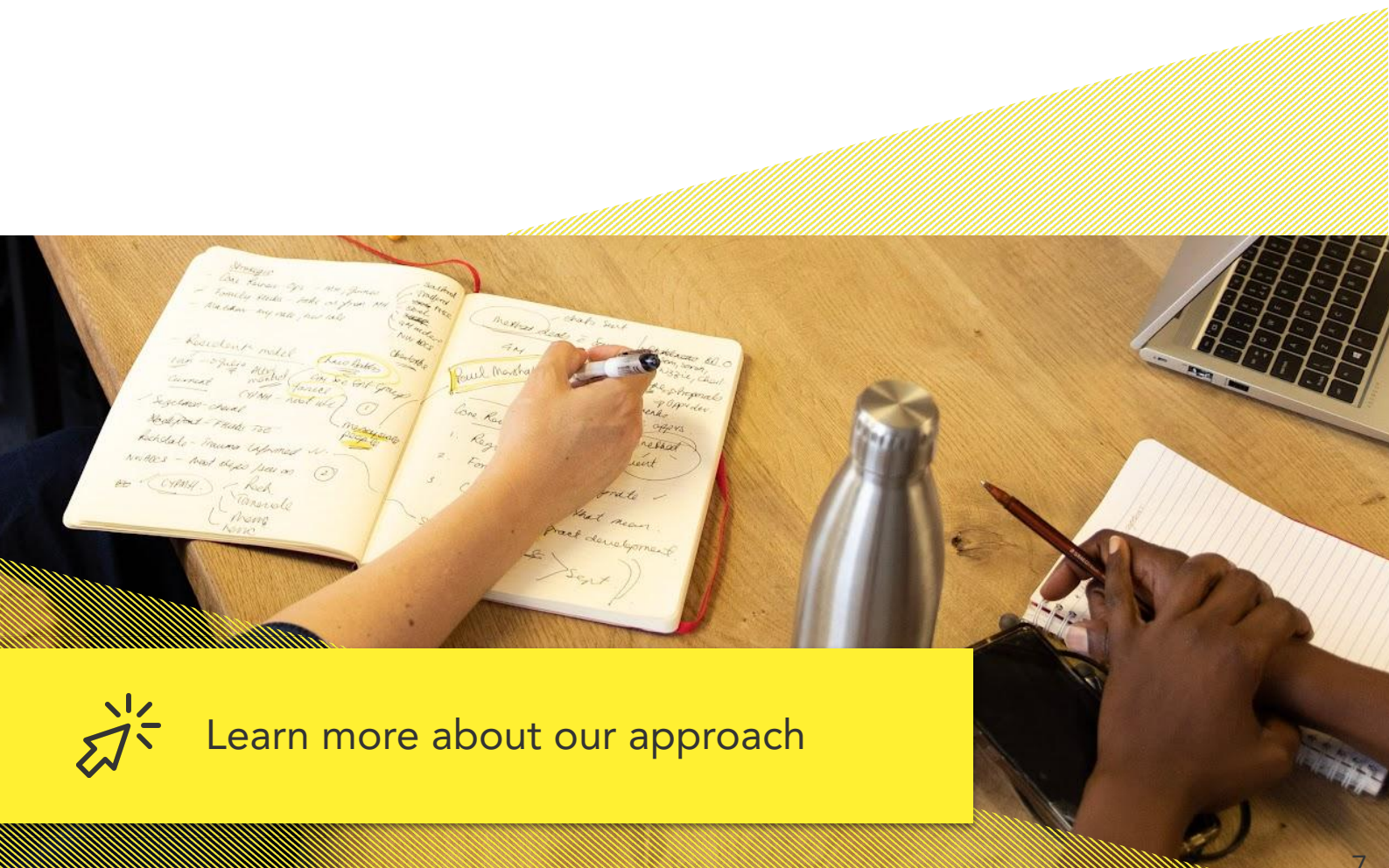
We do this by coaching leaders and their teams as they introduce difficult changes. And we help build local capability to ensure that new ways of working will be maintained long after our work is complete.

We work closely with people with lived-experience and frontline staff.

Together, we dig deep to find root causes of problems, challenge assumptions, design and test new ways of working and help implement change.

We help organisations collaborate with one another and build strong partnerships that can transform a system or a place.

The impact is better outcomes and experiences for vulnerable people and better outcomes for the wider system.



Learn more about our approach



Equity, diversity and inclusion

We are actively seeking to recruit a diverse pool of talent for the available roles.

Our recruitment process will test your ability, skills and knowledge and we encourage you to apply even if you only have some experience for the role.

We put lived experience at the heart of the work we do at Innovation Unit – whether through co-design, storytelling or participatory research. Much of our work is within the mental health, health, children's social care, and criminal justice systems.

We know that staff members with lived or professional experience of these systems make us stronger, and more capable of creating meaningful impact.

We value all forms of diversity as a matter of principle, and because innovation thrives on new perspectives, we want our new team members to help us see entrenched social challenges in new ways.

We are committed to becoming an anti-racist organisation, and strongly encourage people of colour to apply. We also welcome applications by candidates from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, those with disabilities as well as those who identify with any other underrepresented group.

OUR RECRUITMENT PROCESS

At Innovation Unit we use Applied for our recruitment. Applied aims to overcome unconscious bias in recruiting. Instead of using your CV alone, we'll be asking you to answer questions to test skills needed for the role. The responses are then anonymised, and reviewed in a random order by members of our team.

The Applied platform also asks some demographic questions before you start your application. We at Innovation Unit never see the responses to these demographic questions with your application. We only see summary statistics to help us check if our candidate pool is balanced and if everyone has an equal chance to get hired irrespective of their background. If you prefer, you can easily opt out of answering these questions.



Finance & Operations Assistant





Personal attributes

We have developed strong systems and processes over the past five years and are now focused on enhancing their efficiency and effectiveness to support the continued growth of Innovation Unit.

We are seeking a capable and proactive Finance and Operations Assistant to help deliver this ambition. This role is ideal for someone who thrives in a varied and fast-paced environment, brings strong attention to detail, and demonstrates initiative and ownership in their work. You will play a central role in supporting the smooth day-to-day functioning of our financial and operational systems, reporting to the Head of Finance and Operations and working closely with colleagues across the organisation.

You will be responsible for a broad range of core activities including managing expenses and payments, supporting procurement processes, maintaining accurate and timely financial records, and helping ensure our internal systems are well maintained and continuously improved. You will also support the use of our new project management system (CMAP) and contribute to more streamlined and effective ways of working across teams.

This role requires practical experience in finance administration or bookkeeping, ideally gained within a consultancy, not for profit, or other project based organisation. You will be confident using systems such as Xero, DEXT, and Google Workspace, and demonstrate the ability to learn and use new platforms effectively. You will be expected to manage tasks independently, apply good judgement, and complete work to a high professional standard.

You will need to build and maintain strong working relationships with colleagues, associates, and suppliers, and work effectively across a range of internal functions. This will require excellent communication skills, sound decision making, and the ability to prioritise and adapt when circumstances change. A high level of discretion and care will be essential, particularly when handling sensitive information or supporting compliance processes.

Innovation Unit is a mission-driven organisation, committed to tackling persistent inequalities and transforming the systems that shape people's lives. You will be joining a collaborative, supportive, and high performing team that values learning, inclusion, and a shared commitment to meaningful impact. From your first day, you will be expected to contribute actively to the success of the team and to the continuous improvement of our finance and operations functions.

If you are looking for a role that offers responsibility, variety, and purpose, and the chance to build and apply your finance and operations expertise in a values-led organisation, we would be delighted to hear from you.



Job Description

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Finance Administration & Bookkeeping

- Process and reconcile staff and associate expenses, credit card payments, and other financial transactions using DEXT and Xero
- Manage the shared finance inbox, triaging and responding to incoming queries
- Own the reconciliation of the company credit card, ensuring all receipts are submitted, accurately coded, and matched against statements
- Perform regular bank reconciliations in Xero, investigating and resolving discrepancies independently
- Raise and track purchase orders, ensuring procurement processes and internal controls are followed
- Review and process associate PO requests, record them in Xero, and collate timesheets in CMAP to complete the self-billing process
- Maintain invoicing schedules and actively track cash flow projections
- Raise client invoices in line with agreed milestones, ensuring accuracy and correct project coding
- Monitor accounts receivable, track outstanding balances, and follow up with clients to ensure timely collection
- Lead on credit control, escalating overdue invoices as needed
- Prepare monthly payroll data, including collecting timesheets and managing staff changes for submission
- Support VAT returns, and manage month-end and year-end financial close in collaboration with the Head of Finance and external accountants
- Maintain accurate and audit-ready financial records, ensuring compliance with reporting standards and organisational policies.



Job Description

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Delivery & Project System Support

- Set up and maintain project data in CMAP, including budgets, billing schedules, opportunities, and resource allocations
- Track and record project-related expenses in CMAP, keeping delivery leads informed of budget status and spend to date
- Manage project closure processes, ensuring project data is updated and reconciled at month-end and year-end
- Onboard new associates and suppliers, setting them up in CMAP and Xero, and maintaining accurate contract, PO, and contact records
- Act as the first point of contact for delivery teams and associates using CMAP, providing guidance on time/expense entry and troubleshooting access or usage issues
- Maintain internal systems and records, including CMAP, Xero, DEXT, procurement logs, and shared digital platforms (e.g. Google Drive, SharePoint)

Reporting & Management Information

- Assist in preparing reports and updates, such as project risk logs, operational summaries, and internal trackers
- Contribute to regular internal reporting cycles by pulling data from CMAP, Google Sheets or finance systems



Experience, knowledge and skills

SKILLS & EXPERIENCE

Essential Skills and Experience

- Proven experience in finance administration, including bookkeeping, invoicing, and reconciliations
- Confident user of cloud-based finance systems, ideally Xero, DEXT, and Google Microsoft
- Experience working with a project management system to input and maintain project data (e.g. budgets, billing schedules, timesheets)
- Strong numerical and analytical skills, with excellent attention to detail
- Experience processing purchase orders, raising invoices, and supporting credit control
- Comfortable managing payroll data, including timesheets and staff changes
- Excellent organisation and time management, with the ability to manage competing priorities
- Clear, professional communicator (written and verbal), with confidence liaising across teams and with suppliers/associates
- Ability to work independently, take initiative, and solve problems proactively
- Experience working in a consultancy or project-based environment, or supporting teams delivering client-facing work

Desirable Skills and Experience

- Experience working in a charity, social enterprise, non profit or purpose-led organisation
- Familiarity with self-billing processes for associates or contractors
- Understanding of VAT submissions and UK payroll requirements



Contract details

Location

We have colleagues in London, Edinburgh, Greater Manchester, Yorkshire and places in between, with access to offices in central London and Manchester.

We only accept applications from people with the right to work in the UK and are UK based.

Hybrid working

Our team splits their time between home, on client sites and office, with moments to come to the office for project work, away days and socials. Schedules vary depending on the requirements of your role.

Salary

£ 28k - £ 32k p.a.
depending on experience

Type

Full time permanent

Hours

37.5 per week

Holiday

27 days holiday plus bank holidays. In addition, we close the office for three days between Christmas and New Year.

Who will I report to?

Head of Finance & Operations

Benefits

4% pension contribution

Pension salary exchange scheme

Life cover

Flexible working

Employee Assistance Support

Please get in touch with any questions about the role or the contract at:



contact@innovationunit.org



How to apply



Please email contact@innovationunit.org

DEADLINE

The deadline for receipt of applications is 09:00 Friday 15th August 2025

INTERVIEWS

First round interviews will take place between 11th and 22nd August over video call. Final screening interviews with the Managing Director will be in the week commencing 24th August online.

All candidates will receive an email confirming that their application has been received. After this, we will only contact the applicants that have been selected for interview. Feedback on your application will be given through the Applied system.

Due to the nature of our work with children and vulnerable adults, Innovation Unit operates a Safer Recruitment policy. All offers of employment will be made on the condition of a DBS check being carried out and we will ask for two references.