



Oxford Policy Engagement Network (OPEN) Seed Fund Call for Proposals, Trinity Term 2023

Guidance for applicants

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1. Summary

The Oxford Policy Engagement Network (OPEN) Seed Fund offers awards of up to £5,000 to enable researchers at the University of Oxford, and public policy professionals anywhere in the world to kick-start or deepen collaboration, working together to design, deliver and evaluate projects that

- Enable them to share evidence and support its use in policymaking;
- Improve their understanding of how research can inform policymaking, and develop the skills to catalyse that process; and
- Broaden and deepen their networks.

With the exception of those requesting less than £1,000, projects may not start earlier than 9 May 2023. All project activity **must** be completed and funding spent by 31 July 2023.

Academics and researchers from any department or faculty at the University can apply. Proposals from those new to, or experienced in, policy engagement are equally welcome. Those with college-only contracts must apply via a department or faculty. DPhil students can apply if they will have submitted their thesis and be awaiting examination at the point their project will commence. All proposals must include at least one Policy Partner.

Policy professionals who would like to take advantage of the Seed Fund but who do not have a Research Partner, should [contact the Policy Engagement Team](#).

Proposals must be made by the Research Partner using the [Internal Research Award Management System](#) (IRAMS).

Applicants should follow the guidance below, and are encouraged to consult their departmental research support team in the first instance, not least to ensure they comply with any departmental eligibility criteria, approval processes, or guidelines. Questions regarding the Seed Fund in general, eligibility or other aspects of the application process, should be addressed to researchandpublicpolicy@admin.ox.ac.uk.

To discuss ideas for a proposal, applicants are encouraged to contact the relevant divisional contact within the Policy Engagement Team to arrange a consultation.

Division	Contact
Humanities & Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences	Sarah Eichhorn (sarah.eichhorn@socsci.ox.ac.uk)
Medical Sciences	Martin Christlieb (martin.christlieb@medsci.ox.ac.uk)
Social Sciences & GLAM	Will Pryor (william.pryor@socsci.ox.ac.uk)

Proposals for up to £1,000 can be submitted at any time before 12:00 BST, 24 April 2023. All other proposals in response to this call must be submitted by this deadline.

2. Key dates

Action	Date
Call opens	13 March 2023
Application deadline	12:00 BST, 24 April 2023 (Proposals for less than £1,000 can be submitted, and will be considered, before this date.)
Applicants notified of funding decision	w/c 9 May 2023
Earliest project start date	9 May 2023
Latest project end date	31 July 2023

3. About the OPEN Seed Fund

Policy engagement is all about relationships: investing in them, maintaining them – and, from time to time, ending them.¹ For some researchers and policymakers, however, it can be difficult to know where start, or how to develop these relationships. The OPEN Seed Fund makes it easier for potential partners to connect and begin to collaborate, share knowledge and expertise, so that, together, they can contribute to better policies that protect what is valuable and change the world for the better. This is central to the mission of [the Oxford Policy Engagement Network](#) (OPEN), a growing network of more than 800 researchers and others at the University who share a vision of public policy powered by the world’s best available research evidence and expertise.

The OPEN Seed Fund is co-sponsored by the UK Civil Service Policy Profession and the University of Oxford, and funded from the University’s allocation from Research England’s Higher Education Innovation Fund. It replaces the Research and Public Policy Partnership Scheme (RPPPS), which closed in July 2022.

4. What can the OPEN Seed Fund be used for?

Partners may use the Seed Fund for

- Co-production of tools and resources that facilitate uptake of research evidence in policymaking;
- Collaboration on synthesis of evidence from diverse sources, disciplines and contexts to inform policy debates, options or decisions, and approaches to filling gaps;
- Co-development of approaches to monitoring, evaluation or scrutiny of policy;
- Consultation with other researchers and stakeholders in the policymaking community; or
- Establishment, development or leverage of mutually accessible networks.

Under the RPPPS, partners in the UK used awards of a similar size

- To better anticipating demand in Oxford for food aid during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- To improve language teaching in primary schools;
- To better understand early experiences of integration of resettled refugees;
- To learn lessons from Violence Reduction Units for school exclusions after COVID-19; and
- To better understand [the impact of direct-to-consumer genetic testing on the NHS](#).

The RPPPS also supported partnerships focused on policy challenges outside the UK, e.g.,

- To develop a better understanding of [the trade-offs involved in application of the concept of health security](#);
- To improve responses to the mobility needs of some of the poorest people in Istanbul, during and after the pandemic; and
- To develop a shared understanding of the impacts of COVID-19 on pastoral communities in Central Asia and elsewhere, and [exploring with them ways to mitigate those](#).

Activities that are **not** eligible include:

- Research consultancy;
- Academic conferences or seminars lacking clear engagement with policymakers;
- Studentships or internships for Research Council-funded DPhil students, where these are funded through Research Council Doctoral Training Grants.

5. How can partners themselves benefit?

Research and Policy Partners are likely to benefit through broadening and deepening their professional networks.

¹ See Roche, C., Tomlin, A., & Krishna, U. (2020). [Monitoring, evaluation and learning for policy engagement: Approaches, questions and resources](#). University of Oxford

Research Partners stand to learn more about the value of their skills and expertise to public policy, and enhance both; to build their professional networks; and discover how to collaborate effectively with policymakers at pace and in the face of widespread uncertainty.

Policy Partners may strengthen their understanding of research methods that can help model, test and improve policy solutions, as well as their understanding of, and ability to use, research evidence and expertise.

6. How will proposals be assessed?

An interdisciplinary panel, including representation of the OPEN Steering Group and the Policy Profession Unit, will prioritise practical and innovative proposals that

- Contribute to clear policy-related (as opposed to only research-related) goals;
- Define realistic objectives that relate to a clearly identified policy (or policies), and to impact that is clearly connected with that; and
- Focus on activities that enable collaboration, co-design and co-delivery of those outputs with those who make or shape relevant policies.

Proposals may relate to continuation of ongoing or earlier activity, or substantially new activities. The former must clearly demonstrate the added value of further funding and the potential for timely impact.

The panel will also consider the following criteria when reviewing proposals:

- **Relevance** to clearly identified current/emerging public policy objectives;
- **Potential for mutual benefit** – reflected in outcomes and outputs of benefit to both partners;
- **Sustainability** – reflecting the potential of the partnership to lead to future collaboration or to create/accelerate impact; and
- **Value for money**: an appropriate and well justified budget, with careful consideration of individual costs, as well as investment (cash or in-kind) by partners.

7. Who can apply?

Applications must include a Research Partner and Policy Partner.

Research Partner

The Research Partner must be an academic or researcher employed by a department or faculty at the University, or by a college, applying via such a department or faculty, with a contract of employment that lasts at least six months beyond the planned end date of the proposed project. Researchers with a contract of employment that lasts less may be involved as a Co-applicant but cannot serve as Research Partner.

Awards can only be held in departments or faculties, not in colleges. Researchers with college-only contracts, and those from Gardens, Libraries and Museums, must apply via a department or faculty, with a member of that department or faculty as a Co-applicant.

Retired and Emeritus Fellows, as well as Masters and doctoral students, are not eligible.

If the Research Partner moves to another university during the course of the project, this funding will not transfer with them.

Policy Partner

The Policy Partner, whether from within or outside the UK, must be from among the following:

- Policymaking staff of central government departments/ministries;
- Policymaking staff of county, district or city councils, or similar local authority;
- Staff of the House of Commons Committees Office; Library or Scrutiny Unit; Lords Committee Office or Library; or Joint Committees; Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology; or similar structures in other national or regional legislative assemblies;
- Policymaking staff of intergovernmental organisations, e.g., UN programmes, funds, and specialised agencies; or

- A non-academic civil society organisation with a policy-related mission.

Co-applicants

Co-applicants can include

- Other researchers, DPhil students, teaching staff, museum staff, as well as research facilitators and other professional services staff; and
- Others in the policymaking community.

Project staff not employed by the University must be able to demonstrate their eligibility to work in the United Kingdom.

8. What can be funded?

Eligible costs do **not** include salary of Research or Policy Partners, but include those related to:

- Salaries of other staff, e.g., research support, communications or events management staff;
- Venue and catering;
- Travel and accommodation costs;
- Other event costs e.g. equipment, printing, IT/AV support; and
- Surveys.

All project activity must be completed and funding spent by 31 July 2023.

Support from the Seed Fund is not provided on a full economic cost (FEC) basis. Estates and indirect costs are not covered by the fund but 100% of direct costs will be covered. More information about costing and pricing projects is available [here](#).

Efficiency, cost-effectiveness and value for money should be clearly demonstrated in the application. Payments will not be made for miscellaneous expenses or unspecified items. If you are unsure about the eligibility of a specific expense, please contact those identified on page 2 for further guidance.

Clear details of any combination of cash or in-kind contributions are sought from both partners to reflect shared commitment to the proposed partnership. **The contribution of policy partners is expected to be at least 25% of the total project cost.**

9. When to apply

Prospective partners may apply for

- Less than £1,000 at any time between 0900 BST on 13 March 2023 and 1200 BST on 24 April 2023; and
- Between £1,000 to £5,000 ahead of the gathered field deadline of 1200 BST on 24 April 2023.

They can expect to hear of panel decisions within 10 working days. Feedback from the panel review will be available on request.

In exceptional circumstances and with adequate justification, applications for more than £5,000 may be considered. Partners considering such an application should consult the Policy Engagement Team at an early stage.

10. How to apply

Proposals must be submitted using the University's [Internal Research Award Management System \(IRAMS\)](#), to which only the Research Partner has access. This is a four-part process:

1. Complete the online section of the application in IRAMS
2. Download the Case for Support Word documents template from IRAMS, to be completed in collaboration with the Policy Partner
3. Combine the Case for Support with the other supporting documents into a single PDF.
4. Upload the single PDF to IRAMS, which should comprise:

- a. Case for Support, with all relevant fields completed; and
- b. Statement of support from a senior representative of the Policy Partner's employer

The Research Partner should check with their department or faculty to clarify any internal eligibility criteria, approval processes, and other guidelines. Some departments require significant notice to check and submit proposals, so Research Partners should seek guidance from their departmental administrator as soon as they consider making an application.

Online part of IRAMS application form

The earliest start date for projects between £1,000 and £5,000 in value is 9 May 2023. Earlier start dates for such projects, and for all proposals of less than £1,000 in value, must be agreed in consultation with the Policy Engagement Team.

Case for Support

The Research Partner should download the Case for Support from IRAMS and complete together with their Policy Partner all relevant sections. Detailed instructions for completing the Case for Support are included in the form.

The Research Partner should consult their departmental administrator about the preparation of costings. The department or faculty is responsible for confirming the accuracy of those costings.

Statement of support

A letter (or email) of support (no more than one A4 page in length) should be provided by a senior representative of the Policy Partner's employer. This statement should

- Reflect an understanding of the proposed goal, outcomes, outputs and activities;
- Describe how the proposed goal relates to the policymaking agenda and how the proposed partnership will benefit the Policy Partner and, possibly, their colleagues;
- Outline the support that will be provided.

In cases where obtaining such a statement is particularly difficult at the proposal stage, the panel may consider applications without one, and subsequently offer a conditional award, pending provision of such a letter.

11. Sharing best practice

Successful applicants may be invited by the University or Policy Profession to take part in briefing, training or other events that support the aims of the Seed Fund.

Applicants should note that successful applications are likely to be used as exemplars for future applicants but an opportunity to opt-out of this will be available.

In addition to any publications that may be delivered through their partnership, successful applicants will be invited to help the Policy Engagement Team prepare a short lay summary of their project for publication via University channels and others at their discretion.

12. Monitoring, evaluation and learning

Applicants are encouraged to consult the [Policy Engagement Team's guidance and resources relating to monitoring, evaluation and learning](#) and are expected to outline relevant arrangements in their case for support.

The Policy Engagement Team will work with Partners, individually and as a cohort, to

- Maximise learning from their experience, and in finding ways to share that with others, e.g. in the context of training activities or resources, or in the form of a blog; and
- Communicate progress towards outcomes, planned or unplanned, including via the team's online presence and social media.

Reporting requirements

Timely consideration of arrangement for monitoring, evaluation and learning will also facilitate and inform the reporting that is required of all award-holders. These reports will be the key mechanism to collect critical information for reporting to Research England, and will assist the Policy Engagement Team in monitoring progress and managing any issues that arise.

A schedule of reporting dates will be provided with award offer letters. Research Partners will be contacted with an email reminder closer to the dates that reports are due for submission. The emails will include a number of questions to help shape reports:

- **End-of-project report** – This should evaluate the project, demonstrate the impact and benefits for Research and Policy Partners, and detail any future plans for further engagement. This report should be submitted within one month of the end of the project.
- **Impact report** – This should briefly outline further impacts achieved in the six months following the project's completion. The aim is to capture any impact that has developed since the project's completion date.

13. Where to get support

Research Partners are encouraged to consult their departmental or faculty research support team in the first instance, not least to ensure they comply with any departmental eligibility criteria, approval processes, or guidelines. Applicants with questions regarding the Seed Fund, eligibility or other aspects of the application process, should email researchandpublicpolicy@ox.ac.uk.

Research or Policy Partners wishing to discuss ideas for a potential application should email the most appropriate your divisional contact in the Policy Engagement Team to book a consultation.

Please find below some sources of inspiration, information and guidance from the Policy Engagement Team and others at Oxford:

- [Oxford's Experience in Policy Engagement](#) – news, stories, and advice from OPEN Fellows and other policy-engaged researchers at Oxford
- [Policy Engagement: guidance and resources](#)
 - [How can I engage with policymakers?](#)
 - [How does UK Government work and what do policymakers look for?](#)
 - [How do I engage with the UK Parliament and how do parliaments work?](#)
 - [How do I build policy engagement into project design?](#)
 - [How do I engage with policymakers internationally?](#)
 - [How do I monitor, evaluate and learn about policy engagement?](#)
- [Social Sciences Division impact case studies](#) – lay summaries of successful impact stories
- [TORCH KE Fellowships and other projects](#) – run by the Humanities Division
- [Oxford Impacts case study series](#)
- [Oxford's KE and Impact pages](#)