

## Social Science Impact Fund (SSIF)

### *Guidance for Applicants*

The Social Science Impact Fund (SSIF) aims to support the use of research and expertise through the development of relationships with non-academic stakeholders, beneficiaries, and partners. This can be done in a number of ways but begins with thinking carefully about the people, groups, organisations or bodies that you hope to work with and by clearly identifying the best methods for engaging those stakeholders. Understanding stakeholder needs is vital to strong impact work and leads to a clear understanding of how success can be measured and evaluated. The University of Cambridge has an established and experienced impact ecosystem and can support researchers in developing ways to apply their research by working with policy makers, industry partners, arts communities, the wider public, and others.

Impact activities can be undertaken at any point in the research life cycle. In developing research plans, impact activities and opportunities to engage with stakeholders can be included in *pathways to impact* statements but should unanticipated opportunities emerge at later stages, the Social Science Impact Fund can support emerging activities from two distinct streams:

1. Impact Fund
2. Discretionary Fund

Although each funding stream is dedicated to support impact arising at various points, both streams must make clear how activities meet the aims of ESRC Impact Accelerator Account (IAA).

### Aims

The principle concern of the ESRC IAA is to take social science research and expertise and put it directly into the hands of stakeholders through carefully selected methods and approaches, and to build in to projects the opportunities for evaluation and tracking of activities and outputs. It is easiest to think of this as a three-step process: beneficiaries, methods, and metrics.

### Beneficiaries

A first step to creating impact is in choosing the stakeholders and beneficiaries that will most benefit from your research and expertise, and in strategically involving external partners throughout to help develop and deliver the project outputs. Please see Annex A: Partners, Collaborators, Stakeholders, and Beneficiaries for examples of potential beneficiaries and types of impact that may be generated by your activities.

### Methods and Activities

Successful impact work can often depend on **choosing the most appropriate method or activity for your community of stakeholders and beneficiaries**. The methods and approaches for social science impact work can include a wide range of activities, some suggestions for what can be funded out of

the IAA are below. Please see *Annex B: Methods and Activities* for examples of engagement activities.

## Metrics and Indicators

Evaluating impact projects is necessary for both the evidencing of success and in planning for future pathways to impact. Therefore choosing the most appropriate methods and indicators to qualify and quantify the outcomes of the project are important. Please see Annex C: Metrics and Indicators for examples.

## Other things to consider

We particularly encourage innovative bids, whether this is a new method for engagement or collaborating with a new partner.

Applications are invited from any researcher pursuing activity in the social sciences or policy engagement (whether or not they are ESRC grant holders) who holds a current contract of employment as an independent researcher – at the point of application – with the University. This includes: all University Teaching Officers, externally-funded Research Fellows, Senior Research Associates, Research Associates and those working in research centres or other relevant non-School institutions. Post-graduate students are not eligible to apply.

There will be one call annually with a deadline of 30<sup>th</sup> September. The Rapid-Response Discretionary Fund has no deadline and we aim to get decisions to applicants within ten days.

For the Impact Fund the maximum award is £20k, projects must be completed in 12 months, awards will cover 100% of directly incurred costs but will not cover indirect costs. Grants can be used to support staff on the project, consumables, travel etc. but cannot be used to support students or to cover PI time.

Letters of support from partner organisations, with details of their contribution to the project where appropriate, will help support your case. Please use the online application form which, upon completion, will be automatically sent to the lead applicant's Head of Department for approval/signature of support (cross-departmental bids are encouraged)

## Assessment criteria

Applications to all funds will be assessed against the following criteria:

- Quality of the impact plan: including relevance and timeliness of proposed activity, clear objectives that align with aims, clear identification of the beneficiaries, stakeholders, and partners, and their potential involvement with the activities, achievable milestones over the life of the project, and metrics or indicators against which long-term success could be gauged;
- Project management: A clear description of how the project will be managed;
- Added value: the application must describe how the award will be expected to develop or enhance the prospect of impact and be additional to existing Research Council or other funding for impact activities, additionally the way in which the award will benefit both the applicant and target audience;

- Budget: A clear outline and rationale for the activities included in the proposal. Co-funding of activities is encouraged, but not required;
- Where partners or collaborators are involved in activities and outputs, a clear statement of any commitment in kind or in terms of co-funding by those organisations should be provided in a letter of support.

## Evaluation

Applications to all schemes will be evaluated by a cross departmental Steering Group comprised of senior researchers.

## Progress and Final Reports

For Impact Fund projects, progress updates from project holders will be required after three months, or half way through the project, whichever is sooner. Updates shall be brief (approximately 250-400 words) and will outline progress against the milestones proposed for the project and agreed by the members of the Steering Group. A Final End of Award Report will be required after all projects have completed and will be assessed by the Steering Group.

An Update report will also be requested six months after the end of the project. This is designed to record any additional impact that has developed or continued beyond the completion of the project.

For all other funds, the reporting requirements will be confirmed by the relevant co-ordinator at the time of award.

## Annex A: Partners, Collaborators, Stakeholders, and Beneficiaries

Below are some examples of partners, collaborators, stakeholders, and beneficiaries and the impacts that may be generated by your activities.

### 1. Civil Society, Social Justice, Public Policy; Justice, Rights & Welfare

Potential beneficiaries include:

- Advocacy groups or lobbyists
- Citizens
- Courts
- Charitable organisations
- EU or other European organisations
- Intergovernmental organisations
- Local / regional governments
- Military
- National governments
- NGOs
- Policy makers
- Public Bodies
- Quangos
- Regulatory bodies
- Specific communities or groups (UK or elsewhere)
- Think tanks

IMPACTS ON

- Access to justice and other opportunities (including employment and education)
- Capacity to fulfil treaty or reporting obligations
- Decisions by a public service or regulatory authority
- Ethical standards
- Evidence based policy
- Human development
- Human rights
- Humanitarian action and relief (including monitoring or evaluation of these)
- International development
- International guidelines or policy (governmental or otherwise)
- Law enforcement
- Legal and other frameworks
- Legislative change, development of legal principle or effect on legal practice
- National, regional or local guidelines or policy (governmental or otherwise)
- Standards or contents of policy discussion and debate
- Political and legislative processes
- Public awareness, attitudes or understanding
- Public participation in political and social processes
- Public spending decisions
- Security
- Social welfare, equality and inclusion
- Understanding of minority linguistic, ethnic, religious, immigrant, cultures and communities
- Understanding of standards of wellbeing and human rights

### 2. Society & Community; Media; Arts, Heritage & Culture; Visitors, Tourists & Tourism

POTENTIAL BENEFICIARIES INCLUDE

- Artists and practitioners
- Arts, heritage, and culture
- Heritage sites
- Libraries and archives

IMPACTS ON

- Arts and heritage policy, governance and funding
- Community cohesion or regeneration

- Media professionals
- Museums
- Performing arts
- Religious organisations
- Specific communities or groups
- Visitors, tourists
- Wider public
- Creative practice and expression amongst practitioners
- Cultural life of a community, region or nation
- Cultural understanding of issues and phenomena, shaping or informing public attitudes and values
- Public engagement with cultural heritage and / or the arts
- Influencing media discourse relating to research
- Outreach and engagement of marginalised or under-represented groups
- Preservation, conservation and presentation of local, national, international cultural heritage
- Processes of commemoration, memorialisation and reconciliation
- Production of cultural artefacts e.g. films, novels, music, art
- Public awareness, attitudes or understanding
- Public discourse or debate
- Public engagement with research
- Quality of tourist or visitor experiences
- The work of community organisations

### 3. Economies, Commerce & Organisations (Including Public Sector Organisations)

#### POTENTIAL BENEFICIARIES INCLUDE

- Commercial / industry organisations and their users or clients
- Economies (local, regional, national, international)
- Professional practitioners (individuals or bodies)
- Public sector organisations and their users
- Regulators

#### IMPACTS ON

- Access to finance
- Access to public services
- Business or industry sectors
- Commercialisation of research
- Corporate social responsibility
- Development of new or modified standards or protocols
- Development of alternative economic models (e.g. fair trade)
- Development, trialling and delivery of new materials, products or technology
- Development, trialling and delivery of new methodologies, frameworks or systems
- Economic prosperity (any geographic level)
- Enhanced organisational effectiveness and sustainability (any organisation)
- Improved or enhanced customer /client/ audience experience

- Institution of new businesses or other organisations
- Inter-organisational understanding, cooperation or effectiveness
- Investment in research and development
- Jobs and employment
- Mitigation or reduction of potential harm
- Performance or productivity (including reduction of costs/waste)
- Quality of public services
- Regeneration
- Regulation or governance
- Strategy, operations or management practices within any business or organisations
- Take-up or use of public services

#### 4. Human Health & Wellbeing

##### POTENTIAL BENEFICIARIES INCLUDE

- Health or medical regulators
- NHS and its users
- Other health systems or services and their users
- Patients and related groups

##### IMPACTS ON

- Access to or take-up of healthcare services or related resources
- Control and understanding of diseases
- Costs within a health system or service
- Decisions by a health service or regulatory authority
- Development, trialling or delivery of new or modified clinical or lifestyle intervention
- Development, trialling or delivery of new or modified diagnostic or clinical technology
- Development, trialling or delivery of new or modified drug
- Development, trialling or delivery of new or modified guidelines (including for e.g. training and ethical standards)
- Experiences for patients or related groups
- Improvements in quality of life or lifestyle
- Indicators of health and well-being
- Outcomes for patients or related groups
- Prevention of harm
- Public awareness of a health risk or benefit
- Public health and quality of life

- Public understanding, attitudes or behaviour relating to health or wellbeing
- Specific costs of an intervention

## 5. Built & Natural Environments

### POTENTIAL BENEFICIARIES INCLUDE

- Construction and related industries
- Specific communities or groups
- Conservationists and associated practitioners
- Natural environments (including flora and fauna)
- Specific communities or groups
- Wider public

### IMPACTS ON

- Built environments (buildings, cities, public spaces etc.)
- Infrastructure
- Planning
- Sustainability
- Transport
- Natural environments:
- Animal health and welfare
- Biodiversity
- Conservation
- Environmental policy
- Environmental standards
- Mitigating or reducing risks posed by natural hazards
- Natural resources including energy, water and food
- Public awareness or behaviours relevant to the environment
- Understanding of environmental risks or hazards (including climate change and emissions)

## 6. Education & Training; Professional Practice; Research

### POTENTIAL BENEFICIARIES INCLUDE

- Academic disciplines
- Non-UK Higher Education: research or teaching
- UK Higher Education: teaching (beyond the University of Cambridge)
- Schools
- Research beyond Higher Education
- Vocational and continuing education
- Professional or practitioner bodies
- Professional or practitioner groups or individuals

### IMPACTS ON

- Academic performance
- Access to higher education
- Curricula and educational content
- Delivery of highly skilled researchers
- Development and delivery of training resources
- Development, content and delivery of CPD (or other) training
- Educational assessment
- Educational practice
- Enhancing the knowledge economy
- Health and vitality of academic disciplines
- Professional practice (in any sector)
- Professional standards (in any sector)
- Professional understanding (in any sector)

- Public / community teaching and learning
- Teaching and education beyond the University of Cambridge
- Uptake of specialised subjects
- Worldwide academic advancement



## Annex B: Methods and Activities

Engagement activities for non-academic partners and collaborators might include:

- Collaborative organisation of event(s)
- Contribution to exhibition(s)
- Editorial role for non-academic publications
- Participation in a research collaboration, network or consortium
- Secondments, placements and visits into or out of the University of Cambridge

Engagement activities for broader public audiences might include:

- Creation of a research community – helps engage (non-academic) participants with research
- Involvement or employment of local people in research projects
- Joint academia-industry appointments
- Joint publications with non-academic partners
- Non-academic input to research (e.g. by steering group or external evaluators)
- Publication in practitioner journals

Engagement activities for specialist audiences might include:

- Commissioned research
- Consultancy (paid or unpaid)
- Demonstration of prototype or new material(s)
- Formal or informal networking and discussion
- Membership of expert group(s)
- Production of policy papers, guidance
- Production of reports
- Talks, workshops and other events for specialist audiences
- Transfer of skilled people (including e.g. student placements in external organisations)
- Production of mediated and/or bespoke outputs

Activities to change attitude, awareness, or understanding might include:

- Collaborative, participatory or action research methodology which engages subjects / participants with research and its findings; may offer immediate access to benefits as result
- Mentoring
- Outreach / widening participation activity
- Provision of CPD or other training
- Provision of publically-available online information or engagement resources
- Sustained engagement with a community or group
- Provision of teaching or teaching materials for audiences outside the University of Cambridge

Activities to change policies or guidelines might include:

- Contribution to curriculum design
- Contribution to or provision of evidence (e.g. to select committees)
- Formal advisory role
- Provision of data to inform development of new or modified guidelines

Activities to change practice, performance, or outcomes might include:

- Artistic collaboration
- (Contribution to) set up of new service
- (Contribution to) set up of spin outs, including social enterprises
- Invited provision of expert advice to inform practice
- Knowledge Transfer Partnerships
- Licensing and patenting
- Practice– or design-based research (e.g. design of buildings, spaces; production of art or music)
- Production of prototypes, tool kits, beta software etc. for use beyond academia
- Proof of Concept projects
- Provision of new materials or products based on research
- Provision of new methodologies, frameworks or techniques for use beyond academia
- Research fed directly into clinical practice (e.g. via clinical trialling)

## Annex C: Metrics and Indicators

### PRIMARILY INDICATE DISSEMINATION/SHARING OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

Activity: Working with partners and collaborators

Indicators might include:

- Number of collaborative partners (academic or otherwise) engaged with research
- Number of collaborators new to PI or project, or to the University of Cambridge
- Number of other institutions engaged (including through secondments)
- Number of collaborative projects continuing beyond initial research or KE work
- Number of new collaborative projects or project proposals
- Number of skilled people moving into or out of the University of Cambridge
- Details of in-kind contributions e.g. contribution of time, expertise, space
- Value of cash contributions

Activity: Disseminating research and its results beyond academia

Indicators might include:

- Amount of traditional media coverage (press, television, radio etc.) and size of audiences
- Amount of online / social media coverage and size of audiences
- Number (and bibliographic details) of publications produced for non-academic audiences
- Number of contributions to external research-related events
- Number of research-related events
- Number of attendees at research-related events

### PRIMARILY INDICATE ENGAGEMENT WITH RESEARCH OR RESEARCHERS

Activity: Engaging general audiences outside academia

Indicators might include:

- Amount of funding secured to sustain or extend initial engagement activities
- Evidence of increased (non-academic) engagement in or involvement with the research
- Examples of staff providing invited testimonials or evidence to non-academic audiences
- Responses to coverage of research e.g. letters to a newspaper or online commentary
- References to research on external organisations' webpages or in their promotional materials
- Sales or download figures for research outputs or online resources based on the research

Activity: Engaging specialist audiences outside academia

Indicators might include:

- Number (and where relevant value) of CPD or other training based on research
- Number of advisory roles or memberships of expert groups
- Number (and bibliographic details) of joint publications produced with non-academic partners
- Number of publications or other outputs for specific non-academic audiences
- Number of talks, workshops, lectures or seminars for specialist audiences outside academia
- Number of languages into which outputs are translated; sales or download figures for these
- Value of commissioned work or consultancy (whether or not this was actually paid for)

### PRIMARILY INDICATE CHANGES RESULTING FROM DISSEMINATION AND EXCHANGE (IMPACT)

Activity: Changing attitudes, awareness, or understanding

Indicators might include:

- Evidence of change in awareness, attitudes or understanding from e.g. independent surveys
- Evidence of increased engagement with or enquiries to external organisations associated with the research (e.g. work on legal aid prompting enquiries to Citizens Advice Bureau)

- Examples of engagement with or responses to research or media coverage of research, particularly where these show a new interest in or changed attitude toward a specific subject

Activity: Changing policy or guidelines

Indicators might include:

- Inclusion of research outputs on curricula; number of institutions (and students) using these
- References to research in new or modified policies or laws
- References to research in new or modified standards, guidelines or training guidance
- References to research or researcher in political debate or policy-making processes

Activity: changing practice, performance, or outcomes

Indicators might include:

- Changes in health indicators or outcomes for patients or related groups
- Evidence of changing trends in key technical performance measures
- Figures showing increased uptake of a service or product, including public services
- Financial information showing e.g. increased turnover or profit, or jobs created or protected
- Increase in visitor or audience numbers for external partners
- Measures of improved public or other services e.g. from independent evaluations
- Measures of improved local, national or international welfare, equality or inclusion
- Measures of increased attainment in specific academic subjects in institutions using research to support teaching and learning in this area
- Tourism or visitor data showing changes in patterns of visiting or engagement
- Value to partners of adopting new or modified products, models, systems or processes based on research