

A British Academy and Nuffield Foundation collaboration on Understanding Communities

Call for researchers, policymakers and practitioners to participate in a virtual research and policy innovation workshop to develop innovative and interdisciplinary research proposals on the theme of understanding communities.

Closing date: 17:00, 4 June 2021

Who should apply: Early and mid-career researchers, policymakers and practitioners who are already working on the theme of communities, or whose expertise could directly contribute fresh perspectives.

How to apply: Submission of a two-page summary CV and completion of an application form setting out why you would like to participate, the contribution you might make (including the methodological skills or policy and practical insights you bring), how you approach novel problems in a multidisciplinary area, your ability to work in a team and communicate research to wider audiences.

Assessment process: Applications will be assessed by a selection panel consisting of representatives from the British Academy, Nuffield Foundation and associated project Steering Group members. Following this process, we expect to invite around 40 people to attend the workshop. Research funding will be awarded on merit to the research proposals that result from the workshop.

Research challenge: To inform policy and practice by identifying the role of local and non-local ties, or the variety of attributes and assets within UK communities, that make some communities weaker, stronger, more or less equal, and more or less connected than others. Successful research proposals might consider the nature of social networks, the formal and informal ties within and between communities, temporally, socially and spatially, and their effects on people's well-being and their interaction with reducing or reinforcing discrimination, diversity, disadvantage, and inequalities.

Key dates:

Workshop applications open 26 April 2021 to 5pm, 4 June 2021

Evaluation of applications June/July 2021

Virtual workshop sessions 13 - 24 September 2021 (5 x three-hour sessions)
13 October 2021 (1 x three-hour session)

Funding application deadline November 2021

Review and respond phase December 2021 / January 2022

Funding announcement February 2022

Contact: policy@thebritishacademy.ac.uk

Innovative research and policy to deepen our understanding of communities in the UK

Call for researchers, policymakers and practitioners to participate in a virtual research and policy innovation workshop to co-produce innovative and interdisciplinary research proposals on the theme of understanding communities

Closing date: 17:00, 4 June 2021

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Summary

The [British Academy](#) and the [Nuffield Foundation](#) invite applications from early and mid-career researchers, policymakers and practitioners to participate in a research and policy innovation workshop and develop innovative and interdisciplinary research proposals that advance our organisations' shared interest in enhancing people's lives in the context of their communities. At least £500,000 in funding is available to deliver the research proposals that result from the workshop and more funding may subsequently be made available to develop the programme of work if proposals and projects demonstrate sufficient promise.

The [British Academy's Cohesive Societies programme](#) aims to shed light, and develop suggestions for policy change, on how societies can remain cohesive in the face of rapid political, social, economic and technological change, drawing on a range of salient themes and policy areas for both government and civil society. The Nuffield Foundation, whose aim is to advance social well-being with research that informs social policy, has identified limitations in the collective understanding of the role of community in social and individual well-being in the UK, and its effect on the ability of interventions to address disadvantage, as a major social policy challenge of the 2020s. These interests also resonate with policymakers' seeming reorientation towards greater consideration of place and community.

We are aiming for this programme to support genuinely new approaches, produce mutual and lasting benefits for researchers, policymakers and practitioners, strengthen the relationships between these three key communities within the policy ecosystem, and find tangible, evidence-based policy solutions that could have an important and positive impact on society.

The workshop will take place at a series of virtual sessions from **13 to 24 September 2021**, with a final virtual session on **13 October 2021**.

The research challenge

The research and policy innovation workshop aims to deepen our understanding of communities in the UK and how connections within and between communities, alongside issues of trust and confidence and interactions with localities, structures, systems and institutions, affect people's well-being. The research, development and analysis ideas developed at the workshop should aim to investigate the attributes and assets of communities rooted in place, but these might also be affected by broader networks of relationships, that may be virtual and trans-local.

Participants will be encouraged to develop research, development and analysis proposals that aim to investigate either or both of: (1) the role of local and non-local ties in making some communities weaker, stronger, more or less equal, and more or less connected than others, and (2) the nature of local and/or community assets, attributes and affiliations that enhance or impede individual welfare and social well-being.

Successful proposals might consider the nature of social networks, the formal and informal ties within and between communities, temporally, socially and spatially, and their effects on people's wellbeing and their interaction with reducing or reinforcing discrimination, diversity, disadvantage, and inequalities. They might also look at the role on people's lived experience of their local environment, the character of local affiliation and community

connections, the influence of demographic and economic trends and public sector provision, or aspects of communities that affect the success of public service interventions and implications for service delivery.

Participants will be asked to:

- develop original approaches,
- strongly consider ways to combine different disciplinary perspectives,
- strongly consider ways to account for lived experience,
- focus on practical and policy-oriented solutions that go beyond those that might solely apply to any individual community or place.

Examples of the types of research areas of interest to the collaboration are given at Appendix 1.

Who should attend?

Attendance of a diversity of participants from a mix of disciplines and from research, policy and delivery backgrounds is crucial to the success of this workshop. We are calling for early and mid-career researchers, policymakers and practitioners who are already working on the theme of communities or who could contribute fresh perspectives, for example from related areas of work on social networks, place-based insurance mechanisms, justice and human rights. We are keen to explore new data sources, and the innovative use of existing large-scale data sets. We seek expertise from a wide range of disciplinary, conceptual and methodological perspectives, and the analytical, policy and practical perspectives of policymakers and practitioners.

You may be working within government or the private or voluntary sectors at local, regional or national level. You might be responsible for policy, working in a data and research role, directly involved in policy development and implementation, or involved in the direct delivery of services within local communities, be that paid or voluntary. Some examples include community engagement officers working for local authorities, people working for local Citizens Advice, people running or volunteering for local charities such as homelessness organisations, youth clubs, groups working with older people, food banks, religious groups and others.

If you have a research background, you might be an early- or mid-career researcher based in a university, research institute, think tank or voluntary organisation, from disciplines including humanities, social sciences, social theory, economics, law, education, data science and others which might contribute fresh perspectives.

This is an opportunity for all participants to form new collaborations and draw on the insights this brings to inform, influence and develop new and innovative research proposals that address the research challenge and will deliver concrete implications for policy and practice.

Researchers will have the opportunity to build multi- or inter-disciplinary research teams and develop proposals that transform our understanding and offer solutions to shape policy and practice. You will be able to draw on the expertise, insights and challenge of policymakers and practitioners and benefit from their continued engagement in the project. We want to draw on evidence from the humanities, social sciences, data and computer science and the complementary involvement of disciplines such as public and population health. Quantitative expertise and an awareness of the challenges when trying to measure

the influences on and outcomes for communities is a desirable aspect of the approach, but it is not essential or desirable that each participant has significant quantitative knowledge. We also believe that the insights provided by well-designed qualitative research, or action research, can help to shed light on the problems facing society and support the development of solutions.

Policymakers and practitioners will have the opportunity to engage with researchers and shape, challenge and support research proposals to inform policy and / or practice. Although this project does not seek to respond to specific, short-term government policy questions, it does aim to contribute new thinking, and rigorous, solution focused evidence to improve the well-being of communities and the people within them. You might be interested in helping to shape the problem, guide and challenge the research proposals to completion, or you might have specific data or analytical experience that can directly contribute to the research, or a combination of the two. We want to draw on expertise from central and local government, and practitioners involved in the delivery of services to communities.

From all participants, we seek open-mindedness, a willingness to explore new perspectives and to experiment with new ways of doing things. You will have an appetite for working across academia, policy and practice and demonstrate a commitment to being genuinely challenge driven and dedicated to integrating the perspectives, needs and priorities of those who are the subject of the research. All project teams should strongly consider ways to account for lived experience, and the potential for co-production.

The virtual workshop

A research and policy innovation workshop is an intensive, interactive environment, sometimes known as a sandpit, and more commonly used in the natural and physical sciences. Participants from a diverse range of disciplines and backgrounds are brought together for a series of virtual sessions, away from their everyday worlds, and through facilitated, collaborative thinking processes, will coalesce into multi-disciplinary teams (including policymakers and practitioners) and be challenged and inspired to construct innovative research, development and analysis projects to address the research challenge.

The workshop will be held virtually from **13 to 24 September 2021**, with a final virtual session on **13 October 2021**. Each participant will attend a total of six virtual morning sessions from 10am – 1pm on the following dates:

1. Introduction on 13 September
2. Exploring the challenge on 14 September
3. Generating ideas on 21 September
4. Selecting ideas on 23 September
5. Round-up on 24 September
6. Final session on 13 October.

An application to attend will be taken to indicate your availability for these dates and your commitment to attend if short-listed. Please be advised that attendance for the full timetable of six virtual sessions is mandatory, as these form a continuous process. Full details of the virtual event, including access instructions and the provisional agenda will be sent to participants once they are confirmed.

In addition to the six mandatory sessions, please consider allowing time outside of these sessions to engage in networking and ideas development, particularly in the week between the round-up session on 24 September and the final session on 13 October. We understand that the level of engagement with additional networking and discussion will depend on individual circumstances and time-commitments.

Where participation in the research and policy innovation workshop would involve additional care requirements, we expect in the first instance that your employer will meet these costs. If your employer is unable to cover these additional costs, or if you have any additional access requirements, then please contact us (policy@thebritishacademy.ac.uk) to discuss.

Research proposals, stakeholder engagement and dissemination

Funding decisions will not be made at the workshop. The workshop will be dedicated to the creation and development of ideas and, although we expect research, development, and analysis proposals to emerge and be developed during the workshop, final written proposals should be submitted within six weeks of the final event¹. Not all proposals will be funded. We expect that around 8 to 10 proposals might be generated and to award funding to around five. Grant requests are expected to range in value from £20,000 up to £200,000 and to last up to 24 months. The total amount of funding available is at least £500,000, although more funding may subsequently be made available to develop the programme of work if proposals and projects demonstrate sufficient promise.

The project team should all have been participants in the workshop, except where the team identify and can make the case that specific additional skills would fundamentally benefit the research proposal. We would expect, in most instances, that the Principal Investigator chosen to lead the team is a researcher, although we may be open to other team structures if there is a strong rationale and clear evidence of methodological rigour and grounding in the proposal. Other participants may form part of a research team in co-investigator, consultant or associate roles and where appropriate workshop participants might be part of more than one proposal. To support and promote innovation and impact we would expect all research projects to include the continued involvement of policy and practitioners, either as participants in the research team or providing consultation and advice throughout.

The programme as a whole is expected to include a set of complementary projects that are wide ranging and multidisciplinary. All project teams should strongly consider ways to account for lived experience, in both quantitative and qualitative research. However, we recognise that each project may have its own particular focus, conceptual frame, methods and characteristics. Where proposed, resources for incorporating lived experience should be included within the proposed budget. Where this extends to co-production, we recognise it takes time and resources, including a longer timescale for ethics approval, and we would be willing to consider initial seed funding to enable the broad research questions developed at the workshop to be refined through the co-production process as a first step. We also recognise that early career researchers may have limited experience of

¹ The proposal should cover the substance of the research agenda and, if needed, precise finance details can be submitted at a later date.

coproduction and may need to allow time and resources for appropriate training and support².

Research proposals will need to identify the main audiences for the proposed project and each team will be required to develop a communications plan to engage those audiences with their research and its outputs. In addition, the British Academy and the Nuffield Foundation will support a programme of synthesis, dissemination and engagement across projects to promote understanding and learning between funded research teams and engage relevant stakeholders in the wider body of evidence produced. Project teams will be expected to participate in this activity during and beyond the completion of their grants for up to 36 months from the start of the programme of projects.

We will connect newly formed research teams with a college of experienced mentors, who will be able to provide support and guidance during the research process.

How to apply for the workshop

Applications are invited from individual eligible researchers, policymakers and practitioners. Approximately 40 participants will be selected to take part.

All applicants must register in the British Academy's online [Flexi-Grant®](#) system to enable the processing and assessment of your application. Then, you must select the 'Understanding Communities Workshop' call to begin your application. If you have not previously used the British Academy's Flexi-Grant® GMS, please follow the registration process from the Flexi-Grant® homepage. Please note the further details on using the Flexi-Grant system set out in Appendix 2. Applications cannot be submitted on paper or in any other format.

In applying to attend the workshop, you will submit a 2-page summary CV and answer application questions about:

- your rationale and motivation for participating.
- your potential contribution to the virtual workshop and subsequent research (including how you approach novel problems, and the methodological skills or policy and practical insights you might bring).
- your ability and experience of working in teams across different disciplines and across different areas of policy and practice. For example, if you are a researcher, you should outline your ability and experience of working with policymakers or practitioners.
- your experience of communicating and engaging with a wider audience and of communicating your work to non-specialists.
- details of how your work has led to or shaped policy or practice outcomes.

Answers to these application questions should be a maximum of 250 words each.

The panel will use your answers to these questions to assess whether you have the suitable skills, approach and values to participate in this virtual workshop. No further documentation will be accepted. Please note that we are not looking for your academic publication or research track record, but rather how you might approach multidisciplinary problems in this area.

² However, please note that costs relating to Continuing Professional Development activities are the responsibility of the host institution.

A pre-deadline webinar will be held from 15:00-16:00 on 20 May 2021 to provide further information about the Understanding Communities collaboration and the application process. This will be an opportunity to meet the team, and to ask questions about the aims of the collaboration and the practicalities of the application process, workshop and research funding that will be available. You can sign up to the webinar [here](#).

The deadline for applications is **17:00, 4 June 2021**. Late submissions will not be considered. You will not be allowed to make any changes to your application or submit any additional information after the deadline. All applications will be subject to an eligibility check undertaken by appropriate British Academy staff before being put forward for assessment, and applications that are not completed correctly and on time will not be considered by the assessment panel.

Applications to attend will be shared with and assessed by a panel representing the British Academy and Nuffield Foundation and include representatives from government and the third sector. Within the pool of applicants longlisted on the basis of these assessment criteria, the panel will look to ensure a diversity of disciplines, experience, and professional background. More widely, [the Nuffield Foundation believes that diversity and inclusion are central to our strategic objectives](#). The British Academy's [vision](#) is for a humanities and social sciences community that is genuinely diverse, and it focuses on bringing about real change in equality, diversity and inclusion at the institution and in the wider sector.

You will be informed of your selection for the workshop by the end of July 2021.

Please note that because of the large number of applicants expected, we will not be able to give individual feedback to you if your application is unsuccessful.

Selected applicants should inform their host institutions, in advance of the event, that you are going to attend the virtual workshop and identify any potential difficulties in complying with [Nuffield Foundation's terms and conditions](#) for the award of grants if your research proposal is accepted for funding.

How to apply for research funding following the workshop

We expect to fund around five substantive proposals that emerge from the workshop, depending on size and quality of the applications. We are willing to consider funding for smaller, seed corn proposals as well as larger, more developed projects. There is no guarantee that research proposals will be funded, however participation in this event provides a valuable opportunity for you to develop your network, think differently about your existing research, and find out more about Nuffield Foundation and British Academy funding streams.

The deadline for submission of research proposals is the end of November 2021, although you should let us know if determining a finalised budget will be difficult in this timeframe. Proposals should be submitted via the Nuffield Foundation's online application system. Further guidance on this part of the process will be available at the workshop.

Applications will be shared with a range of peer reviewers (from the research community, policy and practice), who will be asked to consider the novelty of what is proposed and whether: the research question is relevant; there is a clear conceptual framework; the analytical approach is appropriate and rigorous; the budget is appropriate and offers good

value for money; the team possesses appropriate experience, expertise and potential; and there is a clear route to use the output to positively influence future outcomes. We recognise not every successful application will meet all criteria, and most will be stronger in one regard than another. Some consideration will also be given as to whether the proposed projects collectively provide a complementary and coherent programme of research that demonstrates the potential to inform policy and practice.

Anonymised reviewer comments will be shared with the applicants alongside any questions or concerns arising from the application, and there will be an opportunity for you to respond to reviewer comments. Applications (including reviewer comments and responses to reviews) will be considered by a Steering Group representing the British Academy and Nuffield Foundation. The Steering Group may decide to offer a grant, request further clarification or impose specific conditions before awarding a grant, or to reject an application. You would be informed of the outcome as soon as possible following the Steering Group's decision. Final funding decisions will be made by the end of February 2022.

Eligibility

To apply to attend the workshop:

- You must be employed by, volunteering for, or affiliated with, an UK-based institution or organisation.
- If you are from a policy or practice background, you must be able to demonstrate in your application how your skills and experience would contribute to the objectives set out for the workshop.
- If you are from an academic background, you must have no more than 15 years' experience working in an academic institution. A PhD is not essential.
- You must attend as an individual, being prepared to form new research groups with other workshop participants, unconstrained by existing obligations to any research group or institution.

To apply for funding after attending the workshop:

- You must be employed by, volunteering for, or affiliated with, an UK-based institution or organisation.
- We will not accept applications that are under consideration by another funder. You are subsequently free to seek funding from other sources should your application be unsuccessful.
- We expect Principal Investigators to be researchers rather than those working in policy and/or practice. However, we are open to discussing an alternative approach on a case-by-case basis and you should contact us to discuss before submitting a funding application.

Types of work that are *ineligible* for funding

- Projects led by individuals unaffiliated to any particular organisation.
- Projects led by schools or further education colleges.
- Projects led by someone for whom undergraduate or taught study is their main activity.
- PhD fees or projects where the main purpose is to support a PhD.
- The establishment of academic posts.
- Ongoing costs or the costs of 'rolling out' existing work or services.

- 'Dissemination-only' projects, including campaigning work, which are not connected to our funded work.
- The provision of charitable services, replacement for statutory funding, or social services or social welfare provision.
- Requests for financial help or educational fees from or on behalf of individuals.

Contact

- policy@thebritishacademy.ac.uk is the first port of call for enquiries and applicants to the workshop.

Appendix 1: Examples of the types of research areas of interest to the collaboration

These are not intended to be an exhaustive list nor limit the proposals which emerge, but to provide stimulus to workshop participants. A range of other materials will be provided at the workshop.

Social and economic context

- The relationship between social cohesion and economic cohesion, including processes of economic development in the poorest and / or most segregated communities.
- The role of homogeneity, segregation, deprivation, safety, security, and social capital, for example, in local and individual wellbeing.

People, leadership, collaboration and movements

- Processes by which people without institutional power and status can have an influence.
- Processes of, and conditions for, collaboration within and across communities in emergency and non-emergency circumstances. Also, the impacts of collaboration and barriers to it that exist in policy, structure, and systems, including systemic racism.
- The role of trust in authority, public services and leadership at different levels, and how trust is gained or lost.

Systems, structures and institutions

- The role of different social structures in enhancing or impeding policy implementation and service delivery, and in having a direct impact on people's lives.
- The role played in communities by institutions at different levels, including local institutions such as schools or religious institutions and non-local, for example institutions at regional and central government level.
- The role of businesses in communities and places, and vice versa.

Place

- The role of local and non-local connections, which may include individuals' emotional investment in local places and their global connections and relationships.
- The role of space in the nature of place.
- The effect of historic and non-local processes, influences and power, on local spaces.
- The effect of changing work and commuting patterns, the inclusion or exclusion of different people in changing existing patterns, such as of remote working, and contributing to a different future.
- The level at which research, policy, interventions and resources are best directed, and why. Measurement and evidence of the value of investments at various levels of accountability.
- The dynamic nature of people and places.

Appendix 2: Further details on using the Flexi-Grant® Grant Management System

When completing your application on Flexi-Grant®, it is recommended that you take particular note of the following points:

- **Personal details:** When registered in the British Academy Flexi-Grant® system, a user has the option to add or update personal information such as contact details, log-in details (including email address and password), interests, research, and employment details, at any time. **This does not form part of the specific application form for any individual scheme**, but represents a personal record of your account in the system. It is useful if this information is kept up to date, but it is not essential to the progress of an application.
- **Automatic log-out:** You are strongly advised to save your work regularly to prevent accidental loss of information. In particular you should be aware that if the system does not detect any activity for 2 hours it will log out and save the application at that time. Please note that moving between *pages* within an application form will save the page that you are exiting but completing a *field* on a page is not considered an activity. It is recommended that you write the text for longer sections/fields in a word processor such as Word and then copy and paste into the relevant text box to avoid being timed out in this way.
- **Multiple sessions:** You should not have multiple browser windows/tabs of your application open at the same time as this may cause information to be lost. Only one user should edit an application at a time, otherwise changes might be lost.
- **Word limits:** When completing boxes that have a restricted length (note that it refers to words) you should note that if you exceed the specified amount you will not be able to save when you press the save button. You should type the text for the longer-length boxes in a word processor. You will then be able to check the word count and paste it into the British Academy Flexi-Grant® system. You will then still have a copy of the text to return to in the word processor. The word limit applies to text boxes.
- **Plain text:** If entering plain text, please avoid using symbols as some may not be accepted by the British Academy Flexi-Grant® system. You should generate and view a PDF of your application to check that the application appears as you want it to by clicking on 'print form'.
- **Uploading PDF documents:** When uploading PDF documents, please add your name and a heading at the top of every page to show what the document is. Please avoid uploading documents containing illustrations with fine details or colour as this can cause problems when creating a PDF of the application. Please note we will only print your applications in black and white. Each PDF cannot exceed 3 Mb in size.
- **Email addresses:** The British Academy Flexi-Grant® system relies heavily on automatic email contact. It is essential that you ensure you enter accurate email addresses where requested as it may cause considerable delay in the submission/processing of your application if any of these are incorrect. You cannot make changes to email addresses after your application has been submitted for approval.
- **Submission:** You will not be able to submit your application until you have completed each section in full.
- **Application deletion:** You can delete your application at any time although it is often a lot easier to just re-edit your existing application. We will be able to recover

a deleted application for a period of 7 days after deletion. After this it will be permanently removed from the system.

PLEASE NOTE THAT IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT YOU CREATE A PDF OF YOUR COMPLETED APPLICATION (by clicking 'Download as PDF'), AND CHECK IT THOROUGHLY, INCLUDING EMAIL ADDRESSES AND UPLOADED PDF FILES, BEFORE SUBMITTING IT FOR APPROVAL BY YOUR HOST ORGANISATION. IT MAY NOT BE POSSIBLE TO RECTIFY MISTAKES IN TIME FOR THE DEADLINE.

WORD LIMITS APPLY TO PLAIN TEXT ONLY. PAGE LIMITS APPLY TO PDFs ONLY.

AII FIELDS MARKED WITH AN ASTERISK* ARE MANDATORY.

YOU SHOULD NOT HAVE MULTIPLE BROWSER WINDOWS/TABS OF YOUR APPLICATION OPEN AT THE SAME TIME AS THIS MAY CAUSE INFORMATION TO BE LOST.