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**Call for proposals: research projects that will benefit the community business sector**

**Ailbhe McNabola, Head of Research and Policy**

**06 June 2017**

**About Power to Change**

Started in 2015, [Power to Change](http://www.thepowertochange.org.uk/the-team) is an independent charitable trust endowed with £150 million from the Big Lottery Fund to address social need by growing community businesses in England. Our vision is better places through community business. Our [2016-18 strategy](http://www.thepowertochange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/2016-2018-PTC_Strategy_TAGGED-1.pdf) and our [2015 Annual Report](http://www.thepowertochange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Power-to-Change_Annual_report_2015_AW.pdf) provide further information on our objectives and activities. Our [definition of community business](http://www.thepowertochange.org.uk/funding/am-i-suitable-for-funding/) guides our activities across funding, support, and research.

**Our activities and our research programme**

Power to Change offers funding and support to the community business sector. Funding and support comes in the form of open calls (such as our [Community Business Fund](http://www.thepowertochange.org.uk/funding/grants/community-business-fund/)) and targeted funding programmes, such as to support particular sectors or businesses at a certain stage in their life-cycle. An example of a targeted programme is the “[More than a pub](http://www.thepowertochange.org.uk/funding/sector-funding/community-pubs-support-programme/)” programme, offering funding and support to community-owned pubs. Other targeted programmes are in development.

In addition to offering funding and support directly to the community business sector, we invest heavily in research and impact measurement. 5% of our £150 million endowment has been allocated to research into the community business sector. This funding supports the activities of the [Power to Change Research Institute](http://www.thepowertochange.org.uk/research/). This research is being commissioned by the Research Institute and will form part of our ongoing programme.

**Background to this call for proposals**

The Power to Change Research Institute invests substantial funding in research about and for the community business sector, guided by the research priorities identified by our Community Business Panel and our User Panel. The Research Institute commissions a broad range of research, promotes rigorous analysis and stimulates critical scrutiny and debate. In doing so, the Institute aims to shape both policy and practice. We are supported in delivering high-quality evidence by an academic Research Panel, whose members provide critical assessment and peer review of our output.

In order to ensure our research programme meets the needs of community businesses in England, and in addition to our planned research programme, in 2017 the Research Institute will make available a total of £125,000 (excl. VAT) to fund research projects that have been proposed by the community business sector and its close partners. The funding will be made available in two tranches, in January and in June of 2017; up to three projects will be supported each time. The research will be delivered by the successful proposer(s), with the Research Institute maintaining a governance role during delivery, supporting dissemination of outputs and sharing the learning from the research.

Openness and collaboration sit at the heart of the work of Power to Change. This open call for research funding will ensure that research is delivered that directly meets current community business needs. It will also inform the future development of the Research Institute’s own research programme.

**Call for proposals**

The Power to Change Research Institute (RI) invites proposals for research that has tangible benefits for the community business sector in England.

* Individuals and organisations are invited to propose research projects to Power to Change Research Institute. The RI will fund (through research grants) successful projects to be delivered by the proposers, with the RI maintaining involvement through a project steering group.
* Funding in the range of £20,000 to £30,000 per project is available for up to six research projects in 2017 (we aim to select three in January, three in July).
* Projects can have a total budget in excess of this amount. Power to Change funding can be used to complement other funding, if this is the case it should be clearly set out in the proposal.
* The research must be completed within 12 months of grant award.

**Who can submit a proposal?**

Organisations or individuals are encouraged to submit research proposals.

The research must have tangible benefits for the community business sector in England – for example, by sharing insight into the success factors for community business or into how barriers to growth and development have been overcome, or lessons learned from past failures. Equally the research may contribute evidence to inform policy and enable advocacy on behalf of community business, to raise awareness of the role and impact of community business in society.

The research should ideally include some form of involvement with individual businesses. This can be in an advisory capacity and should play to the business’ strengths. Community businesses may be able to identify evidence gaps, or research findings may be tested with community businesses for accuracy and usefulness. Business can also help researchers to communicate their findings in an accessible manner, so that the research reaches a wider community business audience.

Proposals can be submitted by (this is not an exclusive list):

* community businesses / individuals working or volunteering in community businesses
* organisations that represent or support community businesses
* academics
* freelance researchers
* research organisations or think-tanks

**Selection criteria for successful projects**

Proposals will be scored by a selection panel against the following criteria:

**Need**: that the research is needed by community business and fills an evidence gap

**Delivery**: that the project has a clear research question and manageable scope

**Quality**: that the project has a sound and appropriate research methodology

**Cost**: that costs are appropriate and transparent

**How to apply**

Applicants should submit a 5-10 page proposal which must set out how the proposed project demonstrates:

* The need for the research project or the evidence gap that exists
* That the research will benefit the wider community business sector (or sub-sectors)
* That the work will be of good quality and add to the evidence base in a meaningful way
* That the project will be well-managed and minimise risk to delivery
* That the project delivers value for money – costs must be clearly set out, broken down by team member and activity
* What the other sources of funding for a proposed project are (if these exist) including an indication of whether this funding has been secured
* What key milestones and deliverables (project outputs) are proposed
* That research findings and outputs will be shared with the community business sector and other interested parties – proposals should set out the intended audience(s) for the project and how these will be reached by dissemination activities

Proposals should be emailed to Ailbhe McNabola, Head of Research and Policy at the Power to Change Research Institute (ailbhe.mcnabola@thepowertochange.org.uk), by **17:00 on Thursday 13/07/2017.**

**Project management and governance**

Successful proposals will be awarded a research grant. The RI will not manage these projects on a day-to-day business but will remain involved via a steering group for the project. Power to Change will support the research projects as far as possible, in particular with dissemination and sharing learning.

**Timeline**

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| Call for proposals issued  | 06/06/17 |
| Deadline for proposals | **17:00 on 13/07/17** |
| Selection panel meeting | Late July 2017 |
| Successful projects notified  | August 2017 |
| Details of successful projects shared (on PtC website and newsletter/blog) | As soon as contracts signed  |