



power to  
**change**

business in  
community  
hands

# **Call for expressions of interest: research projects that will benefit the community business sector**

**Suzanne Perry, Research Officer  
27<sup>th</sup> August 2018**

## About Power to Change

Established in 2015, [Power to Change](#) 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. See our [2016-18 strategy](#) and [2016 Annual Report](#) for information on our objectives and activities. Our [definition of community business](#) 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. This comes in the form of open calls (such as our [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](#) programme, offering funding and support to community-owned pubs, or our [Places programme](#) where we are investing intensively in a number of key demographic areas.

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](#).

## Background to this call for expressions of interest

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 Advisory 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 academic members of our Advisory Panel, who provide critical assessment and peer review of our output.

To ensure that our research programme meets the needs of community businesses in England, and in addition to our planned research programme, in 2018 the Research Institute has made available a total of £120,000 (excl. VAT) in the form of research grants, to fund research projects that have been proposed by the community business sector and its close partners. The funding has been made available in two tranches, in January and in August/September 2018. With £60,000 remaining, up to three projects can be supported in this round. 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 grants will ensure that research that directly meets current community business needs is delivered. It will also inform the future development of the Research Institute's own research programme.

## Call for expressions of interest

The Power to Change Research Institute (RI) invites expressions of interest for research projects that have tangible benefits for the community business sector in England.

- Individuals and organisations are invited to propose research projects to Power to Change RI, by submitting short expressions of interest (see below on how to apply). A selection of proposers will then be invited to submit a full proposal.
- The RI will allocate research grants to successful projects to be delivered by the proposers. The RI will maintain involvement through a project steering group.
- Funding in the range of £20,000 to £30,000 per project is available for up to three research projects in September 2018.
- 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 an expression of interest?

Organisations or individuals are encouraged to submit. Expressions of interest 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

### What kind of research do we fund?

The proposed 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.

To date, we have funded a wide range of research through our 'Open Call' grants. An overview of these projects is provided here, to give a flavour of the diversity and quality of what we have funded:

- **New Economics Foundation** have explored **the role of community business in sustainable social care**. This piece of research uses qualitative interviews with commissioners and beneficiaries as the basis for exploring the barriers to and benefits of commissioning community businesses in the social care sector, now and in the future.

- **Rural Action Yorkshire and Durham Community Action** have conducted a mixed methods study inclusive of a survey, interviews and desk based research in order to better understand the **size, scale, scope, potential growth and future of Village Halls as community businesses**.
- The Centre for Enterprise & Economic Development Research (**CEEDR**) at Middlesex University examined existing data sets as well as conducted qualitative research to explore the **challenges, opportunities and support needs of community businesses in providing Health & Wellbeing Services**.
- **The Centre for Local Economic Strategy (CLES)** is making use of a range of primary qualitative methods to engage with community businesses to decipher **the role of anchor institutions** (large, cross sector institutions in a local community such as employers, hospitals, schools etc) **in the evolution and rising potential of community businesses**.
- **The University of Liverpool** are building on current work of theirs by looking at the **growth, sustainability and purpose in the community business market in the Liverpool City Region** (one of power to change's priority areas). They are primarily achieving this by running quantitative analysis on an existing database.
- **Durham University** are making use of secondary datasets and face to face interviews to explore **community business eco-systems and resilience in Bradford, Hartlepool and Middlesbrough**.
- **CLES** are using qualitative research with stakeholders, workers, service users and customers to understand **the ways in which community businesses contribute to inclusive economic growth**.

You can view the proposals for some of these projects on our [website](#).

## Selection criteria for successful expressions of interest

Expressions of interest 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 an expression of interest of a maximum of 4 pages which must set out:

- The need for the research project or the evidence gap that exists – with reference to relevant literature, or gaps in literature
- The research question(s) that will be addressed
- How the research will benefit the wider community business sector (or sub-sectors)
- The intended audience(s) for the project
- That the work will be of good quality and add to the evidence base in a meaningful way – the research methodology should be clearly set out
- Research project management should be described at a top-level
- The estimated research budget (a detailed budget is not required at this stage)

- A top-level view of what the research outputs might be

Expressions of interest should be emailed to Suzanne Perry, Research Officer at the Power to Change Research Institute ([suzannep@powertochange.org.uk](mailto:suzannep@powertochange.org.uk)) by **12:00 on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> September 2018**.

**The selection panel will choose a maximum of 5 of expressions of interest and invite these to submit a full proposal to be considered for grant award. The panel will select expressions of interest, and award grants, against the criteria set out above.**

**Please be aware that there is strong competition for research funding. There were 40 expressions of interest in January 2018 open call.**

### **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**

Call for expression of interest issued	10:00 on Monday 27 <sup>th</sup> August 2018
Deadline for expressions of interest	12:00 on Monday 10 <sup>th</sup> September 2018
Shortlisted projects invited to submit full proposal. Non shortlisted projects will be informed.	By 17:00 on Monday 17 <sup>th</sup> September 2018
Deadline for full proposals	12:00 on Monday 1 <sup>st</sup> October 2018
Selection panel meeting	Monday 8 <sup>th</sup> October 2018
Successful projects notified	24 <sup>th</sup> October 2018
Details of successful projects shared (on PtC website and newsletter/blog)	As soon as grant agreement is signed