



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**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> January 2019**

## 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 Research Advisory Panel inclusive of Community Business Panel representatives. The Research Institute commissions a broad range of research, promoting rigorous analysis and stimulating 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 is making up to £200,000 (excl. VAT) available in the form of research grants, to fund high-quality research projects proposed by the community business sector and its close partners. The funding is being made available in two tranches, in January and in June 2019. 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 now 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 Research Institute, 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 Research Institute will allocate research grants to successful projects to be delivered by the proposers. The Research Institute will maintain involvement through a project steering group.
- Funding in the range of £20,000 to £40,000 per project is available for up to three research projects.
- 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 community 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.

- 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](#).

### Projects underway

- **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**.

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

### Power to Change research interests

From June 2019, the open call for research funding will be asking for proposals relating to a selected theme. In January's open call, Power to Change are still open to suggested themes from the sector but you may be interested to read the areas in which we are particularly interested:

- Community business' role in public services, especially health and social care
- Workforce i.e. volunteers and employees
- Community asset transfer / asset ownership and management
- Localism and local democracy
- Community business operating in the energy and housing sectors
- BAME-led community businesses
- The economy model of community business
- Sustainability – in particular financial sustainability

Please note, evaluations of individual community business programmes or projects are unlikely to be successful, unless the learning from these would be particularly pertinent to the wider community business market.

### 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 A4 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 high 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
- The estimated research budget (a detailed budget is not required at this stage)
- Research outputs and dissemination approaches

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 **09:00 on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2019**.

**The selection panel will choose a maximum of 8 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.**

## Grant management and governance

Successful proposals will be awarded a research grant. The Research Institute 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 Wednesday 2 <sup>nd</sup> January 2019
Deadline for expressions of interest	09:00 on Wednesday 16 <sup>th</sup> January 2019
Shortlisted projects invited to submit full proposal. Non-shortlisted projects will be informed.	By 17:00 on Monday 21 <sup>st</sup> January 2019
Deadline for full proposals	12:00 on Monday 4 <sup>th</sup> February 2019
Selection panel meeting	11 <sup>th</sup> February 2019
Successful projects notified	28 <sup>th</sup> February 2019
Details of successful projects shared (on PtC website and newsletter/blog)	As soon as grant agreement is signed