

## **Guidance on the incorporation of community partner costs into Connected Communities Programme research applications?**

The Connected Communities Programme is a cross-council programme led by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) in collaboration with a number of other Research Councils. Funding for awards made under the Connected Communities Programme is therefore subject to the terms and conditions for Research Council Funding. However, Connected Communities also has a particular emphasis on engaging with communities throughout the research process. Therefore we wish to encourage applicants and research organisations to fully utilise the flexibility and provisions within Research Council grants to ensure that the contributions that community partners and collaborators make to research projects can be recognised and, where appropriate, funded.

There are a number of basic criteria that must be adhered to, both by the Research Councils in designing the funding opportunities, and by the applicants and their partners in submitting proposals for funding.

- Funding can only be held by eligible UK based Research Organisations. In practice this means awards can only be held by Universities, or by a small number of organisations recognised by the AHRC as Independent Research Organisations (IROs), such as museums and galleries (<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/documents/eligibilityiros.pdf>).
- Community partners cannot apply independently in their own right for Research Council Funding, or be paid directly for their activities by the Research Councils. Involvement with the Connected Communities Programme must be through awards held and administered by eligible Research Organisations.
- Funding is available for any activity that is directly related to the research project being proposed. This can include activity undertaken or delivered by community partners, but only where this is clearly related to the delivery of the research project. Funding is not available for community partners to continue to deliver their core business, and funds cannot be used outside the dates of the award itself.
- Applications must be costed on a Full Economic Cost (fEC) basis which seeks to make transparent the full costs of undertaking the research project. The Research Councils then pay a percentage of this; the Government has agreed that for most headings the Research Councils will pay for 80% of the full economic costs. The remaining 20% is then expected to be provided by the Research Organisation; for universities

this would normally be seen as being part of the dual support system for research with the 20% met through other public funding for research received through the Higher Education Funding Councils. The Research Organisation will therefore need to be willing to meet 20% of any community partner costs charged to the grant. However, as community partner costs are an essential part of Connected Communities grants, they should be treated in the same way as all other costs (such as overseas academic/ professional consultancies, conference venue hire, travel and subsistence costs, etc) where the Research Organisation also has to meet 20% of the costs.

There are a number of ways in which a Community Partner can be involved in a research project, depending on the role the Partner will play in the project. Academic partners should be aware that what works for one community partner may not work for another.

Community partners should also be aware that there are rules around the funding of research projects by Research Councils which the Research Organisations have to adhere to. There needs to be a clear and open discussion with the academic partner about how a community partners' role and therefore contribution will be costed into a proposal, and community partners should be aware that there will be limitations on what is possible within the rules around funding of research projects. At the end of any project, the research organisation must be able to provide invoices / records / a full account for all costs that have been incurred that they wish to charge to the grant, should these be requested.

Guidance on eligible costs is provided in the **AHRC Research Funding Guide**, which is available on the AHRC website.

So, given this framework, how can Community Partners get involved in Connected Communities Research Projects in a way that includes them being recognised and acknowledged for their time, expertise and resources?

## **Project Partners**

Being named as a Project Partner is the most usual form of engagement by a Community Partner organisation with a research project. To be a Project Partner, the Community Partner must make a specific contribution (either in cash or in kind) to the research project.

Resources to be provided by Project Partners, whether cash or in-kind contributions, should be clearly identified in the proposal. These contributions are not counted towards the total cost of the project in terms of the financial limits of the scheme. All Project Partners are required to provide a letter of support. This letter should explain the type

and level of commitment by the Community Partner, and the added value the Community Partner brings to the project. There is no minimum time or financial requirement for Project Partners.

It is possible for Project Partners to charge some of their activity/resource back to the grant, provided this is very clearly set out in the application as being separate and distinct from the contribution they are making to the project in order to qualify as a 'Project Partner'.

For example, it would be possible for venue space and facilities to be provided by the Project Partner as part of their contribution to the project, but for travel and subsistence costs to be charged to the grant, or vice versa. What is not permitted is to be named as a 'Project Partner' where all of the contribution to the project, be it staff time, venue and facilities costs, or other resources, is being charged back to the project. The responsibility for demonstrating the distinctiveness and appropriateness of the arrangements rests with the applicants.

## **Collaborators**

Community partners who are not in a position to, or where the design of the research proposal does not require them to, make a financial or in-kind contribution to the research project, but who are involved in delivering the research project and its activities, can be named in the proposal as collaborators.

While there is no specific space in the application form to name collaborating partners (unlike for Project Partners for whom there is a specific section on the form), these individuals/groups should be named and their involvement in the project should be carefully explained in the Case for Support.

Collaborating partners can draw on travel and subsistence costs from the project budget for activity directly related to the research project, providing they are costed into the proposal and agreed by the research team.

Collaborating partners are also expected to submit a letter of support addressing the points listed above, although unlike project partners this is not a formal requirement. It is advisable to check the application details as each competition might have different requirements.

## **Consultants**

Community partners who are providing professional services, expertise, and/or resources to the research organisation(s) and therefore the project, but are not making

a contribution as a project partner (i.e. they are charging all costs to the research organisation and therefore the project) should be named as consultants.

While there is no specific space in the application form to name consultants (unlike for Project Partners for whom there is a specific section on the form), the involvement of these groups in the project should be detailed in the Case for Support, and any costs fully detailed in the Justification of Resources. Where a specific consultant is named a justification should be provided as to why that individual is considered the most appropriate individual to conduct the specific activities outlined and an assurance that the fees requested represent good value for money.

For the purposes of Connected Communities applications, groups named and paid as consultants do not count towards the eligibility requirement for collaborating groups/projects, even where they have previously been involved with Connected Communities awards in other capacities.

### **A final word on costs**

As noted above funding can be requested for the costs that community partners (whether named as Project Partners, collaborators or consultants according to the guidance above) incur that are directly related to the delivery of the research project being proposed. This can include 'directly incurred travel and subsistence costs' in conducting research or attending project events and/or supporting project-related dissemination and knowledge exchange activities and 'directly incurred other costs' such as those associated with organising, hosting or running project events (including project knowledge exchange and dissemination events), costs of staff time or professional fees (either current staff or staff recruited to undertake the work) in undertaking research-related activities for the project where these are clearly above and beyond their normal activities (can be costed as a daily rate, consultancy, fee or % of salary) and other costs they incur directly in contributing to the research.

In some cases it may also be appropriate to include small amounts of funding to facilitate or incentivise community members to participate in research activities. For example, there may be a case for funding community participation where this involves a more significant than normal time commitment, is unavoidably inconvenient, onerous, difficult or disruptive for participants, where arrangements need to be out in place to cover participants' caring or other responsibilities to enable them to participate, and/or if it is considered necessary to sustain engagement over a period of time. Such costs need to be necessary and essential for the successful completion of the research and fully justified in the application. Appropriate consideration should be given to institutional or other professional guidelines and to ethical and other considerations such as equity,

distribution of any potential benefits or burdens from the research and future research sustainability.

Equipment is normally only purchased and owned by the Research Organisation (although it is recognised that in some cases it may be more cost effective to hire equipment from partners (e.g. for events they are hosting)).

In all cases the Research Organisation is responsible for ensuring that appropriate agreements, systems of accountability and provisions for ensuring appropriate value for money are put into place and that all relevant legal requirements are met, including ensuring appropriate arrangements are made for declaring any payments for taxation / national insurance.

Funding is not available for community partners to continue to deliver their core business, and funds cannot be used outside the dates of the award itself.