Oxford Policy Engagement Network (OPEN) Leaders Scheme 2024: Call for expressions of interest

Guidance for applicants

Contents

1. Summary

The Oxford Policy Engagement Network (OPEN) Steering Group is calling for Expressions of Interest (EoI) from researchers and professional services staff at the University of Oxford who would like to become OPEN Leaders, helping to foster an inclusive, supportive culture of policy engagement.

Awards of up to £8,000 are available to support OPEN Leaders in carrying out activities that will enable their departments or faculties, and potentially others, to:
- Deepen understanding of how researchers can contribute to policymaking, and develop skills to do so effectively
- Broaden and deepen relevant networks, creating and developing more opportunities for engagement
- Improve the policymaking community's access to the best available research evidence and expertise.

Previous OPEN Leaders – for some of whom it has been their first award – have used the award to develop leadership skills, to support their colleagues, and to spearhead activities of strategic benefit to their departments and more widely.

This scheme is supported by the University's allocation from Research England's Policy Support Fund award. Awards can last up to 5 months, starting no earlier than 29 February 2024. All project activity **must** be completed and funding spent by 31 July 2024.

Research, teaching, academic and professional services staff from any department or faculty at the University can apply. DPhil students can apply if they will have submitted their thesis and be awaiting examination at the point their project will commence.

Applicants should follow the guidance below when drafting their EoI, and are encouraged to consult their departmental research support team in the first instance, not least to ensure they comply with any departmental eligibility criteria, approval processes, or guidelines. Questions regarding the scheme in general, expression of interest process, and eligibility, should be addressed to researchandpublicpolicy@admin.ox.ac.uk.

To discuss ideas for an EoI, applicants are encouraged to contact the relevant divisional contact within the Policy Engagement Team to arrange a consultation.

Divisions	Contact
Humanities	Thomas Kelsey (thomas.kelsey@humanities.ox.ac.uk)
Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences	Sarah Eichhorn (sarah.eichhorn@socsci.ox.ac.uk)
Medical Sciences	Naomi Gibson (naomi.gibson@medsci.ox.ac.uk)
Social Sciences	Noora Kanfash (noora.kanfash@socsci.ox.ac.uk)
Gardens, Libraries and Museums	Will Pryor (william.pryor@socsci.ox.ac.uk)

Deadline: 12:00 GMT, 12 February 2024

2. Key dates

Action	Date
Call opens	8 January 2024
Deadline for EoI	12:00 GMT, 12 February 2024
Applicants notified of funding decision	w/c 19 February 2024
Applicants with conditional awards provide detailed plan of activities and budget	17:00 GMT, 23 February 2024
Earliest project start date	29 February 2024
Latest project end date	31 July 2024

3. About the Oxford Policy Engagement Network (OPEN) and the Leaders Scheme

OPEN brings together more than 900 researchers, doctoral students, and professional services staff from across the University who share a vision of public policy powered by the world's best available research evidence and expertise. OPEN's mission is to enable members to share knowledge and expertise with the policymaking community so that, together, they can contribute to better policies that protect what is valuable and change the world for the better.

OPEN members work with partners in national and local governments, and arms-length bodies; in national parliaments and devolved assemblies; in civil society; in the UK, and around the world, including in international organisations. Their approach helps ensure that research of the highest quality clarifies, or expands, the range of options open to policymakers, through co-design, collaboration and co-production.

OPEN connects members with each other, and with opportunities for engagement, professional development, and funding, aligned with their areas of policy interest. It offers members guidance and support from the University's Policy Engagement Team, which also fields incoming expressions of interest from members of the policymaking community. A University-wide Steering Group guides the development of the network. More information about OPEN can be found here.

About the OPEN Leaders Scheme

As set out in the OPEN Strategy, OPEN aims to strengthen leadership for policy engagement and promote greater reward and recognition of excellence in this area across all career stages. The OPEN Leaders Scheme offers researchers and professional services staff the opportunity and resources to lead the design and delivery of initiatives that increase awareness of, and capacity for, policy engagement amongst their own department or faculty.

OPEN Leaders will be expected to allocate at least five days between February and July 2024 for these initiatives, and will receive up to £8,000 towards the development and delivery of relevant activities.

4. What can an OPEN Leader award be used for?

Previous OPEN Leaders have come from the Departments of Economics, Education, International Development, and Materials; the School of Geography and the Environment; the Nuffield Department of Clinical Neurosciences; and the Faculties of Classics, History, and Music. They have used their awards:
- To conduct scoping activities, such as departmental surveys to map colleagues' awareness of the value of policy engagement and the extent of their engagement, and to develop strategies to increase these
- To create or raise awareness of relevant learning and development opportunities and resources, for example:
  - Enabling more engaged colleagues to share their experience
  - Exploring areas of public policy relevant to their department or faculty
  - Facilitating networking activities between researchers and members of the policymaking community
  - Exploring social media as a means to support other engagement approaches

- To strengthen interdepartmental networks focused on specific policy areas or challenges
- To make it easier for policymakers to understand why they might wish to connect or collaborate with the department – e.g., through creation of dedicated online space and content
- To broaden and deepen OPEN membership within their department.

Examples of other eligible activities include:
- Incorporation of policy engagement in relevant strategies and plans, and delivering elements of those
- Initiatives aimed at improving the visibility of researchers engaged with the policymaking community, for research and policy audiences
- Development of the role of champion for policy engagement in the department or faculty
- Creation of other learning and development opportunities and resources, e.g., seminars, workshops or masterclasses
- Creation of opportunities for researchers and the policymaking community to share expertise and evidence – e.g., by offering to host a UK government department to explore their Areas of Research Interest, or a visit to Oxford by a Select Committee to gather evidence of interest to its members
- Other activities that broaden or deepen membership of OPEN, e.g. in a particular area of policy interest.

Activities proposed in EoI should not exceed £8,000 in eligible costs. This scheme will **not** fund:
- Research consultancy;
- Publications or other activities that already took place;
- Academic conferences lacking clear prospects of enabling policy engagement.

The OPEN Leaders scheme complements other OPEN initiatives, such as the OPEN Peer Mentoring Scheme, and internal funding schemes, such as the OPEN Seed Fund and OPEN Fellowship Scheme, which support engagement between researchers and policy partners. If this scheme is not right for you, there may be other opportunities offered by OPEN that are more suitable. More information about all of OPEN's funding and opportunities can be found here.

5. How will EoI be assessed?

Applicants will be expected to have demonstrable interest in, and some understanding of, public policy in at least one area, and some experience of the kind of engagement described in Section 3. This is an opportunity to develop as a leader, and the panel will therefore also be looking for evidence of the potential:
- To communicate effectively with a wide range of interlocutors, including researchers at different career stages and members of the policymaking community, and to persuade through reasoned discussion
- To recognise and encourage contributions from colleagues
- To sustain collaborative relationships, and to create, develop and exchange knowledge in collaboration with external partners, as well as other researchers
- To promote the application of research to public policy in innovative ways
- To raise awareness and foster engagement with and understanding of the mutual benefit of effective policy engagement to research and society.

6. Who can express interest?

The panel will consider EoIs from staff in any department or faculty at the University Oxford, but will prioritise those from staff in departments and faculties that have not benefited from this scheme to date. (See Section 4 for a list of these.)

Support and approval from the head of the relevant department or faculty obtained in advance of the EoI is required. Many departments and faculties have internal eligibility criteria, approval processes and other guidelines to which all applicants should adhere. Please consult your departmental administrator for internal deadlines and further information.

Retired and Emeritus Fellows, as well as Masters students and DPhil students, are not eligible. Funding under this scheme for any staff member who moves to another university will not transfer with them.

7. What can be funded?

This scheme has been designed with a view to minimising the administrative burden for applicants. Fully costed EoI are welcome but are not required. However, where an offer of funding is made, efficiency, cost-effectiveness and value for money should be clearly demonstrated in the project plan. Payments will not be made for miscellaneous expenses or unspecified items.

Eligible costs include:
- Research or teaching assistance (up to 50% of total value of award)
- Consultancy/professional fees for external partners (up to 50% of total value of award)
- Travel and subsistence costs for staff or external partners
- Project costs including publishing, venue hire, transcription and IT
- Equipment.

Funding for these schemes is not provided on a full economic cost (FEC) basis. Estates and indirect costs are not covered by this funding but all direct costs required to develop, deliver and evaluate the project are covered. If you are unsure about the eligibility of a specific expense, please contact your divisional contact in the Policy Engagement Team for guidance.

8. How to apply

Researchers are encouraged to join OPEN before applying.

Expressions of Interest should comprise:
1. A letter from the applicant (max. 3 pages), setting out
   a. Their motivation and interest in taking on this role, and the skills and experience they bring to it;
   b. The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing their department or faculty in relation to one or more of the four aims of the OPEN Strategy; and
   c. An outline of their proposed programme of activities, indicating how each would address those objectives, and what kind of support they might need from the OPEN Steering Group or Policy Engagement Team;
2. A one-page CV; and
3. A statement of support from their Head of Department or Faculty.

These documents should be combined into a single PDF and emailed to the Policy Engagement Team at researchandpublicpolicy@admin.ox.ac.uk by **12:00 GMT on** 12 February 2024.

9. Selection process

EoIs will be reviewed and the funding decisions made by a panel comprising researchers from at least three Divisions, chaired by the Academic Champion for Policy Engagement.

Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their EoI during the week beginning 19 February 2024. Results will be issued by email. Feedback will be available on request.

Funding will be allocated on the condition of provision of a detailed project plan of activities and fully costed budget after being notified of the panel's decision and before project activities begin. Applicants are encouraged to consult the Policy Engagement Team for advice when drafting these.

The Policy Engagement Team would like to use successful EoI as an exemplar for future applicants. Please bear this in mind if your EoI is successful. All sensitive data will be removed from EoI before they are shared. Successful applicants will be given an opportunity to opt-out.

10. Monitoring, evaluation and learning

The Policy Engagement Team works with OPEN Leaders, individually and as a cohort, to
- Provide guidance on how to monitor and evaluate activities
- Maximise learning from their experience, and in finding ways to share that with others, e.g. in the context of training activities or resources, or in the form of a blog.

Reporting requirements

Timely consideration of arrangements for monitoring, evaluation and learning will also facilitate and inform the reporting that is required of all award-holders. These reports will be the key mechanism to collect critical information for reporting to Research England, and will assist the Policy Engagement Team in monitoring progress and managing any issues that arise.

A schedule of reporting dates will be provided with award offer letters. OPEN Leaders will be contacted with an email reminder closer to the dates that reports are due for submission. The emails will include a number of questions to help shape your reports.

- **End-of-award report** – The end-of-award report should evaluate the activities funded through the award, demonstrate the impact and benefits for the OPEN Leader, department or faculty, and broader OPEN membership, and detail any future plans for supporting policy engagement within the department. This report should be submitted within one month of the end of the award.

- **Impact report** – The impact report should briefly outline further impacts achieved in the six months following the award's completion. The aim is to capture any impact that has developed since the award's completion date.

11. Where to get support

Applicants are encouraged to consult their departmental research support team in the first instance, not least to ensure they comply with any departmental eligibility criteria, approval processes, or guidelines. Applicants with questions regarding the scheme or EoI process, including queries relating to eligibility, should email researchandpublicpolicy@ox.ac.uk. If you'd like to discuss ideas for a potential EoI, please email your divisional contact in the Policy Engagement Team to book a consultation.

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