

Public Engagement Starter Fund

2024 Application Guidelines

Aim of the Fund

The Public Engagement Starter Fund provides financial support of up to £2000 to University of Cambridge research staff and PhD students to design and deliver projects in public engagement with research.

Review further information about the [funding scheme](#) and a [list of previous winners and their public engagement projects](#). You can also [attend one of our drop-in sessions](#):

05/07 14:30-16:00

30/07 10:30-12:00

04/09 10:30-12:00

04/09 14:00-15:30

Eligibility

- Researchers and PhD students must be affiliated with the University of Cambridge and/or one of its Colleges from the application deadline to the end of the delivery window for the project in December 2025.
- Public engagement/outreach/communications/research impact professionals are not eligible for this grant scheme. This group of professionals are encouraged to discuss proposals with researchers and help them complete application forms.
- Previous recipients are eligible to apply for funding, but the assessment panel will look for significant development of the idea or activity within the new application.

Conditions of funding

1. Training:

All successful applicants will be required to attend dedicated training sessions on Introduction to public engagement, Planning public engagement and Evaluation, and advised on appropriate courses run as part of the Engaged Researcher training programme to develop the skills they need to successfully deliver their project.

2. Reporting:

All successful applicants will be required to submit an interim report due on 31 May 2025 (six months after the start date) and a final report, including project evaluation, due on 30 Nov 2025 (twelve months after the start date).

3. Sharing best practice and learning through public engagement case studies:

In order to share expertise and learning across the University, successful applicants will be asked to provide information, text, quotes and images for their project to be developed into a case study.

Activities outside the remit of this scheme

- We are unable to fund catering or travel costs unless it is shown that these are integral to

the proposed activity and reasonably costed (i.e. not the majority of the cost of the application). For these costs to be supported by this grant there must be evidence of a sound methodology/critical thinking behind this request.

- It is important to note that the community/stakeholder groups must be the main focus of the activity funded by this small grants scheme. Activities associated with academic conferences or similar activities should clearly show how these will do one or more of the following:
 - ❖ Attract community/stakeholder participation.
 - ❖ Encourage two-way dialogue between academics and communities/stakeholders.
 - ❖ Offer significant demonstrable value to the community/stakeholder group.
 - ❖ If the activity is associated with a fee-paying conference/event, the applicant should show clearly why the conference/event fees cannot cover this portion of activity.
 - Funding cannot cover costs for project staff who receive a full-time salary from their organisation or employer.
 - Funding for general purpose hardware, apparatus or equipment such as digital cameras, telescopes or computers cannot be covered unless they are shown to be integral to the project, not to be for a one-off activity, and not to make up the majority of the project costs.
- Please contact us before submitting your application if you have any questions about these guidelines.

Timeline

15 September 2024: Deadline for submitting applications

10 October 2024: Decision to be communicated to applicants

10 November 2024: activities can start

31 May 2025: Interim report is due

31 November 2025: Final report is due

Activities must take place by 31 December 2025

Judging panel

- Lucinda Spokes, Head of Public Engagement, University of Cambridge
- Claudia Antolini, Public Engagement Manager (School of Physical Sciences and School of Technology), University of Cambridge
- Beth Elliott, Community Engagement Manager, University of Cambridge
- David Farrell-Banks, Participatory Research and Impact Coordinator, Fitzwilliam Museum
- David Cain, Public Engagement and Festival Manager, University of Cambridge
- Emily Calderbank, Research Associate at the Cambridge Stem Cell Institute/Dept of Haematology
- Amaya Camara-Campos, Senior impact and knowledge exchange coordinator at University of Cambridge
- Emma Salgård Cunha, Commercialisation Manager (Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences), Cambridge Enterprise
- TBC

Judging criteria

For the purpose of the award, we use the [National Coordinating Centre of Public Engagement](#)'s definition of public engagement with research:

Public Engagement with Research describes the myriad of ways in which the activity and benefits of higher education and research can be shared with the public. Engagement is a two-way process, involving interaction and listening, with the goal of generating mutual benefit.

The key principles of public engagement with research are that:

- ★ It must be underpinned by contemporary research.
- ★ It involves elements of genuine interaction, e.g. through dialogue, participation, collaboration and co-production, and demonstrates mutual benefit to all involved. Benefits may include acquiring knowledge, skills, insight and new perspectives.
- ★ It engages people and/or organisations from beyond academia.

Projects must also do one or more of the following:

- reach a specific target community or stakeholder group relevant to the applicant's research.
- develop a partnership with a community of interest.
- create an innovative activity for the Cambridge Festival.

A wide variety of projects are eligible for this fund, such as (but not limited to):

- Live events, including festivals, discussions, talks, workshops, science cafes.
- Collaborative projects with defined stakeholders and communities as partners in research, including those that use new and innovative approaches to engage under-represented groups in academia, a particular geographic area and/or commercialize research.
- Public involvement, including with patient groups and through citizen science activity.
- Digital engagement through social media, online discussion events, blogs, podcasts and videos.
- Exhibitions and installations within museums and galleries.
- Education programmes that connect pupils, teachers, and/or education providers directly with research.
- Activity that acts as a pilot for a planned large-scale public engagement project within a grant application.

Note: If the application builds on an existing public engagement project, it must demonstrate how this grant will support a significant new development or enable the project to become sustainable.

Note: If the total cost of the project can't be entirely covered by the Starter Fund, please comment on how you are planning to cover the remaining expenses (eg. matched funding, a College grant, research grant, professional body, etc). Please consult the section **Activities outside the remit of this scheme** to check what this fund can and cannot cover.

Note: In the event that two applications are equally matched, we will consider the applicant's career stage and their School/institute, to ensure we fund activities across a range of disciplines and seniority.

Note: We expect the main applicant to be the lead in delivering the project.

Note: You need to discuss the ethical aspects of your project with the appropriate contact in your department/institution and make the necessary steps to secure ethical approval. It is recommended you do this already at the application stage.

Your project will be assessed against the following criteria:

- Quality of the plan: have you clearly outlined how you will deliver the project, and have

you demonstrated it is feasible? Is it innovative? Have you shown you have the necessary expertise, and if not, how will you secure it?

- Benefit for the target group: have you clearly identified a target group that makes sense for your research? How will they benefit from this project, or what will change for them?
- Benefit for your research: How will this project benefit your research? What change will it bring to your research activity?
- Value for money: Is your budget realistic, and does it fall under the constraints of what this fund can cover? Could you run this activity again in the future? Could it become sustainable?
- Evaluation: Have you outlined clear and achievable aims? Have you outlined an evaluation plan that is suitable for the activity?