

Partnering with the Open Innovation Team: guidance

This document provides guidance for universities interested in submitting a proposal to partner with the Open Innovation Team between January 2019 and December 2021.

Created in August 2016, the Cabinet Office's Open Innovation Team helps Whitehall departments generate analysis and ideas by deepening collaboration with academics. For more detail on progress made and challenges encountered during our pilot phase, please see our 'pilot phase review' slide pack.

Since its inception, the Open Innovation Team has been supported by Research Councils UK and sponsored by four leading universities: Bath, Lancaster, Southampton and Warwick. Each of our partner universities has contributed a total of £125,000 to cover all staff and projects costs for the team, and each has received a range of benefits designed to increase collaboration with its academics and educate its students about the policy making process.

Cabinet Office has contributed to the partnership by providing office space, covering back office costs and working to persuade Whitehall departments to place their policy staff in the Open Innovation Team or pay for secondments from outside government. For example, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport has recently agreed to pay for a secondee to work in the Open Innovation Team to support its digital policy work.

Following a successful pilot phase, the Cabinet Office has decided to invite universities to partner with the Open Innovation Team for a further three years from January 2019. Funding for our pilot was secured through a series of informal conversations with research intensive universities. For phase II, we are using clear selection criteria and a transparent selection process.

Progress so far

The Open Innovation Team operates an almost exclusively demand-led model, meaning that we find out what departments want and do our best to deliver that for them. We may experiment with more supply-led projects in phase II, meaning that we could champion relevant analysis and ideas where we feel this is appropriate, but we expect our work to remain primarily demand-led.

Our work so far has covered a wide range of policy areas, including:

- **Digital transformation:** we have set-up a Digital Government Partnership to help accelerate the digital transformation of government by deepening collaboration with the academics operating in this area. Our work has included collaborating with academics to develop proof of concepts for the use of Distributed Ledger Technology and Artificial Intelligence in government and proposing the £20m GovTech Catalyst initiative announced in 2017.
- **Growth and labour markets:** we have worked with HM Treasury, Cabinet Office, the Department for Business and others on a wide range of growth and labour market related issues, including the industrial strategy, competition policy, childcare reform, rural economies and experimental economic indicators.

- **Mental health:** we have provided intensive support for the Department for Health and Social Care and Department for Education's work on children and young people's mental health.

As our profile in Whitehall grows, the number of departments approaching us for support is also increasing. For example, the Home Office, Ministry of Justice, Defence and Security Accelerator and Office for Government Property have all contacted us recently requesting support. The demand for our services far exceeds our capacity with current levels of resourcing.

Research to evaluate our impact so far is under way and there is already enthusiasm from both government and universities to build on what we have achieved during our pilot phase. Key achievements include:

- 40+ collaborations with academics under way or under discussion
- 40+ PhD placements of 3-6 months
- 60+ Whitehall events with academics
- Policy announcements on digital transformation and mental health, and support for numerous policy projects including industrial strategy, competition, loneliness, ethnic disparities and housing.

Working with partner universities has brought us closer to leading researchers who we can weave into the policy making process more swiftly. It has also helped us work together to find more effective ways of collaborating with each other.

We want to continue working closely with partner universities to deepen collaboration in ways that help officials generate better analysis and ideas, while providing a route to research impact for partner universities.

Vision and objectives for phase II

Between 2019 and 2021, we want to increase collaboration with academics and maximise our policy impact by working with partners to take the following steps:

- Widen and deepen our support for departments and partner universities.
- Refine and improve the engagement and analytical tools we have created to deepen collaboration between academics and officials.
- Experiment with new ways of adding value for departments and university partners.

Application timeline

The application process will run as follows:

- w/c 30 July: invite interested universities to an event in London to explain our approach, answer questions and get feedback on partner benefits.

- 7 September 2018: event held at 1 Horse Guards Road, London, SW1A 2HQ to explain our approach to interested parties and listen to feedback, including on assessment criteria, scoring and phase II partner benefits.
- 28 September 2018: deadline for partnership proposals based on approach discussed at our September event. Proposals should be submitted to openinnovation@cabinetoffice.gov.uk by midnight 28 September 2018.
- October 2018: we will shortlist partnership proposals and create a reserve list. We will then work with prospective partners to equalise financial contributions and agree a final deal.
- December 2018: university partners announced.
- January 2019: new partnership agreement comes into effect.

Partner benefits

Partner universities will receive a number of benefits. At present, agreed partner benefits are:

- Two collaborations per year between partner university academics and Whitehall officials.
- Two one day visits per year to partner universities.
- One Whitehall policy workshop per year for partner university students.
- One talk per year from a senior official.
- One place on an advisory partnership board, meeting every three months to discuss progress and shape plans for collaboration.

These partner benefits have varied in their usefulness and deliverability. For example, we have over-delivered on academic collaborations and not delivered any talks from senior officials.

Before finalising partner benefits for phase II, we would like to listen to feedback and ideas from interested universities at our event on 7 September.

Selection criteria

We intend to score partnership proposals based on the following criteria:

1. **Funding:** how much sponsorship funding is the university able to offer the Open Innovation Team per year? We are seeking an increase on the current level of £75,000 per university per year to increase the size of the team and maximise our impact.

2. Partnership working: we can achieve more when universities are responsive and proactive. Does the proposal demonstrate that the university is willing to work in close partnership with government? Is the university able to offer any in-kind contributions to complement their sponsorship funding? For example, some of our current partners have funded PhD students to work in Whitehall, either in Cabinet Office or with other departments.
3. Diversity: we can achieve more if our partner universities support their academics to allocate time to collaborate with us and help address barriers to participation, ensuring equality of opportunity. How will the university help us address barriers to participation and increase the diversity of academics we collaborate with?
4. Research quality: will partnering with the university strengthen our links with top-quality researchers? We will collaborate intensively with our partner universities so we need to be confident that their academics are among the best in the country.
5. Geographical spread: we would like to create a partnership that reflects the geographical diversity of UK universities. After receiving bids, therefore, we intend to weight them according to how heavily different regions are represented in the sample. The least well represented regions receiving a boost to their score of up to 10%.

We welcome feedback on these criteria at our event on 7 September.

Additional information

- Universities should apply as individual institutions, not in groups.
- We expect to partner with a maximum of six universities.
- We will also aim to increase support from departments, including secondments and direct funding of posts.
- We do not intend to open the competition to organisations other than universities (e.g. consultancies, charities) at this stage and we do not expect to receive any funding from Cabinet Office, which already subsidises the Open Innovation Team by covering office space, back office and senior management costs.
- Our arrangement with our university partners is not exclusive. However, the majority of our academic collaborations so far have been with our partner universities.