

Announcement: Grants for innovation, entrepreneurship and growth experiments - Finding out what works to increase innovation, support high-growth entrepreneurship and accelerate business growth

Background

This grants programme is the first initiative of a new international collaboration, the global innovation, entrepreneurship and growth lab, which aims to increase the use of randomized controlled trials in innovation and entrepreneurship research and evaluation. This initial call is funded by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation and Nesta.

Innovation and entrepreneurship research has made much progress in the last decade, but there are still many open questions on the best approaches to encourage and support innovation and entrepreneurship. While policy makers and practitioners have developed many schemes with this aim, evaluations of the effects of these programmes have typically been poor, both in terms of methodology and outcomes. There is a need to experiment with new approaches and, crucially, learn what works.

While there are many approaches to generate good evidence, randomized controlled trials (RCTs) have been particularly underutilized in the area of innovation and entrepreneurship, in comparison to other fields like development, health, education or social policy.

This grants programme aims to change this by providing funding and project management support to researchers and programme delivery organizations interested in undertaking RCTs that relate to innovation and high-growth entrepreneurship.

To whom this Call for Proposals is relevant

- **Programme delivery organizations and operators** involved in entrepreneurship training and education programmes, innovation management and commercialization, or other programmes that aim to support innovation and entrepreneurship, who are interested in participating in research projects and undertaking randomized controlled trials.¹
- **Researchers** interested in designing and conducting randomized controlled trials on innovation and entrepreneurship.

We welcome applications from researchers and programme delivery organizations from around the world.

What we are looking to fund

The main aim of this call is to fund experimental research that provides evidence on the best approaches to increase innovation, support high-growth entrepreneurship and accelerate business growth.²

For instance, research may examine different models to encourage technology transfer from universities (from innovation vouchers to incentives for researchers), estimate the impact of accelerators on

¹ This includes as well organizations interested in running experiments within their own organization in order to improve their innovation processes.

² There are already several initiatives, such as the Jameel Poverty Action Lab (JPAL) and Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA), which are focused on running experiments on poverty alleviation, typically in developing countries. The aim of this call is to incentivise the transfer of some of this best practice to advanced economies trying to support innovation and high-growth entrepreneurship.

entrepreneurial success, or study different approaches to managing innovation processes (e.g. open innovation, challenge prizes, etc). We also welcome proposals that look into areas such as intellectual property, networks and collaboration, mentoring and advice, financing schemes, innovation and entrepreneurial skills, and innovative procurement, as well as any other instruments and methods related to innovation and high-growth entrepreneurship. This also includes experiments that test different approaches to increase the social returns from basic R&D.

Within the scope of this call experiments refer exclusively to randomized controlled trials (e.g., randomized evaluation).

What we offer

We will directly fund research and, when necessary and appropriate, we will also facilitate projects by matching programme operators and researchers. We will offer 5 types of awards:

1. Unconditional: Low cost experiments (or experiments with co-funding) that have both a research team and a committed programme delivery partner (or which don't require an external programme delivery partner).
2. Conditional on finding a programme delivery partner: Research teams proposing a feasible experiment but without a committed programme delivery partner that would be required to run it.
3. Conditional on finding a research partner: Programme delivery organizations interested in running a randomized controlled trial with one of their programmes but lacking a research partner.
4. Conditional on finding co-funding: High cost experiments with good value-for-money but which this grant cannot fund on its own.
5. Design grant: Small grant to fund the development of an experiment, but not to run it. In a second stage we will aim to provide funding and support for the best designs, so that they can become a reality.

In addition, we will also support the selected teams in other ways. We will:

- Make available project managers to provide operational support to the project by helping to run the experiment and liaising with programme delivery partners on day-to-day issues.
- Provide matching and brokerage support, helping to generate and/or identify opportunities for experiments in programme delivery partners, matching them with interested researchers (and vice versa).
- Create a network of researchers undertaking experiments in innovation and entrepreneurship, organize conferences and workshops, support the dissemination of the findings and translate them for policy and practitioner audiences.

How to propose a project

Full details and proposal requirements are available at the Nesta and Kauffman websites (<http://www.nesta.org.uk/about-us/work-us/grants-for-innovation>).

For further information, please email research@nesta.org.uk.

Closing date of applications: Monday 24th February 2014, 5pm (EST)