



Open Innovation Team

# Partnering with the Open Innovation Team

Briefing and guidance



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## Summary

- > The Open Innovation Team (OIT) is a cross-government unit that works with academics and other experts to generate analysis and ideas for policy
- > We have partnered with UK universities since we were established in 2016 and they have played a central role in increasing the impact of our team
- > In addition to working with us to improve links between policy and academia, our university partners receive a range of benefits designed to increase collaboration with their academics and educate their students about the policy-making process
- > With our current university partnership deal coming to an end in December 2022, we are inviting applications to partner with us for the next three to five years
- > We are asking each university wishing to partner with us from January 2023 to contribute £95,000 pa towards our costs
- > The application deadline is midnight on 21 October 2022. All applications should be sent to [partnership@openinnovation.gov.uk](mailto:partnership@openinnovation.gov.uk).

## Introduction

This document provides background briefing and guidance for universities interested in submitting a proposal to partner with HM Government's [Open Innovation Team](#) from January 2023.

The Open Innovation Team (OIT) is a cross-government unit that works with academics and other experts to generate analysis and ideas for policy. Over the past three years, we have delivered over 70 policy projects for a wide range of government customers, engaging more than 1,000 academics and other experts from the UK and overseas. You can find out more about our work by reviewing the slide pack we have published alongside this document.

The OIT operates on a cost-recovery basis, generating income by charging for policy projects, delivering training and advice, and partnering with universities, businesses and



third sector organisations. HM Government supports the Open Innovation Team by providing desk space, back office support and senior management support worth more than £200,000 per year.

Between 2019/20 and 2021/22, each of our current university partners - Brunel University London, the University of Essex, Lancaster University and the University of York - contributed £85,000 per year towards our costs.

Our partners work closely with us to help us achieve our mission - by helping us create new services, for example - and they also receive a range of benefits designed to increase the policy impact of their academics and educate their students about the policy-making process.

With our current university partnership deal now coming to an end, we are seeking bids from interested UK universities who wish to partner with the OIT for three to five years from January 2023.

Our staff have already been in touch with several universities interested in partnering with us, so this document reflects some of the feedback we have had about how our partnership offer might evolve.

### **Background on the Open Innovation Team**

Set up in 2016, the OIT operates a demand-led model, meaning that we find out what our policy customers want and do our best to deliver that for them.

We have never had an exclusive relationship with our university partners when it comes to delivering analysis and advice for our customers in government. We let our partners know what we are working on and welcome their suggestions on which experts we might engage with, but we have always been free to engage with other organisations as we wish. This explains why more than 200 organisations from the UK and overseas have contributed to our policy work over the past three years.

The OIT's first university partners were the University of Bath, Lancaster University, the University of Southampton and the University of Warwick. Following a successful pilot phase with these partners, we ran a competition to agree a new set of university partners for the period 2019/20 to 2021/22, resulting in the deal we currently have with Brunel University London, the University of Essex, Lancaster University and the University of York.



Over the past three and half years we have worked with our partners on five key priorities:

- > Increasing our policy impact - having experimented with different types of products and services in our pilot phase, we wanted to concentrate on delivering the kind of support our government colleagues found most helpful and spend more time on higher impact projects. Update: we have prioritised and significantly expanded our consultancy-style offer, working on a wide range of high-profile policy issues and receiving excellent feedback from colleagues about the quality of our support.
- > Raising our profile - we wanted to raise awareness of our team inside and outside of government. Update: we still have work to do on raising our profile outside government, but we have made good progress inside government. For example, setting up a popular series of online talks for officials, arranging in person events for senior colleagues and establishing a presence on gov.uk.
- > Diversifying our income - we wanted to increase our financial resilience by diversifying our income. Update: having accounted for more than 75% of our annual income in 2018/19, university income now accounts for only about 25% of our annual income. Our largest and fastest growing source of income comes from charging departments for our policy work. We also generate income from training, events and other services (e.g. graphic design).
- > Delivering partner benefits - we aimed to over deliver on agreed benefits and create new benefits to strengthen our offer. Update - despite the disruption caused by coronavirus pandemic, we have over delivered on most agreed benefits and significantly expanded our training and advice offer.
- > Strengthening management and administration - with our team and range of activities growing quickly, we needed to adapt our management and administration. Update - we've increased our management and administration capacity, improved data collection, created a more systematic feedback process and increased standardisation of processes and services.

### **Vision and objectives for the next three to five years**

We will agree a strategy with our new partners, but having established an effective operating model over the past few years, we do not plan to make major changes to how we work. We will remain focused on policy work, continue generating income to cover our



costs and gradually evolve our offer in response to the needs of our policy customers and partners. For example, over the next few years we may:

- > Establish specialist teams - as our team grows or as opportunities emerge, it might make sense for us to establish specialist teams to deliver the highest quality support to our colleagues. For example, specialist teams could work well on cross cutting challenges, such as climate change, levelling up or government efficiency.
- > Strengthen our support for early career researchers - parts of our offer, especially our Policy Masterclasses and Impact Advice Clinics, are already being used to support early career researchers, but some universities have suggested that we find ways to enhance this offer. This could be an opportunity to do something useful.
- > Integrate our support into the teaching and careers offers of our partners - a number of universities have raised this possibility, which is one reason we are considering a university partnership of five years instead of three.

### Partner benefits

Our partner universities benefit from working with us in a number of ways:

- > Policy: we don't have an exclusive relationship with our partners, but they hear first-hand about the projects we are working on so can suggest relevant experts
- > Training and advice: partner university academics and students receive a mix of training, advice and support tailored to their needs
- > Visibility: partner university branding appears on all our policy outputs and the marketing materials for our popular policy events
- > Innovation: partners have the opportunity to shape our offer over time.

The range and value of the benefits we offer our university partners has grown significantly over the past few years because we are committed to evolving our offer to meet their needs. We will stick to this principle in future by aiming to over deliver on agreed benefits and continuing to experiment with new benefits where we agree there is a good case.

Table 1 compares the range and, where possible, the value of the benefits we offered to our university partners in 2019 with what we plan to offer from 2023 - showing that the value of the easily quantifiable benefits has increased from £30,000 to £190,000 per year.



Table 2 gives more detail on what each of the partner benefits involves.

We have experimented with offering training and advice to non-partner universities over the past 18 months, but we expect to make the majority of our training and advice exclusive to partners from January 2023. We will continue to offer Policy Masterclasses to non-partners.

### Cost and selection criteria

Following feedback from universities, we have decided to move away from the sealed bids process we have used to agree partners in the past and instead set a partnership fee of £95,000 per year. For universities willing to pay this sum, we will assess bids using the following criteria:

- > Research: we collaborate intensively with our partner universities so we need to be confident that their academics are among the best in the country. Will partnering with your university strengthen our links with top-quality researchers? (scored out of 10)
- > Partnership: we can achieve more when our university partners are responsive and proactive. Does your proposal demonstrate that your university is ready to work in close partnership with us? (scored out of 10)
- > Diversity: we need our university partners to support academics wishing to collaborate with us and help address barriers to participation, ensuring equality of opportunity. How will partnering with your university help us address barriers to participation and increase the diversity of academics we collaborate with? (scored out of 10)
- > Geography: we would like to create a partnership that reflects the geographical diversity of UK universities. After receiving bids, therefore, we intend to sort them according to how heavily different NUTS1 regions are represented in the sample, with the least well represented regions receiving a boost to their scores of up to 10%.
- > Length of partnership: we would prefer a five year partnership deal, but we will agree a three year deal if there is a compelling case to do so.



### Additional information

- > Universities should apply as individual institutions, not in groups
- > We expect to partner with a maximum of six universities
- > We do not intend to open the competition to other kinds of organisations (e.g. consultancies, charities)
- > We do not expect to receive any grant funding from government
- > Our arrangement with university partners is not exclusive when it comes to the provision of policy analysis and advice.

### Timeline

The process will run as follows:

- > 21 Oct 2022: application deadline.  
Applications should be submitted to [partnership@openinnovation.gov.uk](mailto:partnership@openinnovation.gov.uk)
- > 28 Oct 2022: applications shortlisted and reserve list created
- > Nov 2022: finalise partnership deal with shortlisted partners
- > Dec 2022: confirm partners
- > Jan 2023: new partnership agreement comes into effect

### Contact us

If you would like to discuss or give feedback on any aspect of this process, please [email us](#).





**Table 1: Range and value of partner benefits, 2019 vs 2023**

2019		2023	
Deliverable	£Value	Deliverable	£Value
1 x seat on partnership board	n/a	1x seat on partnership board	n/a
2 x academic collaborations per year	n/a	2x academic collaborations per year	n/a
3 x in person visits per year	n/a	5x academic contributions per year	n/a
1 x Policy Masterclass per year (10k each)	£10,000	3 x Policy Masterclass per year (10k each)	£30,000
1 x Policy School per year (20k each)	£20,000	2x Policy Schools per year (15k each)	£30,000
1 x final report summarising outputs	n/a	2x Storytelling training per year (2.5k each)	£5,000
1 x OIT staff to lead on non costed benefits (10% of a G7 + input from DD)	n/a	9x Impact Advice Clinics per year (5k each)	£45,000
PhD placements where possible	n/a	3x impact engagements per year (15k each)	£45,000
Commitment to experiment where possible		1x annual progress report	n/a
		3x OIT staff to lead on benefits (10% of a G7, SEO & HEO + input from DD)	n/a
		2x graphic design work on template	£10,000
		3x graphic design support for partner uni output	£5,000
		3x editorial advice for three outputs	£10,000
		3x data visualisation support	£10,000
		PhD placements where possible	n/a
		Commitment to experiment where possible (e.g. on events, training, advice)	n/a
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£30,000</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£190,000</b>



**Table 2: Description of partner benefits**

<b>Deliverable</b>	<b>Description</b>
1x seat on partnership board	Our partner board meets quarterly to review progress against our objectives and discuss how partners benefits can be enhanced
5x academic contributions per year	When an academic is interviewed for a policy project, gives a talk to officials or attends a policy roundtable/workshop, we log it as a contribution
2x academic collaborations per year	If an academic makes multiple contributions or a more significant form of contribution (e.g. helps draft a policy paper, helps design a programme of work, reviews one of our outputs, delivers a piece of research or advice for a government team) we log it as a collaboration.
3 x Policy Masterclass per year	Our Policy Masterclasses are designed to help academics and professionals understand more about the theory and practice of policy and how they can increase their chances of influencing it. We usually deliver them in 2x2hr online sessions to groups of up to 30 attendees.
2x Policy Schools per year	Our Policy Schools give groups of 20-25 students a taste of the policy-making process by inviting them to work in teams on a live policy problem (e.g. climate change). Experienced officials brief students on the problem, coach teams as they work up their ideas and then feedback on their proposals. The training can be delivered in person over a day in London or online over 3-4 weeks.
2x Storytelling training per year	This training is designed for small groups of academics or professionals to coach them on how to write for policy. It is normally delivered over two or three 1hr sessions.
9x Impact Advice Clinics per year	These sessions give individuals or groups working on the same project an opportunity to receive more tailored advice on their influencing challenge. Each clinic usually involves two meetings or 1-2hrs followed by a note summarising our advice.
3x impact engagements per year	Impact engagements give individuals or groups working on the same project an opportunity to receive a longer and more intensive period of advice and support. Plans are tailored as needed, but can involve multiple meetings/workshops and support to create and get started on influencing or profile building plans.
1x annual progress report and presentation	We will create an annual progress report for each partner university and can deliver it to senior staff in partner universities.
3x OIT staff to lead on benefits	Each university partner will be allocated an experienced policy official from the OIT to lead on our relationship with them. They will be supported by two other OIT staff, with the head of the OIT and our head of communications also feeding in as needed.
2x graphic design work on template	We can create bespoke branding for academics or research units to use on slides and other documents.
3x graphic design support for partner uni output	We can help academics format slides or other documents in a professional way, either using pre-existing templates or bespoke templates we have designed.
3x editorial advice for written outputs	We can help academics edit written outputs intended for a policy audience.
3x data visualisation support	We can use our in-house graphic designer to help academics communicate their data in creative ways.
PhD placements where possible	We have an established PhD placement programme that is open to all eligible applicants with funding regardless of institution, but we make additional spaces available for PhD students from partner universities if they have funding.
Commitment to experiment where possible (e.g. on events, training, advice)	Our partner benefits have evolved significantly as we have responded to partner needs and we expect this to continue.