

Policy Research Unit to drive improving health and reducing inequalities in Scotland

Frequently asked questions

24 August 2023

Eligibility

1. Is the programme open to anyone in the UK?

A key principle underpinning this work is to ensure that the activities, outputs and policy calls are developed and owned by Scotland, and its institutions and communities. We expect to award funding to a Scotland-based organisation to set up and run the Policy Research Unit and maintain a fixed presence in Scotland. Section 4 of the [Call for applications](#) sets out the experience and skills we are looking for.

Policy Research Unit

2. What is the expectation of the Foundation regarding branding of the unit?

The branding and name of the unit would be part of decisions finalised during the design phase. Our expectation is that the unit's name and branding would clearly link the unit to the Health Foundation.

3. What is your position on involvement of researchers who already have Scottish government advisory roles. On the one hand, this would enable the unit to work well in influencing policy at government level but on the other hand may not square with the need for the unit to have an independent voice. What would you advise?

The independence of the unit is important, though we recognise and expect that experts will have some level of engagement with policymakers. It would be important for any potential conflicts of interest to be acknowledged and available publicly. Proposals would need to demonstrate that the unit would maintain independence in its activity. Ultimately this will need to be considered on a case-by-case basis and depend on the level of involvement and relationship the researcher has with the unit and government.

Delivery approach

4. What kind of staffing model would you expect for the Policy Research Unit?

We do not wish to prescribe the number and types of roles. The unit staff need to be able to fulfil the brief set out in the Call for applications including senior-level stakeholder engagement, developing policy recommendations and delivery of a policy and insight function. The grant funding is anticipated to support a senior role to lead and shape the

work of the unit and engage with stakeholders across the Scottish policy community as well as provide capacity for research and analysis, project management and wider functions such as admin, contract governance, publications and events. It is envisaged that up to around a quarter of the resources would support the activity directly related to the implementation gap project (further outlined below) including the management of the project and a potential commission of an external partner to deliver the work.

5. The Health Foundation reviews identified three areas of particular concern: the prevalence of drug-related deaths, inequalities in the health and experiences of infants and children, and health and socioeconomic outcomes among young and middle-aged men. Is the expectation that the 'Closing the implementation gap' work strand considers all three areas?

We would welcome your advice. We anticipate the work to primarily focus on two areas: early years and young and middle-aged men. Drug-related deaths are concentrated among young and middle-aged men. The Scottish government's Drug Deaths Taskforce is already undertaking work to address the challenge of Scotland's drug death crisis. Applicants should include indicative costs for the scoping of up to two further areas of activity in their budgets.

6. Could we subcontract the deliberative work for the 'Closing the implementation gap' to an organisation with the relevant expertise? Will the funding cover public participation costs?

Yes. We anticipate that the unit would work with an external provider or partner from within their organisation to deliver this strand of work. We would expect public participants to be reimbursed. Applicants should include all relevant costs associated with delivery of this work in their budget, such as subcontractor costs and payment for public participation.

7. What are the plans for sustaining the work when funding ends?

In the final year of the programme, we will assess the effectiveness of the activities and anticipate inviting the unit to submit plans for building on the work when the funding ends. Applicants do not need to include sustainability plans in their bid.

8. Do you have an expectation of which stakeholders to engage with and will the Health Foundation make introductions?

We anticipate that the unit will work closely with the Health Foundation-commissioned senior adviser to develop a communications and engagement strategy at an early stage. The senior adviser and the Health Foundation may make some introductions as appropriate. The Health Foundation's communications agency will work alongside the Policy Research Unit's communications team to help ensure alignment of communications plans.

Working with programme partners

9. Can you share any further details about how you would like to see the Health Foundation communications agency and the unit's communications team work together?

The Health Foundation will continue to build influence at the most senior level. Its commissioned communications agency will manage the Health Foundation's senior stakeholder engagement, support media opportunities and help ensure that the Health

Foundation's profile and momentum is maintained in Scotland. The agency is expected to develop a communications strategy for the programme of work, working closely with the unit and any other research partners, and will help ensure alignment with the unit's own communications plans.

Proposals should set out how you will maintain a programme of engagement that helps to inform the work of the unit and for the unit to influence policy in Scotland, which could include activities such as: stakeholder events, meetings with policymakers, webinars and roundtable discussions about relevant policy and evidence.

10. How closely will the Policy Research Unit and the Health Foundation's senior advisor work together?

The senior adviser will help to shape the unit's programme of work and provide a link to the steering group. The unit is expected to work closely and collaboratively with the senior adviser throughout the programme and be informed by the steering group to ensure the work is robust, rooted in Scotland and designed to maximise impact.

11. When is the work expected to begin?

Successful applicants must be ready to begin the programme within 3 months of application outcomes. We expect the unit's delivery team (and Health Foundation partners) to be in place by the start of the design phase. The unit is expected to formally launch by early 2024.

12. What is the role of the steering group? How do you see them working with the unit?

The Health Foundation is establishing a steering group, chaired by the adviser, to support the work as part of the governance arrangements. The steering group will consist of a small number of key senior stakeholders in Scotland from across sectors. The unit is expected to work closely with the senior adviser and be informed by the steering group to ensure the work is robust, rooted in Scotland and designed to maximise impact. We anticipate the unit will meet up to four times a year with the steering group to share progress, shape work plans and consider opportunities for activity.

13. What is the budget for the tender?

Applicants can apply for up to £1.2m. We will fund the unit for a period of 3 years.

14. What should be included in the budget?

It covers all costs of unit staff and for developing and delivering the programme of work. We would welcome bids that segment or group the population affected by work and health to engage them effectively. We wouldn't see them as audiences but as participants.

Costs for Health Foundation staff, strategic adviser, steering group members and meeting venues for the group would be covered by the commission.

15. Can you confirm whether overhead costs can be included, or only direct costs of research?

We will fund overheads on a project for charities or not-for-profit organisations (eligible organisations) or for research organisations that sub-contract to an eligible organisation. Overheads cannot exceed 15% of the direct project costs. We will also fund overheads

for research organisations but only to the extent that these overheads cannot be recovered from a central fund, such as the QR Funding or Charity Research Support Fund. Commercial organisations should contact us separately.

16. The call for applications mentions a detailed budget for the first 6 months and an indicative budget for the remaining part of the programme. Could you discuss the timescales and approval process for that, please, so we can plan that into our application?

We would like applicants to submit an outline budget covering the full 3-year programme. We expect a detailed budget for the period of the design phase (which may take anywhere up to 6 months) and indicative costs for the remainder of the programme. The successful organisation will submit a revised budget with detailed costings for the full three year period at the end of the design phase. The unit is expected to formally launch early 2024 but no later than June 2024.

17. When will payment be made?

The payment schedule will be agreed with the successful organisation but would normally be at key milestones through the project and on completion.

Application process

18. The guidance says, 'we will only accept one application per applicant'. Just to confirm, do you mean one application per organisation?

One application per lead organisation. An applicant could be a partner for another organisation's bid.

19. Will you accept applications from partnerships or consortia? If so, do all partners need to be based in Scotland?

Yes. We welcome organisations working with partners to bring in additional expertise and networks. We would expect most partners to be based in Scotland in order to maintain the key principle underpinning this work, that the activities, outputs and policy calls are developed and owned by Scotland, and its institutions and communities.

20. Is there a template to complete our response?

To begin your application, you will need to register on our [online applicant portal](#). You will then receive an email with a link to complete an application form. Applications must be submitted via the online portal by the deadline, 12.00 (midday) on Wednesday 27 September 2023. No late submissions will be accepted. Before applying, please read the Call for applications document and the Guidance for applicants which is available on our [website](#).

21. Is there a word count limit to proposals?

The online portal has word limits for each question.

22. What is the process to filter applications from submission through to the interview stage? Who will be assessing the bids and conducting the interview panel?

We will sift bids initially in-house. Applications will be assessed by internal staff and at least one external person previously involved in the Health Foundation review. We expect the interviews will be conducted by Health Foundation staff and at least one external person. They will all sign non-disclosure agreements to maintain the confidentiality of your bid.

23. How many teams do you expect to shortlist for interview?

The number of shortlisted applicants depends on the quality and the scope of the bids.

24. Will the interviews be in person? What is the format of the interview? Will we need to present a project pitch?

We intend to hold the interviews in person with the applicant team at a venue in Edinburgh, Scotland, on Friday 20 October 2023. Shortlisted applicants will be invited to interview, which will include a presentation of the proposal, set questions related to the selection criteria, and a more open discussion.

25. When is the closing date?

Applications must be submitted via the online portal by the deadline, 12.00 (midday) on Wednesday 27 September 2023. No late submissions will be accepted.