

IGL Grants programme: Supporting RCTs to find out what works to increase innovation, support high-growth entrepreneurship and accelerate business growth

Background

The IGL Grants programme is one of the activities of the Innovation Growth Lab (IGL), a new global laboratory for innovation and growth. IGL aims to test different approaches to accelerate innovation, high-growth entrepreneurship and business growth, bringing together researchers and private and public organisations from around the world to find out what works and what doesn't.

The IGL Grants programme is funded by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation and Nesta, and aims to support randomised controlled trials that build the evidence base on the most effective approaches to increase innovation, support high-growth entrepreneurship and accelerate business growth.

In the last decade much progress has been made in innovation and entrepreneurship research, 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 and what doesn't. While there are many approaches to generate good evidence, randomised 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.¹

Because of this, the IGL Grants programme aims to increase the use of randomised controlled trials in innovation and entrepreneurship research and evaluation by providing research funding and project management support to researchers and programme delivery organisations interested in undertaking RCTs that relate to innovation and high-growth entrepreneurship.

To whom this Call for Proposals is relevant

- **Programme delivery organisations and operators** involved in entrepreneurship training and education programmes, innovation management and commercialization, or other programmes that aim to support innovation and entrepreneurship; and who are interested in participating in research projects and undertaking randomised controlled trials to evaluate the impact of their programmes or compare different versions of them. This also includes organisations interested in running experiments within their own organisation in order to improve their innovation processes.

¹ Randomized controlled trials (RCTs) are considered to be the gold standard for understanding the impact of programmes. RCTs randomly assign participants into or out of the programme, thus allowing for unbiased estimates of the impact of the programme to be computed. Other methods of analysis suffer some level of bias because they compare people who chose to sign up for a programme to those that do not—this selection bias is considered to be significant when considering entrepreneurship and innovation programmes.

- **Researchers** interested in designing and conducting randomised controlled trials related to innovation, entrepreneurship and business growth.

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

What we are looking to fund

The main aim of this call is to fund randomised controlled trials that provide evidence on the best approaches to increase innovation, support high-growth entrepreneurship and accelerate business growth.

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 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 randomised controlled trials (e.g., randomised 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 organisations interested in running a randomised 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).
- Organise conferences and workshops to provide a forum to discuss the research with other members of the IGL Research Network, which consists of researchers undertaking experiments on innovation, entrepreneurship and business growth.
- Support the dissemination of the findings through different channels and translate them for policy and practitioner audiences.

Evaluation criteria

We will evaluate the proposals according to the following criteria:

1. Fits with the aim of the call: Proposes a randomised controlled trial that increases the evidence base on what works to increase innovation, support high-growth entrepreneurship and accelerate business growth.
2. Creates actionable insights for policy makers and/or practitioners: While evaluating a particular intervention is not a prerequisite for this call, selected proposals will generate insights that help to inform policy makers and/or practitioners' decisions and choices.
3. Pushes the knowledge frontier forward: Best proposals will not only test the effect of a particular intervention, but will also generate new insights on the underlying mechanisms that explain innovation and entrepreneurship decisions and/or their consequences. We expect projects to produce outputs that are suitable for academic publication in peer-reviewed journals. (Proposals submitted by programme delivery organisations without a research partner will be judged based on the potential for the RCT to produce interesting research findings even if they have not been identified in the proposal).
4. Generalizable lessons: We are more interested in proposals that generate lessons that have wider applicability and can be used across different contexts than findings which are of limited use outside a narrow niche.
5. Methodological rigor: Only proposals that showcase a high level of methodological rigor and can mitigate any potential conflict of interest will be supported.
6. Project feasibility: The viability of the experiment proposed, the commitment of the programme delivery partners, and other potential obstacles to the success of the project will be taken into consideration when judging the proposal. Proposals that already have an agreement to conduct research and share data with a program or delivery organisation will be viewed positively.
7. Value for money, co-funding and cost: Best proposals will provide excellent value-for-money. In addition, everything else equal, lower cost proposals are preferred. Proposals that already have committed co-funding (or the ability to attract it) will be considered positively.

The ideal mix of funded projects will include:

- Both senior and junior researchers, including advanced PhD students, in economic and other social science departments, business schools or other research institutions.

- Geographical mix, in terms of where the researchers are based and where the RCTs are undertaken (as long as they produce answers that can help to inform the design of support interventions in advanced economies).²
- A combination of low cost speculative projects and larger projects.
- Projects that produce results in the short term and others that have a more long term focus.

How to propose a project

Please submit your proposals using the online application form available at <https://nestauk.wufoo.com/forms/igl-grants-programme/>³

Deadline: Monday, 5 January 2015, 5pm EST

Proposals should be uploaded online and consist of:

1. A completed online application form.
2. A four-page description of the research to be undertaken, including (a) the problem to be solved or hypothesis to be tested and why it is important, (b) a description of the proposed RCT, the specific intervention, how it will be delivered, and the target population, indicating as well whether you would like to get project management/operational support to run the RCT, (c) the analysis to be undertaken, and (d) any partnerships involved (including programme delivery partners and co-funding) and how they will be brokered.
3. A one-page description of the timeline for the project, including milestones, and a budget with breakdown of project costs, including some justification of the costs provided. (Note that as a general rule these grants are not aimed at funding Principal Investigator time).
4. CVs or resumes for the people who will be undertaking the research.

Items 2-4 above should be merged into **one single document**, preferably PDF but Word documents will also be accepted.

Researchers and organisations interested in submitting a project are invited to register an expression of interest by emailing us at innovationgrowthlab@nesta.org.uk to be kept updated if there are any changes in the process.

You can also contact us if you would like some help or support in trying to identify a research or programme delivery partner prior to submitting your proposal.

Additional information

The IGL Grants programme is a joint call funded by the Kauffman Foundation and Nesta, and the selection process will be undertaken jointly by both organisations. However, the final grant awards for selected projects will be made by one or other of the organisations, depending on the location of

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.

³ Proposals should be written in English.

the project. Grants for US-based researchers/projects will be awarded by the Kauffman Foundation, while for researchers/projects based anywhere else grants will be awarded by Nesta.

Kauffman and Nesta will jointly evaluate the proposals received and notify its final decision by February 16th 2015. We may invite a selection of applicants for an interview before the final decision is taken. We can request additional information and attach additional conditions to the grant. For unconditional awards, the commitment of programme delivery partners will need to be certified in writing before the grant agreement is signed. We are seeking to conclude grant agreements before March 9th 2015.

The goals of this effort include developing a network of researchers and organisations undertaking experiments on innovation and high-growth entrepreneurship and building a repository of experimental findings with the aim of sharing the lessons across programmes and countries. To that end, grant recipients will become members of the IGL Research Network, and commit to making their methodology and findings available for this central repository. The default presumption is that individuals, programmes, and companies participating in research will not be individually identified unless express permission has been obtained from them for research purposes. However, whenever feasible, an anonymised version of the dataset created with the experiment will also be made available to the repository. Additionally, the results and findings of these funded experiments and projects should be publicly available.

All proposals made in response to this Call for Proposals will be subject to the Terms and Conditions below. By submitting a proposal, you agree to be bound by these Terms and Conditions.

For further information and guidance, see [Frequently Asked Questions](#) or email innovationgrowthlab@nesta.org.uk.

Kauffman Foundation and Nesta Terms and Conditions for the IGL Grants Program

1. These terms and conditions govern the Call for Proposals from the Kauffman Foundation and Nesta (“the Funders”) for the IGL Grants program (“the Program”). This program and request for applications are not and shall not be construed to be a contract, offer, or request for an offer. Those responding to this program receive no rights whatsoever as a result of their submissions. The Funders will not have any express or implied obligations or responsibilities to those who respond and will not otherwise be bound by any terms or conditions, except as set forth below. There is no commitment by the Funders that any applicant will receive a grant.
2. Please read these terms and conditions carefully before submitting an application to the program. By submitting an application, you accept these terms and conditions and agree to comply with them. The lead organisation identified in the application will be responsible for compliance with these terms and conditions by its partners and anyone else involved in its submission. You must take independent legal advice if you are concerned about these terms and conditions or your participation in the program.
3. The Funders in their discretion may reject any or all applications with or without notice or reasons, withdraw this program at any time, reduce or increase the number of applications selected or the amount of support available under the program, or if no application is accepted, abandon the program without awarding any grants.
4. The Funders reserve the right to reject any submission or withdraw a place on the program if you are in breach of these terms and conditions or in the event of an actual or potential conflict of interest. If any selected applicant subsequently withdraws or is withdrawn from the program, the Funders may select a replacement applicant, but will not be obliged to do so.
5. The Funders further reserve the right in their discretion to waive irregularities or defects in any application, but in no event will the Funders have any obligation to do so.
6. The Funders reserve the right in their discretion to modify the timeline for decision making or otherwise modify or amend the Call for Proposals, this program or these terms and conditions at any time, as they deem appropriate. Variations will take effect from the date they are first posted on the Program’s Website so you must check it regularly to see the current version.
7. The Funders reserve the right to disclose or use any information contained in the applications and other presentations responsive to this program, except to the extent that material is subject to proprietary rights as set forth below.
8. The Funders are not responsible for and will not reimburse any costs incurred in submitting materials or information pursuant to this program, including but not limited to evaluating, responding, providing follow-up, negotiating, and otherwise complying with program requirements.
9. The Funders’ joint decision as to which applicants, if any, qualify for the awarding of a grant will be final. The Funders will jointly assess any proposals received by the deadline set out in the Call for Proposals against the evaluation criteria set out in the Call for Proposals. Shortlisted applicants may be invited for an interview. Grant recipients must commit to publish any research funded under the program.
10. The Kauffman Foundation will award any grants made to submitters based in the United States and all other grants will be awarded by Nesta. Any financial or other support awarded will be subject

to satisfaction of all relevant legal and regulatory requirements, evidence of commitment from delivery partners, signature of grant agreements and completion of milestones. Financial support provided by the Funders may not cover all the costs of your project. UK applicants should note that VAT is not payable on grants.

11. Grant recipients agree that, if requested by the Funders, they will provide additional information about any subcontractors, graduate students, research assistants, and other third parties engaged by the grant recipient to produce the work product for which the grant is awarded.

12. The Funders reserve the right to request additional information from any or all persons submitting applications. Such persons agree to make themselves available for follow-up as reasonably requested by the Funders.

13. Submitter must act lawfully, ethically and in good faith and will comply fully with all applicable laws, regulations, guidelines and codes of practice. Applicants must inform the Funders of any actual or potential conflict of interest with any of the Funders.

NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATORY POLICY AS TO PARTICIPANTS

14. The Funders will admit participants into the program and award grants without regard to race, color, age, gender, religion, sexual orientation, national and ethnic origin, disability and veteran's status

PROPRIETARY RIGHTS

15. By submitting this application, submitter agrees that, if he/she should win an award, that he/she will grant each of the Funders rights to use the research outputs in accordance with the Funder's grant conditions.

16. In furtherance of any license granted hereunder, the submitter represents and warrants that the submitted materials are original with the researcher and do not infringe on or violate the intellectual property or privacy rights of any person or entity and that the submitter has obtained all authorisations, registrations, licenses, consents and permissions necessary to submit its application, carry out its submission and to grant the usage rights as set forth herein. Further, the submitter represents and warrants that all information and materials provided to the Funders are true, accurate and complete and it will notify the Funders immediately of any changes to the information or materials provided.

17. The Submitter agrees that the Funders will be entitled to use the names of the submitter's organisations, a summary of its submission and any photos and biographies supplied in connection with the receipt of this award in any publicity or promotional material for the program. The Funders will give the researcher credit for any verbatim use of this research and, where appropriate, for any derivative use. Any dissemination activity which the submitter or its partners wish to carry out in relation to the program must acknowledge the Funders and be approved by both of the Funders in advance.

LIMITATION OF LIABILITY

18. The Funders will not be liable to you, your partners or anyone else in respect of any direct or indirect loss, economic loss or loss of opportunity arising as a result of your application to the program, any breach by the Funders of these terms and conditions or any reliance by you on any

statement made or advice given by either of the Funders, our partners or contractors. The Funders do not make any warranty about the accuracy or completeness of the information provided by either of the Funders about the program.

19. Any dispute between you and/or your partners and/or any other applicant must be resolved between you and independently of the Funders. Any dispute between you and one of the Funders must be resolved with that Funder. Neither Funder shall be responsible for the acts or omissions of the other, nor for any representations made by the other, including without limitation in relation to any award under the program.

GOVERNING LAW AND JURISDICTION

20. With respect to claims against Nesta made by any applicant that arises under these terms and conditions, these terms and conditions shall be governed by and interpreted in accordance with the laws of England and Wales and all parties hereby submit to the exclusive jurisdiction of the English courts.

21. With respect to claims against the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation made by any applicant that arises under these terms and conditions, these terms and conditions shall be governed by and interpreted in accordance with the laws of the United States of America and the State of Missouri, and all parties hereby submit to the exclusive jurisdiction and venue of the federal and/or state courts located in Kansas City, Missouri.

Nesta, a charity registered in England and Wales with number 1144091 and with a place of business at 1 Plough Place, London EC4A 1DE, United Kingdom

The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, a private foundation with a place of business at 4801 Rockhill Road, Kansas City, Missouri 64110, United States