

IGL Grants programme 2016-2017: Supporting RCTs to find out what works to increase innovation, support high-growth entrepreneurship and accelerate business growth

The IGL Grants Programme funds randomised trials that examine the impact of different approaches to encourage innovation, support entrepreneurship and stimulate business growth. First-stage applications will be accepted until 5PM EST on Monday, 24 October 2016.

Background

The IGL Grants programme is one of the activities of the [Innovation Growth Lab](#) (IGL), a global collaboration that develops and tests different approaches to support innovation, entrepreneurship and growth. Working together with researchers, governments and foundations around the world, IGL aims to find out what works, and what doesn't, to accelerate innovation, support entrepreneurship and help businesses grow.

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

While the research in this area has advanced in the past decade, numerous open questions remain as to how innovation and entrepreneurship can best be encouraged and supported. Numerous schemes have been developed with this aim but evaluation of the effects of these interventions has typically been poor, both in terms of methodology and outcomes. There is a need to experiment with different approaches and, crucially, learn what works and what doesn't.

In parallel, there has been very little use of RCTs in the area of innovation and entrepreneurship, in comparison to other fields like development, health, education or social policy.¹ Although there are many approaches to generating good evidence, RCTs can be a very useful tool for organisations to measure the impact of their interventions, or compare the impact of different versions.

The IGL Grants programme therefore 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 these topics. This may range from small design grants to support researchers in

¹ Randomised controlled trials (RCTs) are often 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 can be particularly significant when considering entrepreneurship and innovation programmes.

earlier stages of trial development to grants for full-scale trial implementation.

To whom the IGL Grants Programme is relevant

- **Programme delivery organisations and operators** who are involved in entrepreneurship training and education programmes, innovation management and commercialisation, or other programmes that aim to support innovation, entrepreneurship and business growth; and who are interested in better understanding and evaluating the impact of their interventions, programmes or schemes or comparing different versions of them. This also includes organisations interested in running trials within their own organisation in order to improve their innovation processes.
- **Researchers and academics** 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, accelerate high-growth entrepreneurship and support business growth.

Below is a list of examples of some of the research topics that we would welcome. Please note the examples are not exhaustive, so projects looking at other questions related to innovation, entrepreneurship and business growth are also welcome.

Science and innovation

For example, we would welcome research examining different approaches to managing innovation processes (i.e. open innovation, challenge prizes, etc.), models for technology transfer from universities (e.g. innovation vouchers, incentives for researchers, etc.), networks and collaboration (including peer-learning and networking capabilities), and ways to support social or organisational innovation or accelerate scientific development. We would also be interested in proposals looking into areas such as intellectual property, support for social or organisational innovation, development of innovation skills, talent development specifically for innovative companies (including development of specialised support services), and infrastructure support for innovative companies and innovative procurement.

Entrepreneurship and business growth

Proposals on topics such as SME capacity building, stimulation of inclusiveness and diversity in entrepreneurship, access to skills and talent, and access to finance schemes would fit well in the scope of this call. We are also interested in research that looks at investment readiness programmes, local policies for entrepreneurship or business growth, the impact of accelerators (or other peer-based or cohort programmes) on entrepreneurial success, female entrepreneurship, development of entrepreneurship ecosystems, mentoring and advice for startups or SMES, and the impact and delivery of different forms of entrepreneurship education.

Please note that 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, can also facilitate projects by matching programme operators and researchers. We will offer 5 types of awards:

1. Unconditional: RCTs 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 RCT 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 RCTs 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 RCT, 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.

As a reference, the majority of awards range between \$10.000 USD to \$100.000 USD. However, exceptions may be made in the case of particularly relevant proposals.

In addition to funding, we can also support the selected teams in other ways. We may:

- Make available project managers to provide operational support to the project by helping to run the RCT and liaising with programme delivery partners on day-to-day issues.
- Provide matching and brokerage support, helping to generate and/or identify opportunities for RCTs 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 RCTs 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 RCT 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 different settings).
- 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

The application process is split into two stages, and will open to applicants on **Monday, 22 August 2016** via a link on our website.

- **First Stage:** Applicants submit a [completed application form](#) which is assessed by the involved organisations.

Deadline for first stage applications: Monday, 24 October 2016, 5PM EST

- **Second Stage:** Selected applicants are invited to submit a comprehensive proposal.

Deadline for second stage applications: Wednesday, 4 January 2017, 5PM EDT

First stage proposals should be uploaded online and will consist of:

- A completed online application form (word limit 2000 words) including general information, details on the proposal, details on programme partner and research team, and preliminary budget estimates.

Second stage proposals will be contacted directly to provide a five-page proposal, full timeline, full

budget and all research team CVs.

On **Wednesday 28 September, at 4:00 PM BST**, IGL will host a webinar for researchers and organisations interested in applying to the IGL Grants Programme. The webinar will give an overview of the call and set out what a strong application looks like. There will also be an opportunity to ask questions. [Register to attend here](#).

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, the Argidius Foundation and Nesta, and the selection process will be undertaken jointly by all three organisations. However, the final grant awards for selected projects will generally be made by one or other of the organisations, depending on the location and topic of the project. The Kauffman Foundation may generally offer grants for US-based researchers and/or projects. The Argidius Foundation may offer grants to projects taking place in Central America, and West and East Africa. Nesta may offer grants to researchers/projects based anywhere but is particularly interested in trials taking place in developed economies, although it will also consider trials in emerging or developing economies if they can provide learnings applicable in more advanced economies.

Kauffman, Argidius, and Nesta will jointly evaluate the proposals received and notify applicants invited to the second stage of the application process by mid-November 2016. In the second stage, successful applicants will be notified by the end of February 2017. We may invite a selection of applicants for telephone interviews before the final decisions are 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 the end of March 2017.

The goals of this effort includes growing a network of researchers and organisations undertaking randomised trials on innovation and high-growth entrepreneurship and adding to a repository of experimental findings with the aim of sharing the lessons across programmes and countries. To that end, all 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 trial 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.

The Argidius Foundation, the 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, the Argidius 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 programme 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, the

Argidius Foundation and Nesta will award grants to submitters and projects based in other locations. 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 58 Victoria Embankment, London, EC4Y 0DS, 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.

The Argidius Foundation, a private foundation with a place of business at Grafenauweg 10, CH-6301 Zug, Switzerland.