

Grant funding for Communities of Interest

Call for proposals

The Enterprise Research Centre invites applications for funding for Communities of Interest around specific research topics which can contribute to the evidence base on SME growth and development. Two grants of up to £4,000 each are available to fund research networking activity, workshops or seminars.

Applications for Community of Interest funding can be made by faculty in any UK university and should be submitted to ERC by 7th November 2014. Successful bids will be announced by 5th December 2014. Funded activity should take place between February and October 2015.

Background

The Enterprise Research Centre (ERC) is an independent research centre which conducts policy relevant research on SME growth and development. The ERC is led by Professor Stephen Roper (Warwick) and Professor Mark Hart (Aston). The ERC is a partnership between Warwick Business School, Aston Business School, Imperial College Business School, Strathclyde Business School, and Birmingham Business School. Funding is being provided by the Economic and Social Research Council, the UK government Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, the British Bankers' Association and the Technology Strategy Board. Further details on the activities of ERC are available at www.enterpriseresearch.ac.uk.

As part of its role in facilitating SME research in the UK, ERC is offering two grants to support the development of Communities of Interest around specific SME research topics. (Two Communities of Interest have already been established focussing on university-SME collaboration and open innovation). Funding is intended to support new research collaborations or networks which can contribute to the evidence base supporting SME growth and development in the UK. Applications may relate to any area but proposals on the following growth related themes are particularly welcome:

- Social or community enterprise
- Rural enterprise
- Barriers or enablers of SME growth in emerging industries
- Non-bank finance and SME growth
- Supporting effective commercialisation
- Third-age entrepreneurship and growth
- Emerging business models for growth

Applications may be submitted by faculty members in any UK university. Proposals which are likely to contribute to promoting SME growth and development in the UK are particularly welcomed as

will proposals which can demonstrate a strong profile of activity and potential outcomes. Proposals which include collaboration between research organisations, firms or business support organisations are also particularly welcome. We also particularly welcome applications which involve partners from across all parts of the UK.

Decisions on funding will be made by the ERC senior management team and the ERC Funders' Group. Proposals will be evaluated in two stages:

1. Stage 1 – Pass/Fail – only proposals which demonstrate the potential to make a contribution to SME growth and development will move on to the second stage.
2. Stage 2 – Decision criteria – Funding decisions will be based on the following weighting:
 - Strength of the suggested programme of activity 30%
 - Strength of the project team 20%
 - Engagement of non-academic partners 20%
 - Potential contribution to supporting SME growth 30%

Funding cannot be used to cover salary costs but is intended to cover hosting, travel and accommodation costs related to research networking activities, workshops and seminars. Funding is not intended to run training events or development activities. Ideally projects would lead to further applications for grant funding, knowledge exchange or further collaborative activity. Funded activity would be expected to be undertaken between February and October 2015. Funded projects will be expected to submit a brief interim report (after 3 months) and a short final activity report (3-4 pages) to ERC by end November 2015.

As the ERC contract holder Col offers will be made from Warwick University. Proposals will form the basis for a brief contractual agreement. Subject to receipt of the interim and final activity reports and completion of the proposed programme of activity, costs will be reimbursed quarterly on receipt of invoices.

Preparing an application

Potential applicants are invited to discuss possible proposals with either the Director or Deputy Director of ERC (Stephen.Roper@wbs.ac.uk or mark.hart@aston.ac.uk).

Applications should be prepared as Word documents and excluding appendices should be no longer than 6 pages. These should take the following form:

Page 1 – Project title and applicants including full affiliations and contact details. The lead applicant should be clearly identified.

Page 2 – Overview of proposed activities and potential contribution to SME growth and development

Page 3-5 – Case for Support for the project – this should include:

- Aims and objectives of the Col
- Description of intended activity
- Profile of project team and partners
- Overview of anticipated outcomes

Page 6 – Detailed costing breakdown.

Annex - Brief two page CVs for the lead applicant and other relevant team members should be included in an annex.

Applications for Community of Interest funding should be submitted to Wendy Ferris at ERC (w.ferris@aston.ac.uk) by 7th November 2014.