

PROJECT IDEA

IDÉE DE PROJET

The Project Idea Form is a public document, if you wish to keep it private at between the JS and your partnership at this stage, please advise your Facilitator / *Le Document Idée de Projet est un document public, si vous souhaitez qu'il reste privé entre le SC et votre partenariat pour le moment, merci d'en informer votre coordinateur de l'animation.*

Project Name / Nom du projet: The Engaged Communities Project

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Specific Objective / *Objectif spécifique:*

Keep only one and erase the others/ *Garder un seul et effacer les autres*

1.2 - Increase the quality and effectiveness of service delivery to the most socially disadvantaged groups through social innovation

1.2 - Accroître la qualité et l'efficacité des prestations de services en faveur des groupes les plus défavorisés socialement et économiquement, par l'innovation sociale

Summary description of the project idea (1 page max.) / *Description synthétique du projet (1 page max):*

Society is becoming more divided. The labour market is becoming 'hour-glass' shaped with growth in low and high skilled jobs but a reduction in traditional craft and intermediate level jobs. Inequalities in wealth and income are rising whilst the population is ageing rapidly. There are groups in society that benefit from or are disadvantaged by globalisation and digitalisation. These changes have led to a sense of disenfranchisement which has results such as xenophobia and the Brexit vote. The doctrine of austerity and the demand that 'more be done for less' has reduced UK local authorities' capacity for community intervention and action and local government in France, too, finds itself under considerable pressure. A top down approach to solving people's problems is no longer viable.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are being encouraged to act as drivers of regional economic development and to deliver research that has an impact in the real world. As a consequence, HEIs are looking to better engage with local communities (of all kinds) to understand their needs, their aspirations for change and to deliver research that can bring about positive change. There is considerable innovation potential from the combination of community groups, local government and Higher Education Institutions – particularly as we are working bottom-up not top-down.

Engaged research with local communities, focused on enhancing many aspects of quality of life within specific geographies, offers the opportunity to bring people, with different backgrounds together; to

deliver a common sense of social purpose and to erode persistent 'them and us' attitudes that attach to and can be exacerbated by the experience of higher education.

There is good evidence that community-led engaged research can help tackle persistent societal and environmental problems; empower communities; break down 'them and us' stereotypes; and, even lead to significant impact from new and existing research. Our project seeks to increase the quality and the effectiveness of service delivery by Local Authorities to the most socially and economically disadvantaged groups using a relatively new mechanism of social innovation – engaged research.

HEIs are increasingly viewed by national and regional governments as key partners in delivering regional economic growth and innovation. This challenges many underlying assumptions concerning 'place' and 'geography'. Many Higher Education Institutions have traditionally been detached from place, preferring to see themselves as global and international in scope and reach. This is further complicated by persistent 'them and us' attitudes within university cities where university employees (academics, researchers, knowledge transfer, policy etc.) have little knowledge of their local communities, particularly the most disadvantaged ones, who themselves have little contact with, or understanding of, the kind of work carried out by their local university.

Our project will link local authorities and disadvantaged communities using engaged research methodologies to make a real difference to the lives of those in the community and to enable more effective delivery of limited resource from local government, the state and other community-level providers.

The project will target both those people furthest from the labour market and older/retired people and will seek to deliver impacts in two key areas:

1. We will up-skill community groups to enable them to carry out their own research with and within their communities, enabling them to successfully make the case for change and interventions within their communities and equally importantly enabling them to understand the issues and problems they face and to tackle these themselves only seeking external recourse when appropriate and with sufficient evidence to have real agency over stakeholders and policymakers.
2. We will achieve significant service improvements across a host of sectors where local authorities are seeking to enhance the living standards and quality of life of their citizens at community level. This means doing more with local authority resources and delivering the right services and support, whose need can be evidenced directly from community-led and community based research.

Examples of concrete actions / Exemples d'actions concrètes:

Development of 12 new community-led projects, each tackling a recognised disadvantaged group (older people, long-term unemployed, former prisoners etc.) which result in, within each case, demonstrable measures such as:

- 8 Study visits (2 to each partner at 'formative' and 'summative' stages = 8) involving representatives from all partners plus members of the community groups (likely to be in excess of 48 people)
- 1,400 people interviewed (120 per community project)
- At least 2 facilitated workshops in each project (24)
- 12 new community sub-groups established (each with approximately 8 participants = 96 participants)
- Final project evaluation reports for each of the 12 projects identifying clear recommendations for action to address community-identified concerns drafted by the community groups with support from project staff

- Final Project 'Recommendations for Policy' Report (1)
- New journal article and publication produced by the Higher Education Institutions exploring findings and making recommendations (2)
- Evaluation to calculate number of people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion helped in the project (target 800)

Development of new strategy documents within each Local Authority and each Higher Education Institution with associated benefits:

- New/updated strategy developed by each Local Authority (4)
- New/updated strategy for local engagement within each Higher Education Institution (4)
- Demonstrable financial savings for each Local Authority (€ target to be set)
- Demonstrable additional service delivery for each Local Authority (€estimated equivalent to be set)
- Dissemination within an international network of University cities at least 2 events (1 during the early stages of the project to draw in lessons and build an audience and one after to help dissemination mainstreaming and impact) of the results of the project and their applicability for Local Government.

Development of new, freely available and if appropriate (i.e. if offered online) Open Source course materials to enable the training of community groups in community-led research and the parallel training of Higher Education staff in supportive engaged research:

- New course offered by each Higher Education Institution for its academics and professional service staff (4) based on an agreed and freely available core/central offer (1)
- New course offered by the Community lead partner organisation to community groups (4) based on an agreed and freely available core/central offer (1)
- Conference targeting an International Community of engaged researchers with the Courses and findings (target audience 80 persons)
- 2 Conferences targeting community groups in UK and France with the Courses and findings (1 event per country) (target audience 140 people - 70 per country)

Changes that the project will contribute to / *Changements auxquels le projet contribuera:*

1. Enabling disadvantaged individuals and communities to identify and express the changes that they wish to see in their lives
2. Empowering disadvantaged individuals and communities to engage in positive action to make changes in their own communities
3. Local authorities and HEIs (and other partners) better able to understand, respond to and deliver positive change / impact on their area - as engines of social innovation – delivering better tailored services that meet genuine, articulated, need
4. Building the community development role of HEIs
5. Generating innovative new research and methodologies

Ultimately we seek to enhance the quality of life of those involved within the communities we engage with; ensure local authorities can continue to deliver high quality services despite lower budgets; see recognisable benefits such as:

- Measurably happier and healthier communities
- Measurably enhanced impact from targeted local authority resources (more people helped, more people back into work, reduced crime, enhanced quality of life)

Cross border added value / *Valeur ajoutée transfrontalière:*

The impact of the 2008 crisis hit both disadvantaged communities and local government particularly hard. At a time when more support is needed the capacity for local government to deliver support has

been reduced. This problem manifests itself across almost all of Europe and certainly within the UK and France.

Engaged research is still relatively new but there are examples of good practice around Europe and within the Chanel area that we seek to build upon. However it is not practical to do all of the actions and activities 'with every group in every location' as the experts in community engagement and engaged research are widely spread and focused within particular specialisms (older people, gender, disability etc.). Therefore we seek resource to bring together the experts (from community-level organisations, local government and higher education) to share practice and develop and test new approaches – embedding the new techniques within a series of 12 community-led projects with the intention of producing new materials and courses to help ensure similar actions and activities can be carried out elsewhere.

The concept of the 'Community Animateur' is still relatively new to the UK where similar roles and functions do exist and much can be learnt from the history of French community engagement. Similarly a number of recent developments in engaged–research have been championed in the UK and should provide innovative new means of French Higher Education Institutions engaging with and through Animateurs and community groups.

Capitalisation on previous initiatives/ *Capitalisation sur de précédentes initiatives:*

We are building on a number of existing projects and programmes such as:

- The Community-Builders Project (University of Exeter)
- The Community Partnerships Project (Exeter City Council, Exeter City Futures and University of Exeter)
- Street Factory (CiC) (Plymouth College of Art)
- Made@EU (Plymouth College of Art)

But will seek to engage with and learn from past and existing INTERREG and other EU Projects like SHINE and TRIPLE-C (2 Seas Programme), including projects those in sectors that we will be engaging with (transport, energy, etc.) such as Intelligent Community Energy (Channel/Manche) and BISEPS (2 Seas Programme).

The University of Exeter and Exeter City Council are actively engaged in a Community Partnerships Project which is developing and testing new methods for Community Engagement in the area of environment and transport and have established internal expertise. Plymouth College of Art has undertaken a number of engaged activities with community organisations and brings considerable experience in the use of arts and creativity with disadvantaged groups.

Sustainability/*Durabilité:*

Dissemination will take place via the events and articles cited above - including research publications and local government articles. Mainstreaming the lessons learned and the behavioural changes required will be both within the community groups involved and within the local authorities. The approaches taken by the Higher Education Institutions will feed shape engagement of this kind and will achieve benefits for them through demonstrable community and real-world impacts.

Partners (with their geographical areas) already involved in the project idea / *Partenaires (en précisant leur zone géographique) déjà impliquées à ce stade d'idée de projet:*

Exeter City Council (City of Exeter)
University of Exeter (Exeter Region)

(A number of community organisations)
Plymouth College of Arts (Plymouth Region)

Potential partners sought (skills wanted) / *Partenaires potentiels recherchés (compétences recherchées)* :

England / Angleterre:

Community level organisations in the South West of England working with disadvantaged people

France / France:

Local Government

Higher education institutions using Engaged Research methodologies

Community organisations working with disadvantaged people

Start date and end date of the project / *Dates de début et de fin du projet:*

March 2018 – August 2021

Estimated project cost / *Coût estimé du projet:*

€2.4m (estimate)

Other comments / *Autres commentaires:*

Has a programme facilitator from the InterregVA FCE Joint Technical Secretariat provided advice to the project applicant? / *Un coordinateur de l'animation du Secrétariat Technique Conjoint FMA a-t-il conseillé le porteur du projet ?*

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Yes / Oui

If yes, facilitator's name / Alex Larter