



GW4 BUILDING COMMUNITIES FUND GUIDANCE /



1. BACKGROUND

The GW4 Alliance brings together four of the most research-intensive and innovative universities in the UK: Bath, Bristol, Cardiff and Exeter. Its vision is to develop pioneering, collaborative endeavours to drive innovation and economic growth across the Great West region.

The GW4 Building Communities Programme aims to build research communities of scale and capability that will deliver a step change in world-class research that could not be achieved by one of the institutions alone. GW4 seeks to work across all areas of academic activity, opening up new opportunities for collaborative research; to develop shared research infrastructure, equipment and other resources; to identify and work with external partners; to seek joint capital investment; postgraduate training partnerships; joint appointments; and staff leadership and development initiatives.

The Building Communities Programme supports both new and existing GW4 research communities to collaborate and develop new lines of academic enquiry.

These communities can be in any area of academic endeavour with the purpose of addressing a major research or societal challenge and should look to engage both academic and external partners. The Building Communities Programme has a limited amount of resources and is highly competitive.

Awards will only be offered to outstanding projects that meet all the assessment criteria. For information on previously successful projects please see our website [here](#).

PLEASE NOTE:

- This is the third call for the Building Communities Generator Fund. Generator Awards have replaced the previous Initiator and Accelerator Awards.
- Generator Awards aim to support both the creation of new GW4 communities and the development of the strongest ideas emerging from our existing communities.
- The call is open to communities in any area of research and applications from Early Career Research (ECR) communities are particularly welcome.
- The panel also wishes to encourage applications with a focus on the following strategic GW4 areas
 - **Climate**, for further information visit www.gw4climate.com.
 - **Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)**, for further information visit www.gw4amr.com.
 - **Accelerating to Net Zero**, for further information visit www.gw4.ac.uk/net-zero/
- This round of funding is not limited to addressing these initiatives.
- For general application pitfalls and top tips please refer to [Annex One](#).
- Please note resubmission is by invitation only.

2. THE AIMS OF THE GW4 BUILDING COMMUNITIES PROGRAMME

- ✓ To support enabling activities that bring together communities of academic staff with excellent and complementary expertise and capability.
- ✓ To address research questions with potential for high impact that could not be carried out by any single institution.
- ✓ To facilitate exploration of novel research concepts to a point at which significant external funding can be sought.
- ✓ To identify and engage external partners to provide step-change collaborations.
- ✓ To promote and facilitate ground-breaking interdisciplinary research.
- ✓ To demonstrate clearly the added value of the GW4 collaboration.

3. GUIDELINES

Currently the GW4 Building Communities Programme offers only one funding stream; the Generator Fund, to which this guidance applies. Research communities may apply to the Generator Fund from any area of academic endeavour, including the arts, humanities, social science, experimental and theoretical science, engineering and medicine. Interdisciplinary research is explicitly encouraged. In addition, we particularly welcome applications from ECR communities as well as those with a focus on Climate, Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) and Net Zero.

3.1 GW4 GENERATOR FUND

- This funding is for community building activities that enable:
 - a) new, or previously informal, communities to come together to scope and refine research ideas and identify potential collaborators.
 - b) existing GW4 communities to explore an identified opportunity that could be a new area of inquiry, and/or preparation

for a specific funding stream.

- Generator funding is available for workshops, sandpits or other community building activities that enable communities to scope and refine research ideas and identify and engage potential collaborators and external partners.
- Generator funding is also available for pump priming activities with the potential for sustainable, step-change collaborations and research that engage both academic and external partners.
- Generator funding can be used as a stand-alone award or in conjunction with other sources of funding.
- The expectation is for communities to use the Generator Fund as a step towards applying for external funding.
- Applications up to a maximum £20k are invited.
- Eligible costs are travel and subsistence, consumables, meeting costs, research assistant support, external speakers or facilitators, equipment (small purchases only, justifiable in line with project deliverables) venue and catering costs, and administration support (only where fully justifiable within the context of the proposal).
- Ineligible costs include academic salaries, studentship fees, internal research facilities costs and other indirect costs.
- We encourage budget to be entirely held at the Lead (PI's) Institution. We will allow budget to be split across institutions if required, but budget allocated to Col Institutions should only be for workshop expenses, staff salary expenditure etc – i.e. only things that cannot be claimed as an external expense. Therefore, budget for staff expenses (such as travel, accommodation, etc) should all be held at the Lead Institution and Cols should claim as an external or the Lead Institution should book and pay for these.

- The Lead Applicant will be responsible for all arrangements for any events, activities and participation.
- All funded applications will be promoted via the GW4 website and GW4 portal.
- All Generator funded activities are expected to be completed in a six-month period, starting 1st June 2022. Variations from this will be considered but only where this is fully justified within the context of the project.
- Leads should discuss their application with their University's research support team. In addition, applicants are welcome to contact their institutional GW4 Programme Manager¹ to discuss potential applications and are encouraged to talk to the BC Project Manager with specific queries.

3.2 ALL APPLICATIONS MUST:

- Involve at least three GW4 institutions, with communities involving all four partners preferred. Where fewer than four are involved this will need to be fully justified. Each GW4 institution has a GW4 Programme Manager¹ who can help put you in touch with appropriate partners.
- Articulate and evidence the added value of working across GW4. This may be in terms of capacity and capability building, complementarity or synergy of expertise, new interdisciplinary groupings, academic endeavours and the ability to attract external funding.
- Previous successful applications, from the Generator scheme may be reviewed by contacting your GW4 Programme Manager¹. For information on previously funded GW4 projects please see our website [here](#).

¹ GW4 Programme Managers:

BATH Richard Hocking R.J.Hocking@bath.ac.uk

BRISTOL Valerie Aspin valerie.aspin@bristol.ac.uk & Sam Lambshead sam.lambshead@bristol.ac.uk

4. ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE

For further guidance on how to complete your application form, refer to Section Ten and Annex Two. GW4 is committed to supporting Early Career Research (ECR) communities that are building capacity and capability for leadership. If yours is an ECR collaboration (i.e. any of the team are ECRs), please indicate this, as directed, on the application form.

GW4 is committed to supporting all research disciplines equally. To aid the assessment process, please ensure your application clearly justifies the scope of your proposed activities, outputs and outcomes within the context of your discipline norms. If your application has a focus on Climate, AMR or Net Zero research please discuss this on the application form, as directed. Otherwise, please disregard this section of the application form.

5. REPORTING

Following the end of an award, communities are expected to complete a Community Tracking Form and End of Award Report on the GW4 portal. Full portal access and training will be provided. Communities will also be expected to participate in evaluations and updates, and promotional and communication events, as appropriate, during their funding and annually following the end of their award.

6. APPLICATION PROCESS

All Lead applicants are expected to speak to their University research support team in advance of applying, with particular reference to providing accurate costings.

Applicants are to complete the Generator Application Form and submit to communities@gw4.ac.uk by **7 February 2022**.

CARDIFF Kate Pattern PattenK1@cardiff.ac.uk

EXETER Charlie Lane C.Lane@exeter.ac.uk

7. MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF GW4 BUILDING COMMUNITIES PROCESSES

Assessment

Applications will be assessed and considered by the GW4 Building Communities Panel and taken to the GW4 Board for formal approval. Applicants will be notified of their outcome in March 2022.

The Building Communities Panel consists of academics selected equally from across the four GW4 institutions, balanced across discipline area and career stage and supported by processes that ensure assessment is undertaken independently and objectively against fund criteria. The Panel is chaired by GW4 Board Chair.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

GW4 is committed to supporting a positive and inclusive culture and embedding best practice. The Building Communities Programme provides equality of opportunity and actively encourages applications from academics across all career stages (including ECR) and backgrounds. Our review processes are monitored to ensure fairness, and wherever possible, diversity. We collect and analyse our applications to monitor the balance between STEMM and HASS discipline (data available on request) and EDI data will be collected (please note that providing this information is voluntary, see the Generator Application Form for further information).

Integrity, Ethics, Open Access

GW4 institutions are committed to research of the highest quality, with ethics and integrity at its core. Our research is governed by our institutional policies for research ethics, and supported the principles of open access for research publications and data

The Building Communities Programme processes are subjected to an ongoing programme of review and strengthening to ensure they remain robust and transparent.

8. PREPARATION

Applicants should ensure that activities are planned

and scheduled so that in the event of an award, activities can be undertaken rapidly. We expect projects to be completed within a 6-month timescale, starting two months after award notice to allow for project preparation and for budgets and paperwork to be in place. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, applicants should carefully consider current restrictions and which activities will take place in person or online. Please note extension requests due to COVID-19 will require full justification to the GW4 board and are unlikely to be granted.

Extended project timelines may be considered by the Building Communities Panel but only where they are fully justified and proportionate to the scope of the project.

9. FEEDBACK AND RESUBMISSIONS

Please note that feedback on applications is limited and resubmission is by invitation only.

10. ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR GENERATOR FUNDS

This guidance has been drawn up to assist applicants when completing their Generator application forms. The purpose is to explain the type of information and evidence required to satisfy the assessment criteria.

Assessment Criteria	Type of Evidence Required
1. Strategic Fit	This criteria draws on the assessment and scores of the following three criteria. This determines the overall fit of the proposal to the aims of the Building Communities Programme.
1A. Step change	<p>Clear statement about why potential outcomes and impact (e.g. interdisciplinary, capability and capacity, unique and distinct opportunity) from the proposed research is only possible, or significantly enhanced, as a result of it being undertaken by a GW4 community rather by an individual academic or institution.</p> <p>Where appropriate, use baseline data to explain why your proposal represents a step-change in your research area.</p>
1B. Outcomes: leveraging funding and publications	<p>Anticipated or actual plans for how the community will leverage external funding as a direct result of this award.</p> <p>Where possible:</p> <p>(1) provide specific information to evidence the estimated value of bids, how and when they will be written, to whom and when they might be submitted</p> <p>(2) make specific reference to high quality publications, conference papers, policy documents/reports or other to be written as a direct result of the award; to whom they might be submitted and by when.</p>
1C. Creating Impact	<p>Communicates how it is anticipated this award will create impact to benefit each of the GW4 institutions as well as the wider society at a local, national, international level. Provides information about whether the community plans to engage with specific external partners to provide a step-change (if relevant).</p> <p>What is this potential impact (academic and non-academic), when might it be felt and what plans are in place to help achieve this?</p>
2. Award Delivery	This criteria draws on the assessment and scores of the following three criteria.
2A. Project team	<p>The application provides clear details about the strength of the research team to mobilise a new, or develop an existing, community to collaborate and effectively deliver award activities and outputs on time and within budget, putting in place plans to sustain the community in the longer term. Note key aspects such as previous experience as well as proposed team structure and breadth - for example, leadership, anticipated roles and responsibilities, ECR elements, multidisciplinary.</p>
2B. Sustainability of the GW4 community	<p>Application outlines mechanisms that enable the GW4 community created through this funding to stay connected and operational in the long term. Communicates how the momentum of bringing together so</p>

	many interested parties for the purpose of producing quality GW4 research can be sustained in the long term
2C. Value for money	The application clearly justifies a realistic budget, aligned with the proposed activities and anticipated outcomes, and able to deliver significant success towards the aims of the Building Communities Programme.
NON SCORING CRITERIA TO CONSIDER ECR and Climate/AMR/Net Zero fit	<p>This criteria is encouraged but is not an explicit requirement of this funding call.</p> <p>If appropriate, indicate if yours is an ECR community and explain why you feel this to be a factor of success and/or how you will use this to develop additional skills such as leadership. What activities, such as mentoring, will support this?</p> <p>If appropriate to your research, please provide a clear demonstration of how your research community will contribute to the following GW4 priority areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate • AMR • Net Zero

Previous successful applications may be accessed by contacting your GW4 Programme Manager.

GW4 Programme Managers:

BATH Richard Hocking R.J.Hocking@bath.ac.uk

BRISTOL Valerie Aspin valerie.aspin@bristol.ac.uk & Sam Lambshead sam.lambshead@bristol.ac.uk

CARDIFF Kate Pattern PattenK1@cardiff.ac.uk

EXETER Charlie Lane C.Lane@exeter.ac.uk

11. TIMELINE – GW4 GENERATOR FUND ROUND THREE

Call Open	30 Nov 2021
Call Close	7 Feb 2022
Review Panel	Week commencing 7 March 2022
Notification of Awards	End March 2022
Project period	1 June 2022 – 30 November 2022 (expected)

ANNEX ONE: Pitfalls and Top Tips for Completing your Generator Application Form

Pitfall 1: Added value of GW4: failing to articulate, and therefore persuade the panel, of the added value of your GW4 partnership.

Top Tip 1: discuss with your community – what can be achieved as a GW4 collaboration that could not be achieved as a single institution? Your answer needs to be strongly and clearly articulated in the application and evidenced where appropriate.

Pitfall 2: Step-change: failing to envisage and articulate the potential step change that can be achieved through your GW4 community.

Top Tip 2: this connects to Top Tip 1, linking the added value of your GW4 partnership to the step-change made possible by the unique resources available through the GW4 Alliance i.e. what will you do differently: academics, infrastructure, training, external partners etc.

The panel appreciates that there are different working methods and discipline norms between STEMM and HASS discipline areas, so ensure you explain how the activities and anticipated outcomes proposed represent a step-change relative to the norms for your discipline area, and your research team (for example if you are an Early Career Researcher community).

Pitfall 3: Leveraging external funding, publications, other outcomes and impact: panel members are often not persuaded on the application's value for money in relation to this. They are looking for clear specific plans on how the activities will help the applicants to apply for external research funding.

Top Tip 3: where appropriate, include specific details of any potential external funding sources that can be leveraged (e.g. anticipated values, submission deadlines and delivery plans). Provide a similar level of detail, where possible, for other anticipated outcomes (e.g. high-quality publications, conference papers, policy documents, reports, staff development activities, broadening and strengthening the community).

Pitfall 4: Sustainability – applications fail to articulate how the momentum and successes achieved during the award will be sustained in the longer term.

Top Tip 4: outline an anticipated sustainability plan. Provide clear ideas to how you will keep the community active following the end of the award such as further team meetings, relationship building with key external partners, leveraging funding, expanding the network, raising the profile and influence of the community both internally and externally.

Pitfall 5: Assessment criteria and language – applications can be difficult to assess where they fail to include sufficient clear, concise and relevant information in relation to each of the fund criteria or are written in overly complicated, technical language.

Top Tip 5: Enhance your application by reading the Guidance and contacting your GW4 Programme Manager for advice and examples of previously successful applications. Check your application can be understood by someone from another discipline or consider consulting a senior colleague.