

# Paul Hamlyn Foundation

## Explore and Test Evaluation Support Scheme Guidance for Grantees



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## Introduction

Congratulations on your successful application for an Explore and Test grant. As you know, Paul Hamlyn Foundation's (PHF) Explore and Test grants are intended to help organisations test and pilot new approaches or gather evidence for the first time.

This means that learning about your work is particularly important for these grants. For PHF, a successful Explore and Test grant is one where you have been able to learn about what has or has not worked, and why that has been the case.

By setting up a clear learning and evaluation plan you will be able understand the sorts of outcomes that are emerging, and to understand what it is about your ways of working that are helping or hindering progress. The information you produce as part of this learning work will enable you to review and change your approach if necessary. It will also provide findings that will help you to decide what you want to do next, whether it be to continue to develop the work you have been exploring and testing, or to conclude that it does not justify further development.

To help you get the most out of your grant we are offering Explore and Test grantees two days' free support from an independent consultant to help you plan your evaluation, so that you can develop a useful and practical approach to evidence and learning. It will be up to you and your evaluation consultant (who you should choose from our list - see below) to decide how to use the two days' support. PHF will pay the evaluation consultant directly when the work is complete.

## The Evaluation Support Scheme

Since we started making Explore and Test grants in 2015, we have found that the evaluation experience of grantees varies widely, depending on what they have done in the past and the background of their staff. Many are not used to evaluating new approaches like those included in 'explore and test' projects.

When we ask people to outline their evaluation plans in their application forms, we sometimes find that they are over ambitious and unrealistic, or that their proposed evaluation will not help them to answer the key questions they want to explore and test. The support scheme is intended to help you get off to a good start with a realistic and focussed plan or framework.

We believe that the evaluation support will help grantees to make a success of their Explore and Test grants. Whether or not to take up the option of evaluation support is your decision. We very much hope that you will get involved and give us feedback. This will help us make decisions about whether and how to continue the scheme.

The following are some examples of the types of areas you might want to work on with your consultant:

- General evaluation planning and deciding on the priority evaluation questions
- Choosing the methods and approaches that are right for your Explore and Test grant
- How to collect, analyse and interpret evidence
- Budgeting for an evaluation and ensuring the plans are feasible for the staff and budget available

- Ways to strengthen your own approach to evaluation, or advice on commissioning external evaluators
- Help in finding some useful resources or specialist expertise.

PHF will pay for up to **two days'** of support, so you may need to prioritise the areas that you would like the consultant to work with you on. (Please note that the two days' support is likely to involve the consultant carrying out preparatory work and they therefore may not be in direct contact with you for the full two days).

For this support scheme we have a selected list of evaluation consultants and, subject to their availability, you can choose who you would like to work with. [The support scheme brochure](#) includes the details of our evaluation consultants, including their areas of specialism and experience. The Foundation has worked with these consultants in various ways, and has also taken up references. We are confident that they can provide you with support that is practical and can be tailored to your needs.

## External evaluations

In many cases it will be appropriate for the learning and evaluation activity to be undertaken within the organisation itself. Some grantees will prefer to commission an external evaluator, rather than do the work in-house. There are pros and cons to these alternatives and your consultant can help you to decide what is right for you. We know that external evaluations can be disappointing because the grantee was not clear enough at the beginning about the questions they need to answer and the objectives of the evaluation. Your consultant can help you to write a clear brief and to carry out an appropriate search and tender process.

PHF advocates a competitive tendering process for external evaluations to ensure that the most appropriate and best value contractor is appointed. Occasionally grantees have a pre-existing agreement with an evaluator, made before the funding was secured. In this case, apart from exceptional circumstances, the grantee will not be eligible for evaluation support. We have found in the past that what the consultant can offer is limited when an evaluator is already in place. There may be an evaluator you have worked with before or have in mind for this project. This is okay, but it is important you are not contractually committed to them and that in any informal discussions with them you are clear that the contract will go have to go out to tender.

## How to access the support scheme - step by step guide

The support is available as soon as you have accepted your Explore and Test grant from PHF. As the scheme is focused on providing support with your evaluation set-up and planning, we suggest that you aim begin this process as soon as is practical.

### Choosing a consultant

1. To choose your preferred consultant, refer to the [support scheme brochure](#) to see which consultants support work in your thematic area, arranged by the three PHF funds: Arts-based Learning; Arts Access and Participation; and Shared Ground
2. You can then review the relevant information about the consultants (e.g. their location and areas of expertise).

## **Making contact**

1. Once you decide on your preferred evaluation consultant, please contact them via email directly (e-mail addresses are provided in the [support scheme brochure](#))  
If you do not receive a response, please get in touch with PHF's evidence and learning team at [evaluation@phf.org.uk](mailto:evaluation@phf.org.uk).
2. Having made contact, we suggest that you share your approved application and your letter from PHF confirming your grant with your preferred consultant, as these two things will give them an outline of your planned project for an initial discussion about your support needs.
3. Following this contact you may find that the consultant isn't the best fit for your requirements. If so, then please contact your second preference etc. Please be mindful of the need for the work to be done fairly quickly (within six weeks of agreement, if practical). We ask you not to 'shop around'/contact more than one consultant at a time as this will be too time consuming for the consultants as well as yourselves.

## **Agreeing to work together**

4. If you agree to work together, please confirm this to PHF via e-mail [evaluation@phf.org.uk](mailto:evaluation@phf.org.uk) and cc in the consultant.
5. Once PHF has given the go-ahead (via e-mail) you will then be able to arrange the support directly with the consultant at a mutually convenient time. We would normally expect this to take place either prior to, or at the start of the work that PHF is funding. The two days' support may be used as is most appropriate and can be split over several weeks. Whilst we anticipate that some of the support will be provided remotely, it is often helpful that the consultant's support will include at least one visit to your organisation. PHF will meet the consultant's travel expenses. If you are based in a location where there is not a consultant nearby, PHF will consider providing extra time for the consultant in addition to the two days on a case-by-case basis. *[April 2020 update – during the 'lockdown' period related to COVID-19 it is expected that all support will be conducted remotely].*

## **After the support**

6. When the work is complete, the consultant will produce a brief summary of what was done, actions to be taken next, and any recommendations. They will send this to both you and PHF. This will enable us to authorise payment and also to better understand the evaluation needs of the organisations we support.
7. The consultant then sends an invoice to PHF.
8. Please let us know via e-mail [evaluation@phf.org.uk](mailto:evaluation@phf.org.uk) if you intended to take up the support offer but were unable to proceed. It would also be useful to also understand the reasons why.
9. We will welcome your feedback on the usefulness of the scheme and how it could be improved. We will be in touch after the support about this.