



# KEI GUIDANCE FOR GRANT APPLICATIONS

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## KEI AND GRANT APPLICATIONS

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*Embedding impact plans in grant applications has become increasingly important. Many research funders are interested in understanding how the projects they support will not only advance basic research but also how they will contribute to broader economic or societal challenges. As a result, funders may require applicants to explain how their research will affect – and hopefully benefit – non-academic audiences and what plans the applicant will put in place to achieve that.*

Writing grant applications differs from writing for academic publications in several respects. A key consideration is that your application is likely to be evaluated by reviewers from a range of academic disciplines (not necessarily just your own). In addition, those reviewers will likely be evaluating multiple applications. For that reason, you should make your impact plan stand out by keeping your writing as straightforward as possible (avoiding jargon and explaining highly discipline-specific language or concepts); by clearly articulating your plans, hypotheses, and methods; and by making a strong case for why there is a need for the new research you are proposing to undertake.

This module provides you with a framework to start developing an impact plan. There is no single correct way to develop the impact sections of your grant application; however you will want to ensure that you have identified the following key elements before you begin writing.

- Stakeholders
- Information
- Activities
- Impacts

Two examples of impact plans are provided in this module. It may be helpful to refer to these as you think through the potential impact of your research. Blank worksheets are available at [lse.ac.uk/KEI](https://lse.ac.uk/KEI).

If you find that it is difficult to identify one or more elements (or boxes in the worksheets), you might want to think a bit more about potential impact before you start writing your plan.

This toolkit can help. For example, you might refer to the module on **Beneficiaries of Impact** if you find it is difficult to come up with a list of potential stakeholders or research users. Or you might refer to the module **Methods and Activities Supporting KEI** if you are struggling with identifying activities. Referring to the more detailed online guidance about methods and activities will help you decide which activities are really going to be useful and feasible and help you to effectively allocate resources to support these.

If you find it challenging to articulate the potential impacts of your project, a good first step is to identify organisations or people outside academia with whom you might have fruitful discussions about your research. Often this exercise will bring possible impacts to light as you think through areas of mutual interest.

In addition to identifying the four elements outlined above, you should also be able to explain how they link up: for each stakeholder you should be able to say what information they need, how you will share it (methods and activities), and what the impact(s) of sharing the information will be for all beneficiaries. While achieving impact is rarely as straightforward or linear as this model suggests, it is helpful to tell a clear and coherent story for the purposes of writing a grant application.

Please see the Research Division's website for a list of external and internal funding opportunities: [lse.ac.uk/researchfundingopps](https://lse.ac.uk/researchfundingopps).



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## GENERAL GUIDANCE

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### 1) Think about impact at the start of your project and plan for the exchange of knowledge throughout, rather than one-way dissemination of information from expert to practitioner at the end of the research.

**Why?** Projects where the researcher has early and active engagement with stakeholders are much more likely to result in impact. This is both because the project is informed by stakeholder interests/needs and because maintaining networks means there is an existing audience for the findings.

### 2) Understand the funder's KEI requirements, as well as its overarching mission.

**Why?** In order to ensure that your application is responsive to the funder's requirements, you should review any explicit guidelines concerning knowledge exchange, dissemination, public engagement, and impact. In addition, it is in your interest to familiarise yourself with the funder's mission and overarching objectives. Some funders might have a strong focus on pure research (and therefore less emphasis on KEI) while others might be strongly motivated by public engagement or knowledge exchange.

### 3) Be as specific as possible about your KEI plans and use active, rather than passive, language.

**Why?** Reviewers will evaluate your application (and its impact plans) not only on the strength of the underlying ideas and research methodology, but also on the perceived likelihood of success. Being specific and direct in your writing will make for a more compelling and persuasive impact plan. It is best to write your impact documents using active language and to avoid the use of hedge words and phrases wherever possible e.g., instead of "we will attempt to...", simply say "we will...".

### 4) Be realistic in developing your impact plans.

**Why?** Some projects may have relatively modest impact goals. In many cases (such as exploratory research or fellowships where the focus might be on career development or developing networks) this is appropriate. In such cases, it is better to be realistic about what you can achieve rather than making claims that a reviewer or funder may find unrealistic or unfeasible. Although the impact activities may be more limited in these instances, it is still crucial to ensure that they are as specific and clearly articulated as possible.

### 5) Bear in mind that public engagement, dissemination, and knowledge exchange are not the same as impact.

**Why?** Engaging with the public (or other non-academic audiences), disseminating research findings, and exchanging knowledge are all important parts of doing research and achieving research impact. However, they do not constitute impact in and of themselves. They are activities that can increase the likelihood that your research will have impact, but they should not be considered 'end goals' when writing applications for funders that require formal impact plans.

### 6) Discuss your project with staff in LSE's Research Division, share your ideas with fellow academics in your discipline and in other disciplines, and engage with people outside academia, including potential stakeholders or end users of your research.

**Why?** Your colleagues are likely to identify new potential impacts or help you strengthen ideas you have already developed. Think of this as an opportunity for internal peer review before submitting your application for external peer review.



# KEI PLAN – EXAMPLE WITH TWO STAKEHOLDERS

<p><b>STAKEHOLDERS</b> A first step is to identify broad stakeholder groups (top box), and then “drill down” to identify specific groups or people who are well-positioned to use your research in a meaningful way (second box)</p>	<p><b>UK &amp; international governments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ UN special rapporteurs</li> <li>▶ English and Scottish MPs, members of Welsh Assembly</li> </ul>	<p><b>Women’s organisations &amp; charities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Women’s Aid</li> <li>▶ British Pregnancy Advisory Service</li> </ul>
<p><b>INFORMATION</b> Next you will identify the information or knowledge your research is likely to generate that is most relevant to each group</p>	<p>Mapping of existing services for women across nation and comparison of research findings with obligations of government under national and international laws</p>	<p>Robust comparative data about currently available services for women and associated toolkits</p>
<p><b>ACTIVITIES</b> Then you will identify activities and events that allow you to exchange or disseminate research findings and knowledge</p>	<p>Initial workshop to gauge stakeholder needs, three policy research briefings to share findings and exchange</p>	<p>Development of toolkit and training videos, local events and bespoke training sessions</p>
<p><b>IMPACTS</b> Finally you will identify one or more potential impacts of sharing your research findings with each group</p>	<p>Policy changes for betterment of services for women in UK</p>	<p>Identification of areas where NGOs might contribute through further independent research or lobbying</p>

Chetan Bhatt, Sociology



# KEI PLAN – EXAMPLE WITH THREE STAKEHOLDERS

STAKEHOLDERS	Health-related agencies and decision-makers	Research funding bodies	General public and medical practitioners
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ NICE</li> <li>▶ What Works</li> <li>▶ EUnetHTA</li> <li>▶ European Medicines Agency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Medical Research Council</li> <li>▶ Economic and Social Research Council</li> <li>▶ Wellcome Trust</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Patients</li> <li>▶ Medical professionals</li> <li>▶ General public</li> </ul>
INFORMATION	Empirical findings, methodological design findings	Empirical findings, findings on relative costs of studies	General findings about reliability of observations versus clinical trials, recommendations for general public
ACTIVITIES	Presentation of empirical findings in workshop, discussion and KE with decision makers in development of methodological guidance	Targeted dissemination of study findings to research funders through tailored information sheets and policy briefings near end of research	Communicate progress and early results via social media channels and blogs; disseminate final study results and recommendations via press release
IMPACTS	Clarity around the types of questions for which RCTs and observational studies are to be preferred, improved decision making on the basis of strong evidence	More efficient allocation of scarce research funds, development of scientifically rigorous observational research studies	Improved health outcomes, improved accountability of decision-making at the health system level, more educated populace with respect to impact of study design on research findings

Huseyin Naci, LSE Health





# YOU CAN GO A LONG WAY WITH A LITTLE INVESTMENT

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Contact Research Division's  
KEI team to discuss your ideas.

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Visit the KEI portal for contact details of KEI professional services across LSE and to find a downloadable version of this toolkit.

 [lse.ac.uk/KEI](https://lse.ac.uk/KEI)