

# RCUK Digital Economy Theme 'Telling Tales of Engagement' Competition 2014



**Call type: Call for Expressions of Interest**

**Closing date: 12.00 noon on 19 November 2014**

**Related themes: Digital economy**

## Summary

The RCUK Digital Economy Theme (DET) is running a competition designed to help capture and promote the impact that your digital economy research is having. Three prizes of £10,000 are available to support researchers to further tell the story of research impact in an interesting and engaging way to a wider audience. The competition, which has been co-developed with the National Centre for Universities and Business (NCUB), is designed to produce very informative case study exemplars which can be used to help the wider research community develop understanding of the nature of a pathway to impact. It aims to encourage applicants to tell a story to describe the pathway to impact which actually occurred. This should be even more informative because understanding how impact arises is key to planning for future impact pathways. We want the stories to portray impact as including what capability has changed outside the institutions, and what benefits that exercising this capability change has then delivered. Each "Tale of Engagement" in showing how the actual impact arises and the evidence of the impact itself will thereby show clearly the link between the impact and the research. Choosing how to tell the story should reflect the nature of the story itself. We hope that giving the timeline of the whole story should stimulate thinking on more imaginative and illustrative ways to tell the tale of engagement and the resulting impact.

## Background

Research Councils UK defines impact as 'the demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy'. Impact embraces all the diverse ways that research-related skills benefit individuals, organisations and nations. These include (but are not limited to):

- Fostering global economic performance, and specifically the economic competitiveness of the United Kingdom;
- Increasing the effectiveness of public services and policy;
- Enhancing quality of life, health and creative output.

A key aspect of this definition is that impact must be demonstrable. It is not enough just to focus on activities and outputs that promote engagement, such as staging a conference or publishing a report. Evidence of the research impact is required, for example, that it has been taken up and used by policy makers or has led to improvements in services or business.

The 2012 Digital Economy Theme Impact Review (see <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/RCUK-prod/assets/documents/documents/RCUKDEconReport.pdf>) confirmed that the DE Theme's investments in research and skills are producing significant outcomes, outputs and impact and it has a leading role in the overall impact agenda. However, more work needs to be done to capitalise on this leading position. A key recommendation arising from the Impact Review was a desire for digital economy researchers to not only demonstrate the academic impact of their research, but also show the wider impact and what had changed as a result outside the institutions responsible for the research. Given the DE Theme's leading role in the overall impact agenda, the question is can the DE community help to disseminate better understanding of the overall impact process to other sections of the research community who are not so enlightened? This includes a better understanding of the Impact agenda, what makes successful impact and recognition of the breadth of their impact; it would help researchers set impact related goals and metrics and would clearly show the particular importance of the facilitation role in relation to cross disciplinary work and the skills needed for the facilitation role and the nature of the role. Helping the wider community to understand this might be helped through generating case studies. These could include providing guidance on developing pathways to impact and their implementation to be used across the wider research community.

## **Funding available**

Funding is available to support three awards, each for £10,000, to support an activity or activities that will allow you to tell your impact story to a wider audience. Activities could include (but are not limited to): video or podcast production, outreach activities to schools, public lecture series, artistic interpretation (sculpture, painting and dance) or specialised media training or attendance at a high profile, non-academic focused conference.

## **Scope of competition**

The focus of this competition is to capture the wider, non-academic impact that your digital economy research is having, and to offer you the chance to win funding to allow you to continue to tell your story in an interesting and engaging way to a wider audience.

It has been co-developed with the National Centre for Universities and Business (NCUB) to incorporate some of their findings on what factors help lead to successful impact. It is designed to produce informative case study exemplars which can be used to help the wider research community develop understanding of the nature of a pathway to impact. It aims to encourage applicants to tell a story to describe the pathway to impact which actually occurred. This should be even more informative because understanding how impact arises is key to planning for future impact pathways. We want the stories to portray impact as including what capability has changed outside the institutions, and what benefits that exercising this capability change has then delivered. Each "Tale of Engagement" in showing how the actual impact arises and the evidence of the impact itself will thereby show clearly the link between the impact and the research. Choosing how to tell the story should reflect the nature of the story itself. We hope that giving the timeline of the whole story should stimulate

thinking on more imaginative and illustrative ways to tell the tale of engagement and the resulting impact.

Projects will be up to 18 months in duration, starting from January 2015 onwards.

Entries to this competition must be able to demonstrate the impact of their digital economy research by answering the following questions:

- What is the research field?
- What were the outputs of the research?
- What has been the impact of these outputs? What has changed as a result of the research?
- Who/what did the research have impact upon?
- How does the entrant propose to 'tell the story' of the impact?
- What is the evidence of a change, how was it made, who or what has changed, and how did they do it ?
- What was the contribution of the research to the change and why was it important in terms of its contribution to making the change ?
- How did that contribution happen and who was involved in making it ?
- How was the opportunity identified and by whom ?
- What was the contribution of the impact story to on-going research ?
- What did you learn about pathways to impact from the story ?
- How did external partners contribute to the development of the impact and how did the researcher(s) contribute to the development of a business case so that the contribution was forthcoming.

The digital economy research described above does not need to be supported by the Research Councils UK.

## **Judging Criteria**

A Panel comprising of industrialists, academics and Research Council staff will assess the entries on the following criteria before selecting the winning entries:

- Strength of research impact evidence;
- Potential scope for further impact;
- Contribution of the case to spreading understanding of the nature of impact pathways;
- Originality and fit for purpose of activity/activities to tell impact story.

## Eligibility

### Entrants

All researchers employed or registered at a UK Higher Education Institute (HEI) who would be eligible for RCUK grant funding (<http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/funding/howtoapply/fundingguide/>) and **registered to attend the Digital Economy All Hands Conference: DE2014 'The application of digital innovation'** (<http://de2014.org/>) are eligible to apply. This includes research assistants, post-doctoral research assistants, PhD students, fellows, lecturers, professors.

Industrialists or international researchers registered to attend the conference interested in applying can do so by partnering with an eligible UK researcher as a named partner.

Applications are not limited to individuals, a team of researchers can apply but a lead person must be named. The prize money can be split between the team as appropriate.

For applicants not eligible for direct EPSRC grant funding (PhD students, post-doctoral researchers, research assistants) we expect an eligible advisor to be named on the application form along with that of the applicant.

### Research

The research must be within the remit of the RCUK Digital Economy Theme but does not necessarily need to have been supported by the DET core funding held by EPSRC. Ideally it should relate to previous Research Council support.

Entries will be accepted from researchers that have already used their research in an activity to demonstrate its impact, for example a video, public lecture, but who wish to widen the potential audience or explore complementary activity/activities that are new. Applications from users and the Third Sector are welcome, but note that an eligible named advisor is required and must be named on the application form along with the applicant.

### How to Apply

Please complete the form at the main call page (<http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/funding/calls/tellingtales/>), addressing the questions raised in "Scope of Competition" section and taking into account the "Guidance on completing proforma" notes below. Please ensure you include a single PowerPoint slide which summarises your entry in an interesting and engaging way.

**The deadline for receipt of proposals is 12:00 (noon) on Wednesday 19 November 2014.**

Entrants should note that the PowerPoint slide submitted will be viewable (after the deadline) on the All Hands Conference DE2014 'The application of digital innovation' (<http://de2014.org/>) and the DET website ([www.rcukdigitaleconomy.org.uk](http://www.rcukdigitaleconomy.org.uk)).

Therefore it is advised that:

- No material that is confidential is included in the application;
- The necessary permissions to share the information are sought in advance from the relevant people;
- The information contained may potentially be used for publicity material by the Research Councils and third parties. Notification of this will be given to entrants where possible.

### Successful Entries Only

- **Following the competition** : If you are successful, payment will be made to your HEI, who will then be responsible for issuing the award and ensuring funds are released as required. EPSRC reserve the right to retain 40% of the total funding until an account of the expenditure has been submitted from the University Finance Office.

### Guidance on completing proforma

Question	Guidance
Please describe the research field (max ~100 words)	Please describe the research area that you are working in.
Please describe the impact of the research (~1000 words)	Please describe the impact of the research detailing what this impact was; who or what it has had impact upon and how this that has been brought about and by whom as a result of the research. The story will provide evidence (quotes, conversations, meeting details, etc) to support the story of how the research impact arose.
Please describe how you propose to further 'tell the story' of the impact (~1000 words)	Please describe your ideas on how you want to use the £10k to tell the story of the impact that your research has had. Novel and innovative ways of telling the story are welcomed.
Please detail other related activities to demonstrate the impact of the research	Please detail any material that you have already produced that demonstrates the impact of your research e.g. video, poster.
PowerPoint slide to summarise research and its impact	Please provide one PowerPoint slide that describes your research and the impact that it has had in an interesting and engaging way. This slide may be displayed at the All Hands Conference and website.

## Key dates

Activity	Date
Closing date for the submission of entries	19 November 2014
Judging Panel meeting	04 / 05 December 2014
Announcement of winners	05 December 2014
Duration of award	Up to 18 months, starting from January 2015 onwards

## Contacts

If you have any questions, please contact:

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