



Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre

Guidance for Reviewers and Panellists

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Introduction

The Policy and Evidence Centre forms a part of the Creative Industries Clusters Programme. Led by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and funded through the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund, this is an ambitious research and development investment to establish up to eight Creative R&D Partnerships within existing creative clusters across the UK and a Policy and Evidence Centre (PEC).

The PEC will be independent but complimentary to the work of the Partnerships, providing insight and independent analysis on the creative industries that is of national and international significance. It will establish a clear research agenda for the creative industries, synthesise existing research and conduct and commission new research and analysis on key sectoral and sub-sectoral challenges that will be of direct benefit to policymakers and creative businesses.

A maximum of £8m will go towards the PEC, including an AHRC contribution of £6m from July 2018 to March 2023. Applications were invited from eligible HEIs or IROs, working in partnership with a consortium of relevant stakeholders including HEIs, IROs, trade associations and other key partner organisations, potentially including private sector research organisations.

The Assessment Process

The Policy and Evidence Centre is a single-stage process. The application will be peer reviewed by a select group of experts and following this the applicant will be invited to respond to their reviews. The

application, reviews and response will then be considered and discussed by an assessment and interview panel who will make funding recommendations to the AHRC. If successful, the proposal will continue to be refined in the first year of funding and so panel feedback and guidance will be given to the applicant to support this process.

The role of the Reviewer is:

- to conduct expert reviews of the submitted application against agreed criteria (see Annex 2). The reviews will be expected to contain a reasoned appraisal of the application and an overall score based on the agreed grading scale.
- to submit reviews to the AHRC by email on the provided review template by Thursday 8 March 2018. Please note that due to the timing of the panel meeting there can be no extensions to this deadline. As well as sharing the reviews with the assessment panel, the AHRC will also send the reviews to the applicant for a response before the panel.
- To offer advice on areas that the panel may wish to focus on at the interview stage.

The role of the PEC Assessment and Interview panel is to:

- read the call guidance, proposals, reviews and applicant response in advance of the panel meeting and interview
- collectively assess the proposal that has been submitted against the published criteria for the Programme (see Annex 2), drawing on the reviews submitted by the Reviewers;
- to ensure the reviews submitted by the reviewers are accurately reflected in the panel discussion at the panel meeting;
- to provide individual feedback and guidance regarding the proposal to inform areas for further discussion at interview and to support the project during its first year of funding
- to agree on a final grade and make a recommendation on whether the proposal should be funded, and whether the award should be conditional

The purpose of the interview is to:

- to assess the strength and rationale of the proposed partnership and the commitment of individual partners
- to discuss further areas of concern or areas needing further clarity noted during assessment by the Reviewers or Panellists

Timeline

Date	Activity
8 th Feb	Deadline for application
w/c 19 th Feb	Application sent to reviewers
8 th Mar	Deadline for reviews
w/c 19 th Mar	Feedback sent to applicant
4 th Apr	Deadline for applicant response

5 th Apr	Response and reviewer feedback collated for interview panel
13 th Apr	Meeting papers sent to panel
25 th Apr	Interview Panel Meeting
26 th Apr	PEC Interview
w/c 30 th Apr	Funding recommendations sent to AHRC Executive
May 2018	Announcement of successful proposals

Assessing an Application

Confidentiality

Reviewers and Panellists must agree to treat all information contained in the applications they are asked to review in the strictest confidence. This includes not only named individuals, research organisations and partners, but also any content and strategy contained within any of the proposal documents. They must also treat all information concerning the assessment of bids in the strictest of confidence.

Reviewers and Panellists are reminded that they are not permitted to make contact with any individual or organisation named within a proposal they are reviewing to discuss the content of the bid.

Conflicts of interest

It is vital that all reviewers and panellists are seen to be completely impartial at all stages of the review process. You should not take part in the assessment of any proposal where a conflict of interest may be construed.

AHRC officers endeavour to identify conflicts of interest and will not select you as an assessor if there is a clear conflict. Not all conflicts are obvious from the information we have available, if you consider you may have a conflict of interest you must contact the AHRC before proceeding with the review or panel role. It is important that you ensure you are eligible to review the proposal before undertaking the review or role as a panellist. If you are in any doubt about whether or not you should assess a proposal, please contact the AHRC using the following email: [REDACTED]

Assessment of Applications

All reviewers and panellists must read all the proposal materials for the bid as a single coherent document (see Annex 1 for list of content). In some instances, the applicant may have cross referenced sections, for example the Case for Support and Pathways to Impact. In addition, please ensure that you assess the application only on the information presented in the application documentation. The application must be assessed using the published assessment criteria (see Annex 2).

Reviewers and panellists are asked to focus their assessment on the quality of the proposal against the published criteria. Practical requirements concerning attachments, budget and eligibility criteria etc. will have been assessed by AHRC staff and corrected with the applicant.

All reviewers will be required to return all peer-reviews to the AHRC by the deadline of Thursday 8 March 2018. Due to the timing of the panel meeting there will be no extensions to this deadline.

Panel Meeting Process

The application will have been peer reviewed by six reviewers and the applicant asked to provide a response to the reviews; these documents will be made available to panellists before the meeting and interview. Panellists will be asked to moderate the reviews and response as well as bring their own expertise to the discussion. The Panel Chair will be asked to ensure that the panellist's discussions reflect the comments and observations of all peer-reviewers when they are discussing the proposal. The aim of the panel meeting is to discuss the proposal in the light of the reviews and PI response and agree the approach to the interview, including areas of concern to cover with the applicant and roles for each panellist. Each panel member will be asked for their comments on the proposal based around the criteria outlined at Annex 2 below.

Panellists are **not** required to complete an assessment form, but may find it helpful to do so in order to structure their comments on the proposal and aid discussion during the meeting. It would also be helpful to come to the meeting with an indication of how you would score the proposal for each of the criteria and overall. However, a final score will only be discussed and agreed following the interview.

When considering the reviewers' comments and Director Response, you are advised to use a 'compare and contrast' approach to identify consistencies and/or contradictions in the reviews and to note any significant issues. Points to note in particular are:

- any important issues identified by the reviewers which the Director has failed to address, or address adequately, in their Director Response form and that may form the basis of questions at interview
- any discrepancies between reviewers' comments
- where the reviewers' comments were of insufficient quality to help inform decision-making and further information is needed and could be sought through the interview
- You are advised to pay particular attention to the reviewers' comments rather than grades; grades are not always consistent with the comments, especially around the margins of a particular grade, e.g. one reviewer may think of an application as a 'high 4', but another will think of it as a 'low 5'

The panel meeting will also be an opportunity for panellists to discuss the background and objectives of the PEC and ask questions of the AHRC and Panel Chair.

Interview Process

Following the panel meeting, the panel will reconvene to interview the applicant and discuss each area of concern or interest agreed at the panel meeting. The interview will take the form of a brief presentation from the applicant, followed by questioning by the panellists.

Following the interview the panel will collectively agree a final score and recommendation of funding to the AHRC (see Annex 2 – Grade descriptors). The panel can also make further recommendations to the AHRC based on their assessment of the proposal. These could take the form of adjustments to costs (for example, if it is felt that a particular cost has not been justified), conditions of funding (these could either be conditions that need to be met before the award is confirmed or met during the course of the award), or feedback (advice from the panel which is not significant enough to amount to a condition but would be helpful to applicant in undertaking the award).

Annex 1: Format and content of application

- Je-S Form
- Case for Support (7 sides A4)
- Curriculum Vitae Compulsory for the PI, Co-I and any named researchers (max 2 sides A4 each)
- Publication Lists Compulsory (2 sides of A4)
- Justification of Resources Compulsory (2 sides of A4)
- Pathways to Impact Compulsory (2 sides of A4)
- Partnership agreement Compulsory (2 sides A4)
- Project Partner Letter of Support (Max 2 sides A4 each)
- Risk Management Statement (2 Sides A4)

Annex 2: Grade descriptors

6	<p>An outstanding application that sets out an innovative and ambitious strategy for the delivery of a Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre.</p> <p>It has the potential to meet and surpasses the key assessment criteria.</p> <p>It provides full, clear and convincing evidence and justification for all aspects of the proposal.</p> <p><i>It should be recommended for funding as a matter of the very highest priority.</i></p>
5	<p>An excellent proposal that offers a consistent and innovative strategy for delivery a Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre.</p> <p>There may still be a few weaknesses to be addressed but it demonstrates multiple areas of excellence which demonstrate its potential to fully meet the key assessment criteria.</p> <p>It provides full evidence and justification for the proposal</p> <p><i>It should be recommended as a matter of priority, but does not merit the very highest priority rating.</i></p>

4	<p>A very good proposal demonstrating a sound strategy for the provision of a high quality Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre.</p> <p>It meets all the key assessment criteria or has the potential to do so but has several areas that need further development.</p> <p>It provides good evidence and justification for the proposal, though could be strengthened following feedback from the panel in a small number of areas.</p> <p><i>It is worthy of consideration for funding.</i></p>
3	<p>A satisfactory proposal in terms of the strategy for provision of a Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre.</p> <p>It has a number of strengths, and/or good components or dimensions, but which lacks the innovation and novel approach shown by more highly rated proposals.</p> <p>It satisfies at least minimum requirements in relation to the key assessment criteria.</p> <p>However, there are a number of areas of weakness or areas where the evidence or case made for meeting the scheme criteria is unconvincing.</p> <p><i>In a competitive context, the proposal is not considered of sufficient priority to recommend for funding.</i></p>
2	<p>A proposal of inconsistent quality which has some good components or dimensions, but also has significant weaknesses or flaws in one or more of the key assessment criteria.</p> <p><i>The proposal is not of sufficient quality and it is not recommended for <u>funding</u>.</i></p>
1	<p>A poor quality proposal that fails to set out a convincing case for the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre.</p> <p>It does not meet many of the assessment criteria for the scheme.</p> <p><i>It is not suitable for <u>funding</u>.</i></p>