

# **Nesta Policy & Research, Research Grant: Data Driven Methods for Mapping ‘Below the Radar’ Activity in the ‘Social Economy’**

## **1. Introduction**

Nesta’s Policy & Research team undertakes a range of projects and also funds others to develop new ideas, different approaches, and explore issues that help meet Nesta’s objectives. This grant is for research exploring new data driven methods for mapping what is often referred to as the ‘Below the Radar (BTR)’ organisations, small voluntary organisations, community groups and more informal or semi-formal activities in the third sector which in most cases aren’t represented in any formal register or database but make up large amounts of the activity happening in the third sector / civil society / the social economy.

These grants are about exploring new methods for researching and understanding BTR activity, and we are therefore looking to award up to five research grants, worth £10K each.

### **1.1 To whom this call for proposals is relevant (eligibility to apply)**

We welcome applications from Universities and research organisations, charities, companies and consultancies. We will not fund individuals.

### **1.2 What we are looking to fund**

The end product from the research should be one or more methods for capturing new types of data about BTR organisations and examples of the application of these in practice in the UK. The lessons from the research should be captured in a short paper. Alongside this the data and insights from the data analysis should be visualised (see more detail about visualisations below).

### **1.3 What we offer**

We will provide funding up to £10k per proposal.

This will be grant funding – we will not own the IP to the work, although, as a charity, Nesta has an interest in widely disseminating the findings from research and projects it supports for public benefit and therefore Nesta may publish and republish findings for this purpose. Please note that VAT is not payable on grants.

## **2. What we are looking to explore with the research grants**

There is a wealth of activity in the UK of people coming together to deliver projects and activities outside those delivered by mainstream public services that achieve public and social value, from running shelters for the homeless to a gardening project for people living with a mental health condition. These activities are organised and resourced in a variety of ways, from people giving small financial donations to voluntary activities such as offering to cook a meal for people living in isolation

through an online collaborative platform, skills sharing through local timebanks, volunteering for a charity or providing peer support in hospitals. Just as there is variation in the types of activity, the types of organisations involved in these activities have very different structures, from large national charities, to very small informal loose organised community groups.

We recognise that *Third sector*<sup>j</sup>, *Not for Profit Sector*,<sup>i</sup> *Civil Society*<sup>iii</sup> and *Social Economy*<sup>iv</sup> are just some of the terms often used to define all or part of these organisations and their activities, and the part of society where they operate. Substantial research has already been undertaken into some of these areas, in particular on the registered charity and social enterprise landscape. For the purpose of this research we don't rely on one definition but instead set the following criteria for including organisations or networks in the study, that they:

- Are non-governmental
- Are value-driven
- Seek a social impact with their activities
- Principally reinvest any financial surpluses to further social, environmental or cultural objectives.<sup>v</sup>

Through research projects, registries and data bases such as the Charity Commission<sup>vi</sup>, The Civil Society Almanac<sup>vii</sup>, The National Survey of Charities and Social Enterprises and the Third Sector Research Centre<sup>viii</sup> there is already a wealth of knowledge about the more traditional organisations and activities that meet these criteria, such as registered charities or social enterprises. This data forms the basis for much of our understanding of activity taking place in the sector.

However, as pointed out in numerous studies there is still a substantial gap in our knowledge about the activity of what is often referred to as the 'Below the Radar (BTR)' organisations. This includes the small voluntary organisations, community groups and more informal or semi-formal activities across civil society / the third sector / the social economy, which in most cases aren't represented in any formal register or data base. A one off crowd funding campaign or community groups loosely organised via social media, such as neighbourhood watch or friends of the park groups are two examples of what this could be.

Therefore, the primary aim in providing these research grants is to understand BTR activity in civil society / the third sector / the social economy, particularly through using data driven research methods. Our intention is to support projects where the end product from the research should be one or more methods for capturing new types of data about BTR organisations and examples of the application of these in practice in the UK. The rationale for this focus, is that while there has been little research into the informal groups and networks, there is a general acceptance that these play an important role in delivering activities with a social impact, but very little is currently known about how they work and their exact contribution.<sup>ix x</sup>

We recognise that a focus on data driven methods will exclude BTR organisations, groups and networks that have no online activity and/or don't register any data about their activities in any accessible data sets. However, whilst acknowledging this, we emphasize that the purpose of this research is on exploring the potential of using new data driven methods such as web scraping, social media and big data analysis to provide a more refined picture of BTR activity.

### **3. Project Phases**

We envisage that the projects we fund will be split in to two phases, although we will consider alternative approaches to undertaking the research.

#### **3.1 Phase one**

We would anticipate that phase one will explore, experiment with and ultimately develop different data driven methods for mapping organisations and networks that meet the aforementioned criteria. We expect there will be little data available about informal unregistered networks and community groups, therefore we would expect the main focus of task one should be on developing new methods for capturing data about these. A certain amount of investigation and development would be required into how to gain this information quantitatively through new methods. Examples of data that could be interesting to capture about BTR organisations through these new data driven methods could be on the size of organisations and networks, number of volunteers / members, reach (Such as how many people are affected by the organisations or networks and their activities), type of activity, types and size of organisations and networks, geographical location and spread. One possible solution is the use of more innovative 'big' data collection techniques, web scraping or social media analysis. We would also be interested in funding scaleable models for self-identification and creating of a database by accretion, rather than seeking and identifying all data sources at once.

#### **We would anticipate the main outputs from phase one to be**

- An analysis of the most appropriate methods and techniques available to collect the data required.
- New innovative methods for collecting data, where existing methods won't enable the data collection required.

#### **3.2 Phase two:**

With the methodology for capturing data on different types of organisations and networks in hand, we would anticipate the main task in phase two to be how to deploy this methodology to capture sufficient and relevant data.

While the focus of the data collection would be on methods for capturing data on a national level, we are open to supporting projects that develop and prototype new methods for capturing data to focus on a smaller geographical area, such as a city or region.

Ultimately we anticipate that phase two will use the captured data to analyse and visualize and map organisations and informal networks.

#### **We envisage phase two generating two main outputs**

1. Data analysis and visualisation: As part of the data analysis we would like to support research that results in a number of visualisations that illustrates key findings and trends. This could include a geographical map and/or visualisations of organisations and networks analysed, their characteristics, where activity is strong and weak, clusters or networks of activity etc.
2. Open Data: Where possible, we would like supported projects to make the data captured in phase two of the research available as an open dataset set for anyone to access.

### 3.4 Weighting of the different phases of work

The table below outlines how we envisage the weighting across the different phases. As we are particularly interested in funding the development and application of new methods for capturing data, we anticipate the majority of focus on work happening in phase one of the research.

| Weighting of the different phases of work |     |
|---|-----|
| Phase 1                                   | 65% |
| Phase 2                                   | 35% |

## 4. Coordination with existing research

We are looking to fund projects where the end goal of the research is to support the development of tested data driven methods for capturing data on ‘Below the Radar’ activity, which can be presented and analysed alongside existing data sets on civil society / third sector / social economy. Nesta is committed to building on insights from the research, in our work with researchers and policy makers interested in the role of BTR organisations in delivering social impact, including how to support growth, sustainability and innovation within civil society / the third sector / the social economy. For this reason we expect the research to coordinate with existing research projects and programmes such as the NCVO Civil Society almanac and the TSRC, which are researching size and activity in the formalised part of civil society / third sector / social economy.

We expect any research funded to build on lessons from work that has already happened in the field, and actively engage these organisations in the scoping and development of this research project.

## 5. Working with Nesta

Nesta’s Policy and Research team has already developed significant knowledge in this field and is interested in working with grant recipients on scoping and developing the research, as well as undertaking the analysis and development of the final study report in order to maximise the value of research findings.

In view of what we already know, a significant part of this investigation will involve communicating with the organisations and research teams interested in this research. Building on this Nesta hopes this research and its findings will stimulate a debate around research and research methods for understanding BTR activity and the role of BTR organisations in social innovation. We therefore expect grantees to participate in events and roundtables where we will discuss this. Any reasonable costs of organising and running these events will be carried by Nesta.

## 6. How to propose a project

Submissions should be single-spaced, in 12-point font and on A4 paper. We would like proposals of no more than four pages, outlining:

- Your idea

- Explaining why the proposal needs funding (e.g. how it will address the questions and challenges described in the call on researching BTR organisations and what impact it will have)
- What methods the project will develop and use
- How much it will cost and any other support you are seeking from others
- A realistic timeline for undertaking the research.
- Track record in this area, including expertise and skills in analysing data and developing innovative methods for capturing data
- Full CVs of the people who will be working on the project and a description of the applicants' organisation(s) should be provided as additional appendices.

Please send your proposals by email to [research@nesta.org.uk](mailto:research@nesta.org.uk)

Due to the high volume of applications expected we will not be able to offer feedback on unsuccessful proposals.

### **6.1 Evaluation and Selection criteria**

Successful applicants will be selected on the following criteria:

- Quality of the proposal
- Originality, innovativeness and level of experimentation in the proposed research methods
- Track record of the team and organisation(s) in delivering data driven research

### **6.2 Timetable**

6<sup>th</sup> February 2014 - Call opens

4th March 2014 - Call closes

5<sup>th</sup> March – 14th March 2014 - review and shortlist applications, interviews with shortlisted teams

15<sup>th</sup> March 2014: Decision on funding, contracting begins

End March 2014: Projects start

We expect the project to conclude within a year of its start.

#### **Some guidelines:**

- Your proposal needs to be for public benefit and in line with [our charitable objects](#) and your final research funded by the grant will need to be made public/published openly as a condition of funding, for example, in Working Paper format
- If applicable, all underlying datasets should also be made publically available for further research
- Whilst we will consider applications for projects that have additional funding, all proposals should demonstrate that Nesta funds are sought for a clearly defined, discrete piece of research, which will have an identifiable outcome on completion of the Nesta-funded component of the research

- You must keep accurate records of your expenditure of the grant and comply with Nesta's monitoring requirements. Further details can be found in clause 2.3 to 2.4 of the Standard Grant Conditions released with this call.

For further information and guidance, please email [research@nesta.org.uk](mailto:research@nesta.org.uk)

**Call for Proposals for Data Driven Methods for Mapping 'Below the Radar' Activity in the Social Economy Grants: Terms and Conditions**

These terms and conditions govern the Call for Proposals from Nesta ("Nesta" or "we") for data driven methods for mapping 'below the radar' activity in the social economy grants ("the Programme"). Please read these terms and conditions carefully before submitting an application to the Programme. By submitting an application, you accept these terms and conditions and agree to comply with them. The lead organisation identified in the application will be responsible for compliance with these terms and conditions by its partners and anyone else involved in its proposal.

**1. What happens after you apply?**

- 1.1 We will assess any applications received by the deadline set out in the Call for Proposals and which satisfy the eligibility criteria set out in the Call for Proposals, against the selection criteria set out in the Call for Proposals. As outlined in the Call for Proposals, we currently intend to inform successful applicants of our decision by 15 March 2014.
- 1.2 The decision of Nesta about eligibility, selection of applicants, and the amount and type of support to be provided (if any), shall be final. We can only fund applications which meet our charitable objects and commit to publish any research funded by Nesta.
- 1.3 Any financial or other support awarded by Nesta will be subject to satisfaction of all relevant legal and regulatory requirements, signature of appropriate legal documentation and completion of appropriate milestones. Any grants awarded will be subject to Nesta's Standard Grant Terms for Policy and Research Grants released alongside the Call for Proposals, which are non-negotiable. Nesta may amend these template grant terms as it deems appropriate prior to signing. Financial support provided by Nesta may not cover all the costs of your project and VAT is not payable on grants.
- 1.4 You and your partners (if any) must bear any costs relating to the submission of your application. You must take independent legal advice if you are concerned about these terms and conditions or your participation in the Programme. Unless otherwise stated, each applicant may make only one application to the Programme in any financial year.
- 1.5 We reserve the right to refuse to accept any applications; to suspend or withdraw the Call for Proposals or the Programme at any time; to vary the form and substance of the Programme or extend the deadlines; to reduce or increase the number of applicants selected or the amount of support available under the Programme; and/or to reject any proposal or withdraw a place on the Programme if you are in breach of these terms and conditions or in the event of an actual or potential conflict of interest. If any selected applicant subsequently withdraws or is withdrawn from the Programme, we may select a replacement applicant, but will not be obliged to do so.
- 1.6 We reserve the right to vary the Call for Proposals or these terms and conditions at any time and at our sole discretion. Variations will take effect from the date they are posted on our website so you must check this page regularly to see the current version. If you provide us with a contact email address, we will aim to notify you of any changes.

**2 Your promises to us**

By submitting an application for the Programme, you confirm on behalf of yourself and your partners that:

- you satisfy the eligibility criteria set out in the Call for Proposals and all information and materials provided to Nesta by you or your partners are true, accurate and complete and you will notify us immediately of any changes to information or materials provided
- you have provided us with all information which might reasonably be thought to be relevant or necessary for us to consider your application

- you and your partners have, or will obtain as required, all authorisations, registrations, licences, consents and permissions necessary to submit your application, carry out your proposal and comply with these terms and conditions
- in participating in the Programme, you and your partners will act lawfully, ethically and in good faith and will comply fully with equality and anti-bribery legislation and with any other applicable laws, regulations, guidelines and codes of practice
- neither you nor any of your partners has any actual or potential conflict of interest with Nesta (including with our trustees, officers or employees) in making your application or complying with these terms and conditions and you will immediately inform us if you become aware of any such conflict of interest

### **3 Use of Information**

- 3.1 We will use information which you or your partners provide, including contact details for your staff and your partners' staff, to administer and evaluate the Programme. We may share this information with anyone helping us to run or evaluate the Programme, subject to appropriate obligations of confidentiality and data protection. We will also let you know about other Nesta events and activities unless you inform us that you don't want to receive this.
- 3.2 We may carry out publicity and promotion for the Programme and publish our evaluation of the Programme. Any publicity which you or your partners wish to carry out in relation to the Programme must acknowledge Nesta and be approved by us in advance.

### **4 Limitation of Liability**

- 4.1 We will not be liable to you, your partners or anyone else in respect of any direct or indirect loss, economic loss or loss of opportunity arising as a result of your application to the Programme, any breach by Nesta of these terms and conditions or any reliance by you on any statement made or advice given by us, our partners or contractors. We do not make any warranty about the accuracy or completeness of the information provided by Nesta about the Programme. Any dispute between you and/or your partners and/or any other applicant must be resolved between you and independently of Nesta.
- 4.2 Without prejudice to Clause 4.1, our maximum liability to you or anyone else under these terms and conditions (if any) will be limited to £500. Nothing in these terms and conditions shall exclude or limit our liability for death or personal injury caused by negligence or fraudulent misrepresentation made by us.

### **5 Governing Law and Jurisdiction**

These terms and conditions shall be governed by and interpreted in accordance with the laws of England and Wales and both parties hereby submit to the exclusive jurisdiction of the English courts.

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<sup>i</sup> Mohan, J (2011): Mapping the Big Society: perspectives from the Third Sector Research Centre.  
<http://www.tsrc.ac.uk/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=izLuarcAwMs%3d&tabid=830>

Under the radar? Researching unregistered and informal third sector activity. Dr Jenny Phillimore, Angus McCabe and Dr Andri Soteri-Proctor (2013). Third Sector Research Centre.

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/not-for-profit-advice-services-in-england>  
*Structuring not for profit operations in the UK*. Julian Smith and Elizabeth Jones (2012). Farrar & Co.

<sup>iii</sup> *Civil society organisations and service provision*. Andrew Clayton, Peter Oakley, John Taylor (2000). United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.

*UK civil society almanac 2012*. Jenny Clarke, David Kane, Karl Wilding, Peter Bass (2012). National Council of Voluntary Organisations.

<sup>iv</sup> *Towards a new social economy*. Emily Bolton, Louise Savell (2010). Social Finance Ltd.

*The social economy in the European Union*. Jose Luis Monzon Campos, Rafael Chaves Avila (2007). The International Centre of Research and Information on the Public, Social and Cooperative.

<sup>v</sup> This criterion is closely aligned with that used in the National Survey of Third Sector Organisations but unlike that used by the NSTS the criteria for this research also includes informal / unregistered organisations and *networks*.

<sup>vi</sup> <http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/>

<sup>vii</sup> <http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/almanac>

<sup>viii</sup> <http://www.tsrc.ac.uk/>

<sup>ix</sup> See 'Mapping the big society: Perspectives from the third sector research centre. Third Sector Research Centre Under the radar? Researching unregistered and informal third sector activity Dr Jenny Phillimore, Angus McCabe and Dr Andri Soteri-Proctor. Third Sector Research Centre

<sup>x</sup> [http://epapers.bham.ac.uk/796/1/WP29\\_BTR\\_Literature\\_review\\_-\\_McCabe,\\_Phillimore,\\_Mayblin\\_Jan\\_10.pdf](http://epapers.bham.ac.uk/796/1/WP29_BTR_Literature_review_-_McCabe,_Phillimore,_Mayblin_Jan_10.pdf)