

# Expression of interest

# Title: Opportunity Areas – Place-Based Evaluation

**Project reference: DFERPPU/2019/024**

**Deadline for expressions of interest: 17.00 on Tuesday 3rd September 2019**

## Summary

We are seeking expressions of interest for the **place-based strand** of the Opportunity Areas Evaluation. This evaluation seeks to ascertain the effectiveness of adopting a ‘place-based’ approach to delivering educational interventions. This will principally involve qualitative research across the 12 Opportunity Areas. It will build the evidence base on the extent to which location/place, (e.g. rural, coastal or urban regions) affects the implementation, deliverability and impact of local interventions. The final research findings will help inform the department in tackling similar educational priorities in different areas or regions.

This expression of interest was posted on **20th August 2019**

## Background

In October 2016 the then Secretary of State announced a new [social mobility package](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/social-mobility-package-unveiled-by-education-secretary). At the heart of this strategy is the Opportunity Areas programme, a targeted three-year, £72 million support programme aimed at improving the life chances of young people in 12 local areas which typically face entrenched and widespread social, economic and cultural challenges. The first six Opportunity Areas announced in October 2016 were Oldham, North Yorkshire Coast[[1]](#footnote-1), Derby, Norwich, West Somerset and Blackpool. In January 2017, [a further six Opportunity Areas](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/education-secretary-announces-6-new-opportunity-areas) were announced: Stoke-on-Trent, Doncaster, Ipswich, Fenland and East Cambridgeshire, Hastings and Bradford. Nine of the 12 OAs are located in urban areas while three are located in rural areas.

The programme has adopted a type of place-based approach whereby DfE staff work both centrally, within DfE, and locally within the OAs, to develop and implement a locally-focused programme targeted and tailored to local issues. This emphasis on local autonomy and locally developed solutions is a central tenet of the opportunity area programme and the place-based evaluation will be essential in providing the evidence base about what works in this context.

The place-based evaluation will sit within a wider multi-stranded evaluation designed to examine the effectiveness and impact of the OA programme.

## Overall evaluation

The key research aims for the wider evaluation are:

1. To assess whether the increased focus, funding and accountability an Opportunity Area receives is associated with an improvement in educational and related outcomes, relative to similar areas which are not Opportunity Areas.
2. Build the evidence base on social mobility interventions, examining what has worked within Opportunity Areas and identifying interventions which have the potential to be implemented in different areas or regions.
3. Understand what works in creating and delivering a sustainable place-based approach to tackling educational issues at a local level. This includes both understanding whether a place-based approach has benefits in effecting systemic improvement and building the evidence base on what works in particular types of locations, e.g. coastal or geographically isolated locations.

The evaluation consists of the following strands:

* Impact analysis – examining effects on educational and related outcomes
* Cost benefit analysis – on the financial, economic and social dimensions of the OA programme.
* Individual intervention level evaluations – evaluations of a sample of five locally commissioned projects within the Opportunity Areas
* Place-based evaluation – analysis of implementing a place-based approach and its impact.

This expression of interest is focused on the place-based strand of the evaluation, which will primarily look to address research aim 3, though may also touch on aim 1.

## Place-based evaluation aims

The evaluation being tendered should

* explore the progress of the Opportunity Areas programme across the remainder of its implementation (until 2020)
* examine what works to promote social mobility in different places
* assess the effectiveness of a place-based approach.

The primary aims of the place-based qualitative evaluation strand are:

* To examine what has worked in different Opportunity Areas and why. Potential areas to explore include the impact of existing provision and networks on delivery; how and why progress has differed across priority areas (eg. mental health, FE, early years etc.); the distinct impact of capacity building; and the contribution of increased access to other forms of funding.
* To examine the key local challenges different areas face in promoting social mobility, and the effect these have had on implementation, progress and outcomes.
* To understand the effect of a placed-based approach in solving key educational challenges - how it impacts upon the selection, implementation and effectiveness of solutions to common educational issues, and what types of locations are conducive to a successful place-based approach.

## Previous place-based OA research

This research will build on published outputs from the OA programme and other existing qualitative research including:

* A process evaluation of the first year of the OA. This has been published and can be accessed [here](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/747975/2018-09-04_OA-process-eval_FINAL.pdf)
* One wave of qualitative data collection based on interviews with OA partnership board members, looking at the progress and delivery of the Opportunity Area programme.
* One wave of qualitative data collection with delivery teams on 15 projects covering five themes across the OA.

The two waves of data collection will be incorporated and published as part of this place-based evaluation. Data from these waves will be made available to the successful bidder to build upon the existing evidence base.

## Possible evaluation approach

We expect that this strand of the evaluation to take a primarily qualitative approach, with interviews conducted across the 12 opportunity areas.

Previous place-based OA research has been conducted through large scale waves of data collection, but we expect subsequent research will take a more agile approach, with small more frequent data collection points to reflect the constantly changing nature of the programmes being evaluated.

Previous research has focused on the partnership boards and DfE staff members. We expect this research to explore the views of other stakeholders in each OA - e.g. schools/teachers, employers, FE/post-16, mental health practitioners, pupils and parents.

The fieldwork will be expected to run from October 2019 until August 2020. The contractor would then have until March 2021 to pull together research findings into a final report. For information, we estimate that the work will cost approximately £500,000.

### Outputs

An overarching research report that pulls together the findings from the place-based evaluation together with the previous data collection waves outlined above. This report will include a process evaluation for the programme and an exploration of the role of place.

## Timing

* Deadline for EOIs – 5pm 3rd September 2019
* Invitation to Tender (ITT) issued – 9th September 2019
* Deadline for ITT submission – 30th September 2019
* Interviews (if required) – w/c 7th October 2019
* Contract signed – Estimated 25th October 2019

## Assessment criteria

Expressions of interest will be assessed against the following criteria:

* Understanding of the Department’s requirement, including an outline of the proposed approach to conducting a complex place-based qualitative evaluation (40%).
* Evidence of expertise and experience of the broader methodologies to be used; of research with schools and within the education system; and with senior school and education stakeholders (30%).
* Evidence of capacity to deliver high quality research of a similar scale (30%)

CVs and references are not required at this stage.

Expressions of interests submitted must be no more than 1,000 words overall.

| **Closing date for EOIs: 5pm on 3rd September**  **Send your EOI form to:** [**chloe.smith@education.gov.uk**](mailto:chloe.smith@education.gov.uk) **and** [**andrew.zacharia@education.gov.uk**](mailto:andrew.zacharia@education.gov.uk) |
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## How to submit an expressions of interest

You must submit an expression of interest (EOI) in order to be considered to be invited to tender. To do so, please complete the NEW EOI Form which can be found under attachments. A submission of an EOI does not guarantee an invitation to tender and the Department does not routinely advise organisations that they have not been successful in being invited to tender. Feedback is however available on request.

All contracts are let on the basis of the Department’s Terms and Conditions, also attached. You are encouraged to check these before submitting your expression of interest, as these form part of your contractual obligations.

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1. Since this initial announcement, we are now referring to the Opportunity Area covered by the Scarborough local authority district as the North Yorkshire Coast Opportunity Area, to better distinguish between references to Scarborough town and the wider area. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)