



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

—
Sydney Policy
Lab

Call for Expressions of Interest:

Research Leads



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The Sydney Policy Lab is seeking Research Leads from any Department, School or Faculty of the University to help direct its new program of collaborative research for one year in the first instance commencing in 2019. Research Leads will be appointed in each of the three priority areas of the Lab – equality, belonging and power – and may apply as a group for each area if desired.

Each Research Lead area will be equipped with a budget of up to \$75,000 p.a. to be spent in a manner designed to produce world-class policy-oriented, collaborative research under the heading of any one of Lab's current three priority areas. These programs of research could include, but are not limited to, any of the following: webinars, workshops, policy debates, conferences, retreats, policy masterclasses, policy experiments, immersive arts experiences, digital discussions. All such programs should be expected to result in highly-regarded conventional academic research outputs and in more publicly-facing policy-oriented outputs.

In addition to the research funding, each Research Lead will be permitted to draw on the broader resources of the Policy Lab, including its new event and office spaces, training and education programs, strategic consultancy services, communications support and event coordination assistance.

Research Leads will be expected to conduct their work for one year in the first instance, with the position potentially renewable annually for up to a maximum of two additional years.

The Lab's Priorities

The Sydney Policy Lab builds new, creative and dynamic partnerships between the world-class researchers at the University of Sydney, politicians, public servants, business leaders, policy advocates, campaigners and members of the broader community. It does so because such broad-based collaborations are uniquely positioned to unlock the most pressing public policy challenges facing Australia in a time of rapid, disruptive and far-reaching change.

The Sydney Policy Lab's program for 2019 is entitled *transforming ideas*. It aims to generate new policy-relevant ideas capable of responding to the enormous, disruptive economic, social and political change currently on the horizon. The Lab approaches these issues through the following three key priority areas:

Equality: the recent trend towards greater inequality, not just between the traditional socio-economic groups but also between generations, cultural and ethnic groups and regions of the country is now beyond dispute. What is less clear, however, is what is driving that trend and what might be done to ameliorate or reverse it. Questions in this area might include, but are not limited to: Is technology, and especially the rise of Artificial Intelligence and machine learning, a cause for optimism or pessimism? Are global companies who are driven by an orthodox understanding of shareholder value now being challenged by alternative models of ownership and control, as populations seek to reverse the inegalitarian trends of the last thirty years? What role do education and health services have in responding to the rise in inequality? Are new options like Universal Basic Income a distraction from concrete programs for change or a real possibility?

Belonging: alongside the rise of economic inequality and political distrust, there has been a dramatic upswing in the dominance of what have been variously called cultural and national questions or questions of belonging and identity. These concerns include, but are not restricted to, patterns of migration and social integration, the so-called "culture wars" that accompany public debate on gay marriage, the place of religion in society, changing understandings of gender and related concerns. They encompass also the relationship between place and peoples and the sense of social erosion and alienation currently reported in countries across the world. They further encompass questions of the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Lab's work will focus on many of these areas, and others, including themes related to the place of higher education itself in challenging traditional understandings of belonging and identity.

Power: faith in the established institutions of democracy is in precipitous decline in Australia, as it is in almost all of the developed democracies across the world. In the 2018 global Edelman Trust barometer, the level of distrust in politicians in Australia was surpassed only by Russia. We have witnessed elsewhere the electoral consequences of this decline, with the rise of populist political movements and the shattering of conventional parties on both the left and the right, but we are yet to see the deep and broad implications of this shift in Australia. This part of our work will focus on what changes could be made to politics, broadly considered, to reverse this trend towards populism and distrust. Questions in this area might include: Do new participatory models, such as the participatory budgeting and city-based devolution popular in an increasing number of developed democracies, hold out hope? Are there more radical alternatives to conventional representative politics emerging? Is it possible even to talk of a period of post-democracy? How might people from outside of the social and political elite play a role in shaping a new political settlement? How might the public service itself react?

In developing research and partnerships in each of these three areas, we will especially welcome activities that stretch beyond the traditional modes of public policy research and analysis, including insights from the humanities and the creative arts and ideas originating from science, environment, technology, engineering and mathematics.

The Research Lead Role

Each Research Lead will work with the Policy Lab Director to allocate up to \$75,000 p.a. to design and deliver a collaborative program of research in their thematic area for the calendar year 2019. Funds can be used for any activity that directly supports the program of research, and all activities are expected to uphold and boost the dynamism of the partnerships underpinning the program.

EOIs are invited both from individuals and from groups, and in the latter case a clear sense of how responsibilities will be shared must be communicated.

As part of the role, Research Leads will be asked to join the Sydney Policy Lab Leadership Team, which will require attendance at one team meeting per month on average. Research Leads will be appointed initially for a period of one year, renewable for up to two additional years.

In addition to funding, the Sydney Policy Lab will provide project management support, ongoing advice and mentoring, event management support, and access to an open plan collaborative space in the newly refurbished R. D. Watt Building. The Lab will also provide intellectual guidance and support for further grant submissions, although it is important to note that the Lab cannot offer technical administrative support for the submission of grant bids or for the administration of successful grant bids.

Eligibility

All continuing and fixed term University of Sydney academic staff and affiliates are eligible to apply, from any Faculty, School or Department, any methodological background and at any stage of career. It is expected that Research Leads will have an established track record of amplifying minority voices and of carrying others along with them in a range of professional pursuits. Researchers should discuss their expression of interest with their Heads of Department or School in advance and will require formal support from the relevant Head before taking up the role.

Expressions of Interest

In order to express interest in becoming a Research Lead, researchers are asked to send a letter of **not more than two pages** along with an up-to-date CV, not later than **Friday 20th July, 2018 at 5pm**.

The letter should outline the shape of a program of work that could:

- Generate bold new ideas of relevance to one of the thematic priority areas of equality, belonging or power
- Deepen relationships between University researchers and the policy community, broadly considered, including local, state or federal government, community groups, campaigners, media commentators and industry.
- Create new, dynamic, creative partnerships between University researchers and groups or individuals who have not previously had a deep or prolonged relationship with the University
- Generate high-quality academic and non-academic outputs, including publications and digital resources
- Enhance the University's reputation as an innovator in public policy

The letter should also explain how the role of Research Lead is compatible with other research, teaching and administrative obligations. EOIs are invited both from individuals and from groups, in the latter case a clear sense must be communicated of how responsibilities will be shared.

A full budget is not required at this stage, but thought should be given to what is achievable within a budget that ranges between \$50,000 and \$75,000.

Preference will be given to programs and individuals that contribute to the development of multi-disciplinary research in accordance with the University's Strategy 2016-20. We particularly welcome applications from early and mid-career researchers, as well as applications that address questions of gender balance, and participation from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and ethnically and linguistically diverse communities.

Next Steps

Before submitting your EOI, please watch [this video](#) or visit our YouTube channel to learn more from the Sydney Policy Lab's Director, Marc Stears.

EOI's will be reviewed by an independent panel. Shortlisted candidates will then be invited to discuss their plans in more detail with the Director of the Policy Lab, the broader Policy Lab team and an expert panel comprising internal and external representatives.

The Lab aims to appoint Research Leads by the end of September 2018 and research programs will commence at the beginning of the academic year 2019.

For further information and to submit an EOI please contact

policy.lab@sydney.edu.au

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Contact us

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