



Leading Learning through
Action-led Research and Innovation

Guidance on how to apply

The Trustees of the Laurel Trust wish to invite applications from collaborations of schools or networks of schools, early years' settings and educational organisations working in areas of multiple deprivation or educational disadvantage to bid for funding to undertake research or innovation linked to school improvement. For the year 2018-19 the Trustees have chosen as their focus SEND in primary, early years and in special schools/settings with primary-aged children.

The intention of the Laurel Trust is to create strategic partnerships with schools to secure improvement in the quality of teaching and learning and leadership thereby widening opportunity and reducing disadvantage. It wishes to do this through school-based action-led research and evidence-based developments which focus on securing equity and diminishing the difference. The Laurel Trust expects the schools taking part to create wider learning communities which reflect the trust's inclusive values of: equality, belonging, rights of participation, diversity, respect, hope, trust, compassion, courage and joy.

Low social mobility and lack of educational opportunity is one of the biggest social challenges of our time. There is a very large research-base to show that children from families living in poverty do less well in early life, fall behind their peers in school and have more employment and mental health problems in adult life. This year grants are available for collaborations of primary schools, early years providers or special schools settings which wish to carry out some distinctive, action-led and evidence-based development research on an aspect of SEND. Their project must be

explicitly focused on meeting the needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils. Your application must be very clear about the difference you want to make.

All projects need to demonstrate impact in the short-term but also build the capacity and capability for longer term sustainability and impact. The intention is to grow 'research in practice' expertise across a wider range of schools through the development of learning communities and other networks.

"...the trust's inclusive values of: equality, belonging, rights of participation, diversity, respect, hope, trust, compassion, courage and joy."

Collaborative partnerships with schools and other educational organisations will be central with the dissemination of outcomes through influential partners aiming for national impact. The Laurel Trust has formed links with a number of key values-driven national and regional organisations which will act as a conduit to schools and to educational expertise or additional resources. The successful pilot in 2016-17 resulted in some exciting and diverse projects. Summaries of a number of these can be found on The Laurel Trust website.

Projects must reflect local, regional or national need and must demonstrate that they will bring significant benefit to school improvement. In deciding the level of funding and support the Trustees will have regard to other income sources available to the schools. The expectation is that there will be matched funding possibly represented in terms of time and expertise.



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Selection criteria

Proposed projects must satisfy the panel of trustees that they meet all of the following criteria:

- the application should be made by a partnership or collaboration of primary schools, early years or special school settings with primary aged children. The collaboration may be supported by a university or other education specialist organisation
- it must have the full support of the headteachers and the governing bodies of all participating schools and other educational partners
- the collaboration must have within it primary, early years' providers or special schools and be drawn from an area of multiple disadvantage or challenge
- the research must contribute to school improvement and have clear achievable intended outcomes. It must be clear what additionality your research will bring
- projects will need to demonstrate impact in the short-term but also build the capacity and capability for longer-term impact and sustainable improvement
- projects must reflect local, regional or national priorities/need
- participating schools must be willing to sign a Memorandum of Agreement which sets out the terms of the funding, compliance issues and their commitment to completion and dissemination
- clear and realistic timescales for completion must be given and an indication of the next steps to secure sustainability
- in considering the applications the trustees would wish to see arrangements for monitoring the grant and how its impact will be evaluated. It is therefore helpful if the school can demonstrate in its submission that it has 'in house' evaluative skills within its partnership. You will also need to use an external evaluator at the end of your project and submit her/his findings with your research report
- proposed methods of dissemination should be outlined in the submission should include the role that the partners, including the Laurel Trust, should take. Within the collaboration there should be some research expertise which supports the project and, most importantly, a commitment to joint professional development which will build expertise, skills and confidence and aid longer-term sustainability
- research must be school-led and there must be a named lead school which takes responsibility for the leadership of the project – monitoring progress and ensuring financial probity
- the lead school should be judged by Ofsted to be Good or Outstanding. However schools that are not judged to be Good or Outstanding may be part of the collaboration and have a valuable part to play in the project.



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Selection criteria / continued

Projects must have both relevance and credibility and will need to demonstrate reliability, validity and replicability. It is envisaged that the networks chosen will build, reinforce and consolidate social and intellectual capital and create a longer-term collaborative culture characterised by trust, problem-solving and intelligent focused action.

Grant recipients will be required to submit a final report with clear outcomes particularly in relation to improved progress. This report should detail both the methodology used and the outcomes. It may be published on-line to contribute to building an archive of successful school research and innovation. It should contribute not only to the local context but be capable of adding to the wider school-led system. Larger projects may be of national interest and these may be published. Other methods of dissemination could include: social media, conferences, media partners, open space and interconnecting networks. Participants and partner organisations may wish to seek accreditation for their research and innovation.

The Trustees reserve the right to terminate or withdraw a grant where it is not being used for the purpose for which it was awarded or it is not being used effectively.

Each of the collaborations will have the support of the Project Director, and/or Field Officer and of the Trustees.

In 2018/19 the Trustees will be seeking to support between 10-15 research and school improvement projects that show innovative and imaginative approaches to teaching and learning.

These will be drawn from different geographical contexts where there is multiple disadvantage or deprivation. The Trustees will also be seeking a variety of projects of differing sizes and scope with funding ranging from £5k to a maximum of £50k for a national project.

Applications should be submitted on the pro-forma provided and should meet the criteria given in this guidance. You will find a Memorandum of Agreement on The Laurel Trust website. Please do read it before making an application.



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Timescales

The timescale for application and implementation is given below:

26 APRIL 2018 The Application Round opens
16 MAY 2018 Web Conference for Potential Applicants (see 'An Invitation to Apply' Guidance for details of how to join the conference)
25 MAY 2018 The Application Round closes at 5pm
WEEK OF 2 JULY 2018 Schools notified of the results of their application
19 SEPTEMBER 2018 Introductory Conference
SEPTEMBER 2018 Research Projects begin
OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2018 Initial visits by The Laurel Trust
FEBRUARY/MARCH 2019 Visit by The Laurel Trust
MAY/JUNE 2019 Visit by The Laurel Trust
SEPTEMBER – DECEMBER 2019 Projects completed and evaluation activities are in place
JANUARY 2020 Research Report and External Evaluation submitted to The Laurel Trust by the Lead School