



Leading Learning through  
Action-led Research and Innovation

# Guidance on making your Application

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## A little about The Laurel Trust

The Laurel Trust is a grant-giving charity which works with collaborations of primary and special schools and early years' settings and their partners to secure improvements in teaching, learning, and children's well-being, thereby widening opportunity and reducing disadvantage.

**Through the life of the project the Trustees and the Consultant Director work with the schools to support and challenge them as their research progresses. It is important that the research has the potential for a longer-term as well as a short-term impact. The Trust is keen to understand how the impact will be monitored and how ongoing professional development and sustainability are to be secured.**

Similarly, the Trustees and Consultant Director work with and advise schools on dissemination strategies in order that the widest number of children, teachers, and schools benefit. Local and regional dissemination are important to extend reach and engagement across the neighbouring localities.

However, we are ambitious for the work of our partnership schools and wish, where possible, to give their research a national presence. To this end we have recently had articles written by our schools and settings published in national educational journals and magazines.





**“Your application must be about the difference your research will make to children’s lives and life chances...”**

### **Your application for funding**

The Trustees invite applications from groups and networks of schools or from special and early years’ settings in areas of deprivation for funding linked to school improvement. For the years 2021-2022 the Trustees are particularly interested in creative and sustainable projects that will make a difference post-Covid and beyond. Some suggested themes and greater detail are given in the guidance ‘Questions to Consider and Criteria for Selection’: these are illustrative and not exhaustive. Your own ideas and themes will be welcomed.

Multiple studies have found that school closures during lockdown have significantly widened underlying inequalities. For example, The Education Endowment Foundation has identified a ‘large and concerning’ attainment gap in which poorer disadvantaged pupils are seven

months behind more advantaged children. In addition, Public Health England found that for more than 50% of parents’ the greatest concern is the mental health and well-being of their children. Against this background the Trustees have decided on an early round of recruitment to help contribute some funding and support to help your children and their communities.

### **Some thoughts...**

Some of the most successful projects to date have been ‘place-based’ learning which have taken account of local knowledge, context, and priorities, thereby showing an understanding of local and regional needs. Their approach has been inclusive and practitioner led.

Some projects have formed extremely valuable partnerships with parents and the community, the NHS, and the caring and

specialist agencies. The Trustees encourage this integrated working with other partners which fosters a unified approach to the learning, care and well-being of the whole child.

Other projects have been entirely school/setting focused and on occasions have involved primary and special education working together.

**However, the key thing is to demonstrate what will be different and better for the children at the end of the project. Your application must be about the difference your research will make to children’s lives and life chances, and the evidence you will gather to demonstrate this impact**



# Questions to Consider and Criteria for Selection

**Are you part of a group of schools with ideas that will make a difference for children and communities?**

If so, The Laurel Trust is really interested in working with you and supporting you to explore innovative approaches to raising children’s aspirations and achievements, changing their lives and life-chances.

**Metrics that matter to The Laurel Trust:**

- Research that will ask and answer, ‘how well?’ and ‘what difference?’
- Ideas and innovations that promote equity, inclusion and diversity, contribute to system networking and leadership, and that build sustainable and impactful capacity and capability.

**Themes this year that really resonate for us are:**

- mental health and well-being
- approaches to teaching and learning that foster collaboration, creativity and academic and emotional resilience.
- building sustainable relationships with parents/carers and their communities to support children’s learning and well-being
- a renewed focus on positive approaches to behaviour
- innovative ideas from collaborations that will support children to thrive post-Covid-19.

**Additional notes of things we would like you to take into account are:**

- one school is a lead school, a school able to take responsibility for the leadership and management of the project, including signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Trust;
- the lead school is judged to be ‘good’ or better by Ofsted;
- your partners including other schools support your application;
- the ethical principles set out in the latest edition of the BERA Guidelines - [www.bera.as.uk](http://www.bera.as.uk);
- the innovation will make a difference for children living, learning and growing up in communities of multiple deprivation and challenge;
- you and your research collaboration need to match fund The Laurel Trust grant. You can do this through match funding people, time, expertise and resources;
- your project has a clear outcome, realistic timeline and shows how it will make sustainable impact;
- the importance of external evaluation - we will need a report from an independent external evaluator at the end of your project, someone with no prior links to your project. The cost of this may be included in your bid application.

**WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU:**

Whilst we always have an inclusive approach and welcome applications from all collaborations of schools from all areas, we are particularly interested in hearing from you if you serve and support communities in the following areas:

**Sunderland and Kirklees**

**The North West**

**West Midlands**

**Humberside (Hull, and North/ North East Lincolnshire)**

**London Boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Hackney, and Newham and Barking and Dagenham**

**The coastal areas of Essex**

**Thanet**

**Torbay**

**We will work in partnership with you throughout the project to support, challenge and promote your learning and disseminate your findings.**