

Expression of Interest: for the development of the first stage Integration and Cohesion Evaluation Toolkit

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Introduction

Belong – The Cohesion and Integration Network is seeking expressions of Interest from experienced researchers for the development of the first stage of the Integration and Cohesion Evaluation Toolkit. This proposal is specifically targeted at programmes which are using sport and physical activity to deliver integration and cohesion programmes in local areas, but it is likely that the methodology will have much wider applicability for other types of cohesion schemes. This proposal is for the first stage of project development with a second stage planned to take the product to full development. We have **£20,000** available for this first stage. Please see [How to Apply](#) for further information.

Belong - Who we are and what we do

Belong – The Cohesion and Integration Network was set up in November 2018 with support from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (as part of the Government’s Integrated Communities Strategy and Action Plan), the Savannah Wisdom Foundation and with Manchester City Council as a founding member. Our vision is a more integrated and less divided society. We bring organisations and individuals from across different sectors and localities together – to share ideas, knowledge and experience in order to build the capacity, skills and resources for a more cohesive, integrated and peaceful society. Belong is now fully established as an independent national charity and membership organisation and was formally launched by the Minister, Lord Younger on October 10th.

Our purpose is to Connect, Support and Mobilise:

- Connecting people, places and organisations locally and nationally across the UK and across different sectors to disseminate knowledge and best practice on integration.
- Supporting all those who are delivering cohesion, integration and intercultural work; giving them the resources, skills, training, inspiration and confidence to improve practice.
- With our members raise the profile of this vital work, developing a shared voice, consulting on key issues of interest to our members, and influencing policy so that together we can make an integrated society an everyday reality.

Since our set up in November last year we have achieved a remarkable amount including:

- The development of a digital platform, a one stop shop for all your cohesion and integration needs featuring over 100 resources, stories of good practice and a membership that is growing steadily, all committed to promoting cohesion and integration as an everyone and everywhere issue.
- CohesionTech events in local areas hearing from practitioners and providers about the challenges and good practice that exist locally.
- A Leading on Integration conference at our home in Manchester supported by the University of Manchester and Manchester City Council bringing together a range of local authorities, civil society actors, academics and businesses to share knowledge and good practice.
- We already have the support of a number of private, public and civil society sector agencies and our members recognise that there has never been a better time nor a greater need to improve the way we all live, work, learn and socialise together.

The Wider Context

There are indications that the UK is becoming more polarised and divided than ever before with cohesion and integration identified as key challenges that we as a society need to address. The recent British Integration Survey shows that 44% of Brits have no contact with people from a different ethnicity to them and that one in five has no contact with people from a different class. In addition:

- 72% of people who reported having no close contacts from a different socio-economic background also had no ethnic diversity in their friendship circle;
- The youngest and oldest groups of people continue to have the least to do with one another – less than 10% of the closest contacts for people aged 55 and above were under 18;
- Nine out of ten white British people say that all or most of their social contacts are also white;

- 25% of respondents who placed themselves at the top of the social ladder have no contacts on a different part of the social ladder;
- People with less diverse social networks were significantly less likely to think positively or sympathetically about different groups in society.

Other research shows a sharp rise in hate crime and far right activity¹, including a 40% increase in religious hate crimes from 2017 to 2018 with the threat from far-right extremism growing.

One of the most powerful forms of promoting greater integration and cohesion is through meaningful contact where people have the opportunity to build strong relationships and develop empathy and understanding across differences. Delivered well cohesion and integration work creates social spaces and contexts where we can move beyond narratives of 'us' and 'them' towards ideas of kindness, trust and connection. Stronger social bonds are forged and resilience built against divisive and othering situations and narratives.

Another way of thinking about cohesion and integration is that it is the 'social glue' in the places we live, work and socialise. Its presence means that we get on with and trust our neighbours, colleagues and acquaintances. We feel safe and connected to others – a sense of belonging. We often only notice this vital 'social glue' by its absence.

The Role of Sport and Physical Activity

There is strong evidence² indicating that regular involvement in sport can benefit individuals and communities and contribute to a range of positive outcomes including greater tolerance and inclusivity, increased valuing of diversity, and a stronger sense of connectedness, pride in place and belonging. And the potential of sport to specifically contribute to the process of social integration has been recognised by multiple studies.³ Sport and physical activities play a vital role in developing and strengthening the social glue. At its best sport has the ability to fast track relationships, building a sense of commonalities and a shared goal amongst a group of individuals without particular reference to identity.

But there is still much that we don't know about the mechanisms through which sport and physical activity can positively affect changes to levels of empathy towards out-groups, inclusion and integration. For example, the local context (rural or urban, levels of residential and school segregation,

1 <http://www.hopenothate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/State-of-Hate-2018.pdf>

2 Research includes [Quantifying the Social Impacts of Sport and Culture](#) and [Understanding the drivers, impact and value of engagement in culture and sport](#), both by DCMS and its partners

3 T. Hoffmann 'Sport is good for integration' *ScienceNordic* (available: <https://sciencenordic.com/children-denmark-immigration/sport-is-good-for-integration/1393762>)

physical infrastructure, transport, local demographics); the knowledge, skills and confidence of delivery agents in enabling conversations about diversity, difference and integration; family and local community norms and narratives; the influence of media and social media, and national and international events (including sporting events), can all play a part in affecting outcomes.

Added to that many programmes currently have limited evaluation and measurement and are often based upon inputs and outputs, rather than outcomes. The toolkit will therefore be focused on an approach that is focused on outcomes, both for the Individual participants and the wider community. It will develop ways in which the impact of schemes can be measured and evidenced and turn this into an a simple guidance document that can be used in the future by both initiators of schemes to include in their proposals from the outset and for funders of schemes who want to be assured that the impact is clearly assessed.

The Digital Toolkit

Our proposal is for a digital toolkit that will support the design and evaluation of sport and physical activity programmes so that delivery teams can evidence and maximise the impact on cohesion and integration. It will be designed for a user with little specialist knowledge of integration and will be:

- Accessible and easy to use, with the use of jargon free common sense language so that it can be utilised by a range of different stakeholders from hyperlocal VCS organisations to those with more resources.
- Based upon an agreed theory of change, with worked examples and drawing upon good practice (for example the Breaking Boundaries scheme)
- Indicating all relevant available data sources and illustrating how to create and compile additional data as part of the scheme
- Rooted in an analysis of place and context so that schemes can be designed for a specific place (i.e. taking into account a range of factors and data including local demographics, physical geography, education and housing provision, local transport, etc. influence local cohesion and integration)
- Digital and online – it can be developed as a staged process, with inputs being saved towards a completed file

The First Stage Toolkit

We are confident that we will shortly be able to confirm funds for the full project but in the meantime and in order for the toolkit to be **rigorous** and **credible** we are now investing in the research and development stage which will include the following:

- Oversight of the project by partners through a Belong Steering Group. The steering group will consist of Belong staff, a Belong Associate (Researcher) designated staff from partner organisations and other key stakeholders as agreed by partner organisations. (Belong would utilise our academic connections (both members and partners) to ensure high quality academic oversight of the project).
- A review to establish clarity on desired input, output and outcome measures for cohesion and integration schemes. We would expect this to include some debate about how indicators, including proxy indicators can be utilised in some areas and the focus on the impact on participants of schemes as well as within community and institutional settings are sustainable over time.
- A review of measurement techniques as they relate to cohesion and integration schemes – for example the use of ‘contact theory’ and the measured impact on attitudes and behaviours
- A review of the effectiveness of measurement and evaluation of schemes and programmes to date – for example, the National Citizenship Service, the Breaking Boundaries scheme (Spirit 2012) and the School Linking Project - this review is expected to cover around 10 schemes. (to cover most major and current evaluations)
- A review of information and data sources that have been used, adapted and created as metrics, with notes on access and utility
- A draft theory of change and framework of draft indicators
- Testing of this theory of change and framework with the steering group and up to 5 local organisations who are delivering either social connectedness programmes, and sports and physical activity programmes, or both.

The **outputs** from this first stage of development would be:

- Accessible and written in jargon free language
- 8 - 12 draft indicators, with the related research and evidence of their importance.
- A summary of data sources that can be drawn upon to establish the baseline data and evidence of need
- A draft theory of change
- A framework that is practical and can be applied immediately, for further development – see below

The **outcomes** would be:

- An accessible easy to use prototype toolkit that is based on the best and latest evidence, research and insight available

- That is rooted in an analysis of place and context so that schemes are designed for a specific place (e.g. understanding the way that local demographics, physical geography, education and housing provision, local transport infrastructure, etc can influence and impact on local cohesion and integration).
- That had been initially tested with a range of different organisations delivering integration and cohesion programmes drawn from our funder, Spirit of 2012's cohort of grantees working on social connectedness and Belong's wider network including the Integration Areas and sports and physical activity programmes.

Second Stage of development (to be confirmed)

As other funds become available, we would develop through to the second stage which would include:

- A full toolkit established following review of the first stage.
- Wider consultation with a series of potential stakeholders and users in the sporting sector to ensure it will meet future needs. We would expect to consult with funders, contractors and project initiators at the national, regional and community level.
- A wider review of cohesion and integration evaluations (other than those specifically relating to integration and cohesion and / or sport)
- Trials across a wider cohort of potential audiences and users, which in particular test some of the research on place and context and the different factors that influence and impact cohesion and integration at a local level
- Compilation of good practice examples for each section of the guidance
- Commissioning a web designer to enable the toolkit for ease of access through a process of user involvement
- Testing and development of the toolkit, again with a strong user input. Organisations that are members of the Sport and Integration Working Group and the SE Innovation Fund recipients would be actively involved in identifying locations and organisations to trial iterations of the toolkit.
- Development partners will have a key role to play in overseeing the process and contributing directly to the data sources and good practice.
- Digital and Online – it can be developed as a staged process, with inputs being saved towards a completed file.
- It will provide a series of prompts to ensure that each section is based upon an agreed theory of change with worked examples and drawing upon good practice and available data sources.

How to Apply

Please send a copy of your CV (no more than two sides) including the details of two referees and your Expression of Interest to recruitment@belongnetwork.co.uk with 'Associate Researcher for Toolkit' in the title of the email. (If you are applying from a company you should include the CVs of all personnel who all be responsible for delivery and estimates of how much time each company member will commit to the project should be included in the EOI.)

Your EOI should contain the following information:

- A project plan including key sources of research, evidence, and relevant documents that you would access / draw on.
- Examples of similar work that you have undertaken in the cohesion and integration and related fields
- Your methodology and approach
- How you envisage working with the steering group and wider stakeholders
- Any risks and / or ethical considerations
- Key reporting stages and dates.
- A brief outline on how you might approach the second stage of development if funding becomes available
- Costings. (All costings should include VAT. The amount we have available for the first stage of this project is £20,000 in total inclusive of VAT) We have a small separate budget for travel if necessary, to key meetings.

Please send your EOIs to recruitment@belongnetwork.co.uk with 'Associate Researcher – toolkit' in the heading of the email by 9am 13th January 2020.

Interviews will be held in the week beginning 20th January in Manchester.