



# Sustainable Futures: Call for Ideas and Proposals

Application Pack  
February 2020



## Contents

<b>Introduction to OVO Foundation</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Our new vision</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Call for ideas and proposals</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Criteria checklist</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Application process</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Frequently Asked Questions</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Appendix 1: Research into our new thematic areas</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Appendix 2: Examples of our projects</b>	<b>15</b>



## Introduction to OVO Foundation

[OVO Foundation](#) is the charitable arm of OVO Energy. We were set up in 2014 with the mission to support inspiring organisations with smart ideas to give young people a better future. Our annual income is £1m and comes from a combination of customer and company donations.


Over the past five years, OVO Foundation has had three key focus areas: youth poverty; educational inequality; and energy access. Our youth poverty and education work is based in the UK, whilst our energy access work is focused in East Africa. The latest news from our projects can be found [here](#).

We have recently agreed on a new strategy with sustainability at its heart. This new vision better aligns OVO Foundation with OVO Energy's focus on supporting customers on a journey to net zero carbon, whilst continuing to accommodate our existing projects that contribute to social justice. Our new strategic direction is especially relevant given the launch of OVO's sustainability strategy – [Plan Zero](#).



**Our new vision is for all children and young people to have equitable access to a sustainable future.**

This means OVO Foundation will focus more on funding projects that address issues that relate to energy and climate change as they affect children and young people in the UK. We know that achieving this vision will be driven and supported by people at a local community level taking action to address global issues that affect everyone, demonstrating the potential of small actions to drive big change.



We are therefore excited to be launching this call for ideas and proposals which marks our first step towards realising this vision but continues to reflect our approach of supporting innovative solutions that create lasting change.

We have a total funding pot of approximately £1,000,000 and will look to fund up to three projects for three years. More information on how this funding will be allocated can be found in the [Call for ideas and proposals](#) section below (pg. 6).

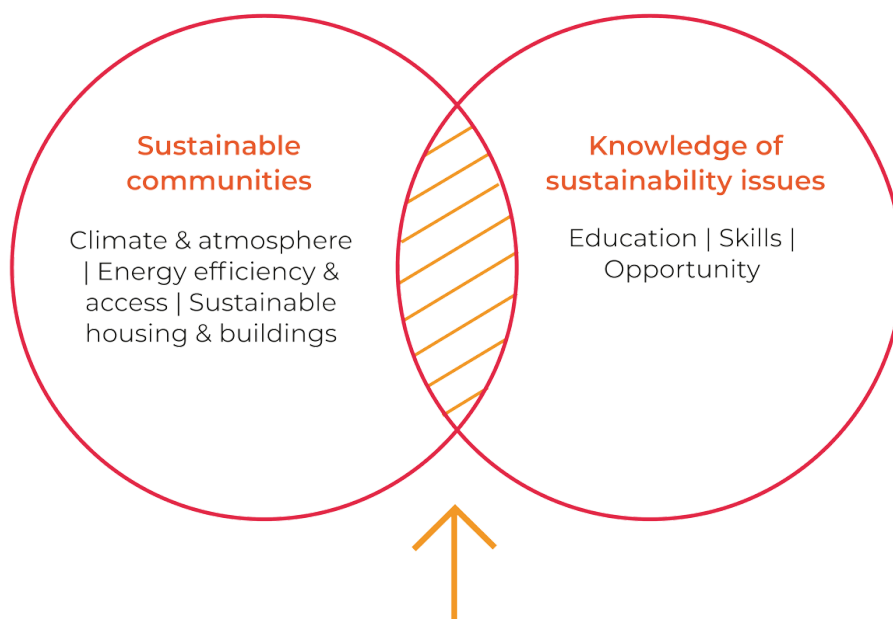
We look forward to receiving ideas and proposals from a diverse range of organisations who would be proud to join OVO Foundation's portfolio of projects. We already have a [successful track record](#) (pg. 15) of developing and piloting new projects in local communities as well as working closely with partners to support expansion and scale, and so are genuinely excited about the opportunities our new direction creates as we work collectively to tackle the urgency of the climate crisis.

## Our new vision

Following a recent strategic review, OVO Foundation has a new vision which is underpinned by two long-term outcomes:

- 1) **All children and young people live in a sustainable community**
- 2) **All children and young people have the skills and knowledge to take action on sustainability issues, and contribute to building sustainable communities**

We are launching a call for ideas and proposals to find new partners and projects that work across the following areas:



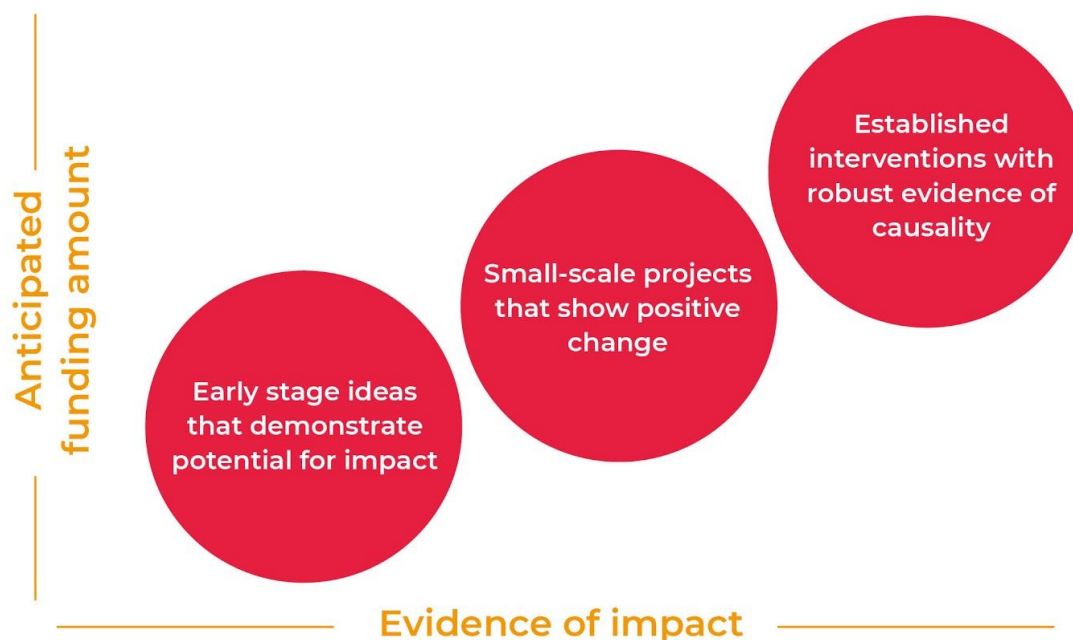
We are looking for exciting and interesting partners and projects that address **both** thematic areas, e.g. Projects that increase children and young people's knowledge of sustainability issues *whilst also* providing them with the skills, opportunities and/or resources to contribute to creating sustainable communities. We also understand that children and young people need to live in a sustainable community in order to thrive and fulfil their potential.

For more information on what we consider to be included in 'Sustainable communities' or as part of 'Knowledge of sustainability issues', please refer to [Appendix 1](#) (pg. 13).



## Call for ideas and proposals

OVO Foundation is interested in hearing from potential partners who are at different stages of developing and delivering their projects. We are as keen to find established projects with robust measures and evidence of impact as we are to find promising early stage ideas, and will flex funding as per the scale below:



To date, the scope of our involvement has varied according to project; we've been involved in designing and delivering projects from scratch, to helping projects scale, to helping others build capacity from a monitoring and evaluation perspective to demonstrate impact. For more information on how we have worked with partners to develop programmes previously, please refer to [Appendix 2](#) (pg. 15).

We're particularly interested in bringing together multiple partners to deliver a more holistic project which addresses communities' multiple needs. Potential partners may already be working together or may have a new partnership in mind which will allow them to combine resources, share expertise and ultimately achieve more for children and young people. We'd love to hear from partners who can complement each other's area of focus and are aligned with our purpose and vision.

OVO Foundation supports children and young people from less advantaged backgrounds or lower income communities so the projects that we'll fund will be working in UK geographic

areas and/or settings which have high levels of evidenced need amongst children and young people.

More details on what we're looking for can be found in the [criteria checklist](#) (pg. 8). Underpinning all projects is our willingness to collaborate, learn, and share experiences and best practice across the sector.

Our final decision on how this new programme area is structured will depend on the types of organisations who apply and the proposals we receive. We have a total funding pot of approximately £1,000,000 and will look to fund up to three projects for three years. We anticipate providing lower levels of funding to early stage ideas, and up to £350,000 for more established projects over three years.



## Criteria checklist

NOTE: We will only consider applications for projects that are developed and managed by a legally identified not-for-profit.

*Please use the key selection and desirable criteria as a checklist for your project before applying.*

### Key selection criteria:

Projects must:

#### 1. Align with our purpose and vision by:

- ☐ Seeking to improve both the physical environment surrounding children and young people **and** increase their knowledge, skills and/or opportunities in relation to sustainability issues.
- ☐ Pursuing an ambition to ensure all children and young people have equitable access to a sustainable future.

#### 2. Target the groups that OVO Foundation is passionate about benefiting, which means you:

- ☐ Work with children and young people (up to 25).
- ☐ Work in UK geographic area(s) and/or settings which have high levels of need amongst children and young people, as measured by, for example, data on social mobility, child poverty, or pupils in receipt of free school meals.
- ☐ Support children and young people from less advantaged backgrounds or lower income communities.

#### 3. Be relevant, meaningful and clear on impact and clearly articulate how the project will be measured including:

- ☐ Demonstrate that there is a clear and compelling need.
- ☐ Articulate how impact will be measured, focusing on outcomes as well as outputs.
- ☐ Have data that, at a minimum, shows some positive change amongst those already receiving or using your intervention. We will take a flexible approach to this question where ideas or proposals are at an early stage.

#### 4. Be confident in delivering, or having potential to deliver, high-impact projects at the lowest possible cost which means projects:

- ☐ Demonstrate value for money in terms of providing a high return on investment (i.e. we seek projects that show high impact in relation to the funding amount), as well as be delivered in a cost-effective way.

#### 5. Share our ambition in wanting to scale which means:

- ☐ Demonstrate potential to be scalable to other settings and geographic areas.
- ☐ Have considered sustainability of the project beyond our investment.
- ☐ Have a project budget up to £350k (for more established projects) over three-years.



## Desirable criteria:

In addition, we would be especially interested in projects that:

- ☐ Already use, or have an appetite to use, a carbon reduction metric to measure impact.
- ☐ Are able to articulate the need for the project using children and young people's voices and opinions on what they believe the barriers to be.
- ☐ Bring together more than one delivery partner to tackle communities' multiple needs in order to benefit children and young people. Ideally you will have demonstrable experience of combining resources and sharing expertise to achieve more together.
- ☐ Are looking for more than just funding. Following the success of our other projects, we're keen to establish partnerships and provide non-financial advice and support.

## What won't we fund?

- Projects and organisations that don't meet our key selection criteria (at a minimum)
- The promotion of religious or political causes, general appeals or circulars, individual sponsorship, events or conferences
- A project's core costs alone
- Projects that take place outside of the UK
- Individuals, bursaries or student fees
- Short-term or one-off projects

## What will OVO Foundation bring to the partnership?

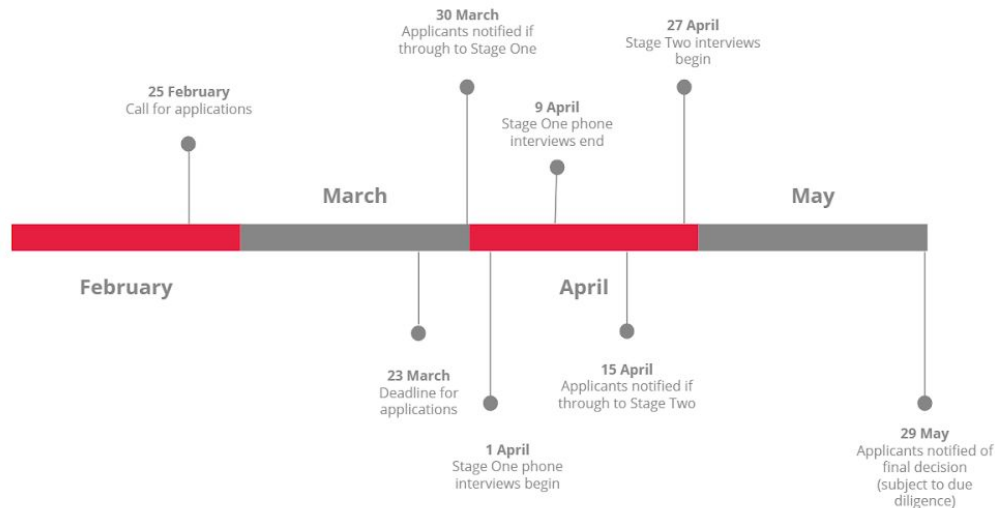
- Total funding of up to £350k over a three-year period, depending on the stage of the project.
- Support the development and/or expansion of the project.
- An understanding of research and challenges relating to children, young people and sustainable communities.
- A strong interest in supporting promising projects and helping them to demonstrate their concept is relevant and applicable elsewhere.
- Support in disseminating learning from the project and connecting with others.



## Application process

Once you're confident that your project meets the key selection criteria at a minimum, please [apply here](#) by 11.59pm (GMT) on Monday 23rd March 2020.

- Stage 1: OVO Foundation will inform applicants if they have been successful in reaching the next stage by Monday 30th March 2020. Longlisted applicants will be invited to discuss their proposals on a telephone call between Wednesday 1st and Thursday 9th April
- Stage 2: OVO Foundation will inform applicants if they have been successful in reaching the next stage by Wednesday 15th April 2020. Shortlisted applicants will be invited to meet with OVO Foundation (in person or via a video call) during the week beginning Monday 27th April 2020
- Final stage: We expect to communicate our funding decision to shortlisted applicants by Friday 29th May 2020 (subject to due diligence)



**Please note that we will not take ideas or proposals forward that:**

- Do not meet our [key selection criteria](#) (pg. 8).
- Fail to clearly explain the delivery model and anticipated outcomes.
- Miss the application deadline, are incomplete or lack supporting evidence.

If you have questions about how to apply or need more guidance, please see [the FAQs section](#) (pg. 11) or submit any additional questions [here](#) by Friday 6th March 2020. We will consolidate all questions asked and aim to hold a webinar to answer them on Monday 9th March 2020.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Can I submit ideas or proposals for several projects?**

We would encourage you to submit an application with details of the project you feel is your strongest only. It must meet our key selection criteria, and ideally our desirable criteria too. You may submit separate forms if you have more than one project that meets the criteria, but please note that we are looking for quality applications.

### **Can I submit a joint application with another organisation?**

Yes! We are really keen to explore projects which bring together a range of stakeholders and expertise. Please clearly state on the application form which organisations are already involved in your project and how.

### **What happens after I submit my application form?**

You will see a confirmation page saying “Thank you for your submission” and a copy of your responses will be sent to the email address you registered when completing the form. All applicants will be notified of whether they have been successful in reaching the next round or not by 30th March 2020.

### **How will OVO Foundation choose which applications to proceed to the next stage?**

All completed application forms will be assessed against our criteria and the strongest will be invited to discuss the project in more detail and share more about your organisation.

Throughout the application process we will be looking for applicants who are keen to learn and constantly seek better ways to achieve great results. Please be clear about how you plan to develop and/or expand your project, and how you might work with OVO Foundation.

### **What happens if my project gets funded?**

We would like all projects to begin delivery no later than September 2020. Funding may begin before this period however, and we would discuss the timeline with you during the application process.

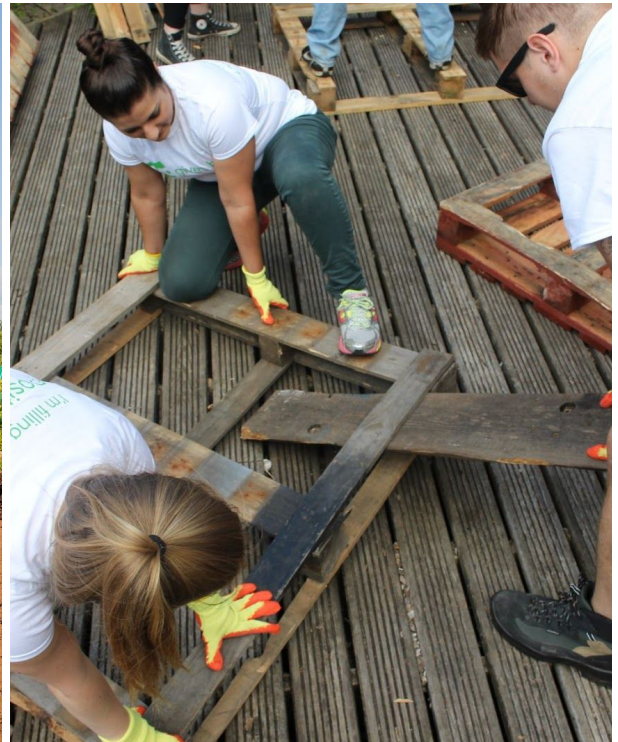
### **How many projects will you fund?**

We anticipate funding up to three projects, but this is dependent on the number of successful applicants and how much each project costs.

### **What if I have another question about criteria or the application process?**

If you have questions about how to apply or need some more guidance please submit them [here](#) by Friday 6th March 2020. We will consolidate all questions asked and aim to hold a webinar to answer them on Monday 9th March 2020.







## Appendix 1: Research into our new thematic areas

In developing our new strategy, we commissioned research to understand some of the key issues relating to sustainable futures for children and young people. We are looking for partners and projects that can articulate the challenge but also demonstrate real potential to address them:

### Problem 1: Sustainable communities

We believe all children and young people, regardless of background, should have the opportunity to live in a sustainable community. Whilst the definition of a 'sustainable community' is incredibly broad, at its very core, a sustainable community provides the foundation for children and young people to thrive.

We know that children and young people from lower income communities and less advantaged backgrounds in particular are less likely to live in sustainable communities. There are a number of attributable factors behind this, including:

- Resource allocation is often unequal – in and between communities
- Lower income communities are particularly vulnerable to climate change, which worsens inequality
- The voices of lower income communities are often unheard. We need diverse and local solutions from all communities
- We need to improve the physical environment surrounding children and young people before we can empower them to take action

Our definition of sustainable communities (to include themes such as climate and atmosphere, energy efficiency and access, and sustainable housing and buildings) and subsequent research into these areas has also highlighted some key barriers and opportunities including:

- 18% of children living in the most deprived areas never visit the natural environment and for many local green spaces are the first and only opportunity to experience the natural environment on a regular basis
- Up to 218 tonnes of CO2 can be sequestered per hectare in urban green spaces over 50 years
- 14% of greenhouse gas emissions in the UK come from homes
- The Carbon Trust estimates UK schools could reduce energy costs by £44m/year and prevent 625,000 tonnes of CO2 from entering the atmosphere
- School buildings are deteriorating and inefficient, e.g. in one Local Authority school buildings were responsible for 54% of the carbon emissions in the area and in another this represented 72% according to the Carbon Trust.

## Problem 2: Knowledge of sustainability issues

Today's children and young people are our future, and they will soon represent leaders, educators and changemakers in the world. What children and young people learn today will affect their lifestyle choices for years to come; and teaching children about sustainability now will give them the opportunity to contribute to building sustainable communities and tackle the climate crisis.

We know that not all children and young people have the skills, knowledge or opportunity to take action on sustainability issues, which can be attributed to:

- Educational inequality
- Lack of awareness and education on the climate change, and how to tackle it
- The fact that the climate crisis requires new ways of thinking (e.g. design and innovation), as well as the core skills and knowledge to take action
- The need for faster and collaborative action to fight the climate crisis

Subsequent research into children and young people's knowledge of sustainability issues in the UK also highlighted the following key barriers and opportunities which we would like to see addressed in our new programme area:

- 'Green grants' tend to not target children and young people resulting in an overall gap in funding for sustainability-related projects
- Connecting to nature can lead to more sustainable behaviour but only 21% of 8-12 year olds in the UK have an adequate level of connection.
- Lack of knowledge can create a major barrier to deeper engagement in sustainability issues – especially for young people from less privileged backgrounds

### Sustainable futures

We feel there is real need, value and opportunity in addressing both of these problems together to create a sustainable future for and with children and young people. Our new programme area will seek to help all children and young people, regardless of income or background, live in a sustainable community with the skills and knowledge to take action.

## Appendix 2: Examples of our projects

As mentioned previously, the scope of our involvement has varied according to project. We look for projects where we can add real value, whether taking something from ideation to delivery, or helping projects scale. And so we thought it would be helpful for applicants to understand how we have developed programmes and projects in the past.

### **Future Builders: Providing young homeless people with the chance to renovate properties that they go on to live in**

Future Builders was the first project developed by OVO Foundation and was launched in October 2016. The idea of the project was borne out of research commissioned by OVO Foundation which highlighted the need for affordable, move-on accommodation for young people with low support needs who have experienced, or are at risk of, homelessness.

Jointly designed with 1625ip, a Bristol-based youth homelessness charity that OVO Energy (whose HQ are based in Bristol) had worked with previously, Future Builders aims to break the cycle of homelessness for young people. It's an innovative live-in apprenticeship scheme supporting individuals to access education, employment or training and independent living. Young people taking part have the opportunity to refurbish semi-derelict houses that they go on to live in at a crucially affordable rate, whilst supporting them into sustained paid work.

We wanted to create a model that can be scaled, replicated and embedded in youth homelessness organisations across the UK. We have been successful in achieving this objective, with Future Builders [now delivered across four UK locations](#). We started off by renovating two properties and providing homes for seven young people in Bristol in 2016; and have now provided funding for the renovation of 20 properties creating 42 homes for young people. We have so far proudly supported 133 young people through Future Builders since the beginning of the project.



Future Builders demonstrates OVO Foundation's ambition and determination to develop projects that deliver holistic solutions and address multiple needs. Throughout the project, we have welcomed open dialogue with all our partners on how to improve its delivery and are delighted to now be working with other funders such as LandAid to scale the project further. We feel our approach to Future Builders represents our way of working; collectively with others to find simple and scalable solutions to big issues.

## **Project Jua: Paving the way for institutional energy needs to be embedded in the design of international education and health programmes**

Project Jua was developed in collaboration with Energy4Impact. The project started as a pilot in 2016 and focused on the electrification of 20 schools and health clinics in some of the most remote parts of Kenya. In 2019, [OVO Foundation announced a further £1.75m investment](#) to electrify 300 sites to improve education and health outcomes for more than 300,000 people over three years, representing a significant scale-up in the project.

In this second phase, we wanted to ensure we contribute to the sector more broadly. So we're also focusing on elements of the delivery that most solar projects fail to pay attention to, including:



### **1. Adding value to the sector more broadly by developing new measures of success and focusing on data collection**

With the scale-up of Project Jua, we're looking to answer questions that are often overlooked to ensure we are contributing knowledge to the sector. For example, we are among very few off-grid solar projects to install technology in each site which monitors solar production as well as energy consumption. This data will be used to better understand the energy needs of remote schools and health clinics, which eventually can be overlaid with data on the number of students/patients, the number of rooms that need power, and the number of health/education services offered to better scope and size energy needs. Understanding energy needs is crucial to improving off-grid institutional solar projects but is simply not done elsewhere. Collecting data and sharing our observations over time is helping us to pave the way for energy to be a key component of other education and health programmes in the development sector.

### **2. Delivering the project as cost-effectively as possible**

Our other focus for the second phase has been to deliver a philanthropic project using private sector principles. We know from the pilot that energy access positively impacts health and education outcomes and so, while we continue to monitor and evaluate, we've also focused on delivering the project at the best possible price – without compromising on high-quality and sustainable technology. We used a number of calculations and conducted external benchmarking to ensure we procured the equipment at the best possible price and are confident that the delivery of Project Jua is much more cost-effective than other similar projects. Again, our ambition is to be able to share these experiences with others to ensure energy becomes integral to the design of similar projects.



## When I Grow Up: Developing a new portfolio of educational inequality projects and helping build the evidence base for early years interventions

In 2018, OVO Foundation commissioned research into educational inequality in the UK to understand where the gaps were in provision, as well as identify areas where interventions have the greatest potential to make a meaningful difference on the lives of children and young people. The research highlighted that the early years would be a key area to focus on. Upon further analysis, we identified an unaddressed need to improve the home learning environment and better engage parents and carers in their children's communication and language development. We also had a particular focus on finding projects that benefit children from low-income and/or less advantaged backgrounds.

Following a call for proposals and a short application process, we selected three projects to form part of a new £240,000 portfolio, 'When I Grow Up'. All of the projects focus on closing the educational inequality gap for disadvantaged children through early intervention. They are:

- Doorstep Library: A weekly reading and book lending service for families in deprived areas in London.
- Parental Engagement Network (PEN): Training early years practitioners in Trafford and Liverpool to support parents with their child's literacy and school readiness.
- Tales Toolkit: Develop childrens' language, literacy and socio-emotional skills through play-based storytelling and supporting parents in Newham (London), Rochdale and Stockport to use the resources at home.



The three projects are all at a relatively early stage with varying levels of evidence to demonstrate impact. To support the development of each organisation's evidence base, we are funding The Sutton Trust/IES to advise the projects on their monitoring and evaluation, contribute to internal capacity building and help build evidence for early years literacy intervention. Our ambition is to help the three projects build a more robust evidence base over the two years of funding to put them in a good position to attract additional grants and scale at the end of our partnership.