Researcher-Led Initiative Fund Application Form

Thank you for your interest in applying to the Researcher-Led Initiative (RLI) Fund.

Applications are invited from University of Sussex doctoral researchers and early career research staff for funding to support short-term, well-defined training and development or public engagement projects.

The deadline for applications is Friday 16th November 2018.

Please ensure that you have read the guidance before completing your application.

1. Name

███████████████████

2. Sussex e-mail address
████████████████@sussex.ac.uk

3. Contact telephone number

4. School and department of lead applicant
Media, Film, and Music

5. Are you a doctoral researcher or early career research staff?
Doctoral researcher

Type of activity

Do you wish to apply for funding for a training and development initiative, or a public engagement initiative?
Public engagement initiative

About the public engagement initiative

Please tell us about the purpose of the public engagement initiative.

You may select any or all of the options below. Please explain your rationale when prompted.

Is the purpose of your activity to inform and inspire the public?
Yes

Please explain your rationale
The proposed activity is an interactive exhibition titled 'The Humanitarian Storyteller', and it takes a critical look at the processes of production of humanitarian and development narratives. Amidst large-scale humanitarian crises, narratives and imagery of those affected by conflict and disasters continue to proliferate our everyday media screens. Such narratives are produced by diverse actors, including media/journalists, states, and humanitarian organisations. The focus here is on narratives produced by international and non-governmental organisations supporting humanitarian and development efforts. Against this context, the central question driving this exhibition is, how are these narratives produced or what institutional factors influence and shape their production? Thus, the exhibition specifically draws attention to the professional thinking, practices, and cultures of these organisations and practitioners, inviting participants to think about their implications within the wider field and the everyday images of humanitarianism they encounter.

The interactive exhibition takes the form of an interactive story, with its style inspired by the Choose-Your-Own-Adventure book series. The story is told from the second person point of view ("you"), and the exhibition invites participants to assume the role of the protagonist and make a range of choices that shape

the direction and outcome of the story. The protagonist (the humanitarian storyteller) is a NGO communications practitioner whose task is to produce compelling media and communication products showcasing the positive impact of the organisation's work supporting conflict and disaster affected communities. Following an opening setting, participants can choose from various pre-written scenes, with each choice they make determining where the story will go next, and leading towards multiple endings. The scenes depict the protagonist navigating and negotiating various tensions, both within the organisation and the broader humanitarian, development, and aid field, including fundraising pressures, advocacy needs, complexities around the representation of need, uses and limitations of new media, and the need to look beyond traditional forms of storytelling.

The exhibition is scheduled to take place in May 2019 at the Phoenix Brighton. The tentative date the event is scheduled for is Saturday, 11th May, 2019, from 9am to 5pm. The objective of holding the event in May is to align it with Brighton Fringe and the Brighton Festival, both of which take place that month. I am keen in registering this event with Brighton Fringe, and there is still opportunity to register the event under the category 'web only listing' (as the brochure registration deadline has passed). I believe this will help gain maximum visibility for the event, and enable wider participation, specifically by the public, including those who may be attending the festivals.

The event will also feature a discussion from 3.30pm – 4.15 pm with a guest speaker, ███████ Associate Professor, Department of Media and Communications, London School of Economics (indicative - I am in discussion with her). After a 15 minute talk/reflection by ███████ 30 minutes will be dedicated for questions and reflections from the participants. I will be facilitating this discussion. Following the discussion, there will be dedicated time for networking/sharing perspectives on the exhibits, for anyone wishing to participate. I believe this discussion will add further value to the exhibition, and invite the exchange of ideas/perspectives from a non-specialist audience.

The event is open to the wider public, and as mentioned above, holding the event on a weekend, as well as in line with Brighton Fringe and Brighton Festival, will be significant in attracting a wider audience. The event is also open to students, researchers, NGO practitioners, etc, who are interested in this area of work. The event is free.

During the event, in speaking to attendees and obtaining their perspectives on the exhibits, I will look also welcome any possibilities of further collaborations on this work with those interested, with the aim of publication (either as an interactive web-based story or a book).

This exhibition is inspired by and draws on my current PhD research, where I examine the public communication structures and strategies of international humanitarian and development organisations in Sri Lanka, drawing on textual analysis of narratives and interviews with communications professionals. I believe adopting a form of a story and making the exhibition interactive will help re-package academic content into an engaging format that will appeal to a wider group of people who may or may not be familiar with the subject. At the same time, the wider appeal of the exhibition lies in the fact that it draws attention to current, relevant, and everyday imagery we encounter given the migration crises. I believe this will be further engaging for the public. By inviting participants to choose or carve their own path, I believe the event will inspire participants to gain new insight into these issues and think about them in a critical light.

The exhibits are primarily text-based, and not visuals, primarily in keeping with the broader purposes/objectives of this event. The purpose of the exhibition is to think critically about the text and make choices. The event is not a traditional exhibition as such, where visitors look at exhibit 1, for example, and then move to exhibit 2, 3, etc. Instead, this is experimental/innovative in nature, and invites visitors to carve their own narrative by moving across the exhibits, going back, revisiting their choices etc. By doing so, the objective is to allow visitors to engage more critically and actively with issues around humanitarian communication and narrative production, moving away from being a passive audience within a typical exhibition setting. The text on each exhibit is brief and minimal – the exhibit will not be text-heavy, and the text would be laid out in a visually engaging manner. The language used will also be non-academic, and more relatable to a wider public. In addition, as I am not a photographer, and do not have access to take photographs of these sites that are focus of my exhibition, I believe introducing visuals will add layers of complexity, and take me away from the primarily goals and objectives of this interactive exhibition.

Is the purpose of your activity to consult and listen to public views?
No

Is the purpose of your activity to collaborate with the public?
No

Why do you want to engage with the public? What do you hope to achieve by engaging?
I wish to engage with the public for several reasons. I have detailed them below. Against each point, I have also noted what I hope to achieve by such engagement:

1) To inform and inspire the public on a timely, relevant, and urgent topic – I believe the interactive exhibition will enable a wider segment of the public to gain new insight, knowledge, and understanding on the topic of humanitarianism and narrative production, while drawing on the narratives and imagery of the humanitarian crises they encounter everyday through media. In making the exhibition interactive, I hope they engage with the content, and think about these issues in a critical light. By engaging with the public, I hope the exhibition stimulates curiosity, new thinking, and critical debate.

2) Building understanding by promoting and sharing research in this field among a wider audience – I believe this exhibition will provide me an opportunity and a platform to share new and existing research in this field. The exhibition highlights my own research findings, as well as drawing on existing research and

known scholars in this field. There is growing academic scholarship and research in this area, and by taking the form of a story, I believe, this academic content can be re-packaged and re-produced in a way that it appeals to a broader group of people.

3) Learning from others and opening up opportunities for future collaborations – the discussion section of the event invites participants to share their thoughts and reflections. With the event open to the public, I hope this will invite different perspectives and views on this issue from those outside of academia. This will be invaluable in informing my own research and learn from other perspectives. At the same time, if there is interest in further collaborations on this work, I would be interested in pursuing them, with the intention of developing this into a broader piece of work and creating new knowledge through collaborative engagement.

What are the objectives of the activity? Please list the steps you will take to achieve these objectives.
The objectives of the activity are:
-        To inform an audience, and promote discussion and debate on a timely and important issue
-        To inspire an audience by stimulating new thinking and curiosity on this subject area
-        To promote results of recent research and wider scholarship in this field in a non-academic manner, thus increasing the research's relevant to society
-        To learn from others, and inspire new perspectives on the research
-        To identify and explore new collaborations and create momentum to build further on this initiative
-        To strengthen the professional development skills of the research
-        To raise the profile of the researcher and the University (including the department and school)

The steps/methods/techniques I will adopt in achieving these objectives are listed below:

-        With the exhibition taking the form of a story, my research findings and arguments from existing scholarship will be re-packaged into non-academic language. The research will be presented in an everyday language style. The exhibits will be short and concise (with brief and minimum text), and be clearly written and presented in a visually engaging manner. I believe these methods will be useful in sharing data and knowledge from my research with a non-specialist audience. I believe this will help participants gain new insight into and understanding of this subject.
-        The exhibition is interactive. It invites participants to make a series of choices, with each choice determining where the story will go next, leading to multiple endings. It also invites the participants to assume the role of the protagonist. I believe the interactive nature of the exhibition will be engaging to participants, inviting them to think about and respond to the exhibits, thus being actively involved with the text. I believe this will help stimulate new thinking and curiosity in this area of study/research.
-        The exhibition will also feature a discussion with a guest speaker. This discussion will provide sufficient time for participants to ask questions and share their own thoughts/reflections. I believe this method will help me gain new perspectives from others on my own research and this wider area of scholarship. It will also provide a platform to debate thoughts and knowledge and build greater understanding of a current issue.
-        Meeting participants coming for the exhibition will help me explore possible opportunities for collaborations. I would ideally like to take this initiative further and explore ways of publication. There would be a file for participants to share their contact details and interests in collaborations should they wish to. I will follow-up with those interested.
-        The exhibition will be held in central Brighton thus making it easier for a wider public to reach the venue
-        Prior to the exhibition, I will be working to promote and market the event, contacting the target audience via email to maximize reach and build momentum for the exhibition.
-        I will introduce a hashtag (eg: #humanitarianstoryteller) so that participants can use this when promoting or sharing details of the event on social media. This can promote further engagement and interest around the exhibition.

-    The event promotion poster and social media pages will have details of the fund, University department, and School, thus raising the profile of the University.

How will you evaluate whether you have achieved the objectives of the activity?
Evaluation plan:

The evaluation plan consists of the below elements, evaluation questions, methodologies, data collection techniques, data analysis, and reporting. It will be carried out alongside the planning of the event.

Evaluation questions:

Outputs:
-    How many participants took part?
-    Who were these participants?
-    How did participants use the hashtag promoting/sharing the event on social media?
-    Identify social media posts that uses this hashtag, to understand what participants have said about it?

Outcomes:
-    What did participants like about the interactive exhibition?
      • What did they most enjoy?
      • What did they think about the interactive format of the exhibition?
      • How did they find the layout of the texts?
-    What could have been improved?
      • Content
      • Form
      • Others (venue, timing)

Impact:
-    What was the impact of informing and inspiring participants?
      • What new knowledge did participants gain?
      • Did the content challenge any pre-held perspectives?
      • What was most useful about the exhibition?
-    What type of impact was achieved?
      • What would participants do with this knowledge?
      • Can there be further collaborations on this work, and what form would this take?
-    How could this impact have been greater?

Questions to evaluate professional development, and impact on research -
-    What new skills have I learnt through planning and conducting this event?
-    What challenges did I encounter?
-    How did I address these challenges?
-    What new perspectives/insights can inform my research?
-    How will these perspectives be used?

Methodologies and data collection techniques:

To measure increased understanding of the topic, enjoyment of the exhibition, and its inspiration, I have proposed to following method to gather evidence –
I will invite the participants to fill out a brief questionnaire at the end of the exhibition with the following two questions –
1.   What did you like about the exhibition?
2.   What could have been done better?
The questions will be printed on a sheet of paper, and participants can answer them anonymously, and drop them into a box.

To measure or explore potentials for collaborations – a separate file will be kept inviting interested participants to share their contact details (email). I will follow up with these participants following the event.

Evaluating the data from the above, the three questions below will be used to measure impact –

1. Based on the data gathered (on outputs and outcomes), has the activity had an impact on informing and inspiring participants on humanitarian narrative production)
2. Based on the above data gathered, what type of impact has there been?
3. Based on the above data gathered, how could the impact have been greater?

Other data collection methodologies and techniques are –
-            Observations (specifically during the discussion segment of the exhibition)
-            Monitoring of the use of the hashtag on social media,

Data analysis and reporting
Following the event, the data will be analysed. A brief report will be prepared, and submitted to the Researcher-led Initiative Fund, and the School of Media, Film, and Music.

Who are your target audience/participants and how many people do you expect to engage with?
Targeted audience/participants include the following:
The primary target audience is the general public. It is to reach the general public that the event is being held on a weekend, and also in line with popular festivals, such as the Brighton Festival and Brighton Fringe. I believe registering the event with Brighton Fringe will help achieve extra visibility for the event. The language used in the exhibits will be non-academic, therefore, enabling wider engagement. The event is free and also open to anyone interested to attend.

I expect around 50 people to attend the event.

What is the timeline of the project? Please include start and end dates, and key milestones.
Start and end dates – November 6, 2018 – May 20, 2019

Timeline of activities and key milestones -

November 16, 2018: Submit event proposal – including making initial contact with guest speaker, identifying budget, and making a tentative booking of the venue.

January 22, 2019: Re-submit event proposal with amendments.

January 30, 2019: Discuss logistics with the venue (I have contacted Phoenix Brighton, and discussing logistics/arrangement of refreshments with them)

February 5, 2019: Confirm details the guest speaker and content the guest speaker will cover

February 10, 2019: Upon outcome of the re-submitted event proposal, register the event with Brighton Fringe

February 15, 2019: Finalise event poster design. Set up event Facebook page, including details of event, and draft poster. Continue promotion of event via Facebook until the event date. Print posters for dissemination/promotion.

February 1, 2019 – March 15, 2019: Draft text for the exhibits, and share these with the supervisors if needed for some feedback.

March 15, 2019 – March 30, 2019: Finalise the text for the exhibit

March 30, 2019 – April 15, 2019: Liaise with the printers in laying out and printing the exhibits

April 20, 2019: Finalise refreshments options.

March 1, 2019 – until event date: Promote event via social media and share poster of event.
Also, set up a registration page via Eventbrite, this will be mainly to get an idea of the number of participants.

May 11, 2019: Date of event. Set up a file where participants can share their contact details if they wish, and express interest for further collaborations

May 12, 2019: Conduct evaluation of project

May 20, 2019: Contact those interested in collaborations and discuss next steps.

How does the suggested project relate to your own research? Please indicate how the activity will benefit yourself and your research.
The project relates to my own research as it builds on and draws from my current PhD work. The exhibits presented will be based on findings of my current PhD research. It will also draw from existing scholarship in this field. I will be highlighting key texts, should participants be interested in exploring relevant academic scholarship further. The exhibits integrate work from my PhD.

I believe this will benefit me and my research in diverse ways. I believe it will enable me to think about how I can promote my research among a wider audience, including a non-specialist audience, thus increasing the reach and relevance of my research. This will be an interesting challenge. Drawing on my experiences in presenting my research at conferences, I will be thinking of how I can present my research in a clear and concise manner keeping in mind the diverse audience the event is targeted at. This will enable me to think about aspects of my research that may not be clear to others, and strengthen the presentation of my research, to engage audiences.

Further, I believe by opening up my research to a wider audience and inviting thoughts, comments, and discussions, I will be able to add value to my research and learning. I hope to gain new insight through discussion of my research with others during this exhibition and discussion. Being in a final stages of my PhD, I believe this will be invaluable for me as I write-up my thesis, building on my own understandings in incorporating new perspectives and enhancing my knowledge and intellectual abilities.

In addition, I believe this event will help me strengthen a range of core skills and attributes, including my communication, presentation, planning, prioritisation, and organisational skills, as well as my ability to engage confidentially in my research. This will also help me strengthen my personal effectiveness skills, including self-confidence, self-reflection, responsibility, and time management.

What is the potential legacy of the project?
Building on this work further, I would like to explore the potential of publication. The piece can be published either as a web-based interactive story, including imagery and sound, or as a printed book (following the format of Choose-Your-Own-Adventure stories). At the event, I will invite those who may be interested in collaborating further on this work to share their contact details, so as to get in touch with them following the event. I believe this might impact students or professionals from this area of work.

Further, building on this exhibition, and drawing on these learnings, I have proposed an interactive working to be held at the Development Studies Association conference in June 2019 on a similar concept (I am awaiting the outcome of my proposal) to continue the legacy of this project.

In addition, I will be inviting participants to share their experiences of the event or promote the event on

social media by using hashtag (eg: #humanitarianstoryteller). This will enable me to understand different perspectives of the event and pull together these ideas.

Please outline your public engagement experience to date
- In January 2018, I successfully organised a panel discussion on 'opportunities for research: humanitarian narratives, representation strategies, and I/NGO structures' at the University of Sussex, funded by the Researcher-led Initiative, where I reached out to students and practitioners outside of Sussex to participate and engage in the event.
- As a PhD student, I have presented my research at conferences outside of Sussex, confidently speaking in public and engaging with diverse audiences, while also catering my research presentations to the needs of the audiences
- In my previous work as the communications officer of UNDP in Sri Lanka, I helped organise various events where I engaged with the public. This includes various photo exhibitions depicting the work of the organisation, and media conferences. My role involved: promoting and disseminating the event among the public and media, including identifying potential personnel to invite, designing and sending out invitations, following up with telephone calls if necessary on attendance; organising the event, including liasing with vendors and printers, and ensuring the venue was organised, and planning the agenda for the day; follow-up activities after the event, including developing news articles on the event, or for a media event, following up on media coverage of the event.

Budget

Please provide a detailed budget indicating what you would spend the funding on if you are successful in your application.

Your budget should include a breakdown of costs and justification for each item (e.g. lunch for 30 people at £6 per head from Sussex Food; accommodation for external speaker at £80 per night at a University approved hotel or guest house). See the guidance notes for further advice on your proposed budget.

Budget details

Item details	£
Venue (Phoenix Brighton, hiring of a workshop venue for one day from 9am to 5pm)	£200.00
Printing of exhibits or storyboards (50 exhibits, printed on A3, 170gsm silk paper, in colour)	£60.00
Purchasing of command strips to hang 50 exhibits on the wall (as required by Phoenix Brighton)	£35.00
Printing of promotional posters (10 copies, A4, in colour)	£5.00
Printing of the evaluation questionnaire (50 copies, black and white)	£4.00
Purchase of stationary items	£3.00
Travel for the guest speaker (Train ticket from London to Brighton during peak hour of travel + travel to venue)	£60.00
Drinks for participants for the day (Apple and orange juice, 12 cartons at £1 per carton) [All food/drinks prices as per ASDA]	£12.00

Drinks for participants for the day (Bottles of water, 3 packets of 12x500ml packets at £2 per packet)	£6.00
Drinks for participants for the discussion with the guest speaker and networking (Wine - 7 bottles at £5 per bottle)	£35.00
Food for participants for the day (Crisps, 4 packets of 6x24g crisps, at £1.50 per packet)	£6.00
Food for participants for the evening discussion with the guest speaker and networking (Crackers - 12 packets at £0.50 per packet)	£6.00
Food for participants for the evening discussion with the guest speaker, and networking (Cheese - 4 packs at £2.50 each)	£10.00
Food for participants for the day (Pringles - 5 packets at £1.25 per packet)	£5.00
Plastic plates (50 plates)	£1.50
Plastic cups (50 cups)	£1.50
	Total: £450.00

Total requested
£450.00

Budget code
NC001-05

Budget amendment: As mentioned in earlier sections, I am keen in registering the event with Brighton Fringe, in order to obtain maximum visibility and exposure for the event, and attract a wider public. The cost for registering the event online ('web only listing') is £111.67. As this was decided following the original submission of the proposal, I am unable to include this in the above budget, as the above does not allow me to make amendments. Therefore, I have added this information here. With this cost, the total request is: £561.67

Supporting statement

You must submit a supporting statement (in PDF format) from your School's Director of Doctoral Studies (for doctoral researchers) or Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange (for research staff).

Your School's Director of Doctoral Studies or Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange's name, title and electronic signature should also be included.

If you have any difficulty with this, please contact researcher-development@sussex.ac.uk or call 01273 873366.

Upload your supporting statement here
RLI_███████████)pdf