

SLSA IMPACT INITIATIVE: DEMYSTIFYING IMPACT

The SLSA now runs two impact funding schemes: Impact Grants and Stream Convenor Impact Funding. However, impact can be a slippery concept, so, here, the chair of the SLSA Impact Committee, Mitchell Travis, offers a short explanation of what impact means in this context.

What is impact?

Impact is about research having some demonstrable effect outside of academia. It occurs where change is 'produced'. In law we tend to see impact as stemming from legislative or policy change – but this is, perhaps, a little narrow. The ESRC, for example, has a much more expansive view noting that impact can be on the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment and quality of life. But this list does not make the prospect of 'doing' impact any less intimidating. How do we make that happen and how might funding help?

Importantly, for the SLSA the funding sought has to be related to academic research. Either the beginning of new research or as part of an ongoing project. It cannot be used to develop or publicise teaching materials.

This fund is ideal for starting your impact journey

Good impact starts with listening to, responding to and engaging with the needs and desires of the communities and stakeholders that are being researched. Policy development can come after! But it's important that the foundations are built right.

An important aspect of the SLSA's impact fund is that it doesn't have to be for people with long-established and impressive impact track records. There's other funding available for them! If you want to get a project off the ground and talk to some stakeholders about the type of research you should be doing, then this fund might be for you. Taking this approach means you're less focused on the huge impact that your project might have in the

future and more about establishing small and meaningful connections with people in your field – some of whom are outside of academia – or to creating pathways of engagement with the people affected by your research.

Consulting with target communities and stakeholders from the outset of the initial design stage is essential. Impact is thus embedded into your project because it's driven by the needs of communities. Their needs can then inform the types of changes you might then go on to recommend.

The fund is also great for those further on in their impact journey

This fund is not only geared towards those applications which support exploratory and tentative networking proposals. If you have already started to have some impact success then you may want to think about how you can gain even more traction by using this fund.

Think carefully about how this can be done, however. For example, a podcast may not be the best way to create engagement with your target audiences. Why not instead have a workshop to feed findings back to community members and/or policy-makers? Have you considered making a policy brief for the institutions that you are trying to target? Can you make pamphlets aimed at empowering the communities you are working with in terms of their legal knowledge? Could any or all of these things be co-produced with third-sector organisations? These are the types of initiative the SLSA is actively seeking to fund.

If you are further on in your impact journey, be realistic about what can be achieved with a relatively small budget and a limited timeframe. Remember that we are happy to support incremental efforts that are likely to open the door to greater and more demonstrable impact. As with all SLSA proposals for funding, value for money will be a key consideration.

If any or all of these sound like something you would be interested in, then please do apply to the impact fund this year. See [w website](#) for details. Closing date: **31 May 2024**. In addition, SLSA stream convenors are eligible to apply for impact funding on a rolling basis by submitting an application to be discussed at any of the three regular Board meetings (in January, May and September). See [w website](#) for details of this scheme.

Finally, the SLSA Impact Committee will be hosting an Impact Awareness event in Portsmouth at lunchtime on day two of the SLSA Annual Conference. We look forward to seeing you there!

Social and Legal Studies

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people . . .

JOHN FLOOD has been appointed Research Professor in Law and Society at Griffith University, Australia. John was a member of the then SLSA Executive Committee from 2002–2007, serving as Honorary Secretary for four of those years.

Former SLSA Chair, Professor **SALLY WHEELER OBE**, has been appointed Vice Chancellor of Birkbeck, University of London. She took up the post on 1 January 2024. Sally said: 'Birkbeck has a unique place within the fabric of UK HE and I am excited to have the opportunity to lead it as it enters its third century. It offers the things that everyone who works in higher education should value – opportunities for students that they cannot get elsewhere, a commitment to access and diversity, and research of exceptional quality.'