

EVALUATION OF
THE BLOOMSBURY SET
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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Background

1. In 2017, The Connecting Capability Fund was launched by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE, now known as Research England). The Bloomsbury SET (Science, Economics, Technology) is a partnership between the Royal Veterinary College (RVC), London School of Economics (LSE), London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) and, SOAS, University of London. The programme also works closely with the London International Development Centre (LIDC)
2. Following a successful bid, in 2018, The Bloomsbury SET – led by RVC –

SQW

Activities, outputs and outcomes

10. Despite these challenges, since 2018 The Bloomsbury SET has funded a diverse range of activities which have encouraged collaboration and knowledge exchange between the four HEIs. It has fully committed the resources that were made available through CCF.
11. The funded activities have taken different forms:

There have been 30 Bloomsbury SET Grants, including:

- ∅ eight Project Grants – applicants could respond under any relevant theme for the programme
- ∅ 19 Follow On/ Commercialisation Grants and

Perspectives on collaborative knowledge exchange

14. Collaborative knowledge exchange was expected to be a key enabler of and outcome from The Bloomsbury SET. Some collaborations between researchers responding to The Bloomsbury SET funding calls pre-dated programme. However there were examples of new relationships forming, particularly with international partners.
15. Participating researchers felt the programme had enabled new connections with other academics or provided funding which cemented pre-existing relationships. A number of researchers also reported that The Bloomsbury SET has encouraged them to respond to other interdisciplinary funding calls and to apply other techniques, such as qualitative surveys, in their work.
16. Several research participants reported that collaborative knowledge exchange between researchers has to be learned. Researchers may not be used to working in collaborative ways or know how to do so effectively. For this reason, there appeared to be a particular role for small projects (which were not too risky). Several others said that working with industry and different disciplines can be challenging as they tend to have vastly different working practices and cultures. Some referred to it as 'speaking a different language'.

Conclusions

17. The commercialisation aims and ambitions of The Bloomsbury SET were very ambitious given the overall timescales, and it will take time to translate research into intellectual property.

A programme of this nature needs to be as flexible as possible and capable of adapting to changing circumstances. This was especially true in the context of the pandemic.

There is a need to be 'radically inclusive' if the aim is to engage across different disciplines on a reasonably equitable basis. AMR – as a topic, field and headline – had much more immediate resonance with scientists than most social scientists, yet the aim was for interdisciplinary approaches. The programme relied heavily on – and was much more effective with – academics who were genuinely open to working across disciplines.

Small projects seemed to be especially effective in developing new collaborative approaches. This may be because risks are relatively low – both for funders and for participating academics.

