

The Catalyst Project, funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and monitored by the Office for Students (OfS) is a partnership between the University of Essex, Essex County Council and Suffolk County Council.

Using cross-disciplinary expertise in data analytics, big data and evaluation, the University of Essex is supporting both County Councils to assess risks for vulnerable members of the community and provide evaluation techniques to fully understand the impact of Council initiatives.

How to work collaboratively with the University of Essex

The Catalyst Project has demonstrated the benefit of working collaboratively with local partners through working on a number of diverse initiatives with a range of different partners. The Catalyst's interdisciplinary teams have applied data analysis to predict risk for individuals and designed evaluation models to assess the impact and effectiveness of public services initiatives. This enables evidence-based support for decision-making aimed at effecting policy change. You can view our case studies and details of the initiatives we have collaborated on at our website: essex.ac.uk/research-projects/catalyst.

The University of Essex is well placed to continue offering collaborative working services and opportunities with public service partners after the completion of the Catalyst Project in December 2019.

Our expertise in data analytics and the social sciences are demonstrated by the following:

- the University has been recognised internationally for its expertise in the social sciences, being ranked in the **top 50** by the **Times Higher Education World University Rankings** in both 2018 and 2019
- we are home to internationally renowned social science researchers and departments and are rated in the **top 5** in the **UK for Social Science Research**. We are also in the **top 20 for research excellence**, taking into consideration all its research disciplines (**Research Excellence Framework 2014**) and in the **top 25 for research quality** according to the **Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2019**
- the University is home to a number of excellent research centres such as:
 - our **Queen's Anniversary Prize winner** (2017), the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER), which specialises in the production and analysis of longitudinal data
 - the Institute for Analytics and Data Science (IADS), is a centre of excellence that connects scholars, businesses, institutions, and authorities, to work on their data needs
 - the Business and Local Government Data Research Centre (BLG DRC), funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), who support local government, public sector organisations and businesses to make more effective use of their data
 - the UK Data Service, a comprehensive resource, funded by the ESRC, to support researchers, teachers and policymakers who depend on high-quality social and economic data
- as a leading university for data analysis research, we are home to the first UNESCO Chair in Data Analytics and Data Science, Professor Maria Fasli
- we are experienced in providing high-quality evaluations for national, regional and local organisations enabling them to determine the impact of their interventions, analyse their spending, and prioritise their resources.

To illustrate, an interdisciplinary team of senior academics from the University conducted an academic-led evaluation for a Suffolk County Council service intervention which was working to reduce recurrent care proceedings amongst vulnerable birth mothers. This evaluation was able to demonstrate a significant improvement in mental health amongst the mothers involved in the intervention. It showed that none of the women engaging with the service experienced an unplanned pregnancy which was likely to lead to care proceedings. Finally, it was able to provide evidence of a significant cost saving in its first 18 months. The evaluation tools developed by the team are now being used by other organisations offering similar services in England.

Pathways towards accessing our services and expertise:

The University of Essex has a range of expert and diverse capabilities that enable us to provide services and advice to government departments, third sector organisations and businesses, large or small.

This help can come in a number of ways:

- **Evaluation** – Our dedicated Evaluation Service works with public, private and third sector organisations, matching evaluation needs with academic expertise. The service has enabled us to be proactive in identifying evaluation opportunities, has helped to achieve impact for both parties, and to leverage genuine innovation for our partners helping them understand their social and economic impact(s), and exerting a positive influence on their working methods and operating procedures. Our service has the knowledge and experience to build evaluation capacity into the work you are carrying out be it a programme, intervention, organisational strategy, collaboration, community-led development, campaign, relationship, strategy, or a process
- **Knowledge exchange and training services** – The BLG DRC provide a range of no-fee services including training in a range of data analytics techniques at different levels and Data Analytics Innovation Vouchers which enable public sector organisations and businesses to work with researchers on their data analytics related problems. As an example, training can enable your analysts to use the latest data tools and techniques. From introductory to advanced levels, through to customised training, your analysts will acquire the right skills to maximise your organisations data use
- **Consultancy and Contract Research** – Our academic experts have years of experience of working with businesses and organisations of all sizes, regionally, nationally and internationally. By drawing on one of our many academic experts in predictive data analytics and evaluation, you can gain access to specialist expertise to engage on specific projects at a level to suit your needs. Our Masters or PhD level postgraduate students are also available to work on consultancy projects, under academic supervision. Whether it's a short-term consultancy agreement, a tailored contract research project or an ongoing partnership, we have the capability to facilitate access to academic expertise to enhance your products and services

Accessing funding for collaborative working

We are well equipped to guide you through the maze of available funding options from a variety of sources and are experienced in bidding to funders as well as providing financial and project management of successful bids.

- **Innovation Vouchers** – The University of Essex Research and Enterprise Office can provide small or medium-sized businesses and public sector organisations with up to £10k to engage with our university expertise. Additional Data Analytics Innovation Vouchers of £3.5k are available from the BLG DRC for a wide range of organisations. Both voucher schemes enable you to receive bespoke support and advice.
- **Collaborative research** – We have extensive experience of working with business and organisations to develop and undertake collaborative projects funded from a variety of funding sources, ranging from Innovate UK Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs) to funding from UK Research Councils; funding from a wide range of charities as well as regional and national incentive funds.

We are in the top 10 in the UK and top in the eastern region and London for the number of KTPs we negotiate and our KTP funding approval success rate is 95%. A recent successful KTP has been a partnership with BT, where BT used the University's expertise in computational intelligence and mixed reality to develop decision-support solutions. The work was awarded a Global Telecoms Business Innovation Award (2017), highly commended at the IET Innovation Awards (2018) and showcased on BBC News, Wired Smarter and London Tech Week.

Please contact Dr Beate Knight (Catalyst Senior Project Manager) at catalyst@essex.ac.uk or by phone: **+44 (0) 1206 872057** to discuss your requirements and find the right help.

The Catalyst Project works in partnership with:

