

Consultancy Invitation: Evaluation of Taking Action on Rural Poverty Project

Your organisation is invited to apply to submit an Expression of Interest for the provision of an evaluation of the Taking Action on Rural Poverty (TARP) Project which is delivered by Poverty Alliance.

1. About the Project

Taking Action on Rural Poverty is a 3-year project funded by the Robertson Trust as part of their Financial Security Workstream. Too often people living on low incomes in rural areas pay a premium for essential goods and services – food, energy, transport, etc. ‘Taking Action on Rural Poverty’ (TARP) will develop new ways of addressing rural poverty in Scotland by reducing the rural poverty premium.

Despite Scotland’s great wealth, rural and island Scotland have been hit hardest by the cost of living crisis. Too many people living rurally are held back by poverty. Stemming the tide is made harder by the higher cost of rural living. It currently costs 15-30% more just to get by in remote rural Scotland than in urban parts of the UK. People living in rural Scotland:

- Have to travel further to access jobs and services but have less access to public transport;
- Use more energy to heat your homes but pay more for it; and
- Have less choice about where you do your weekly shop, which costs you more.

Our measurements of poverty can obscure rural poverty, meaning rural poverty is often hidden from view and not a key focus for policymakers. We also know that stigma associated with asking for help can be particularly strong in rural areas.

The project has three main strands of activity and outcomes.

Outcome One:

Support people with direct experience of poverty and trauma to collaborate with community and voluntary organisations, the private sector and public bodies to address the poverty premium.

Working in two rural local authorities (Aberdeenshire and Argyll and Bute) we have created two citizen’s panel for people with lived experience of poverty. Through this and wider engagement work, we will work together to develop priorities and ideas for practical solutions. We will come together with voluntary organisations, the private sector and public bodies to select a solution to test in each place. With a small amount of seed funding available to invest. At the same time, we will continuously look for and support a range of ways to connect people with lived experience to strengthen local decision making.

Outcome Two:

Strengthen connections and collaboration between rural organisations and support them to network and undertake anti-poverty advocacy work.

In our two pilot areas, we will work alongside the local organisations challenging poverty to understand what they need to amplify their work, connect with one another and influence change. We will create and share resources, disseminate learning and convene events. At a national level we will amplify the voices and experiences of local people and organisations to ensure that there is greater recognition of rurality in national anti-poverty policy.

Outcome Three:

We learn about change in taking a participatory approach to tackling the rural poverty premium.

We will generate evidence on how to take a participatory approach to tackling the rural poverty premium, learn and evaluate as we go. As well as evaluating the effectiveness of our practical measures to reduce the cost of living rurally and the impact of our seed funding, we will have a particular focus on understanding what works in creating change locally, as well as what's not working and why. We'll learn about how to ensure the voices of lived experience are at the heart of this process.

2. About our work to date

Within the first year of the project, there has been deep development work to establish the respective strands of the project. This included the setting up of citizen panels across Argyll and Bute and Aberdeenshire as well as our wider learning partners group, wider scoping work on the local authorities, and a targeted outreach programme to build links with wider organisations in these areas around the rural poverty premium. We have now moved towards setting up the test and learn pilots, where we have a set amount of funding and potential match funding to test and learn from different approaches to tackling the rural poverty premium. Across the project year 2 and year 3: we will 'test and learn' from four interventions that will be developed collaboratively.

We have established a decision making assessment approach for this work which will include working with the respective citizens panels in each area.

3. What we require

For this evaluation, we require an evaluator that understands the vital learning and lessons that can be gained from this project across the three outcomes. The nature of this project - working across different local authorities, with different systems and demographics - means we require an experienced evaluator that can work across a diverse range of stakeholders and contexts, including people with lived experience of poverty, policy makers, the private sector and other partners. Central to this evaluation is our wider [organisational values](#). We are looking for an evaluator that aligns with and supports our approach, alongside our need for high quality evidence and learning and is trauma informed.

As part of this evaluation, we would like to understand how this work is performing against the project outcomes which are:

1. Support people with direct experience of poverty and trauma to collaborate with community and voluntary organisations, the private sector and public bodies to address the poverty premium.
2. Strengthen connections and collaboration between rural organisations and support them to network and undertake anti-poverty advocacy work.
3. We learn about change in taking a participatory approach to tackling the rural poverty premium.

By considering

- How have the respective components of the project enabled us to create the support and conditions for change in addressing and understanding the poverty premium across Aberdeenshire and Argyll and Bute?
- How has the project supported and developed the understanding of the rural poverty premium in Scotland across different stakeholders, relationships, evidence, policies, and resources on the rural poverty premium?
- To understand the lessons of a participatory approach in reducing the rural poverty premium by identifying where change is occurring, the methods driving that change, and the factors preventing progress.
- What are the key lessons in transferability and scalability of the project, in particular from the 'test and learn' and what wider changes are required to sustain, enhance, and build upon the work of this project?

The appointed evaluation contractor is expected to commence work during this time period. We would like this contractor to begin work in January 2025 following an inception meeting with the team in December 2024. This will allow the evaluator to align with the intended delivery timeline of the first test and learn phase of the TARP project.

It is anticipated that year three will follow similar timescales to year two and will be our second phase of the work

Other information

We have an internal monitoring and evaluation framework being led by our Research Officer on the project. This includes data on the experiences and key themes emerging across the panel participants, data from the learning events as well as learning on practice and policy from our wider engagement work and policy work.

Key deliverables and outputs

- Interim briefing produced illustrating early learning from year 2 of the project.
- A final report covering year two and year three of the TARP programme delivery, including a stand-alone executive summary. This should be tailored to work across our intended stakeholder audiences including: local authorities, the private sector, the Poverty Alliance network and other key and relevant stakeholders.

- Presentations of findings and recommendations to Poverty Alliance,
- Presentation to relevant stakeholders at our annual learning partners meeting
- Attendance at inception meeting and quarterly update meetings with project lead.

4. Timescales

We would like the commissioned supplier to begin work on this evaluation on January 2025 with an inception meeting with the team to take place in December 2024. This would allow the evaluator to align with the intended delivery timescales of the first test and learn project.

Key target dates

- Submission deadline : 18th of October 2024
- Notification of outcome – 31st of October 2024
- Inception meeting – w/c 2nd of December
- Final methodology plan agreed – 13th of January 2025
- Interim briefing – September 2025
- Completion of final deliverables – July 2026

5. Responding to this tender.

Please return Expressions of Interest with details of how you would supply this work to the Poverty Alliance by 5pm on the 18th of October 2024. No submission will be accepted after this stage.

Expressions of interest will be accepted by email only to the following address:

David.Reilly@povertyalliance.org

Where there are multiple applications meeting the criteria we reserve the right to hold interviews with potential contractor before awarding contract.

The successful contractor will be informed by the of 31st of October 2024.

The budget associated with this service is £20,000 including VAT.

Expressions of interest must include:

- A proposal which demonstrates how your organisation would deliver this work and help us meet our evaluation objectives and address all of the provisions discussed within the specification including any identified ethical issues.
- Details of staff to be involved in delivering the contract, what tasks they will fulfil, and their relevant experience and expertise.
- Pricing schedule for your for proposed work.
- Attach a copy of your organisational GDPR policy and relevant safeguarding policies.
- One page of relevant previous work. Contacts for two relevant references that can be accessed when appointed.