



Call for Applications - RSA Policy Expo 2019

Infrastructure in local and regional development

Good infrastructure provides a basis for economic and social development in many different economies. Whilst there is more to the role of infrastructure than just a simple causal relationship to economic growth, and simply investing in infrastructure gives no guarantee of more rapid progress, the absence of good infrastructure will almost always act as an impediment to development. Infrastructure takes many forms and covers a full range from the physical infrastructure of transport systems, energy or water supply, or telecommunications to the soft infrastructure of software, control systems and artificial intelligence. In many cases the failure to take a balanced approach to the development of all these aspects of infrastructure has led to a perceived failure of infrastructure investment as a promoter of economic development. The question remains as to whether infrastructure should be seen essentially as a public good paid for, and provided by, the public sector, whether the private sector can or should be involved as provider (and with what form of regulation) or whether some form of public-private partnership provision is the solution to ensure timely investment free of public sector funding constraints but with a strong public sector interest.

Much has been written about all of these aspects of infrastructure: what is sought here are proposals that aim to address new and innovative thinking about the role of infrastructure, how it can be measured and assessed, and modes of provision. This can be in high-, middle- or low-income countries or in an international setting and cover any type of infrastructure. The results of the research should have policy relevance beyond the territory or territories on which it focuses and should have a focus on the regional and city scale. Some key issues that could be addressed may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The role of infrastructure in addressing regional disparities, convergence and divergence;
- Financing infrastructure on a whole life basis allowing for the on-going costs of maintenance and loan repayment;
- Assessing the basis of success and failure in public-private partnerships in infrastructure provision;
- The development of smart cities using soft infrastructure to obviate the need for hard infrastructure in addressing problems of congestion, pollution etc;
- Managing infrastructure to achieve reductions in excessive mobility and emissions;
- The role of connected and autonomous vehicles in future infrastructure provision;
- Approaches to the delivery of new infrastructure in a multi-jurisdiction world: bringing together local, regional, national and international actors to resolve both vertical and horizontal conflicts;

We seek proposals that, while ambitious in advancing the field, target policy-relevant questions and envisage avenues to influence policy and practice. The RSA will award £15,000 for the completion of the research and outputs. The research should produce an article for our gold open access journal, *Regional Studies*, *Regional Science* and a short 'policy facing' book of no more than 30,000 words published by Routledge. The book will have a large distribution, as it will be sent in print copy to all RSA members and in e-book format to all those who subscribe to any of the journals of the RSA. Applicants are advised to read the application support document carefully and to comply with rules of the scheme such as the inclusion of a named early career researcher in the team.

Application queries

The Policy Expo initiative is worth up to £15,000 (c.\$19,000; c. €16,800) to successful teams aiming to connect their work and wider communities to societal questions and policy needs. The RSA seeks to support 3 Policy Expos:

- 1. Infrastructure in local and regional development**
- 2. Austerity urbanism and inclusive growth**
- 3. Sustainable energy**

Research related queries should be addressed in the first instance to the RSA Chief Executive, Sally Hardy on sally.hardy@regionalstudies.org and policyexpo@regionalstudies.org

Administrative queries should be addressed to policyexpo@regionalstudies.org or by telephoning +44 (0)1273 698 017.

Please send your applications to policyexpo@regionalstudies.org

The submission deadline for detailed applications is **12th June 2019**.

To download the application form and handbook, please go to <http://www.regionalstudies.org/funding/page/policy-expo-grant-scheme>