

BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE – RESEARCH COMPETITION

INFORMATION SHEET

The St Helena Research Institute, in conjunction with St Helena Government and the Fibre Optic Cable and Satellite Ground Station Board are seeking to attract research proposals from local and international researchers that will help realise the social objectives of the European Development Fund (EDF 11) 11th round project funding.

The specific social objectives of EDF 11 are:

- Improved connectivity of households and businesses which will have a substantial positive impact on all socio-economic conditions on the Island
- Reduction in overseas referrals for health diagnostics and treatment which will enable people to remain close to their families while receiving medical interventions. Increased Internet bandwidth which will enable access to modern medical procedures, not currently available on the Island
- To enable people with disabilities or a special educational need to reach their true potential and to gain further independence.

As part of the EDF 11, St Helena Government are required to conduct an evaluation of the changes occurring as a result of the landing of the fibre optic cable. We are running a competition to encourage research work which would contribute to this evaluation of a pre and post cable environment on St Helena. Amongst other things we are interested to understand, in relation to St Helena:

- How educational achievement changes when students gain access to unlimited internet
- The impact of telemedicine in remote places
- The contribution of technology to mental health, well-being, independence of people with disabilities, speech and language therapy
- The costs and benefits of telemedicine and influence of medical referral budgets
- The impact of access on culture, relationships and networking
- The impact of internet on globalisation for a small remote island
- Changes in the connectivity of households and businesses and related impact on socio-economic conditions and business opportunities on the Island.

Applicants are responsible for putting forward their own topics for research. The evaluation of proposals will be based on how it assists SHG to demonstrate some of the outcomes of the cable.

The competition is open to individual researchers and consortia of academics, and could comprise more than one academic institution based internationally, on St Helena or, both. The lead applicant must be age 21 years and over. Partnership approaches with St Helena organisations are encouraged and multi-disciplinary studies will be considered.

The indicative timeline for the 'Go Live' date for the fibre optic cable on St Helena is March 2022 with shore landing of the Equiano System expected in April 2021. The project timeline will need to ensure that sufficient time is available to capture the pre-cable baseline. We suggest project should aim to start on or before October 2021.

Only research proposals that have answered all the sections in the application form and reach the Research Institute by the competition deadline will be considered.

Applications should be submitted via the Bridging the Digital Divide application form that can be emailed or collected from Rebecca Cairns-Wicks at the Research Institute Carnarvon Court rebecca.cairns-wicks@sainthelena.gov.sh. The closing date for proposals to reach the Research Institute is 2359 GMT 29 January 2021.

The proposals will be reviewed by the St Helena Connected Group and the St Helena Research Council and the research proposal which is considered to best support the EDF 11 social objectives, offering real benefits to the community and meets the Research Council criteria, will be awarded a grant of £5,000 to go towards the costs of travel to the Island or for local researchers, the sum of £5,000 to contribute to the costs of conducting the study.

Thank you for applying and best of luck.