

BLAVATNIK SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

Summary

Job title	Postdoctoral Researcher (WWHGE Outcomes Fund Study)
Division	Social Sciences
Department	Blavatnik School of Government
Location	Radcliffe Observatory Quarter, Woodstock Road, Oxford, OX2 6GG
Grade and salary	Grade 7: £36,024 - £44,263 per annum
Hours	Full time
Contract type	Fixed-term (1 year), with the possibility of extension
Reporting to	Deputy Academic Director
Vacancy reference	168031
Additional information	The deadline for applications is 12:00 noon (UK time) on Friday 13 October 2023

The project

Governments worldwide have committed to achieving better learning outcomes for children. Yet, with the SDG deadline only a decade away, 800 million children and youths are unlikely to achieve the learning outcomes needed to thrive and prosper. To address this crisis, governments and development stakeholders are increasingly designing and testing new delivery models to improve learning outcomes. One such model is the use of social impact bonds (SIBs) and development impact bonds (DIBs) - a financing mechanism involving private investors, service providers, and outcome payers (government or a development organisation) to create a tighter link between financing and outcomes.¹ Despite the increasing use of this delivery model in low and low-middle income countries, there is sparse rigorous evidence on their impact and the mechanisms through which they operate.

¹ Under this mechanism private investors invest capital in service providers who then undertake a range of activities intended to achieve specific outcomes. The private investors are only paid by outcome payers (government or a donor organisation) if the specific outcomes are achieved.



The WWHGE Outcomes Fund Study is a joint initiative between the University of Oxford and the Education Outcomes Fund (EOF), funded by the FCDO as part of the **What Works Hub for Global Education (WWHGE)**, based at the Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford. The study is part of the 'Learning Agenda' accompanying the Ghana Education Outcomes Project (GEOP) and the Sierra Leone Education Innovation Challenge (SLEIC). Specific research questions include: 1. *Direct program impact*. Which interventions or best practices emerging under the GEOP/SLEIC should be scaled up in future, based on their impact and VFM? 2. *System level impact*. What were the GEOP/SLEIC's impact on the wider education system in each country? 3. *Implementation process*. How did implementation evolve in service of achieving learning outcomes?

The role

The post holder will be a member of the research team for the WWHGE Outcomes Fund Study and will lead various research tasks such as project and government stakeholder management, research management, instrument development, management of data collection firms, data analysis, and writing of papers and reports.

The position is based in Oxford at the Blavatnik School of Government but will involve working closely with government stakeholders, service providers and data collection firms in Ghana and Sierra Leone. It is envisaged that the postholder will spend 3 months up front in Ghana and 3 months up front in Sierra Leone. After this, the postholder will make follow-up visits as needed, and provide line management and hands-on support to the WWHGE Outcomes Fund Study In-country Project Coordinator who will be based in Ghana.

Responsibilities

1. Stakeholder management

- Develop a thorough understanding of the education sector in Ghana and Sierra Leone, mapping out key stakeholders in the public education space.
- Lead the development of relationships with government stakeholders of the WWHGE Outcomes Fund Study in Ghana and Sierra Leone to build a common understanding of the research objectives and goals, and to acquire necessary project approvals.
- Lead the development of relationships with service providers in Ghana and Sierra Leone to ensure that the research team gains a deep understanding of the GEOP and SLEIC interventions on the ground.
- Lead the development of relationships with donors supporting the governments of Ghana and Sierra Leone through the Education Outcomes Fund, and more broadly, to build an understanding of the Study's research objectives, as well as to identify engagement (and potentially funding) opportunities.
- Liaise with the In-country Project Coordinator to ensure that relationships with government partners, service providers, and donors in Ghana and Sierra Leone are maintained during the duration of the Study.

2. Research management

- Support the hiring process for the In-country Project Coordinator, and subsequently line manage the successful candidate.
- Develop and maintain project work plans, ensuring that activities are on track and within budget.
- Organise, participate in, and note take for calls among members of the research team (PIs plus EOF representatives).

3. Survey development and implementation

- Develop a strong understanding of the academic literature on outcomes-based contracting, especially use and evaluation of impact bonds.
- Gain a thorough understanding of the activities being undertaken/planned by service providers in Sierra Leone and Ghana, including trips to meet with (and interview) providers and the GEOP/SLEIC management units where necessary.
- Lead the development of survey instruments for the midline surveys planned for 2024 in Ghana and Sierra Leone.
- Liaise with the In-country project coordinator to contract and manage survey firms.
- Lead the development of training materials for the surveys and participate in training sessions with survey enumerators in Ghana and Sierra Leone.
- Lead the quality assurance process during the surveys.

4. Data analysis

- Contribute to the development of trial registrations and pre-analysis plans, working with the wider research team.
- Lead cleaning of data, with assistance from WWHGE research assistants.
- Preliminary data analysis, in accordance with the pre-analysis plans.

5. Report writing

- Preparation of initial slide decks and reports on results.
- Contributions to reports and academic papers, alongside other members of the research team.

Selection criteria

Essential selection criteria

- Hold, or be close to completion of, a PhD/DPhil in economics, quantitative social science/public policy, or equivalent with a strong econometrics background.
- Experience in managing large field research projects and teams.
- Experience in developing and maintaining research workplans and budgets.
- Experience in conceptualising new research ideas and developing research instruments.
- Experience in managing and cleaning large datasets.
- Adept in the use of Stata.

- Ability to work closely with multiple team members simultaneously and in a collaborative manner.
- Attention to detail and excellent writing and presentation skills.
- Proven ability to: handle several different tasks at one time, successfully complete tasks assigned, and meet deadlines.
- Willingness to travel to Ghana and Sierra Leone.
- Experience of contributing to research publications.

Desirable selection criteria

- Knowledge of other software such as R, Python.
- Experience of working on research projects in collaboration with the public sector.

Pre-employment screening

Standard checks

If you are offered the post, the offer will be subject to standard pre-employment checks. You will be asked to provide: proof of your right-to-work in the UK; proof of your identity; and (if we haven't done so already) we will contact the referees you have nominated. You will also be asked to complete a health declaration so that you can tell us about any health conditions or disabilities for which you may need us to make appropriate adjustments.

Please read the candidate notes on the University's pre-employment screening procedures at: <https://www.jobs.ox.ac.uk/pre-employment-checks>

Hazard-specific / Safety-critical duties

This job includes hazards or safety-critical activities. If you are offered the post, you will be asked to complete a health questionnaire which will be assessed by our Occupational Health Service, and the offer of employment will be subject a successful outcome of this assessment.

The hazards or safety-critical duties involved are as follows:

Travel outside of Europe or North America on University Business

About the University of Oxford

Welcome to the University of Oxford. We aim to lead the world in research and education for the benefit of society both in the UK and globally. Oxford's researchers engage with academic, commercial and cultural partners across the world to stimulate high-quality research and enable innovation through a broad range of social, policy and economic impacts.

We believe our strengths lie both in empowering individuals and teams to address fundamental questions of global significance, while providing all our staff with a welcoming and inclusive workplace that enables everyone to develop and do their best work. Recognising that diversity is our strength, vital for innovation and creativity, we aspire to build a truly diverse community which values and respects every individual's unique contribution.

While we have long traditions of scholarship, we are also forward-looking, creative and cutting-edge. Oxford is one of Europe's most entrepreneurial universities and we rank first in the UK for university spin-outs, and in recent years we have spun out 15-20 new companies every year. We are also recognised as leaders in support for social enterprise.

Join us and you will find a unique, democratic and international community, a great range of staff benefits and access to a vibrant array of cultural activities in the beautiful city of Oxford.

For more information, please visit www.ox.ac.uk/about/organisation.

The Blavatnik School of Government

Our vision is of a world better led, a world better served and a world better governed. We are a global school committed to improving the quality of government and public policymaking worldwide, through three routes: teaching current and future leaders; applied research; and engagement with government and practitioners.

The School was founded in 2010 and our founding dean is [Professor Ngaire Woods](#). We admitted the first 38 Master of Public Policy (MPP) students in 2012 and we currently accept around 120 MPP students and five doctoral students a year.

The Blavatnik School of Government holds a bronze Athena Swan award to recognise advancement of gender equality: representation, progression and success for all. You can find more information on the [Blavatnik School of Government's website](#).

How to apply

Applications are made through our online recruitment portal. Information about how to apply is available on our Jobs website <https://www.jobs.ox.ac.uk/how-to-apply>.

Your application will be judged solely on the basis of how you demonstrate that you meet the selection criteria stated in the job description.

As part of your application you will be asked to provide details of two referees and indicate whether we can contact them now.

You will be asked to upload a CV and a supporting statement. The supporting statement must explain how you meet each of the selection criteria for the post using examples of your skills and experience. This may include experience gained in employment, education, or during career breaks (such as time out to care for dependants).

If, for any reason, you have taken a career break or have had an atypical career and wish to disclose this in your application, the selection committee will take this into account. The selection committee will also be mindful of the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic may have had on candidates' careers as a result of additional caring responsibilities or other factors.

Please upload all documents **as PDF files** with your name and the document type in the filename.

All applications must be received by **midday** UK time on the closing date stated in the online advertisement.

Information for priority candidates

A priority candidate is a University employee who is seeking redeployment because they have been advised that they are at risk of redundancy, or on grounds of ill-health/disability. Priority candidates are issued with a redeployment letter by their employing department(s).

If you are a priority candidate, please ensure that you attach your redeployment letter to your application (or email it to the contact address on the advert if the application form used for the vacancy does not allow attachments).

If you need help

Application FAQs, including technical troubleshooting advice is available at: <https://staff.web.ox.ac.uk/recruitment-support-faqs>

Non-technical questions about this job should be addressed to the recruiting department directly via recruit@bsg.ox.ac.uk.

To return to the online application at any stage, please go to: www.recruit.ox.ac.uk.

Please note that you will receive an automated email from our online recruitment portal to confirm receipt of your application. **Please check your spam/junk mail** if you do not receive this email.

Important information for candidates

Data Privacy

Please note that any personal data submitted to the University as part of the job application process will be processed in accordance with the GDPR and related UK data protection legislation. For further information, please see the University's Privacy Notice for Job Applicants at: <https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/job-applicant-privacy-policy>. The University's Policy on Data Protection is available at: <https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/data-protection-policy>.

The University's policy on retirement

The University operates an Employer Justified Retirement Age (EJRA) for very senior research posts at **grade RSIV/D35 and clinical equivalents E62 and E82**, which with effect from 1 October 2023 will be 30 September before the 70th birthday. The justification for this is explained at: <https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/the-ejra>.

For **existing** employees on these grades, any employment beyond the retirement age is subject to approval through the procedures: <https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/the-ejra>.

There is no normal or fixed age at which staff in posts at other grades have to retire. Staff at these grades may elect to retire in accordance with the rules of the applicable pension scheme, as may be amended from time to time.

Equality of opportunity

Entry into employment with the University and progression within employment will be determined only by personal merit and the application of criteria which are related to the duties of each particular post and the relevant salary structure. In all cases, ability to perform the job will be the primary consideration. No applicant or member of staff shall be discriminated against because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

Benefits of working at the University

Employee benefits

University employees enjoy 38 days' paid holiday, generous pension schemes, travel discounts, and a variety of professional development opportunities. Our range of other employee benefits and discounts also includes free entry to the Botanic Gardens and University colleges, and discounts at University museums. See <https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/staff-benefits>

University Club and sports facilities

Membership of the University Club is free for all University staff. The University Club offers social, sporting, and hospitality facilities. Staff can also use the University Sports Centre on Iffley Road at discounted rates, including a fitness centre, powerlifting room, and swimming pool. See www.club.ox.ac.uk and <https://www.sport.ox.ac.uk/>.

Information for staff new to Oxford

If you are relocating to Oxfordshire from overseas or elsewhere in the UK, the University's Welcome Service website includes practical information about settling in the area, including advice on relocation, accommodation, and local schools. See <https://welcome.ox.ac.uk/>

There is also a visa loan scheme to cover the costs of UK visa applications for staff and their dependents. See <https://staffimmigration.admin.ox.ac.uk/visa-loan-scheme>

Family-friendly benefits

With one of the most generous family leave schemes in the Higher Education sector, and a range of flexible working options, Oxford aims to be a family-friendly employer. We also subscribe to the Work+Family Space, a service that provides practical advice and support for employees who have caring responsibilities. The service offers a free telephone advice line, and the ability to book emergency back-up care for children, adult dependents and elderly relatives. See <https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/my-family-care>

The University has excellent childcare services, including five University nurseries as well as University-supported places at many other private nurseries.

For full details, including how to apply and the costs, see <https://childcare.admin.ox.ac.uk/>

Disabled staff

We are committed to supporting members of staff with disabilities or long-term health conditions. For further details, including information about how to make contact, in confidence, with the University's Staff Disability Advisor, see <https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/disability-support>

Staff networks

The University has a number of staff networks including the Oxford Research Staff Society, BME staff network, LGBT+ staff network and a disabled staff network. You can find more information at <https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/networks>

The University of Oxford Newcomers' Club

The University of Oxford Newcomers' Club is an organisation run by volunteers that aims to assist the partners of new staff settle into Oxford, and provides them with an opportunity to meet people and make connections in the local area. See www.newcomers.ox.ac.uk.