

Call to tender

Facilitator/documenter – knowledge and social justice collective

Title: nurturing a small community of knowledge justice practitioners

Location: online + visits/residentials in person

Budget: up to £30,000

Term: fixed term ending July 2024, subject to negotiation

Application deadline: 10th July 2023

Background

Lankelly Chase is an independent charitable foundation striving for a world healed by justice, equity and inclusion. We connect, support and fund organisations and networks that are seeking to reveal and disrupt systems of oppression and to create the space for systems of justice, equity and inclusion to be imagined and built.

In late 2020 Lankelly Chase released an open call for funding proposals on the theme of ‘knowledge’. This articulated our misgivings about the ways in which knowledge about social harm, injustice and inequality is created, interpreted and used; by whom; using which methods; for what purpose; and under what assumptions, frameworks and mindsets. This enabled us to fund and convene a small group of partners to model and explore – individually and collectively – what a different way of approaching ‘knowledge’ and its relationship with social justice might look and feel like. This group has been working individually and occasionally together for the last couple of years. **We’d now like to formalize a learner-facilitator role to help us make the most of our connections and shared learning opportunities.**

Further information about our approach to knowledge and justice is available on our website [here](#). The original callout on which this work was based is also included as an Appendix at the end of this document.

Where we are now

We have a group of seven partners working as knowledge justice practitioners and explorers in various ways. Our focuses include building community voice and power; challenging evidential and academic hierarchies of voice and method; valuing different forms and histories of wisdom; and centring marginalized voices.

Our group is formed of individuals, some of whom work alone, some in pairs, and others who have loose or close affiliations to organisations/institutions. We’re geographically spread across England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. We don’t have a singular, pithy mission statement or a detailed manifesto, but we’ve stayed interested and committed to this work and the possibilities it’s opened up. We have activist, campaigning and academic postures (and often all three).

We want to **embrace and build** our capacity for ongoing reflection on our personal and collective entanglement in unjust systems, and to model different ways of thinking, knowing, being and doing. We want to **resist and dismantle** false and faulty assumptions and frameworks concerning objectivity, legitimacy, neutrality and rigour; and challenge descriptions of, and approaches to, social justice which rely on narratives of damage and fixing.

As well as funding for their own work, the group have also started to explore how to spread resources more widely into the field of knowledge justice, although we don't want a role as fundholders to distract from our core work as practitioners and colleagues.

Scope/task

The primary tasks of this brief are to a) **plan, facilitate and document** our group's interactions over the next 12 months; and b) **frame and embed a shared reflection & learning process** which structures and flows from these.

We are asking for support to work through what we're hearing, seeing, doing and learning. An important aspect throughout will be the distilling, harvesting, sense-making and pattern-spotting that would allow for discussions and interactions that create a feedback loop with and among partners.

In practice we anticipate this work would be arranged around:

- Grounding and introductions – familiarizing with the work and the partners
- Catchup and reflection meetings (monthly)
- Residential/retreats (every 3 or 4 months)
- Visits and 'field trips' (intermittent, as appropriate).

Our group has had some external facilitation before, and we've also shared/rotated this role amongst ourselves for a while. However, we have become increasingly aware of the need for a person or people to hold this role deliberately and distinctly; to establish a sense of structure and continuity; and to take primary responsibility for 'content' (including writeups and other creative outputs, like graphic harvesting) which gives us a platform to share our work and experiences. We've been maintaining a group notion site, but would like to enhance what this shared space or public platform might look like.

We don't expect the contractor(s) to be everywhere, all the time, but we are looking for a committed presence at the 'campfire' at the times when the whole group gathers together as peer learners. We'd like this to be a joyful and nourishing place. We're also OK with the view that *"we always know more than we can tell, but we can also say more than we can write down"*: so whilst some of the focus will be on 'products' and 'outputs' which help us to tell the story of this work and its place in the world, we are not obsessed with writing things down for the benefit of an unknown, external audience, but equally focused on our own context, inner learning, and embodiment of our shared principles.

Budget & timelines

We have set aside up to £30,000 for this role, over the next 12 months. **This budget does not include travel**, which would be covered from a shared budget alongside the rest of the group.

The contractual relationship will be with Lankelly Chase but the accountability relationship will be shared with the whole group.

How to respond

Please send us a short proposal (no more than 3 pages) setting out:

- Why you're interested in the brief, including anything about your own values and background
- Your experience, including any relevant history or examples of your work
- How you'd approach the brief, including any particular skills, tools and methodologies you'd like to try out and use
- A breakdown of your anticipated costs (see anticipated time commitments in 'scope/task' above).

OR

- Tell us a story of any work you've done which sounds a bit like this, including any insights from the process and what you'd bring to this project.

Please email tender responses to joan@lankellychase.org.uk.

We are happy to have informal discussions about this opportunity as people work up their proposals. Please email oliver@lankellychase.org.uk to set up a conversation.

Further information

We recognize the ironies in tendering in quite a traditional way for a piece of work which talks about 'different ways of knowing', and we're particularly aware of the assumed supremacy of the written (English) word. We do need *something* to go on as we, as a group or subgroup, look at who we might want to bring into the work; but if you have a different way you'd prefer to respond then we will make any arrangements we can to support this.

Depending on the responses we receive, we may choose to interview for this position. If so, we aim to hold these in the week commencing **17th July**.

We are aware of the school & summer holidays, both in the number of deadlines usually associated with this, and the difficulty of getting people together afterwards. We will make reasonable allowances to enable people to continue participating in the process if it extends into this busy period.

We have pencilled in September for our next group residential and would like to have the contractor in place before then, including the completion of some (not necessarily all) of the grounding and prep work, and to contribute to the planning of this.

Thank you.

Appendix: original funding callout (extract)

NB This extract is an example of our thinking at the time (late 2020). Whilst our analysis and description has moved on in some ways, other parts still hold. We've included it in this tender as a useful artefact for potential contractors as the 'thing' which the group first connected with and gathered around.

We think that Knowledge is a critical issue: we want to explore how knowledge about severe social harm is created, interpreted and used; by whom; using which methods; for what purpose; and under what assumptions, frameworks and mindsets. Put together, the 'ways things are done' in these areas define our core understanding of social harm and also frame our responses to it: 'knowledge', like power, is a theme which consistently shows up right across our work and is deeply embedded within it. We have reached a reasonable working analysis of the limits of our current framework, and would like to explore and support some alternative thinking and approaches which can challenge the boundaries that we currently operate within.

The 'paradigm'

We think that our current knowledge system is characterised by:

- The individualisation and medicalisation of social problems
- The location of solutions primarily within services and/or via the delivery of effective interventions to these individuals...
- ...which are measured on a linear, causal basis of 'if we do X then Y will happen', with Y as a predetermined benefit for which services are held accountable...
- ...which, in turn, operate under a market and performance management paradigm whose central features include control and value for money...
- ...with all of this set against a cultural backdrop which sees some people as 'needy' or 'bad' and others as 'normal' and 'good', amidst a complex web of emotions and historical traditions including paternalism, charity, pity and disgust – and more simply, 'othering'.

This translates directly onto what our knowledge economy looks like: what is looked for, what is seen as valuable, which methods are privileged and credible, whose voice is heard, and so on. It has a direct impact on how our systems of care and welfare are conceptualised, designed, run and understood, and shapes the actions and thoughts of everyone involved in them. We are swimming in knowledge about the 'scale' of particular problems, usually understood as how many people they affect or how much they cost – from how many children are 'vulnerable', to how many adults have 'multiple needs', to how many families are 'troubled'. There is a huge market for information on the effectiveness of interventions in delivering clear, measurable change – usually to one person at a time. Our paradigm defines the limits of our understanding of the scale, nature, impact and potential solutions to severe and multiple disadvantage: we are forever focused on intervening at the individual rather than the systemic level. We think this is a problem.

We have lived within this paradigm ourselves (both organisationally and as individuals) and have operated within its limits, assumptions and rules. It has shaped the way that we have funded, commissioned, acted and talked in relation to severe social harm. When we coined the term 'severe

and multiple disadvantage' it was an attempt to contextualise the relationship between issues too often seen as separate (addiction, homelessness and involvement in the criminal justice system), but in reality it has become another silo in its own right: 'multiple needs' has, in turn, become a defined problem affecting an identifiable number of people who need to be helped (or fixed) by interventions and services. It has been difficult to explore alternatives or create the space for different kinds of conversation and understanding.

So what are we after?

Building on the above, we are interested in people, organisations, institutions and initiatives who are approaching knowledge in a different way: particularly on the themes of ownership, value and connection, and especially in line with our [system behaviours](#). We'd like to develop this more intentionally, but it's also not all new work – plenty is showing up already in our existing partnerships.

Our areas of focus are:

- Modelling principles of participation, democracy and equity in the creation, interpretation and use of knowledge
- Collective sense-making and the involvement of multiple partial perspectives, particularly at community level
- Working across and/or challenging academic and evidential hierarchies, including equalising the relationship of power and prestige between clinical, learned and lived experience
- Exposing and questioning core frameworks and assumptions (for example about what and who is deemed valuable, or our concepts of progress, productivity, growth, success etc)
- Challenging the way that knowledge is created and used to separate rather than connect people, issues and communities.

These are the things we'd like to see more of in the world, in contrast with 'how things are done' at the minute. We think our role is to a) find, support, connect, promote (and where necessary instigate) examples of these approaches; and b) help create the conditions for more of these 'good things' to emerge.

Why do we want these things?

The approaches above map directly onto the wider [change we want to see](#), including:

- Intervening on the 'mindset' level: helping to reveal, question and renew the written and unwritten rules and assumptions that govern how we act; and questioning the assumptions, frameworks, knowledge, research and information on which our systems of care and wellbeing are based
- Wanting to find people who are focused on changing the terms of engagement, and build capacity and skills among people who want to rewrite the rules of our systems so they become useful, healthy and just
- Questioning how decisions are made, by whom, in whose interests, with what values/assumptions, and to what/whose purpose
- Emphasising who is involved and how they are working, over and above what they may intend to 'produce' as an 'output'

- Resourcing networked activity between 'active change agents' engaged in collective inquiry about how power is shifting or being used differently, who is being drawn in, what unexpected results are emerging and what kind of future they're building towards
- Relinquishing harmful practices and finding transformational ones.

Overall, we hope that the approaches outlined above are starting to model what a new set of systems might look like, based on fundamentally different ways of thinking and acting, and that they will help to move us towards systems that are governed in the interests of those they serve, with social justice, mutual care, action learning, lived and learned experience, transformative optimism and interconnection at their heart.
