Background Review Report

Funding Policy and Funders' Role in Driving Academic-Practitioner Collaborations

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Abbreviations used in the report

AcPrac	Academic-Practitioner
AFSEE	Atlantic Fellows for Social and Economic Equity
AHRC	Arts and Humanities Research Council (UK)
EC	European Commission
EPSRC	Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (UK)
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council (UK)
EU	European Union
FPF	Funding Policy and Funders
GCRF	Global Challenges Research Fund (UK)
GERD	Gross Expenditure on Research and Development
LMICs	Low and Middle-income Countries
LSE	London School of Economics and Political Science
NSF	National Science Foundation (USA)
ODA	Official Development Assistance
R&D	Research and Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals (of UN)
SSH	Social Sciences and Humanities
SSHRC	Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (Canada)
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
UN	United Nations
UK	United Kingdom
UKRI	UK Research and Innovation
US	United States (of America)

Executive Summary

This report highlights the key ideas and findings of a mapping exercise conducted in the initial phases of the **'Funding Policy and Funders' (FPF)** sub-project, which developed out of the '**Exploring the Potential of Academic-Practitioner Collaborations for Social Change (AcPrac)**[1] project hosted under the LSE's AFSEE programme. The AcPrac project has two key objectives: 1) to contribute to AFSEE's theory of change by exploring the conditions that are conducive to developing generative processes of knowledge exchange between academics and practitioners; and 2) to examine the methodological and epistemological challenges of researching inequalities, and particularly how the latter might be reproduced through the research process itself. The FPF sub-project investigates **how the funding landscape shapes and drives AcPrac collaborations for social change**, focusing on funding programmes that broadly address the reduction of inequalities.

The focus of the first phase of FPF has been to map and collect secondary data from publicly available information about funders to understand the field of actors. We used search engines like ResearchProfessional[2], and BiP[3] as well as funders' accounts on LinkedIn[4] and on governmental funding websites to learn more about certain public funders' profiles. We additionally documented a selected number of research and innovation funding policies, as well as funder strategies from national and international organisations to understand the overarching picture of the policy landscape.

The construction of our data sources is grounded in two thematic considerations: first, only opportunities providing funds for researching and/or reducing socio-economic inequalities have been included. Such opportunities include ones belonging to a broad spectrum of disciplines and fields of focus within the remit of social sciences and humanities. Second, we needed to address the basic information about these funding opportunities must have been publicly available and accessible online. As a result, secondary data from 16 countries' 132 schemes and 45 policy documents were organised and reviewed using MS Excel and NVivo as software.

[1] Details of the AFSEE programme can be found here: https://afsee.atlanticfellows.lse.ac.uk/en-gb/projects/academic-practitioner-collaborations (last accessed on 18 November 2024).
[2] For more information, see: https://www.researchprofessional.com (last accessed on 18 November 2024).
[3] BIP Solutions – 'Business Intelligence for the Private Sector.' See: https://www.bipsolutions.com/products-services/business-intelligence (last accessed on 18 November 2024).
[4] https://www.linkedin.com (last accessed on 30 August 2024)

Our preliminary analysis of the schemes revealed that there is a greater level of acceptance of AcPrac collaborations among public funders, as compared to private[5] funding bodies. We also found that project lifecycle patterns have a positive effect on the trend to seek collaborations. In cases where an AcPrac partnership is desired, funders' definition of practitioners tends to be kept as broad as possible.

This encourages academics to partner with any organisation relevant to their projects without major restrictions from funders. In sections further below, we highlight policy documents that have been briefly described to provide a macro but a 'snapshot' view of the funding landscapes across the world, namely in the UK, Canada, the US, the European Union, as well as a few European and South Asian countries. We supplement this with findings from our textual analysis, conducted through NVivo, to present an overview of the contextual references to 'collaboration' in policy instruments.

Key findings of the first phase of the FPF project illustrate the followings:

1. 84% of all schemes that required AcPrac collaborations were by public funders. Public funders invest more in AcPrac collaborations as they might be more interested in demonstrating the societal benefits gained from publicly funded research. In doing so, they may also have less resource constraints compared to non-public sectors.
2. Public funders consider that the involvement of practitioners in all stages of the research design could lead to more equitable partnerships.
3. 40% of all schemes that suggested AcPrac collaborations were by private funders.
4. Across countries, private entities prefer to encourage rather than enforce AcPrac collaborations on socio-economic inequalities research. Germany is an exception, as we discuss later.
5. Schemes that do not mention AcPrac are highest in the US compared to other funders. However, the US public funders are more likely to invest in projects that 'require' AcPrac collaborations, whilst private funders finance more schemes that present AcPrac collaborations as a suggestion.
6. National policies, as well as those of private funders, tend to avoid using jargon-filled descriptions of AcPrac projects, including broadly avoiding words such as 'practitioner' and 'stakeholder' in their plans.
7. From the funders' perspective, the project lifecycle is a significant indicator of whether practitioners should be involved or not in partnerships.
8. Irrespective of the funders' county of origin, we see an increasing trend in funding schemes that adopt AcPrac collaborations for enhancing socio-economic impact of projects.

[5] By using the word 'private,' we are referring to 'non-public' funding sources. This does not specifically mean that the latter are considered corporate.

This first report provides a foundation for interpreting and understanding the limitations of present-day AcPrac collaborations and future data collection strategies. This enables our research on strengthening AcPrac collaborations and creating a fairer funding system. The significance of these findings is that they demonstrate certain trends by exploring the way public and private funders invest in AcPrac collaborations.

We believe that we need to go deeper in our analysis to be able to make more concrete recommendations concerning funding policy. Accordingly, the findings resulting from this initial phase of research will inform the design and implementation of the next stage. We specifically aim to build on these, using primary data collection to understand **the drivers and barriers to collaboration from funders' perspectives** in the next phases of the project**.**

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1. Introduction

The landscape of research funding has undergone tremendous change over the past decade, as funders seemingly prioritise technology-oriented and impact-driven innovations over discipline-led programmes. This is especially more relevant in the social sciences and humanities (SSH) fields where funders have increasingly issued calls that focus on certain societal problems, and policy-relevant questions that could help governments, grassroots organisations, and businesses to perform better.

In recent years, major public funders, such as the UK government and EU, have initiated challenge-driven, solution-oriented, and interdisciplinary research schemes that would generate evidence for policy and change in ways geared to making our economies and societies function better. Most of these schemes would encourage academic researchers to collaborate with individuals working beyond their own disciplines, as well as with non-academic partners. Societal problems such as inequality, ageing, climate change are too large to address from one disciplinary or sectoral perspective. For this reason, funders have increasingly encouraged collaborative projects that involve multidisciplinary teams. For instance, the European Commission's missions, which formed the bases of the Horizon Europe funding programme (i.e. the 9th Framework Programme) meant that a problem-focussed approach would be needed to tackle Europe's most pressing challenges, requiring multiple disciplines and actors (see Mazzucato, 2018).

The Global Research Council highlighted that mission-oriented research was an emerging model for addressing complex societal problems, and that missions would "require new, innovative and inclusive models for research funding which integrate capacities from a broad range of stakeholders, scientific disciplines and sectors […]" (GRC, 2020, p.2).

Furthermore, different considerations played an important role in aid-spending and in the decision to create new research funding mechanisms, such as the UK's Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) (UKRI, 2023). Such factors include the extent to which the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN, 2024) would be achieved, as well as how the academic research would generate impact on OECD's Official Development Assistance (ODA) countries (OECD, 2024).

An increased focus on funding research that has public benefit and that drives innovation meant that SSH researchers needed to act more creatively and work across disciplinary fields and non-academic sectors to access funding (e.g. see Lok, 2010 for the USA NSF's earlier attempts to encourage impactful science funding across all disciplines).

The growing preference towards collaboration is not entirely driven by national agendas. Researchers at the base of funding systems also benefit from partnerships with practitioners and other disciplines since it exposes them to new work opportunities and can potentially improve project outcomes. However, the trend towards interdisciplinary research funding, despite its desired benefits, have been a challenge in the making for decades (Ledford, 2015). Whilst some science-metrics studies focused on funder-specific case studies and methods to address how interdisciplinary research attained lower funding success rates (see Bronhman et al, 2016 for an Australian study); others found out that for interdisciplinary collaborative research, it takes time to build meaningful relationships, and such projects might attain more successful funding rates in the longer term (Sun et al, 2021).

Research funding is a key driver for more collaborations between academic and non-academic researchers, and social changemakers. Especially university-based research calls put an increased emphasis on securing practical implications as an outcome of such collaborations. This report's objective is **to explore this transition towards collaboration from the perspective of funders – namely through their policies, schemes, available resources, and their understanding of non-academic 'practitioners' goals, and barriers**. A "snapshot" of funding bodies and national-level funding policies have been included in the analysis to understand the rationale informing both macro frameworks and individual schemes.

Collaborative knowledge production between academics and practitioners that result in positive social change, can involve a complex and non-linear process. Existing AcPrac literature reflects similar discussions on the involvement of practitioners in research itself (McCabe et al, 2021). Roper (2002) and Chang (2017) have highlighted the contrasting expectations of academics and practitioners from research, giving way to models that theorise types of academics-practitioners and collaborations.

The growing number of studies on the concept of 'pracademic' identities and experiences in recent years (Possner, 2009), on the other hand, address the tensions between those who move into academia with practitioner backgrounds and those who are considered career academics (e.g. Dickinson et al, 2020). After an extensive literature review, Powell et al (2018) define the pracademic "as an effective academic–practitioner relationship forged to foster and disseminate high-quality research and strengthen nonprofit management education, community service, voluntary action, and philanthropic studies" (p.65).

A detailed examination of such classifications for practitioners is beyond the explorative scope of this project. It is also because the term practitioner is seldom used by funders to describe partnerships with non-academic stakeholders. For instance, of the 45 official policies reviewed in this document, the word 'practitioner' is used by only two organisations: the Asia Foundation and Research England, in their Strategic Plan for 2022-25, which hints at the term's limited usage. To avoid narrowing our focus on terminological differences, the project adopts a broad understanding of all those who collaborate as knowledge producers, end-users, or partners in funded research. Our intention is to simply address the collaborations between those who are based in academia and those individuals and organisations that are outside of academia and contribute to the conduct of research and its findings in their work and activities.

Funder policies (public and private alike) signpost and guide investments in what they identify as strategic fields nationally as well as internationally. Thus, we believe it is important to understand their approach to fostering AcPrac collaborations, as well as measuring and evaluating its impact, and social change in general. The inclusion of specific calls for funding reflects how their outlook manifests in day-to-day grant-making and management activities.

In this report, we aim to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent do funding agencies make specific provisions for AcPrac research projects on socio-economic inequalities? And how do these provisions vary across countries and types of funders?
2. How are AcPrac collaborations conceptualised, suggested, and implemented in funders' strategies and funding policies?

To answer these questions, the report maps the funding landscape for collaborative research on socio-economic inequalities through review and text analysis of secondary data. A total of 132 funding programmes and 45 policy documents have been analysed to understand the nature of collaborative projects financed across the world.

The next section outlines our thematic and methodological choices and steps for the data collection, refining, and analysis. This is followed by the 'Results and Discussion' section, which offers key insights from the schemes dashboard and text analysis. As part of the data collection exercise, we created a list of the selected funding schemes on Excel as a dashboard so that we can organise the data effectively. Aggregated findings are further supplemented by examples and case studies from individual agencies that illustrate how these studied characteristics influence collaborative policies in practice.

2. Methodology

In line with the overarching objectives of the FPF sub-project, a multi-stage approach has been adopted to analyse the funding landscape for AcPrac projects at various levels. For this purpose, we reviewed funder policies and individual programmes across countries and sectors, organised between **2017 and 2022** with a few schemes still ongoing in 2023. Our reason for selecting this window was two-fold: first, it enabled us to look at the evolution of funder policies over recent years and second, it allowed us to consider the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on funding opportunities, although our focus is not about the relation between the pandemic and the changing nature of policy discourse (if any). This would require a different research project.

Raw data was collected from funding schemes using online databases such as Research Professional, UKRI's Funding Finder, NSF Award Search, Hurun Philanthropy List, EU Cordis, UK's Gateway to Research, Business Intelligence for the Private Sector online database, and individual funders' websites and their social media profiles such as LinkedIn. Following consultations with AFSEE's Dr George Kunnath, the following thematic keywords were selected to filter within search results – '**inequality**,' '**social inclusion**,' '**decolonising aid** (or decolonisation)' and '**social impact**.' The same keywords were used to find additional funding calls through a Google search for specific organisations and countries (e.g., European and Asian national funders). We also consulted Bhavya Mehta (Centre for Civil Society, India) who has been working on Asian funding policies to obtain information on agencies and philanthropic networks in the region.

A funding programmes **dashboard** was created from the raw data using the following parameters: a) Time frame and year of recent award, b) whether AcPrac collaborations were mandatory, suggested or not mentioned, c) type of practitioner, d) eligibility, e) type, duration, and amount of funding, f) themes of projects funded, and g) purpose of grant: researching inequalities, reducing inequalities or both.

Overall, we collected secondary information on 132 schemes across 16 countries or coverage areas of the world. 91 of these funding opportunities were offered by public funders whereas 41 were released by private funders – including civil society organisations, industry, and trusts. A detailed list of all the included funders is available in Annex A. Our initial review of the dashboard highlighted that AcPrac collaborations are largely supported by public funders. This, coupled with the lack of granular and publicly available data on philanthropic foundations' websites, informed our decision to focus more on research funded by public bodies or private entities, which mostly had competitive and peer-reviewed schemes. We plan to map other private entities and donor organisations from the philanthropic world in subsequent stages of the project.

For phase 2 of the project, 45 policy documents and strategic plans were collated from funding agencies covered in the initial review – 28 public funders, 11 private funders and 6 country-wide research and innovation policies from 13 regions in total. These policies are mentioned briefly in the later sections of the report. These documents were categorised through NVivo, the qualitative text analysis software, based on the country of origin and type of funder to make inter-group comparisons.

In this context, policy and strategic documents are defined as publications by funders that offer insights into their funding priorities, mission statements, rules, and objectives. For public funders, identifying these documents was more straightforward since they reflected the national policies and priorities of the government. In the case of private and philanthropic funders, gauging their grant-making procedures was not as straightforward given that access to their informal networks is more difficult and that information about their organisational structure and processes is not always publicly available.

While in the next phase of this project, we plan to conduct interviews and workshops with funders, this problem is addressed here by considering the strategic plans released by funders. Since the objectives of the two types of documents remain similar, strategic plans provide valuable insights into funder aspirations regarding particular disciplines, as well as type of partnerships and practitioners.

These documents have been reviewed in two ways: a review of the nuances of collaboration in terms of overall funding trends and context analysis through NVivo. The decision to use NVivo was premised on several factors. Firstly, for reviewing policies, it enabled us to comment and visualise descriptions of collaboration and partnership – e.g., how different policy aspects of AcPrac collaborations are defined and explained by funding agencies. Secondly, it offered the ability to code and classify documents based on attributes such as region and type of funder. The project used these features to highlight whether descriptions of collaboration and partnership systematically differed across funders/regions. Our main findings from the dashboard and review are reported in the following section.

3. Funding Opportunities – Region and Funding Institutions

Based on the above methodology, we find that the interest and push towards AcPrac collaborations has been largely driven by public funders in several countries. This observation is particularly influenced by factors that are explored below. This section first provides an overview of the studied schemes by focusing on the basic characteristics of funders. In the second section, we focus on cross-country differences and see whether they can sufficiently explain patterns in funders of AcPrac collaboration. Next, we delve deeper into the nature of AcPrac collaborations proposed by funders – looking at the types of practitioners involved, the nature of projects funded and a brief discussion on the objectives driving collaboration.

A. Dashboard Profile

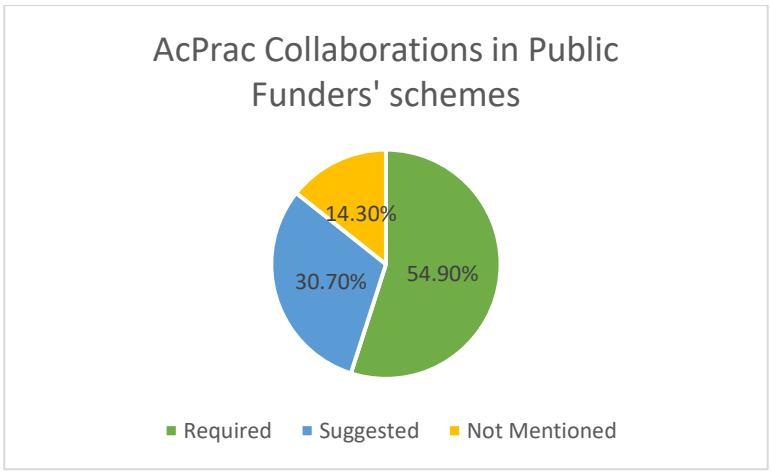
Of the 132 schemes reviewed, 91 were initiated by public funders whereas the remaining 41 were by private funders. Table 1 below represents the distribution of these schemes across countries or their coverage areas.

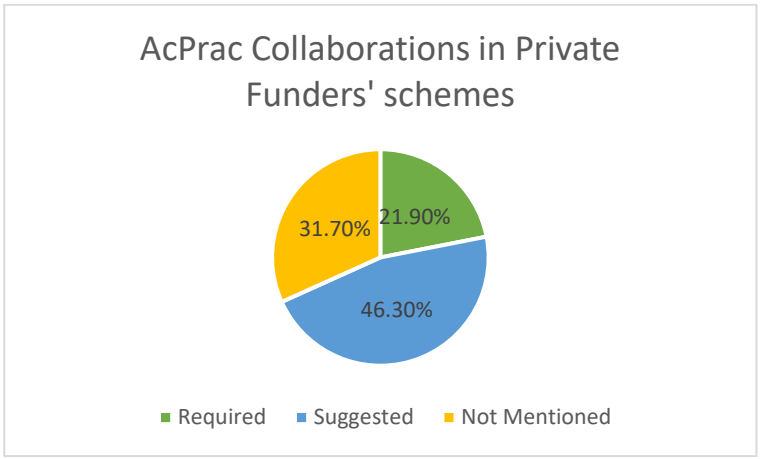
Region/Country	Number of Schemes
United Kingdom	37
United States of America	29
Ireland	7
Canada	9
European Union	8
Denmark	6
Germany	6
France	9
Sweden	5
Norway	7
Japan	2
India	3
Korea	1
China*	1
Asia-wide*	1
South Africa	1

Table 1: Distribution of dashboard schemes based on country of funder. (Source: Authors' own) **denotes the geographical coverage of the funder/specific scheme, i.e. the Asia Foundation and Gates Foundation, although they are located in the US.*

B. Types of Funders

Out of 132 schemes, AcPrac collaboration was mandatory in 59, suggested or encouraged in 47 and not mentioned in 26 schemes. On its own, this observation says little about any differences based on the type of funder. Hence, we first disaggregated these numbers based on whether the scheme was run by a private or public funder. The data reflect that AcPrac collaborations' compulsory inclusion is a trend largely driven by public funders. Graph 1 depicts the exact magnitude of variation observed in our data.





Graph 1: Distribution of AcPrac Collaborations based on Type of Funder (Public v/s Private) (Source: Authors' own)

It is evident from Graph 1 that nearly 55% of all public funders' schemes required collaboration while in the private funding sector, mandatory AcPrac schemes are the lowest within its own category. This gap between public and private funders decreases when we look at schemes that merely encourage AcPrac collaborations focused on

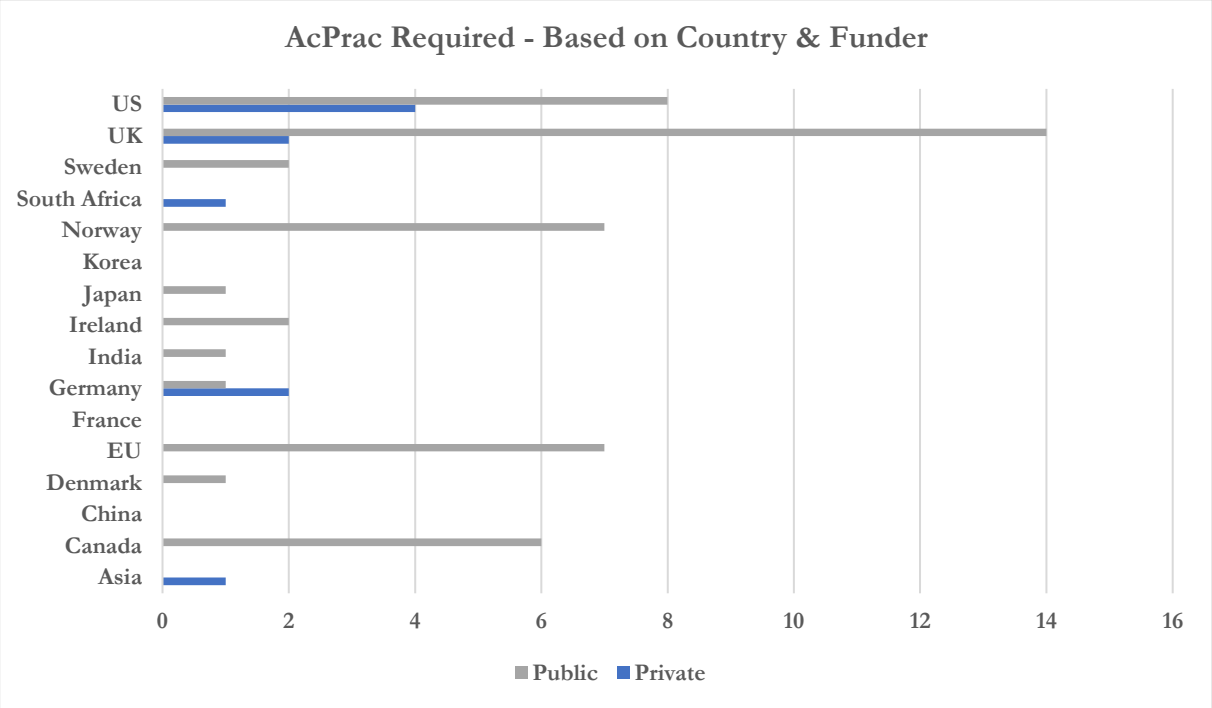
researching/reducing socio-economic inequalities -without making it mandatory. AcPrac-suggested schemes are the highest (46%) within private funder schemes as compared to the public sector (nearly 31%) within their respective categories.

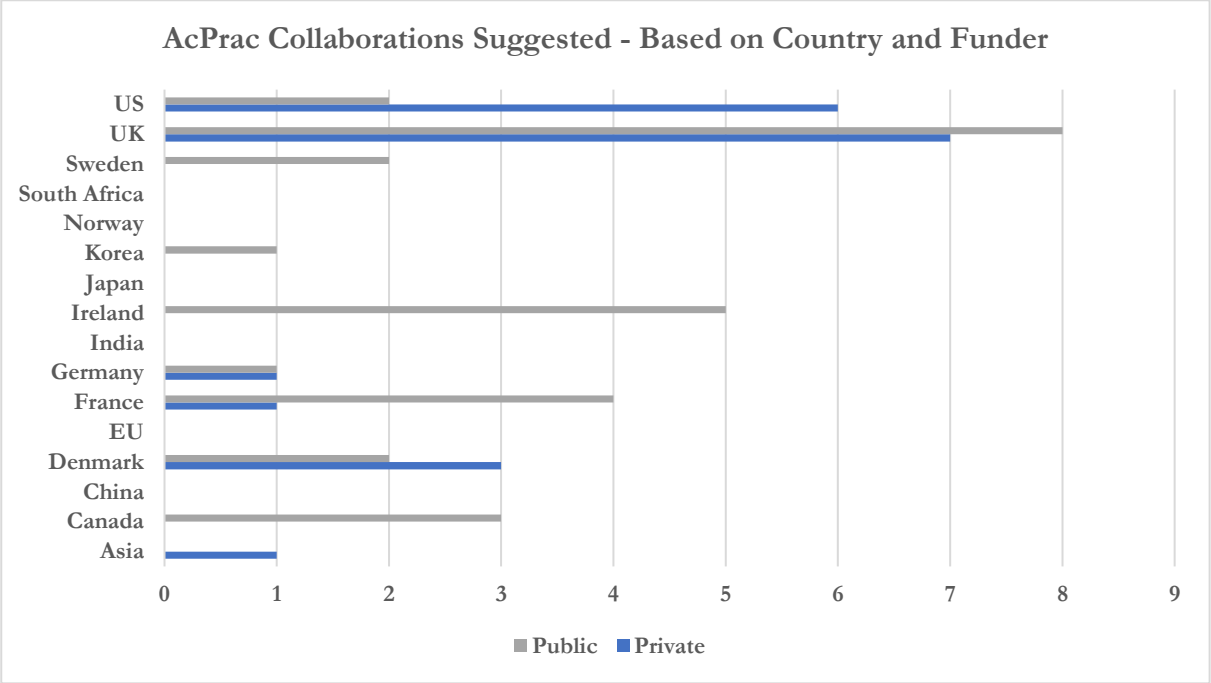
We hypothesise the following reasons as potential explanations for this trend. First, the public sector might be more strongly interested in deriving societal benefits from publicly funded research within universities. Second, industries and non-public funders may face more resource constraints that limit the number of collaborations they can fund and sustain over several years. This trend could also be an outcome of our methodological decisions. Since public-funded schemes are more easily accessible online in comparison to the largely less-known opportunities of private funding, the scope of investments made into research by private entities could not be mapped in its entirety.

The differences between the funding preferences of private and public agencies can be better understood by adding the country of the funder as another variable.

C. Funder Differential Across Countries

Another way of disaggregating data from the dashboard is by looking at cross-country differences. Theoretically, differences among countries' research and innovation systems determine the extent of private sector participation in research and development (R&D) funding. For instance, industry's participation in the R&D sector depends on several factors such as government regulations, support relating to intellectual property rights and ease of commercialising solutions.





Graph 2: AcPrac Collaborative Schemes by Private v/s Public Funders – Based on Country of Funder. (Source: Authors' own)

Graph 2 shows that the UK's public funding agencies lead the way in incorporating AcPrac collaborations under the schemes that could fund socio-economic inequalities projects, with the highest number of schemes in each category. Certain interesting regional dynamics are also evident from the graph. Much of the US' schemes requiring AcPrac collaborations are from the public sector. US private funder schemes invest less in projects that 'require' AcPrac collaborations, but they lead in the number of schemes which 'suggest' collaborative projects. The US also records the highest number of schemes which exclude AcPrac entirely (9 in total). These appear to be managed fully by private agencies.

Comparing the first and second panels in Graph 2, private funders' preference towards suggestive collaboration is evident in both the UK, the US and more prominently, Denmark. From our data sample, Germany emerges as an exception with more private funders requiring AcPrac partnerships. We are interested in investigating the factors fuelling these variations by interviewing and collecting data from funders in subsequent phases of the FPF project.

In middle-income Asian countries, the government is the largest R&D funder compared to participation rates from industry. The desire to promote private sector participation in R&D has led to the emergence of many third-party agencies that facilitate collaboration between

academics and practitioners. For instance, The Asia Foundation is an international organisation (headquartered in the US) that collates funding from other public and private agencies and invests in projects across different Asian countries. Similarly, the Asia Venture Philanthropy Network streamlines investment opportunities in social impact and provides a platform that connects industry sponsors with actors and changemakers from different sectors.

Such organisations bridge the gap between funders, academic researchers, and practitioners by providing AcPrac research grants and/or direct programmes to reduce socio-economic inequalities in society.

D. Nature of Practitioners

For all AcPrac schemes, funders have commonly not placed any restrictions on the possible backgrounds of practitioners. For instance, a university researcher applying for an AcPrac grant is free to partner with any non-academic organisation – community groups, civil society organisations, industries, policymakers, philanthropies etc. – as long as these entities are legally registered in the country of application. This is an important feature in the nascent stages of promoting AcPrac collaborations since it recognises the many avenues and agents of social change. It also enables academic researchers to select practitioners that may best match their project requirements.

In cases where funders provide criteria for eligible practitioners; community and industry groups are the most common in our dashboard. Collaborating with industry and community groups reflects the demand for future **scalability**. In other words, by partnering with such groups, researchers and funders increase the possibility of practical implementation of their findings. Likewise, the requirement to collaborate with relevant grassroots communities reflects a greater methodological shift in social sciences and humanities towards **participatory research**.

Encouraging greater involvement of communities from the beginning of the research design itself may empower people to influence the research process, rather than having them feature in the end as participants or recipients of the research only. This is why the funders are interested increasingly in investing in AcPrac collaborations to produce new knowledge (see Graph 1). Their journey from being solely participants to actors of social change in their communities may be facilitated through grant-based interventions. However, as the research conducted during the first phase of the AcPrac programme demonstrates, there are different types of AcPrac collaborations which emerge for different reasons and with different implications for knowledge inequalities. These types, which are discussed over

several AcPrac case studies[6] in the AFSEE programme are part of a spectrum. They demonstrate that the potential of AcPrac collaborations to empower people to impact research depends on several factors including the objectives for collaborating, the nature of relations and practices within the collaboration.

Throughout the report we include short case studies. These case studies illustrate examples of national public funding schemes that require AcPrac collaborations targeting specific global challenges and have an aim for societal and economic impact.

Case Study 1: Joint Initiatives and the Case of Community Partnership, Canada

The Canada-based New Frontiers in Research Fund's international collaboration on climate change adaptation is a good case of understanding the requirement for community partners. As an international initiative co-managed by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, it focuses on the collective research agenda of nine countries on developing strategies that protect vulnerable populations from the effects of climate change. Not only does it require applicants to partner with other researchers and stakeholders, but it also lays special emphasis on cohesive involvement of members from vulnerable communities.

Adopting a trans-sectoral approach to describing collaboration, it underscores the need to engage with appropriate stakeholder to reflect the participatory and co-developed nature of a project. It mentions community members as the participants, end users, as well as the change makers of their societies. It thus encompasses the research process across all stages of ideation, implementation, and dissemination. This is a case study illustrating the necessity of involving non-academic stakeholders in all phases of the research design. They are considered not as an ad hoc addition at the end; but from the early stages of the research.

Project lifecycle is another crucial factor that determines if practitioners are invited, and which type of practitioners are the most suitable in the context of their agenda.

Following participatory approaches, funders may require community partners at every stage of the project.[7] However, in cases where research findings require industry support for

[6] To view AcPrac case studies, follow the relevant tab here https://afsee.atlanticfellows.lse.ac.uk/en-gb/projects/academic-practitioner-collaborations (last accessed on 25 November 2024).
[7] Research England (RE), for instance, has a Participatory Research funding scheme that is paid as a block grant to English higher education providers (HEP). The HEPs are then expected to spend funds competitively on academic projects that involve "non-academic" participants in the research process. See the public letter stating RE's 2023-2025 budget allocation including participatory research funding pot, here: https://www.ukri.org/publications/research-england-funding-budgets-for-2023-to-2025/research-england-funding-budgets-for-2023-to-2024-and-2024-to-2025/ (last accessed on 04 July 2024).

scalability, such collaborations are only possible once the efficiency of developed solutions is thoroughly established.

Case Study 2: France's Fund for Innovation in Development and Tracking Project Lifecycle

Fund for Innovation in Development is a public funder in France that runs 5 grants that target poverty and inequality - depending on the project stage and nature of innovation proposed. Its initial stage schemes, 'Prepare and Pilot Grants' do not encourage collaborations since sponsored projects would require further development. Its final stage schemes, titled 'Transition to Scale and Transforming Public Policy grants,' however, require researchers to establish and test robust partnerships with practitioners to ensure that the strategies developed are implemented on a larger scale. This case study is an example of where a funder encourages piloting a research idea first, and then applying it through validation and testing in collaboration with potential end-users and practitioners. We believe, this scheme illustrates a targeted and planned AcPrac collaboration approach.

Thus, our secondary review of funding schemes has revealed that public sector funders are more interested in making collaborations a mandatory element of their schemes, especially when funding projects on technological innovations or societal interventions. Such schemes may focus on certain phases of a project's lifecycle where the practitioners' involvement as end-users, beneficiaries, potential customers or impact partners can help increase the scalability of the research's impact.

The following section discusses our initial review of policy documents. It outlines the general funding landscapes of studied countries, followed by a brief discussion on the context-specific nuances of describing collaboration.

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4. Results from Preliminary Policy Documents Review

Funding schemes, as discussed in the above section, are vital manifestations of the established procedures that agencies have for regulating collaborations. The inclusion of policy documents compliments these insights by also reflecting on the general funding landscapes within the region. This section provides a brief overview of funding frameworks as reflected in their policy documents, followed by contextual findings from the NVivo analysis. We aim to delve into detailed analyses of policy discourse for the UK research and innovation system and others at a later stage of the FPF sub-project.

A. Selected Funding Frameworks – A Brief Overview

Countries of the Global North in Europe and North America, along with emerging economies in South and Southeast Asia appear to be the major research, development, and innovation performers in the world. However, these can be divided into two groups – their classification reflects the participation of non-academic sectors and thus the scope for AcPrac collaborations.

In the UK, all the research councils under UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) covered in this report (namely Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), Economic Social and Research Council (ESRC) and Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC)) explicitly encourage interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral collaborations to help with impact and tangible outcomes. The AHRC seems to be more inclined to invest in practice-led research specifically in the creative arts sectors. EPSRC explicitly highlights the connection between research and industry participation in generating innovative ideas. ESRC clearly mentions policy-relevant research and involvement of academics in research-driven and evidence-based policy formulation.

In the UK much of government investment in basic research, capacity building (e.g. postgraduate training) and knowledge exchange happens through its research councils, Research England and Innovate UK. The UK government's Research and Development Roadmap in 2020 envisaged to "engage in new and imaginative ways to ensure that [UK's] science, research and innovation system is responsive to the needs and aspirations of [the UK's] society" (HM Government, p.7). When the current structure of research councils was first introduced in the 1990s, the legal framework at the time, initiated today's impact agendas by addressing that "all the Research Councils' missions will be reformulated to make explicit their commitment to wealth creation and the quality of life" (cited in Carter 2024, p.5). We plan to return to the policy analysis of the UK's research and innovation ecosystem in detail at later stages of our project.

In the US, stakeholders from the private sector are more dominant, funding nearly two-thirds of all R&D activities. Concentrated participation from businesses leads itself more strongly towards collaborative research. This leaves discipline-led research to public agencies who are the biggest funders of basic research, which is blue-skies and curiosity-driven research. However, the past decade has seen a decrease in government funding for it, even though the federal government continues to be a significant source of support for all R&D and basic research across all disciplines (Boroush and Guci, 2022). In cases of non-academic and non-industry practitioners, defining their participation and rules of engagement has at times proven to be difficult. For instance, Yuen et al.'s (2015) study on funding opportunities by

the US Environmental Protection Agency and National Centre for Environmental Research revealed that only 12% of schemes defined the key community-level practitioners involved while only 33% also prescribed a system for achieving collaboration.

The US National Science Foundation's Strategic Plan 2022-26 has placed a strong emphasis on AcPrac partnerships for knowledge sharing, exchange, and implementation of project findings, in line with the larger industry-wide trends. It further contends that partnerships and practical problems in society can drive research from the start – highlighting the potential for practitioner involvement at most stages of the research.

Case Study 3: Collaborations in Innovate UK's Strategic Delivery Plan – Trajectory over the Years

Innovate UK's key mission is to help industry to commercialise the UK's research; so that UK businesses turn the potential of new technologies and services into new products and processes to grow the UK economy. Although the sectors are mainly science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) oriented, there are opportunities for businesses and SSH academics to collaborate on business modelling and socially responsible projects.

Number of references made to the concept of collaboration in the Innovate UK's strategic plans between 2014 and 2022-25 show that the plans include the lowest references to 'collaboration' after Brexit (2017-18) but highest references to 'partner' in the same year. However, references to 'collaboration' and 'stakeholder' increased after 2018 and are more explicit in the latest plan (2022-25). It is important to note that Innovate UK's funding schemes primarily target corporate or third sector-led activities across all disciplines, whilst academic partnerships are allowed in some cases that are designed for 'knowledge transfer' from academia to the private/third sector, such as their Knowledge Transfer Partnerships.

Overall, the ratio of US R&D across all sectors to gross domestic product (GDP) has been on the rise between 2017-20 with the business funded R&D being in the lead (Boroush and Guci, 2022). The contrary is true in Canada's case where it has been reducing over the past years. An evaluation of the funding landscape commissioned by the Canadian government found that this decrease was partly driven by reductions in the private sector's participation (Council of Canadian Academics, 2018). The data from Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) based in Canada corroborates this as the number of industry partners in funded projects has been on a decline since 2017. This has expanded the scope for non-profit organisations, witnessing a sharp increase in their partnerships on SSHRC-funded projects from 2018 (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2019). SSHRC's funding strategy for 2020-25 highlights this trend and calls for targeted attention towards the promotion of international and interdisciplinary collaborations.

Within Asia, major differences persist between countries from East, South, and Southeast of the region. For instance, Japan and South Korea are amongst the top R&D performers globally. As is the case with the US, private funders constitute the dominant stakeholders in research funding. The share of R&D expenditure as a proportion of GDP has also seen a steady rise over the years in the two countries, with South Korea seeing stark increases in expenditure and R&D efforts.

On the contrary, R&D expenditure has been near-stagnant in South Asia. Characterised by the needs of developing countries and lack of adequate participation from the private sector, the government is often the biggest R&D funder. The absence or minimal participation of the private sector within the framework also has severe implications for collaborative research. Hence, recent government interventions to boost industry participation have amplified funding collaboration and the practical usefulness of funded research. For instance, India's Draft Science, Technology and Innovation Policy 2020 and its proposed National Research Foundation envisions streamlining the funding process and promoting AcPrac partnerships and societal impact as vital components of grant applications.

Thus, irrespective of a country's economic status, it can be argued that funders increasingly look at AcPrac collaborators to fund research that has more explicit pathways for ensuring societal impact. To further this goal, funders should formulate **evaluation frameworks** such that collaborative research can meaningfully contribute towards the reduction of inequalities. While collaboration is conceptualised broadly in individual funding opportunities, certain parameters could be fixed at the policy level that determine how partners can holistically contribute to the project needs and outcomes. For instance, the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) was specifically designed as part of the UK government's Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitments and policies during 2017-21. It specifically aimed to support challenge-led, interdisciplinary work which mobilised multi-stakeholder partnerships across the Global North and South, and various sectors.

The pathways set out in the GCRF's Theory of Change (ToC) intended that widespread adoption of GCRF's research-based solutions and technological innovations contributed to achieving the UN SDGs. This impact was expected to be sustained through **equitable research and innovation partnerships** between UK and low-and middle-income countries (LMICs) by targeting an improved outcome for the LMIC partners. The equitable participation meant that impact generation and knowledge production would not solely happen in the UK; but would be co-developed with the LMIC partners where mutual learning and knowledge exchange could take place. The UK government set their ambition at the national policy level that the GCRF would provide a unique opportunity to build a global community of researchers committed to sustainable development and the eradication of poverty (BEIS, 2017).

Such an approach offers two advantages – First, from an ethical research perspective, having guidelines and well-defined requirements would safeguard partners from vulnerable communities or the global south partners against asymmetrical power structures in academic-led projects. Second, from an administrative point of view, enforceable guidelines regarding the eligibility of practitioners can reduce the troubles of ambiguity, leading to smoother application and management experiences for all partners.

The following case study discusses one method of managing AcPrac collaborations through policy decisions: the Consortium Approach.

Case Study 4: Organising Academic-Practitioner Collaborations through Consortium Approach: Research Council of Norway

Following the general consortium approach, funders generally declare the eligibility criteria, roles and hierarchical levels of all partners, and their responsibilities under the project. Within this report's purview, this approach has been implemented by the European Union's Horizon Europe and the Research Council of Norway.

For the EU, most of its funding calls under Horizon Europe and Horizon 2020 operate on the consortium model whereby the project must include a minimum of 3 partners from organisations in different EU member/associate countries (Horizon Europe – Who Should Apply, n.d.). Similarly, the Research Council of Norway's list of eligible members for a research consortium is broad in its scope to cover major practitioner fields (unless specified otherwise in calls) while also guiding interested researchers in looking for practitioners. These funders additionally play a role in streamlining partnership-building efforts through their 'consortium agreement' requirement that verbalises all implicit expectations, powers, and responsibilities of each partner within the project.

The FPF sub-project plans to explore funders' objectives behind regulating AcPrac collaborations in subsequent research endeavours.

B. Text Analysis

Another objective of the FPF sub-project is to evaluate how funders conceptualise and regulate collaborations in funded research. An initial step towards this was our text analysis of policy documents to uncover any preferences of funders while describing collaborations, embedded at the policy level.

Using NVivo's word search query, we delved into the contexts i.e., what aspects of partnerships are heavily emphasised by funders, and growing areas of concern in managing

AcPrac research. Illustration 1 shows common trends highlighting such decisions implicit within funding strategies and policies using two keywords – 'Collaboration' and 'Partnership'.

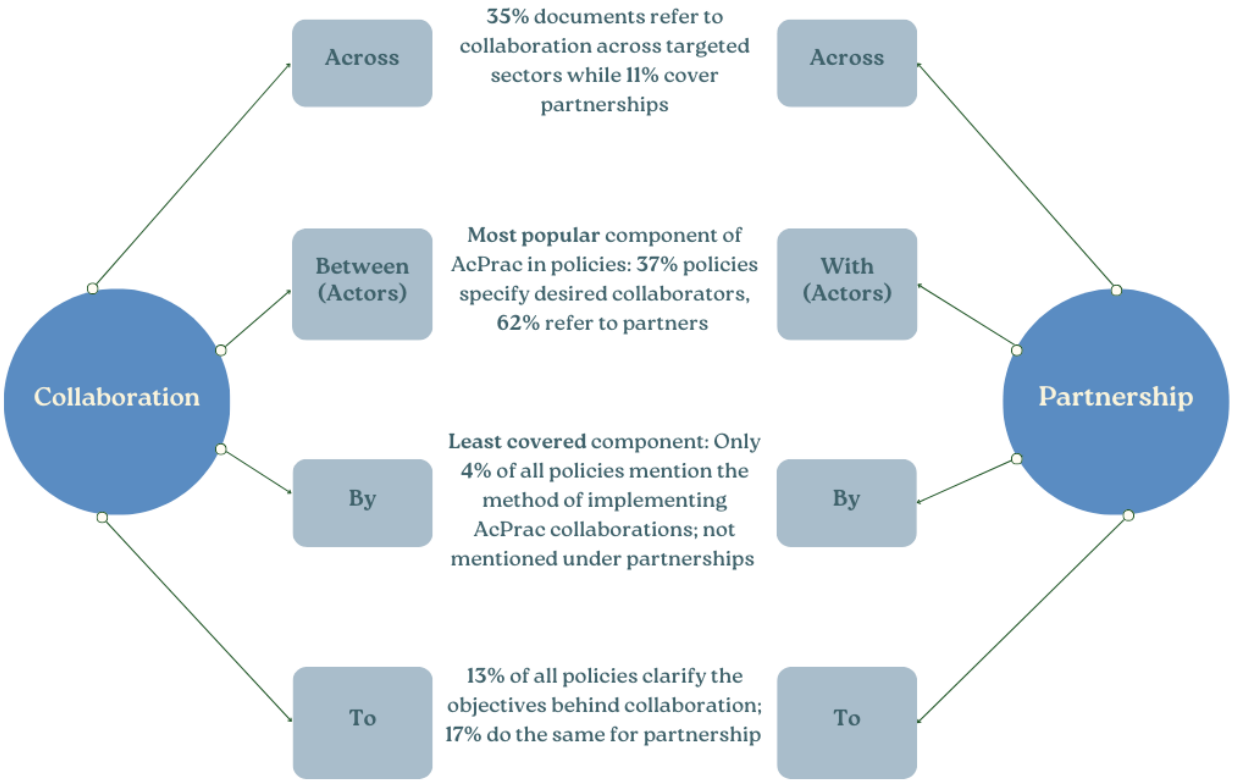


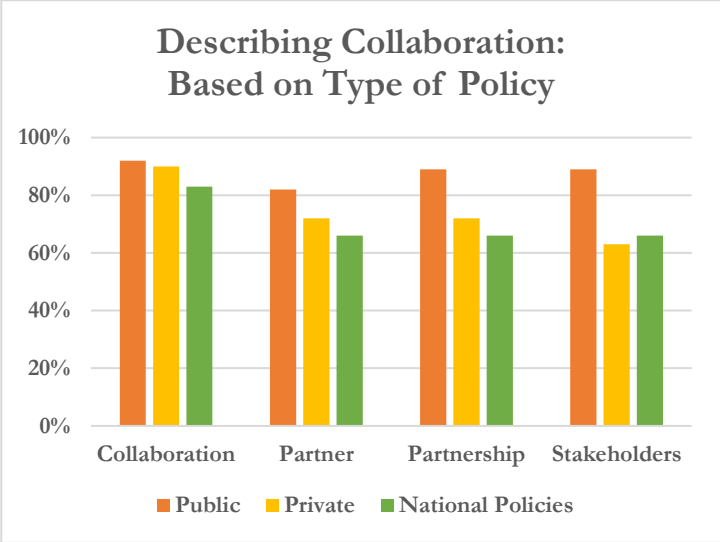
Illustration 1: Word Associations with Collaboration and Partnership (Source: Authors' own)

Using excerpts from policy documents, Illustration 1 shows the four main pillars of collaboration and partnership. To understand the context behind the funders' use of terms 'collaboration' and 'partnership,' we used NVivo's text search tools. Funders' approach to seeking collaboration is defined by their objectives, sectors they target, practitioners allowed as co-investigators or partners in the project and means of achieving a successful collaboration. Irrespective of the term used, funders most commonly describe AcPrac actors to include researchers, policymakers, and professionals from industries, civil society, and non-profit sectors. Similarly, funding policies express the value derived from AcPrac collaborations and partnerships as vital in improving the quality of funded research and increasing the relevance and applicability of its findings.

It is also evident across the two keywords that funders are more attentive towards the types of practitioners allowed in AcPrac projects. Objectives behind and methods to attain collaboration are the least considered aspects at present within the selected funding policies. In other words, **policies discussing collaboration would most focus on who to**

collaborate with, before drawing common standards or clear expectations from partnerships. Thus, funding policies face a rising need to regulate the participation of non-academic actors by drawing on certain standards, and verbalising implicit beliefs and expected outcomes.

This discussion is extended below by looking at the preferred terms used by funders to describe AcPrac engagements.



Graph 3: Key terms mentioned in policy documents referring to AcPrac engagements (Source: Authors' own)

Graph 3 showcases the four key terms (Collaboration, Partner, Partnership and Stakeholders) that can be used to describe AcPrac engagements. The absence of 'practitioner' from this set is striking, making this exercise further relevant to future stages of the FPF project. As discussed earlier, this might be because there is not a common definition of practitioners according to our literature review, which could also be affected by the lack of consensus on its meaning. This can also explain why private funders and policy makers at the national level have not used 'stakeholders' as often as the other three, probably due to the broadness or ambiguity of the term.

5. Conclusion

Analysing funding schemes revealed that public funders are more likely to require AcPrac collaborations whereas private funders find ways of encouraging academic-practitioner partnerships through non-mandatory suggestions.

While studying the deeper conceptualisation of AcPrac collaborations, it became evident that funders focus more on the types of partner individuals and organisations allowed rather than the mechanics behind a successful collaboration. Several variations exist within this broader pattern, depending on the country, type of practitioners, type of methodologies and project stages. These differences will be explored in detail through collection of primary data in the project's next stage.

As AcPrac projects become more prominent in funding landscapes as represented in our sample, their collaborative nature enables research on socio-economic inequalities to transcend the borders between the academic and non-academic spaces. Of the 132 schemes studied, 51 of them required researchers and practitioners to not only focus on researching inequalities but also to play a role in reducing them. This provides an exciting opportunity to evaluate funding policies at the intersection of fostering partnerships and driving social change.

This Background Review report for the FPF sub-project attempted to map the prevailing levels of acceptance among funders towards Academic-Practitioner collaborations. Though expansive in its scope, the review is limited by the constraints of data availability and language barriers, especially related to funders in philanthropic networks and Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Nonetheless, our approach to AcPrac collaborations is situated from the funders' perspectives, thereby facilitating future research with funding bodies and knowledge sharing on this subject. The report has outlined several key findings that can act as the starting points for the second stage of the project.

Our review report has shown plausible implications for AFSEE and for our next steps in the project. AFSEE's core activity is to bring research, education and practice together in search of a dialogue among various stakeholders, including activists, academics, practitioners and policymakers. Therefore, the FPF sub-project's focus on the **funding landscape that drives academic-practitioner collaborations for social change** is a natural result of our understanding that AFSEE is a key player - not only as a platform for multidisciplinary research, knowledge sharing and collaboration but also as a funder which has already financed various social change projects. AFSEE will evaluate the programme and AFSEE-funded projects' impact on the betterment of society and according to the principles we have laid out in AFSEE's own Theory of Change model.

Through this project, we aim to contribute to the AFSEE's desired outcomes for reduced silos between practitioners, academics, disciplines and ways of working. We hope that our results will help increase collaborations across seemingly different practices and contexts to make a more equitable world possible.

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Appendix

ANNEX-A: LIST OF FUNDERS FROM DASHBOARD[8]

Country or Region	Funders
Asia-wide	The Asia Foundation (located in the USA but awards in Asia)
China	Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (awards in China)
Canada	Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)
Denmark	Carlsberg Foundation Danish National Research Foundation Independent Research Fund Denmark Innovation Fund Denmark
European Union	Horizon Europe Horizon 2020
France	France Diplomacy Foundation de France Fund for Innovation in Development The French Development Agency (AFD)
Germany	German Research Foundation (DFG) German Federal Foundation for the Environment German Foundation for Peace Research Robert Bosch Foundation Volkswagen Foundation
India	Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) Newton Bhabha Fund, British Council
Ireland	Department of Education and Irish Aid Department of Foreign Affairs Irish Research Council Science Foundation Ireland
Japan	Japan Science and Technology Agency
Korea	Korea Foundation
Norway	Innovation Norway Research Council of Norway
South Africa	Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI) South African Medical Research Council
Sweden	Swedish Research Council Swedish Research Council for Sustainable Development (FORMAS)
United Kingdom	Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) British Academy

[8] Please note, the data dashboard includes multiple schemes from the same funder.

	British Council British Ecological Society Corra Foundation Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) Friends Provident Foundation German History Society German Research Foundation (DFG) in partnership with AHRC Innovate UK Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) in partnership with AHRC National Health Service (NHS) National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Nuffield Foundation Research England Scottish Government Trust for London UK Government Equalities Office UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) UK Sports Council Wellcome Trust Women's Engineering Society (WES) in partnership with EPSRC
United States of America	Agency for International Development (USAID) Centre for Retirement Research Columbia University Ford Foundation Internet Society Foundation (ISOC) Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Solve Nasdaq Foundation National Science Foundation (NSF) Latin American Studies Association Open Society Foundation Russell Sage Foundation (RSF) Spencer Foundation The Rockefeller Foundation US Department of Justice William T. Grant Foundation

ANNEX-B: LIST OF POLICY/PLAN DOCUMENTS

Country or Region	Policies or Strategic Plans
Asia	Asia Foundation's Guidelines for South Asia Small Grants Program Asia Foundation Strategic Plan 2020
Australia	Australian Research Council Strategy 2022-2025
Brazil	Brazilian Development Bank 2022 Strategic Plan
Canada	SSHRC Strategic Plan Momentum 2020-2025
Denmark	Carlsberg Foundation Five-Year Strategy 2019-2023 Denmark Ready to Seize Future Opportunities
European Union	Horizon 2020 Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Horizon 2020 Societal Challenges – Europe in a Changing World
Germany	Volkswagen Foundation's Funding Strategy 2021
Ireland	Impact 2030 – Ireland's Research and Innovation Strategy Irish Aid Civil Society Policy Irish Aid Gender Equality Policy Irish Research Council Strategic Plan 2020-2024 Shaping Our Future - Science Foundation Ireland Strategy 2025
Norway	Empowering Ideas for a Better World – Strategy for the Research Council of Norway 2020-2024
South Africa	NRF Strategy 2020-2025 SVRI Strategic Plan 2020-2024
Sweden	Strategy for Sweden's Development Cooperation in the areas of Human Rights, Democracy, and the Rule of Law 2018-2022
United Kingdom	AHRC Strategic Development Plan 2022-2025 British Council – Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth EPSRC Delivery Plan 2016/17-2019/20 ESRC Delivery Plans (x2) – 2019 and 2022-2025 Friends Provident Foundation Annual Review 2022 Innovate UK Delivery Plans (x3) – 2017-18, 2019 and 2022-2025 JRF Strategic Plan 2018-2021 NERC Delivery Plans (x2) – 2019 and 2022-2025 Nuffield Foundation Strategy 2017-2022 Research England Delivery Plans (x2) 2019 and 2022-2025 Royal Society – Role of R&D in Supporting ODA Objectives 2020 Scottish Funding Council Strategic Plan 2022-2027 The UK Government Equalities Office LGBT Action Plan 2018 The UK Government's Strategy for International Development The UK Government's Research and Development Roadmap UKRI International Strategic Framework UKRI Strategy 2022-2027
United States of America	Gates Family Foundation Strategic Plan 2017-2021 Internet Society Foundation Action Plans (x2) – 2021 and 2022 NSF Strategic Plan 2022-2025