

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH LEAD

Dated: October 2022

Contract: Full time, permanent

Salary: £40,000 – £45,000 per annum, dependent on experience (subject to review, to be completed by December 2022)

Start date: Immediate

Location: Home based with potential access to desk space in central London, if required; travel across the UK may be required as part of the role (subject to covid guidance)

Reporting to: Director of Research & Evaluation

Direct reports: Research & Projects Assistant

About YMCA George Williams College

In April 2022, YMCA George Williams College merged with the Centre for Youth Impact. The merger brings together the Centre's work to progress thinking and practice in impact measurement in youth work and provision for young people with the College's rich history of supporting high quality relational practice with young people and communities. The combined charity works across the UK, including locality working via dedicated regional networks across England. Although still developing the strategy for the newly combined charity, the two organisations have long shared a vision for all young people to have access to high quality provision and services that improve their life chances, and which enable them to achieve their potential in mind, body and spirit. We believe that embedding more meaningful approaches to evaluation, quality improvement and impact measurement at the heart of resilient, learning organisations is key to achieving this vision.

About the role

The Qualitative Research Lead is a pivotal role for George Williams College. We believe in the power of research and evaluation to build a collective commitment to understanding and improving the impact of youth work and provision for young people. We also believe in the power of quality relational practice to change lives and communities. The Qualitative Research Lead shapes and delivers the College's qualitative and mixed methods research and evaluation work to design, test and implement practice-aligned evaluation that both measures *and* cultivates quality practice. Qualitative research at the College includes working directly with young people and practitioners to gather their experiences and insights through focus groups, semi-structured interviews and site visits. It also includes the design and facilitation of creative and participatory research and methods including Most Significant Change and outcome harvesting.

Reporting to the Director of Research & Evaluation, the Qualitative Research Lead works closely with two other Leads, focused on digital products and quantitative research, and manages a portfolio of qualitative and mixed methods research and evaluation projects. This includes project scoping and design, direct delivery of research and evaluation activity, coordinating and supporting project teams (including staff and Fellows), collating and sharing learning from projects to influence the

College's work and strategy, and working closely with the senior leadership team to secure funding for new activities. The Qualitative Research Lead line manages a Research & Projects Assistant, which includes coaching and developing their skills and interests in research and evaluation.

What are we looking for?

We are seeking a thoughtful and experienced applied researcher and evaluator, with strong project management and people skills. You will need to be confident across a range of qualitative approaches, and have the ability to assess, design and determine proposed methods, dependent on context. You will be curious and keen to learn and influence this evolving field of practice, and comfortable representing the College externally to share our journey as we develop our thinking. You will also be confident in integrating findings from qualitative and quantitative data, and designing mixed methods research and evaluation studies. An understanding of informal and non-formal provision for young people, and how this influences research and evaluation practice, is desirable.

You will be comfortable and confident in working directly with young people and practitioners as part of our research and evaluation projects, including in focus groups and interviews exploring their experiences, in co-designing or collaborating in project design, and in working alongside young researchers to deliver key elements of projects.

You will be a strong project manager, with experience in managing both grant-funded and contract projects from inception to completion. You will be confident in managing project budgets, plans and capacity allocations, across multiple strands of work. You will be able to connect your portfolio into the broader organisational strategy, by drawing out insights from our project activities and sharing them with colleagues.

You will need to be highly responsive to the needs of partners, funders and our networks, with excellent listening, problem solving and negotiation skills. You will also need to be proactive and dynamic, sensing and acting on opportunities for the College to work alongside others to affect change. You will have some experience of income generation, and be confident to work alongside the senior leadership team in initiating and writing successful proposals.

You will also be an outstanding communicator: experienced in facilitation; willing to develop a coaching approach; an engaging presenter, and a compelling writer, able to frame and share ideas with a range of audiences.

Finally, you will be a team player. You will enjoy working with others, and be a valued partner, peer and colleague. You will see the bigger picture, at the same time as being on top of the detail. You will own and play a leadership role in your projects, but recognise and respect the leadership role of colleagues across the College's strategic objectives.

Qualitative Research Lead

The post holder will:

1. Lead the College's qualitative research projects

- Manage a portfolio of qualitative and mixed methods research and evaluation projects, taking accountability for the delivery of these projects in line with milestones and timelines
- Coordinate and support project teams, comprising colleagues and Fellows of the College communicating regularly, assigning and delivering tasks, and maintaining oversight of discrete strands of activity through project plans and timelines to achieve the projects' strategic objectives
- Maintain and be accountable for up to date project documentation, including project plans, budgets, contracts/agreements and capacity projections
- Deliver key elements of project activity, including qualitative research/evaluation design, development of tools and resources, data gathering and analysis, reporting, training and consultation
- Nurture and develop relationships with funders, researchers, and other youth sector partners as part of developing and delivering projects
- Develop a range of material for external publication and internal learning relating to your projects and towards the College's collective learning and development
- Collaborate with other Leads at the College, inputting your expertise and insights into their projects and ensuring join up across the College's work

2. Contribute to the College's strategic development

- Develop ideas for future work related to research and evaluation that can be formed into fundable proposals
- Contribute to regular reviews of the College's strategy and progress in achieving it, sharing reports with the College's board as required

3. Represent and communicate the College's work externally

- Build strong relationships with key partners and supporters of the College's work
- Act as an ambassador for the College in leading and supporting quality practice across the sector
- Engage in external thought leadership through writing and presenting, both as part of project delivery and more widely
- Facilitate and lead training, coaching and workshops, both as part of project delivery and more widely

Person specification

Essential skills and experience

- Significant experience in designing and implementing qualitative and mixed methods research and evaluation projects for complex social programmes

- Experience of managing multiple projects simultaneously, including monitoring budgets, reporting processes and time tracking
- Technical skills and experience in conducting evaluations including developing Theories of Change and designing qualitative evaluation methodologies
- Confident in a range of qualitative approaches to data collection, analysis and data management, including experience of using relevant software packages
- Experience of using survey design software and CRM systems (experience of Typeform and Salesforce would be an advantage)
- Ability to communicate evidence of impact to a range of audiences, with strong writing skills and the ability to produce high quality reports as well as engaging copy
- Ability to build and manage strong working relationships with people across teams and of all levels
- Highly organised with the ability to plan, prioritise and manage deadlines across multiple workstreams
- Takes initiative, is proactive and can work autonomously when necessary
- Experience of consultation with and/or facilitation of communities of practice (online and face to face; synchronous and asynchronous).
- Experience of line management and working with consultants/freelancers
- Experience of leading/or contributing to funding bids and proposals, including initiating and proactively developing ideas
- Relevant experience in the charity/not-for-profit sector, in roles focused on research and evaluation, learning, and programme management

Desirable skills and experience

- Experience of supporting participatory research, ideally with young people
- Publication through a variety of media (reports, journals, podcasts etc)
- Experience of developing good practice, systems and processes to improve impact measurement and evaluation
- Knowledge of effective research, evaluation and impact assessments techniques in youth provision, including measures of social and emotional learning

Personal qualities we are looking for include:

- Identifying with and embodying the aims and ethos of George Williams College, including valuing collaborative approaches, challenging and supporting those we work with, and being curious and questioning
- Passion for keeping up to date with best practice in impact measurement, evaluation and programme quality
- Collaborator and team player
- Reflective and self-aware
- Able to have challenging and courageous conversations
- Understanding of and empathy with our sector
- Meticulous attention to detail