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Gateways: International Journal of Community Research and Engagement

Call for Proposals

Community-university engagement and innovation:
Effecting real change or institutional window dressing?

Editorial team

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Focus

Once considered marginal, community-university engagement is an increasingly significant feature of higher education around the world. When done well, this engagement can be impactful – for communities, individuals and organisations. For communities, it can contribute to substantive, relevant and equitable community-led change. For institutions of higher education, it has the potential to strengthen, renew and revitalise research, teaching and learning: to help deliver on universities' public good purpose.

All these things are true. Yet so too is the opposite. Too often, positive outcomes and impacts remain woefully fragile, fleeting and unevenly distributed. Put bluntly, it is hard to argue that community-university engagement has been transformative. History shows us that entrenched systems have a profound bias towards self-preservation, capable of absorbing and 'digesting' alternatives (Fear & Sandmann 2019). Participatory, pluralistic and action-oriented research and practice must be open to old and new ways to grow and strengthen its democratising, life-sustaining and justice-centred goals. Such efforts are further complicated by the conditions under which they take place, with many universities stepping back from their commitments to the public good.

This guest edited themed volume of *Gateways* journal seeks to explore the potential of innovation to help drive the deeper change-goals of engagement. It puts questions of justice – social, cognitive, ecological, material, methodological – at the heart of its focus on innovation within community-based research and practice. Further, it aims to understand innovation in different contexts, and from different perspectives. Innovation for who, for what purpose?

Innovation in scholarly writing and journal practice

A second focus of this volume is to explore what innovation within scholarly publishing could look like. What could an expanded value proposition involve? How do we make academic writing and publication more sustainable, relevant, ethical and rigorous? As part of this themed volume, a series of voluntary, online writers' workshops will be offered for manuscript development and revision. Products for publication will include peer-reviewed manuscripts alongside other outcomes, such as edited transcriptions of group discussions, visual mapping and data storytelling, and other multimodal experimentation with research writing.

Key questions

We welcome proposals from community-university collaborative research partnerships on any of the following topics:

- Comprehensive case studies of creative and effective innovation, evolved in response to contextual challenges and barriers
- Practice-based contributions: what, how, why, with whom and lessons learnt
- Critical analysis and exploration of theoretical, conceptual and methodological innovation in community-based research and practice
- Critical analysis and reflection on innovation itself: what's needed to ensure innovative efforts don't become another instance of institutional accommodation? How do we move forward together?

Key dates

Please submit a short proposal (approx. 500 word) by **Monday 9 February 2026**.

In addition to responding to one of the above key questions, briefly tell us about your author team (which may include community members, students, professionals, academics), your experience with research writing, and interest in collaborative manuscript development, review and revision.

Email proposals and any questions to Dr Margaret Malone, Executive Editor, *Gateways: International Journal of Community Research and Engagement*, Margaret.malone@uts.edu.au

Timeline

| Activity | Due date |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Call for papers | Monday 12 January 2026 |
| Proposals due | Monday 9 February 2026 |
| Notification to authors | Monday 23 February 2026 |
| Writers' workshops | March/April/May/June 2026 |
| Manuscript submission | End June 2026 |
| Review and revisions | July/August/September 2026 |
| Finalisation of manuscripts | October 2026 |
| Design and proofread | November 2026 |
| Publication | December 2026 |

Reference

Fear, FA & Sandmann, LR 2019, 'It's time for a second-wave movement', In LR Sandmann & DO Jones (Eds.), *Building the field of higher education engagement*, Stylus, pp. 99-110.

About this journal

[Gateways: International Journal of Community Research and Engagement](#) is a refereed journal that responds to an emerging global movement of collaborative, critical and change-oriented university-community research initiatives. As a free, open access journal Gateways' mission is to increase the timely and inclusive sharing of critical theory, insights and practice with the growing, global movement of community-university partnerships.