Research jointly supported by the ESRC and DFID

ESRC-DFID Raising Learning Outcomes (RLO) in Education Systems Research Programme

2018-2021 Call Specification: Invite only

(Open to RLO Principal Investigators and Co-Investigators)

Tranche 4

Summary

The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) part of UK Research and Innovation and the Department for International Development (DFID) are launching Tranche 4 of the RLO Follow-on Fund 2018-2021 call. This call is open to all RLO Principal Investigators and Co-Investigators, both past and present i.e. RLO grants may be open or closed at the point of application. It is intended that the call be open for regular bi-annual tranches over the next two years, however applicants should note that the call timetable (shown on page 11 of this document) for Tranche 4 has been altered in response to the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on research and the research community. The call will focus on the following areas:

- **Workstream 1: Impact Enhancement:** Activities that build on and further the existing impact work of your RLO grant, to develop policy relevance and research user uptake.

- **Workstream 2: Research Augmentation:** Activities that explore any unexpected avenues which may have become apparent through the course of the grant.

- **Workstream 3: Capacity Building:** Activities which develop the capacities of academics and their institutions in the country of research, by building on existing capacity building links and initiatives.

- **Workstream 4: Cross-Grant Synthesis:** Collaboration between RLO researchers to synthesise research findings around a theme.

The invitation-only call is open to Principal Investigators (PIs) who have held a grant funded as part of the RLO programme. In addition, Co-Investigators (Co-Is) from the RLO programme can also apply as a PI to this call, however they must have the express support of their original RLO grant's PI (see below for details). The original grant can be open or closed at the point that the Follow-on Fund application(s) are made and they will be awarded as separate grant(s) to the existing/completed RLO grant. Any Researcher who has not

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been a PI or Co-I on an RLO-funded grant is not eligible to apply as a PI to this Follow on Fund. **All uninvited or ineligible applications will be rejected.**

Workstreams 1-3: Proposals are invited for grants with a full economic cost (fEC) value of between £25k and £100k for either workstreams 1, 2 or 3, or for any combination of these three workstreams. PIs and Co-Is are eligible to apply for a number of these grants, on multiple occasions. However the total amount of all awarded follow-on-fund grants linked to the original proposal must not in sum exceed £100k. Note that whilst cross-grant learning (where appropriate for inclusion) will be viewed positively, it is not a requirement for these workstreams and proposals within these workstreams must stand alone i.e. they cannot be co/inter dependent.

Workstream 4: Proposals are also invited from PIs and Co-Is working in collaboration with their counterparts on other RLO grants for workstream 4. These grants may also have a full economic cost (fEC) value of between £25k and £100k. Researchers can also apply for a number of these grants, on multiple occasions, and can collaborate with different projects in these applications.

The funders are extremely keen to encourage applications to workstream 4. Therefore ***in addition*** to the maximum of £100k allocable per grant in workstreams 1-3, a further £100k may be allocated to original RLO grants against workstream 4 (this makes a maximum of £200k across all 4 workstreams).

Given two or more teams will be working together on grants under workstream 4, the teams will need to designate one person from one of the teams to act as PI for the whole group. This PI will receive all funds for this grant, and be responsible for distributing this amongst the collaboration of teams on the grant. The collaboration of teams may split the funding however they see fit, but this intended split must be set out in advance in the budget documentation.

For example, a consortium of 3 research teams may apply for £100k of funds, with £40k budgeted for research team A, and £30k each budgeted for research teams B and C. If research team A is the designated grant PI, the total £100k will be awarded to research team A and they will be responsible for distributing the additional £60k to research teams B and C.

With regards to recording the maximum allocations to original RLO grants for workstream 4 (i.e. £100K per grant across the lifespan of the call), allocations will be recorded in line with submitted budget splits between research teams.This means the total Follow-on-Fund grant value will not be allocated against the grant's one designated PI.

Continuing the above example, this would be recorded as £40k against research team A, and £30k each against research teams B and C. Leaving team A open to make £60ks worth of additional applications, and research teams B and C the option to make £70k each worth of additional applications.

In summary, applicants from **each grant** may submit one or multiple proposals over the three year period from workstreams 1, 2 and 3 or any combination of these workstreams up to a sum of £100k **and** they can also submit a further one or multiple proposals over the three year period from workstream 4 in collaboration with colleagues from other RLO grants. Proposals outside of this value range for any workstream or combination of workstreams will not be accepted.

Applicants are invited to contact the office when planning to collaborate with their counterparts on other RLO grants for workstream 4 to discuss the distribution and allocation of funding.

Up to £2 million has been allocated for the length of the call. Projects may be up to a maximum of two years in duration. The call will be open twice a year, in bi-annual tranches (usually opened every six months) for the next two years. The fourth bi-annual tranche will open on 12 May 2020 and close 16:00 (UK time) on 22 September 2020. The earliest start date for the fourth tranche will be 18 January 2021. Please note that, in response to the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on research and the research community, the fourth tranche of this call will be open for a longer period than previous tranches. It is intended that subsequent tranches will open in early May and early November each year with a final call opening ~May 2021, however the timing of these tranches will continue to be reviewed in response to the evolving situation regarding the global pandemic. The call has been designed so that all grants will get an equal chance to access the Follow-on Fund if and when they are ready to do so. Proposals can be submitted at any point whilst the call is open, but will not be assessed until the submission window has closed.

Background and Scope

RLO is a £20 million programme which aims to generate world-class and cutting-edge social science research that addresses key questions on learning outcomes within education systems in developing countries. The programme's aim is to enable more effective policies and interventions by providing policymakers and practitioners with concrete ideas on how to improve learning and an understanding of how these ideas will translate to their specific contexts and institutions. The research funded will increase understanding of how the achievement of better learning outcomes in developing countries is enabled and constrained by complex interactions between elements of the education system, the context in which they are embedded, and the dynamics operating within that system. Research funding has been awarded through three research calls on effective teaching, challenging contexts and accountability.

The Follow-on Fund call is designed to support supplementary activities to existing RLO grants, which build on findings and activities achieved so far. The call provides the opportunity for RLO researchers to undertake these activities at any stage of the research lifecycle. The purpose of the scheme is to develop existing impact activities; to explore unexpected research avenues; and to build existing capacity links and initiatives. Within workstream 4 the scheme also allows PIs and Co-Is to collaborate with each other and synthesise findings from two or more grants, around a particular theme. Researchers are encouraged to engage with the Impact Initiative as appropriate to develop and potentially support their activities.

Call Details

This call will enable researchers funded by RLO to flexibly respond to opportunities identified in their existing or completed RLO grants. These Follow-on Fund awards will enable PIs and Co-Is to undertake small to medium scale short-term activities aimed at maximising the potential of their RLO grants. Proposals which include plans for completely new research or which request funding for activities that duplicate work within the original plan will not be funded. The activities proposed must clearly build on activities already undertaken within the original research grant(s). Funding can only be requested for activities related to research funded under the RLO programme. Proposals may relate to individual grants (work streams

1, 2 or 3 or any combination of these workstreams) or involve collaboration between two or more of the grants where there are relevant collective opportunities (workstream 4). Note that within workstreams 1 to 3 cross-grant learning will be viewed positively (where appropriate for inclusion), but it is not a requirement for workstreams 1 to 3, and proposals within workstreams 1 to 3 must stand alone i.e. they cannot be co/inter dependent.

Applications should focus on at least one of the following four workstreams (or they can combine different elements from workstreams 1, 2 and 3):

Workstream 1: Impact Enhancement

Activities that build on and further the existing impact work of your RLO grant, to develop policy relevance and research user uptake. Examples within this stream could include:
- Tailoring communication to a non-academic audience through the production of short documents or media products.
- Organising an event in-country which involves a wide range of stakeholders including policy makers and practitioners.
- Coordinating activities to establish networks and relationships with research users.
- Developing activities to influence policy.

Workstream 2: Research Augmentation

Activities that explore any unexpected avenues which may have become apparent through the course of the grant. Examples within this stream could include:
- Pinpointing an issue identified through the course of undertaking the original research and extending the methodology to cover this new area, to extend the reach of the research findings further.
- Examining in more depth an unexpected connection or research further an unanticipated outcome.
- Prevailing over substantial barriers or limitations that emerged during the original research process.

Workstream 3: Capacity Building

Activities which develop the capacities of academics and their institutions in the country of research, by building on existing capacity building links and initiatives. Examples within this stream could include:
- Assisting with the technical and personal skill development of current and future researchers in the countries of research.
- Identifying and developing capacity building activities set out in relation to the core intellectual agenda of the research.

Workstream 4: Cross-Grant Synthesis

Collaboration between RLO PIs and Co-Is from different RLO grants, to synthesise research findings around a theme. Examples within this stream could include:
- Co-operating with other RLO programme PIs, Co-Is and researchers from different RLO grants on co-authored journal articles and chapters for books.

- Liaising with RLO PIs, Co-Is and researchers from different RLO grants on co-produced outputs to reach a wide range of stakeholders.

While funds can be requested to support evidence-informed debate and discussion, they should not be used to support advocacy activities (i.e. pushing for specific policy changes).

The funders are extremely keen to encourage cross-grant collaboration, particularly with regards to workstream 4 which explores "Cross-Grant Synthesis". RLO programme researchers from different RLO grants are encouraged to take advantage of the Annual RLO Programme Workshop (held early in each year) to develop ideas for follow-on fund activities with each other and also the Impact Initiative and funders. Other international events and conferences attended by RLO programme researchers from different RLO grants would also provide the opportunity to explore potential cross-grant collaboration.

Eligibility

The scheme is only open to PIs and Co-Is from different RLO grants funded through the RLO research programme. Applications from both completed and ongoing RLO funded grants are eligible. Successful proposals will be awarded as a separate grant to grantholders' existing/completed RLO grant. Researchers who have not held an RLO grant are not eligible to apply. All uninvited or ineligible applications will be rejected.

The PI **must** be based at an established organisation with the capacity to undertake high-quality research. This means an institution that possesses an existing in-house capacity to host a grant and to carry out research that materially extends and enhances the national or international research base, and is able to demonstrate an independent capability to undertake and lead research programmes.

For those applications following workstreams 1, 2 or 3, or a combination of these workstreams, applications can be lead by either the PI or a CoI from the original grant. Where a CoI leads the application, they should ensure the PI from the original grant is content with this, and provide a letter of support from the PI to show this.

Lead institutions which are not currently recognised to hold UK Research Institutions grants will have to complete UKRI Due Diligence checks before any grant can be confirmed. In these instances there is likely to be a period of time before the grant could start where appropriate checks would have to be undertaken. Those institutions which have been recognised but only by only other UKRI Research Councils, will not have to undertake the full due diligence but instead undertake the extra ESRC capacity building element of the process, this will also cause a delay. (Please contact the ESRC office if you wish to discuss these further). The project team (Co-Is, staff and researchers) should be configured as appropriate for the proposed programme of activities. It is anticipated that for some applications the new project team may not be identical to the original ESRC-DFID grant.

Within workstreams 1, 2 and 3, or a combination of these workstreams, applicants may submit one or multiple proposals over the three year period. The maximum follow-on-funding

that can be awarded **per original grant**[1] across all proposals is £100k. This means a grant may be awarded for example for £30k in one application and a maximum of £70k in a later application; or alternatively a total of £100k all in one application.

The funders are keen to encourage applications to workstream 4 on "Cross Grant synthesis" where a combination from the PI, Co-I's and researchers from one grant collaborate with their colleagues on one or more other grants. Therefore, in addition to applications to Workstreams 1-3, applicants may also submit applications to workstream 4. One or multiple proposals over the three year period may be submitted to workstream 4. The maximum follow-on-funding that can be awarded **per grant** across all proposals for workstream 4 is a further £100k. This is attributed to the original grant from where the designated PI on the Follow-On Fund application originated.

This means that on workstream 4 the designated PIs from one grant may be awarded for example £30k in one application and a maximum of £70k in a later application; or alternatively a total of £100k all in one application. The PI or Co-I from that grant could *also* be involved on one or more awards that are led by a designated PI from another grant. This means that a grant may be awarded up to £100k for non-synthesis work and *up to a further* £100k for synthesis work. In addition they may work on other synthesis applications where they are not the lead grant. This is explained in more detail on pages 3-4 of the Je-S Guidance.

Funding, eligible costs and grant duration

Proposals are invited by invitation only to PIs who have held a grant funded as part of the RLO programme and Co-Is with the consent of their PI from the RLO programme, who can also apply as a PI to this call. The original grant can be open or closed at the point that the Follow-on Fund application(s) are made and they will be awarded as separate grant(s) to the existing/completed RLO grant. Proposals are invited for grants for grants within workstreams 1, 2 or 3 or for any combination of these three workstreams with a full economic cost (fEC) value of between £25k and £100k. In addition proposals are also invited from PIs and Co-Is working in collaboration with their counterparts on other RLO grants for workstream 4. These grants also have a full economic cost (fEC) value of between £25k and £100k. Up to £2 million has been allocated for the length of the call.

Where appropriate, applicants are encouraged to seek co-funding (cash or in-kind) from partners within the user community, although there is no requirement to secure co-funding. The applicants will need to demonstrate that there is a commitment from any identified external partner organisation by including a letter of support with their application. Please note that it is the Research Organisation's responsibility to claim any contribution from partners as specified in the application, and costs to be met by project partners should **not** be included in the total budget requested. However, contributions from project partners should be included in the project partners section of the Je-S form. The total project cost, including funder and project partner contribution should also be included in the 'justification of resources' section.

Eligible costs from the funders could include:

- Travel and Subsistence

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[1] Those PIs who secured Follow-on Funding in Call1 have to include their two grants as one

- Equipment where appropriate and justified
- Estates and Indirect costs

Salary costs for investigators and research assistants can usually only be requested if not already covered by the original grant (such as through staff time allocated to the Principal- and/or Co-Is). Individual salary costs can only be claimed to cover new activities as applied under this stream and, taken together with already funded research grants, cannot exceed 100 per cent full-time equivalents.

Efficiency, cost-effectiveness and value for money should be clearly demonstrated in the application. Payments will not be made for miscellaneous expenses or for contingencies.

Proposals may be for one-off activities or longer programmes of work over a period of time. Proposed follow-on fund projects should not exceed two years in duration.

If a grant is recommended for funding, budgets may be reduced if considered excessive. All applicants are strongly advised to consult their institutional finance/research offices regarding the financial aspects of their proposal **in good time** before the call deadline. All costs should be broken down and fully justified.

For non-UK institutions the programme will support in full (100%) all the justified directly incurred costs of the Follow-on Fund activities. In addition, indirect costs may be charged on staff salary and other staff-related costs (ie statutory contributions analogous to UK National Insurance or Superannuation contributions). Indirect costs may **not** be charged on non-staff related direct costs, such as equipment, consultancies and conferences as well as travel and subsistence. The following rates for indirect costs should be applied:

- For applicants from developing countries, the overhead rate is 50%
- For applicants from developed countries, the overhead rate is 20%.

Further information is provided in the document 'Costings Guidance for Non-UK Institutions and Partners' available at https://esrc.ukri.org/funding/funding-opportunities/esrc-dfid-raising-learning-outcomes-rlo-in-education-systems-research-programme/ Proposals from a non-UK institution or which include any non-UK partners **must** refer to this document before completing the Je-S proposal.

ODA compliance statement

To comply with ODA requirements, proposals should make clear how their primary purpose is to promote the economic development and welfare of a developing country or countries. There are no priority countries; proposals may relate to any country or countries on the OECD DAC list of ODA recipients (DAC list) except those which are flagged as likely to graduate from the list during the course of the proposed project. If a country is flagged as likely to graduate it cannot be the primary focus of a proposal, although it can be included as an additional case study or comparison.

Applicants should clearly articulate their impact plans, demonstrating how they meet ODA requirements throughout their 'Case for Support' submission. In addition, all proposals must include a mandatory 'Non-UK Components' attachment addressing the following four questions:

1. Which country/countries on the DAC list will directly benefit from this proposal and are these countries likely to continue to be eligible to receive ODA for the duration of the research?
2. How is your proposal directly and primarily relevant to the development challenges of these countries?
3. How do you expect that the outcome of your proposed activities will promote the economic development and welfare of a country or countries on the DAC list?
4. What approach(es) will you use to deliver development impact within the lifetime of the project and in the longer-term. Please consider the potential outcomes, the key beneficiary and stakeholder groups and how they will be engaged to enable development impact to be achieved.

Further guidance on how to submit the ODA compliance statement as an attachment is provided in the call-specific Je-S Guidance. General advice on ODA and links to other useful sources of information are provided on the ESRC website - https://esrc.ukri.org/research/international-research/official-development-assistance-oda/.

Initial ODA compliance assessment will take place within the ESRC, though final decisions may include input from commissioning panels as well as external sources of ODA expertise.

ODA transparency and reporting. As part of the government's commitment to ODA transparency and in line with DFID ODA reporting requirements, UKRI is responsible for publishing information about UKRI ODA grants including project titles and summaries via the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) registry and via DFID's national statistics.

The purpose of publishing information via the IATI registry is to make information about ODA easily accessible to governments, stakeholders and other relevant groups in beneficiary countries. Any UKRI funded project from this programme may be published in this way. Please therefore write your project title and summary in such a way that they are meaningful and accessible to non-specialist audiences, following publication. Please also make clear in your summary how your project is ODA compliant, for example by identifying the development challenge(s) being addressed, the aims of the project and the beneficiary countries.

Gender equality

Official Development Assistance provided by UKRI, including funding from this call, should comply with the requirements of the International Development (Gender Equality) Act 2014, which states the "desirability of providing development assistance that is likely to contribute to reducing poverty in a way which is likely to contribute to reducing inequalities between persons of different gender".

Applicants must submit a one page Gender Equality Statement and instructions are provided in the JeS guidance.

Assessment process and criteria

The call will be open twice a year, in bi-annual tranches (usually opened every six months) for the next two years. An assessment panel will meet after each call closes, usually every six months, to assess each tranche of applications. Final funding decisions will be communicated within three months of the closing date. The earliest start date for successful projects would be approximately four months after the closing date of each tranche. Please refer to the call timetable section of this document for further detail.

Proposals which meet the eligibility, cost and duration requirements will be assessed by experts in the programme against the following criteria:

- **Research agenda:**
    - o Is there clarity and coherence in the research design between research questions, research methods and anticipated intellectual outcomes?
    - o Are the research questions clearly set out?

- **Quality and appropriateness of proposed activities:**
    - o Do the proposed activities have the potential to ensure the research is more widely used or reaches new audiences?
    - o Do the proposed activities build appropriately on activities conducted within the original research grant?
    - o Is there an effective pathway for tracking impact planned?

- **Project Management and Delivery:**
    - o Are the project management plans and configuration of roles and responsibilities reasonable, appropriate and credible for the given project?
    - o Are the credentials of the investigators and host institutions appropriate to deliver the project?

- **Value for money:**
    - o Are the requested resources reasonable to deliver the specific activities?

Note that cross-grant learning in workstreams 1 to 3 - where appropriate for inclusion - will be viewed positively, however it is not a requirement for these workstreams.

For those applications covering workstreams 1, 2 or 3 or a combination of these workstreams, the following additional criteria will be considered dependent on the workstream:

- **Workstream 1: Impact Enhancement**
    - o Do the proposed activities build on and further the existing impact work of your RLO grant, to develop policy relevance and research user uptake?
    - o Are there clear plans to make findings available to target audiences and to maximise research uptake?
    - o Is there appropriate analysis of who the stakeholders/potential users of research outputs are, and the processes and means for engaging with them?
    - o Do impact activities not only make research available/engage with audiences, but also articulate what changes these activities might make? See Annex 1 – "Mapping education research on to the Impact Initiative's wheel of impact".

- **Workstream 2: Research Augmentation**
    - o Do the proposed activities explore any unexpected avenues and opportunities, which may have become apparent through the course of the grant?

- **Workstream 3: Capacity Building**
    - o Do the proposed activities develop the capacities of academics and their institutions in the country of research, by building on existing capacity building

links and initiatives? Capacity building activities may also include policy makers and/or Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) partners.

- o Is there an understanding of the local research context, and have steps been taken to enhance local research capacity?

For those applications covering workstream 4, the following additional criteria will be considered:

- **Workstream 4: Cross-Grant Synthesis**
  - o Do the proposed activities explore collaborative activities between RLO PIs and Co-Is to synthesise research findings around a theme?

How to apply

The scheme is administered by the ESRC part of UK Research and Innovation on behalf of the ESRC-DFID RLO Programme. Applications must be submitted to the Research Council's Joint Electronic Submission system https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/JeS2WebLoginSite/Login.aspx (Je-S) by the call deadline 16:00 (UK time) on 22 September 2020. All proposals must be submitted in English, costed in pounds sterling (£) and made on the official Je-S proposal. Electronic acknowledgements of submission will be sent to the PI and submitting organisation, upon submission by the applicant.

The proposal has two elements: an online form requesting key information; and a series of mandatory attachments which are to be completed offline and uploaded as (PDF) attachments in the Je-S form. The key attachments required include the Case for Support, Justification of Resources and CVs for all named individuals.

These requirements are fully explained in the call-specific 'Je-S guidance for applicants' document which is available to download on the call webpage https://esrc.ukri.org/funding/funding-opportunities/esrc-dfid-raising-learning-outcomes-rlo-in-education-systems-research-programme/ Applicants must ensure they have read and complied with the guidance set out in that document.

This guidance should be used in conjunction with ESRC's Research Funding Guide https://esrc.ukri.org/funding/guidance-for-applicants/research-funding-guide/ and 'How to write a good research grant application' http://www.esrc.ac.uk/How-to. The Je-S help text is available on every page of your Je-S application. Where information issued in the scheme-specific guidance differs from the more general guidance offered in the sources above, you should adhere to the scheme-specific guidance.

Call timetable

The call will be open twice a year, in bi-annual tranches (usually opened every six months) for the next two years. The fourth bi-annual tranche will open on 12 May 2020 and close 16:00 (UK time) on 22 September 2020. In response to the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on research and the research community, the fourth tranche of this call will be open for a longer period than previous tranches, and the timetable for this tranche has been updated accordingly below. Subsequent tranches are intended to open in November and May each year with a final call opening ~ May 2021. These dates are subject to slight amendments over the next two years, and will continue to be reviewed in response to the evolving situation relating to the global pandemic.

Proposals can be submitted at any point whilst the call is open, but will not be assessed until the call has closed. Applicants will be informed of the outcome of their submission within 4 months of the closing date. Please note that when the call is not open the JeS forms will not be available.

Please see the call timetable below.

Tranche	Call Opens	Call Closes	Assessment Panel	Earliest Start Date
Tranche 1	November 2018	January 2019	March 2019	May 2019
Tranche 2	May 2019	July 2019	September 2019	November 2019
Tranche 3	November 2019	January 2020	March 2020	May 2020
Tranche 4	May 2020	September 2020	November 2020	January 2021
Tranche 5	November 2020	January 2021	March 2021	May 2021
Tranche 6	May 2021	July 2021	September 2021	November 2021

Contact details

All queries or comments about this scheme should be addressed to the RLO programme mailbox at eddev@esrc.ukri.org.

The Je-S Helpdesk may be contacted by email (jeshelp@rcuk.ac.uk) or telephone (+44 (0)1793 444164) and is usually staffed Monday-Thursday 8:30 -17:00, Friday 8:30-16:30 GMT (excluding public and other holidays). **Please note that Je-S Helpdesk staff are working remotely via email during the COVID 19 lockdown in the UK; please contact the Helpdesk using the standard mailbox for Je-S (JeSHelp@je-s.ukri.org) during this time, and one of the advisors will respond to you as soon as they can.**

Annex 1: Mapping education research on to the Impact Initiative's wheel of impact

Changing Ways of Thinking; Raising Awareness; Contributions to Knowledge

Conceptual

Instrumental

Impacts on Policy and Practice; A Change in Direction Attributable to Research

Capacity Building

Networks & Connectivity

Building Capacity of Researchers/ Intermediaries to Strengthen Research Uptake Approaches

Building and Strengthening Networks; Connecting up the Supply of Evidence with the Demand for it