

ESRC-DFID Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research Grants Call 2014-15

Guidance for Reviewers

Process summary

This full call is open only to applicants who have been invited to submit a proposal following the outline proposal stage of the call earlier in the year.

Proposals will be subject to full peer review. Applicants will have the opportunity to respond to reviewer comments before the commissioning panel meeting. The commissioning panel of academic and non-academic experts will then assess the proposals and make funding recommendations. Final funding decisions will be communicated to applicants in late December 2015. The earliest start date for successful projects is 1 March 2016.

Assessment Criteria

Peer reviewers and commissioning panel members are asked to consider whether proposals are of world-class standard (being intellectually innovative, well-focused and methodologically sound), and whether the research has the potential to have a real impact on poverty reduction in low-income countries. Peer reviewers and the commissioning panel are asked to comment on the following criteria when assessing proposals.

Research agenda

Is there a clear understanding of the problem/issue to be addressed through this research, and is a strong case made for its relevance to the scope of the call?

Is the proposed research approach appropriate to address this problem/issue and in line with the requirements of the call?

Is there clarity and coherence in the research design between research questions, research methods, and anticipated intellectual outcomes?

Are the research questions clearly set out?

Are the research methods appropriate to the questions set, clearly articulated and robust?

Where mixed methods are used, are quantitative and qualitative methodologies effectively, rigorously and appropriately combined?

Is there clarity as to how, and by whom, the research findings will be used?

Does the proposal integrate adequate and appropriate analysis of gender and other structural inequalities?

Do data management plans follow best practice and ESRC data policy?

Have ethical issues been appropriately addressed in the proposal?

Project management

Are the project management plans and configuration of roles and responsibilities reasonable, appropriate and credible for the given project?

Are the credentials of the investigators and host institutions appropriate to deliver the project?

Capacity-building

Has capacity-building been appropriately considered as a core part of the intellectual agenda?

Is there an understanding of the local research context, and have steps been taken to ensure the research programme builds, and at the very least does not undermine local research capacity?

Where a proposal includes a linked doctoral student:

Does the proposal demonstrate sufficient evidence of an appropriate research environment and infrastructure for doctoral work?

Are the arrangements for the supervision of students adequate and appropriate (including the suitability of the proposed doctoral supervisor/s)?

Is the research conducted by a doctoral student a discrete piece of work which is clearly of a standard to be submitted as a doctoral thesis, but that will also produce synergy and added value to the main research project?

Research impact

Does the project have real potential for impact on poverty reduction?

Does the Pathways to Impact statement present a set of clear, well-funded activities for genuine collaboration with a variety of stakeholders throughout the life of the project?

Does the proposal demonstrate that there is effective demand for the research from policymakers and other stakeholders beyond the academic community?

Is there appropriate analysis of who the stakeholders/potential users of research outputs are and the processes and means for engaging with them at all stages of the research process?

Are there clear plans to make findings available to target audiences and to maximise research uptake?

Have plans been included for an inception workshop with key stakeholders? If not, is there sufficient justification in the Pathways to Impact statement why a stakeholder workshop is not appropriate for this project?

Value for money

Is the budget appropriate and reasonable for the proposed programme of work, including all staff costs, travel, field work, data collection, data analysis tasks and research uptake activities?

Are the resources requested justified and reasonable to deliver the project?

Is the amount of senior staff time on the project appropriate?

Are the daily fee rates for research staff reasonable?

Are the research uptake activities appropriately funded, with at least 10 per cent of the overall budget dedicated to delivering the activities outlined in the impact summary?

Research partnerships

Are proposed academic and non-academic partnerships or collaborations appropriate for the proposed research?

Are the roles and responsibilities of partners and collaborators clear, justified, proportionate and balanced?

Have all the partners been fully involved in the design of the research, and do they have a clear and meaningful role in future activities?

Have sufficient resources and time been allocated to ensure strong working partnerships across disciplines, organisations and geographic contexts?

Additional feedback to all shortlisted applicants

Reviewers should note that the following feedback was provided to shortlisted applicants and should consider how well these issues have been addressed in the proposal as part of their review:

Scheme-funded research *must* generate new knowledge of international relevance that has the greatest potential to benefit the lives of poor people in low-income countries (LICs). Where research proposed takes place in a middle-income country (MIC) it is **essential** to set out clearly and explicitly how this will generate knowledge of relevance to poor people in LICs and what will be done to ensure that they benefit from the research. Please see the 'Geographical focus' section of the call specification on the call webpage for further information.

Proposals must appropriately address the two cross-cutting issues identified as relevant to all research funded through this scheme: 'structural inequalities' (including those based on gender, age, disability, ethnicity, race, religion, class, educational status and spatial factors) and 'measurements and metrics'. Please see the 'Cross-cutting issues' section of the call specification on the call webpage for further information.

Proposals must clearly situate the research in relation to current relevant policy and academic debates, and demonstrate clearly how it responds effectively to those.

Proposals must clearly set out the research aims, methodology and methods proposed, and the relationship between these. Whether the research proposed is quantitative, qualitative, or mixed in nature, particular attention should be paid to ensuring that these methods are described in adequate detail and quality within the proposal, as well as a rationale for why they are appropriate for the research proposed.

Proposals must give consideration to how capacity building, particularly building the capacity of Southern partners, will be developed in their research project. Please see the 'Research Capacity' section of the call specification on the call webpage for further information.