



Research jointly supported by the ESRC and DFID

## **ESRC-DFID Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research Grants Call 2014-15 (invitation only) Specification for full proposals**

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### **Summary**

The Department for International Development (DFID) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) jointly fund a scheme for poverty alleviation research. Both funders

are committed to commissioning world class research and ensuring the results are available for policymakers and development workers worldwide.

The purpose of the scheme is to provide a more robust conceptual and empirical basis for development and to enhance the quality and impact of social science research on poverty reduction. Scheme-funded research will have high potential for impact on policy and practice in low-income countries through the use of the new knowledge created. Proposals are sought from across the social sciences and may be for fundamental or more applied research topics.

The current phase of the scheme is focused on three overarching research questions, set out below. Proposals must address at least one of these questions, and must also incorporate consideration of two cross-cutting themes - structural inequalities, and measurement and metrics - regardless of the overarching research question(s) addressed.

This call is open **only** to applicants who have been **invited** to submit a full proposal following the earlier outline call. Any uninvited proposals will be **rejected**.

Proposals are invited for projects with a **full Economic Cost (fEC) value of between £100,000 and £500,000**. Proposals over £500,000 will not be accepted under this call. This budget limit refers to the total cost of the project, not the contribution paid by the ESRC and DFID. The duration of grants should range from a minimum of one year up to a maximum of three years.

The earliest start date for successful projects is 1 March 2016. The deadline for proposals is **16.00 (UK time), 28 July 2015**.

## **Background to the call**

While progress has been made in reducing the number of people living on less than \$1.25 a day, millions of people remain trapped in poverty that lasts many years, often their entire lifetime, and is passed onto their children. Long-term experience of poverty can cause irreparable, intergenerational damage to people's capabilities, and it may be harder to escape poverty the longer you are poor. Poverty reduction efforts are happening in a context of demographic, economic and environmental events and trends that bring the risk of major, repeated and interacting shocks to the livelihoods and lives of poor people, and this is likely to continue. The unpredictable and discontinuous nature of change also raises profound conceptual and practical challenges for aid agencies and governments.

In many countries, the opportunities for development remain severely compromised by violence, insecurity and fragile institutions at national or sub-national levels. Domestic violence is also a pervasive and critical development issue. Poverty is fundamentally a political phenomenon, with power relations determining how opportunities and benefits are distributed. This highlights the central importance of the political economy context in mediating change that is in the interests of the poor. While the political nature of these challenges is increasingly recognised, development practitioners have had limited success in translating this insight into more effective programming.

In recent years, research has brought advances in the understanding of poverty dynamics, the structural causes of persistent and intergenerational poverty, and the multidimensional nature of poverty. There has been movement towards more analysis of causality, towards combining quantitative and qualitative measures, and towards understanding how different poor people themselves view poverty. However, the significance of social-cultural difference and more qualitative elements (powerlessness, self-esteem, discrimination) needs to be better understood, as do the connections across all these dimensions of poverty over time.

This call's three core overarching questions address these conditions of high uncertainty and rapid change and the need for a new research approach to effectively respond to these. This is part of the scheme's aim to provide a more robust conceptual and empirical basis for development and to enhance the quality and impact of social science research on poverty reduction.

## Call specification

### Overarching research questions

All research funded under this call **must** address one or more of three overarching questions:

- What factors shape pathways into and out of poverty and people's experience of these, and how can policy create sustained routes out of extreme poverty in ways that can be replicated and scaled up?
- What political and institutional conditions are associated with effective poverty reduction and development, and what can domestic and external actors do to promote these conditions?
- What measures can be taken to reduce the risks and impact of violence and instability on the poorest and increase the effectiveness of peacebuilding, statebuilding and wider development interventions in fragile and conflict-affected situations?

No extra benefit will be gained from proposals seeking to cover more than one of these questions. However, **proposals which are not deemed to be within the scope of this call will be rejected.**

Below we provide guidance to applicants on the three overarching research questions, their context, and an indicative **but not exclusive** list of examples of the kinds of work the funders seek to support under this call.

### **What factors shape pathways into and out of poverty and people's experience of these, and how can policy create sustained routes out of extreme poverty in ways that can be replicated and scaled up?**

Globalising economies, demographic change, urbanisation, shifting patterns of inequality, and migration are moving the locus of poverty, offering opportunities and poverty alleviation strategies for some, while rendering others more vulnerable. Understanding these global and regional dynamics, and how and why different groups of people move in to, out of and, importantly, return to poverty over time is critical to identify and target responses to reach the poorest.

Tackling poverty requires multi-faceted and integrated approaches, the reorientation of policies around the hardest to reach, and recognition of the importance of agency and empowerment in finding sustainable routes out of poverty. We know from previous research that, beyond economic growth, a range of connected and sequenced interventions such as social protection, access to education and health care, better infrastructure, training, safe employment, access to justice, increased political voice, strengthening citizenship and better accountability mechanisms, can all play a role in poverty reduction. Ways to enable the poor to change their own lives are also critical, and research needs to understand how forms of collective action can be supported to promote societal change.

Sub-questions under this theme may include:

- What are the key trends in, and drivers of, extreme poverty and inequality?
- How do the routes into and experience of persistent poverty and inequality differ for different groups of poor people?
- What is the relationship between social differentiation and exclusion - at the intra-household level (gender and generational) - and at the level of social categories (eg ethnic, cultural, religious, regional, caste, etc) and poverty, and how can this be broken?
- What do concepts of vulnerability, risk and resilience add to our understanding of poverty dynamics?
- When and how do shocks change the way institutions and policies work for poor people?
- What approaches are most effective in enabling the poor to escape poverty traps, exit and stay out of poverty, and why?
- What role does collective action play in reducing poverty and bringing about broader societal change?
- How can effective policies to promote routes out of poverty be replicated and scaled up?

**What political and institutional conditions are associated with effective poverty reduction and development, and what can domestic and external actors do to promote these conditions?**

Governance research in recent years has focused on the relationship between institutions and development, but consensus has not been reached on the direction of causality between the quality of institutions and development outcomes. Approaches that aim to replicate the prevailing institutions of Western countries as the institutional framework for developing today's low-income countries (LICs) and middle-income countries (MICs), and 'best practice' universal remedies that neglect context or existing institutions, are known to be inadequate. The importance of political economy, and in particular the shape of the political settlement in influencing development outcomes, is now recognised. This raises questions about internal and external actors, about how macro-economic and other policies can reinforce structural inequalities and poverty, and about how development interventions can promote more inclusive and pro-poor political settlements and policymaking.

The importance of working across the boundary between the state and society, and understanding their interplay, is also recognised. Social and political leaders, social movements, institutions and political parties/formations and faith groups are critical for the

creation of constituencies to promote pro-poor development. If development interventions are to enable citizens to contribute to making and shaping service delivery and policies that affect their lives, and to hold national and local government to account, we need analysis of how social movements interact with formal political institutions to bring about progressive social and political change. This is particularly important in understanding how state-building and peace-building work in fragile and conflict-affected situations.

Sub-questions under this theme may include:

- What kinds of political institutions and processes support successful poverty reduction, and how can local elites be best engaged in these?
- Under what conditions does poverty itself act as a key driver of political change?
- How do incentives and political processes at national and sub-national levels work to benefit the poor in terms of livelihood, voice and empowerment?
- When and how can external actors support changes in political processes that directly benefit poor people?
- How do social movements interact with formal political institutions to bring about progressive social and political change?
- How do faith groups interact with formal political institutions to bring about progressive social and political change?

**What measures can be taken to reduce the risks and impact of violence and instability on the poorest and increase the effectiveness of peace-building, state-building and wider development interventions in fragile and conflict-affected situations?**

There is now a high degree of confidence that the causes of both conflict and fragility are multiple and complex, and generally occur in combination. There is increasing evidence that inclusive political settlements are important to peace and stability, and that building trust and confidence around the political settlement, especially among the elite, is vital to its success. We also know that this process often takes decades. Evidence also suggests that conflict and fragility exacerbate other stressors and are connected to them. Poverty and vulnerability are both seen as structurally linked and constructed. Humanitarian and development agencies are no longer separating conflict and fragility from their context, and are more explicitly linking relief and development.

Sub-questions under this theme may include:

- What factors contribute to improved legitimacy, transparency and accountability of state institutions in contexts of fragility, violence and insecurity?
- How do different institutional forms help to overcome the problem of basic service delivery in contexts of sustained conflict and fragility?
- Can external interventions help to build trust in institutions following periods of violence and conflict?
- What determines a viable and inclusive political settlement that enables participation and a voice for the poor, women and marginalised groups following a conflict?
- What measures are effective in tackling the symptoms and causes of violence against women and girls, specifically in conflict and post-conflict situations?

- Are there examples of places where violence or conflict have declined, and how can this be explained and potentially replicated?
- What evidence is there of improved development outcomes in fragile and conflict affected states, and what have been the drivers of this change?
- What are the dynamics of organised crime and terrorism, and what is their connection to conflict and efforts to build a post-conflict settlement?
- How do we measure violence? Are there new metrics that can be used?

### **Cross-cutting issues**

ESRC and DFID have identified two key cross-cutting issues which are relevant to all of the overarching questions within this call. Applicants must ensure these important issues are considered and addressed appropriately within their proposed research, including through disaggregation of data.

### **Structural inequalities**

High and growing levels of inequality are a significant factor in individual and collective ill-being, with research exploring the impacts of vertical and horizontal inequality on conflict, growth and poverty. More and more of the world's poor people are living in MICs, with inequalities between the rich and the poor widening and becoming further entrenched. Intra-group inequalities can also be pronounced. Gender inequality remains a key stumbling block to human development and poverty reduction. Gender gaps persist in part because underlying social norms, institutions and political factors perpetuate structural inequalities in the home, communities, markets and society in ways that affect the ability of women and girls to realise opportunities or meet basic needs. Such inequalities are also experienced by groups such as youth, disabled people, ethnic and religious minorities and people living in remote conditions, who are particularly likely to face multiple deprivations. These deprivations, which include lack of access to education, health, food and nutrition, economic and political opportunities, as well as social stigma and political opposition, make it harder for people to find routes out of poverty and to engage in economic growth processes.

However, development research with a gender dimension that can lead to effective policy is often underdeveloped due to lack of disaggregated data and the inclusion of gender dynamics in conceptual models. Failure to identify and explore the distinctive gender dimensions of economic and social policies and institutions - as well as other structural inequality dimensions such as those relating to ethnicity, age, disability and spatial geography - may lead to bias in interventions and processes, or may limit impact and value for money.

In order to produce knowledge and evidence to inform more effective policies and programmes and to support transformational changes in structural inequalities, applicants should make a genuine effort to integrate adequate analysis of gender and other structural inequalities in their research design, even where this may not be the central focus of the project. We strongly encourage researchers to ensure that relevant data - where feasible - are disaggregated by sex, age and other structural inequalities, but also to analyse the different roles and responsibilities, constraints and opportunities or power differentials between, for example, girls/women and boys/men.

## Metrics and measurement

In the donor community, the increasing emphasis on the measurement of results has brought to the fore three related but distinct issues:

- What are the appropriate indicators of success of interventions designed to achieve social, political and institutional change?
- What are the appropriate methodologies that can be used to monitor change and assess impact over the short and long-term, including at national scales?
- Who measures?

Primary data and high quality analysis is needed to assess **who** benefits, **how**, and in **what contexts** from different interventions and policies - with particular attention to different gender, age, class, ethnic, religious and other social groups. Methods are also required that, in addition to quantifying outputs and outcomes, can help to explain **why** different interventions are more or less successful in different contexts.

The dearth of evidence on 'what works' in governance and social development interventions is due, in part, to a number of methodological challenges. These include the difficulty of measuring complex outcomes such as 'empowerment and accountability', the lack of standardised indicators, and difficulties in capturing impact of programmes (eg budget support) at national scales. Equally challenging is the application of traditional economic measures of success in these areas of policy and the extent to which tools such as social rates of return are likely to prove useful for decision-makers. Finally, there are issues of how different kinds of data can be made more accessible to populations so they can make decisions about how to invest their resources, about how poor people and communities themselves can generate data, and about how this can be used to hold national and local governments to account.

## Research approach

ESRC and DFID recognise the need for a new research approach to effectively respond to the overarching questions posed above. A major objective of the scheme is to improve the quality of social science for development, and to increase its diversity. Proposals are sought from across the social sciences and must be at least 50 per cent social science in disciplinary focus. Multi- or inter-disciplinary research projects are encouraged, although this is not a prerequisite for funding. Queries relating to this should be addressed to the ESRC scheme secretariat – see contact details below.

Research which takes a mixed methodological approach may also help to improve the quality of social science for development. Proposals which effectively and rigorously combine quantitative and qualitative methodologies to address a research question will strengthen their case for funding. However, superficial or tokenistic inclusion of either quantitative or qualitative elements in a research project is inadequate. The funders recognise that not all research questions are suited to mixed methodologies. Although encouraged, using a mixed methodology is not a prerequisite for funding. Applicants must ensure that their proposed methodology follows from their research questions and is appropriate to answering those questions.

All projects funded must:

- recognise and engage with the multi-dimensional nature of poverty and wellbeing
- explore and analyse the complex drivers of poverty, and their interrelationship, taking a dynamic and non-linear approach
- identify emerging issues and drivers of poverty (whether global, regional or in-country), paying attention to change over time
- recognise and engage with issues around politics and power
- take a multi- or inter-disciplinary approach, or provide a clear rationale for why a single-discipline approach is more appropriate
- involve non-academic stakeholders, including potential research users, in project design and conduct, to maximise the research's potential impact on policy and practice

Applicants must explain how their research addresses these issues within their proposal's Case for Support and Impact Summary. Narrowly defined research which does not meet the above requirements **will not** be funded under the scheme.

### **Geographical focus**

Scheme-funded research should generate new knowledge of international relevance with the greatest potential to benefit the lives of poor people in low-income countries (LICs)<sup>1</sup>. In their Case for Support, applicants must describe what their projects will do to ensure that poor people living in LICs benefit from their research.

Scheme research may be conducted in middle-income countries (MICs) when it can be clearly demonstrated that this will generate new knowledge of global relevance with the potential to benefit the lives of poor people in LICs. Applicants must explicitly demonstrate how research undertaken in MICs has the potential to influence policy and/or development interventions that seek to reduce poverty in one or more LICs and what will be done during the lifetime of the project to ensure this. It is not sufficient to note only that the area under study is similar to conditions in average LICs. Specific similarities must be articulated and the Pathways to Impact must include clear plans to engage with stakeholders in one or more LIC(s), normally at an early stage in the research process. Proposals lacking sufficient detail in these plans may be rejected by the ESRC office prior to peer review.

### **Funding exclusions**

Proposals which duplicate work previously supported by this scheme will **not** be funded. Details of the successful awards from previous calls are available on the ESRC website: [www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/funding-opportunities/international-funding/esrc-dfid/research-projects/index.aspx](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/funding-opportunities/international-funding/esrc-dfid/research-projects/index.aspx)

The scheme will **not** fund contract research or consultancy work where the results and physical outputs are to some extent already pre-defined and known.

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<sup>1</sup> See the OECD DAC list of ODA recipients last updated January 2015:

<http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/documentupload/DAC%20List%20of%20ODA%20Recipients%202014%20final.pdf>

For the purposes of this call LICs include both 'Least Developed Countries' and 'Other Low-Income Countries'.



The scheme will **not** fund project/intervention or process evaluations that are not guided by social science-driven questions of broader relevance and applicability. Projects centred around particular interventions must not simply assess **if** these are effective in a given context, but must examine **why** this is the case. Projects which assess the effectiveness of a particular intervention without situating that assessment within a broader research and policy context will not be funded.

### **International dimension and collaborations**

This scheme is concerned with international co-operation to address issues of global importance. Underpinning the scheme and all funded projects must be a strong research ethic based on mutual respect and understanding for different cultural, ethnic, social and economic beliefs and practices. Solutions to poverty must be rooted in, and acceptable to, the institutions, communities and societies where they will operate.

Projects with developing country leads or partners are strongly encouraged. Principal investigators (PIs) can be based anywhere in the world, and funding is **not** dependent on the involvement of a UK-based research organisation. Formal partnerships and collaborators in the research process are **not** a prerequisite for support under the scheme. Sole applicants are acceptable and may be based in any country (subject to eligibility requirements explained below).

However, we strongly encourage partnerships and collaborative relationships where these are substantive and meaningful. The scheme allows academics from developing and developed countries to work together in any configuration of their choosing, and partnerships may build on existing relationships or represent the development of a new collaborative relationship. The principal requirement is for meaningful, quality collaborations or partnerships, demonstrated through clear leadership roles across the proposed partnership, and balance and proportionality in partners' roles and responsibilities. These factors will be taken into account by the commissioning panel.

We also expect non-academic stakeholders, including potential research users and intermediary organisations with a mandate to communicate research, to be included and involved in both the early design and on-going conduct of research projects. We recognise that the exploitation of new knowledge does not just occur at the end of a research project, but rather is embedded throughout the research process itself. The commissioning panel will consider the plans for involvement of non-academic stakeholders in the research process.

### **Research capacity**

ESRC and DFID recognise three key aspects of capacity development: building the research capacity of **individuals**; building **organisational** capacity (eg management, financial, communications); and **institutional** capacity-building (eg the incentive structures, the political and regulatory context and the research resources utilised by academics and policymakers). The capacity to undertake and maximise the impact of research depends on a combination of human capacity, the availability of research resources (including data), and the political and incentive context for policy and decision-making.

We are **not** seeking to fund capacity-building *per se* through this scheme. Both sponsors fund capacity-building activities through other mechanisms. However, we expect as a minimum that

all proposals identify capacity-building activities as part of, and not separate to, the stated research approach. Applicants are encouraged to consider the diversity of opportunities and contexts for capacity-building within their proposed research. Capacity-building elements should be set out in relation to the core intellectual agenda of the research proposal and not treated separately; the focus should be on the quality and impact of the research, and how increasing research capacity contributes to this.

Good examples of capacity-building include co-design of research and implementation, field-based research methods training for developing country partner staff, and opportunities for developing country partner staff to author/co-author journal and conference papers and participate in national and international conferences. Support and mentoring for more junior team members may also contribute importantly to building future research capacity. Successful proposals will also demonstrate a strong understanding of the local research context and ensure the research programme does not undermine local research capacity

This scheme does **not** provide support for standalone doctoral students. Standalone masters and ad hoc courses for UK students will also **not** be funded. Applicants who are considering including a doctoral studentship in their research project must refer to the document 'How to include a grant-linked (associated) student' on the call webpage (<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/funding-opportunities/32693/esrc-dfid-joint-fund-for-poverty-alleviation-research-outline-research-grants-call-2014-15.aspx>) for eligibility requirements. Further information is also available in the section on 'Studentships and visiting fellowships' below.

### **Research impact**

We expect researchers funded under the joint scheme to have identified the potential impacts of their research on policy and practice at the proposal stage, and will actively consider how these can be maximised and developed. This emphasis on research impact will be reflected within the assessment process and will be taken into account by the commissioning panel.

We recommend that a minimum of 10 per cent of the overall budget should be dedicated to delivering the activities outlined in the impact summary. Researchers are encouraged to be innovative in the kinds of user engagement, communications and research uptake activities they plan to undertake during and beyond the period of research funding. It is important that applicants appreciate that outreach and engagement activities in themselves do not constitute impact. The development of a clear impact strategy will be important to ensuring research impact is achieved. When completing the impact summary section of the form, applicants may find it helpful to refer to ESRC guidance on developing an impact strategy ([www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/tools-and-resources/impact-toolkit/developing-plan/index.aspx](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/tools-and-resources/impact-toolkit/developing-plan/index.aspx)).

Every project in this scheme **must hold a seminar with key stakeholders** in the country or countries where the majority of the research is taking place at the earliest opportunity to set out the aims of the projects and fully ground it in the local context. This will facilitate the potential co-production of knowledge and will also allow researchers to 'reality-check' their plans. If this kind of activity is not appropriate for your project we would expect you to set out the reasons why in your proposal.

## Open Access policy

RCUK (<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/outputs/>) and DFID ([www.dfid.gov.uk/what-we-do/research-and-evidence/dfid-open-access-policy](http://www.dfid.gov.uk/what-we-do/research-and-evidence/dfid-open-access-policy)) have both published policies on open access to publications and data. Researchers funded under this scheme will be expected to comply with the requirements outlined in these policies. Where the policies differ from one another, we would expect researchers to comply with the more stringent policy.

Funding will be available for all associated legitimate and proportionate costs, but the route to funding will depend on the researchers' institutional affiliation. UK institutions are no longer able to apply for Article Processing Charges (APCs) as part of a research proposal, but instead funds are provided to research organisations at an institutional level as block grants in order to set up publication funds. For those researchers not covered by the RCUK block grant mechanism, ESRC and DFID will work to ensure that you are not disadvantaged. If APCs cannot be covered by block grants (ie if there is no UK researcher on the proposal or involved in the article in question), applicants should include the APC costs and justify these fully in their proposals. Applicants should seek advice from the programme secretariat as to whether publication costs should be requested (see 'Contact details' below).

## Environmental impact of research programmes

Applicants are advised that they should pay attention to the environmental implications of their research. They should take reasonable steps to minimise or offset the carbon footprint of all travel supported by the scheme. Where the project has control, documents, reports and paper outputs should be printed on paper made from sustainably managed forests or recycled paper.

## What can applicants apply for?

Proposals are invited for projects with a full economic cost (fEC) value of between **£100,000 and £500,000**. The fEC value refers to the total cost of the project and is not the actual contribution paid by the ESRC and DFID. The funders contribution for UK applicants is 80 per cent of fEC. Funding arrangements for non-UK institutions are set out below. If applicants or their host organisations have any doubts about the costing basis of their proposals they should contact the scheme secretariat.

For non-UK institutions, the scheme will support in full (100 per cent) all of the justified directly incurred costs of the research. 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, eg equipment, travel and subsistence, consultancies, conferences etc. The following rates for indirect costs should be applied:

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

Further information is provided in the document 'Costings Guidance for Non-UK institutions and partners' – available to download from the call webpage (<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/funding-opportunities/32693/esrc-dfid-joint-fund-for-poverty-alleviation-research-outline-research-grants-call-2014-15.aspx>). Proposals from a non-UK institution or

which include any non-UK partners must refer to this document before completing the Je-S proposal. ESRC will ask for adequate evidence of the costing basis for all direct and indirect costs. 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.

The duration of grants should range from a minimum of one year up to a maximum of three years, though applicants should note the specific rules for duration of projects involving doctoral students.

## **Eligibility to apply**

The principal investigator **must** be based at an authentic 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.

Applicants that are not based in a higher education institution (for example work for an NGO or other third sector organisation) should consider carefully whether their organisation is best placed to host a grant and can meet the stringent expectations of RCUK eligibility. It is essential that institutions with minimal research capacity collaborate with a credible research organisation who would host the project.

Eligibility checks will be applied to all proposals on receipt at ESRC. Peer reviewers will also be asked to comment on the credibility of the host institution. If you are unsure about your organisation's eligibility, please consult the scheme secretariat. Proposals which are not from a **credible research organisation** will be rejected by the ESRC office.

### **Recognised research institutions**

Research Council recognition of institutions eligible to hold grants is a longer and more involved process that will be undertaken once a proposal has been recommended for funding, after the full peer review and commissioning panel assessment. This must be completed before an award can be issued to the grant holder's institution.

All grants will be awarded to the institution of the principal investigator, and this institution will be responsible for the proper disbursement and accountability of all monies received. In order to be eligible to hold ESRC grants, institutions must be recognised as meeting specific criteria relating to mandate, research infrastructure, governance and accountability. Most UK higher education institutions and some other independent UK research organisations are already recognised institutions and hence are eligible to apply for, and hold, Research Council grants.

Most non-UK institutions and some UK organisations will not currently be recognised to hold UK Research Council grants. Lead institutions which are not recognised to hold UK Research Council grants will have to obtain Research Council recognition before any grant can be

confirmed. In order to minimise administrative burdens and costs to both applicants and ESRC staff, formal recognition will only be pursued if the grant is successful.

No grant can commence until full RCUK eligibility has been granted following this process.

Further details of the recognition process are available from the secretariat, but in broad terms it covers:

- research infrastructure, intellectual capacity and critical mass of researchers to undertake high-quality social science research
- institutional governance and accountability structures
- audit and accountability procedures
- sources of core funding and other funding.

This process takes some time. When setting proposed start dates, applicants in host organisations not recognised to hold UK Research Council grants should allow a minimum of two months beyond the earliest call start date for the recognition process to be completed, and should be aware that there is no guarantee that their institution will receive recognition.

### **Principal investigators and co-investigators**

The scheme is open to researchers based in higher education institutions, research organisations or other organisations with a credible research capacity (see above). Researchers may be based in either UK or non-UK organisations with demonstrable research capacity.

Under the scheme rules an individual is permitted to be involved in multiple bids to this call, but **cannot be the principal investigator on more than one bid**. No applicant (PI or co-I) can exceed 37.5 hours per week time commitment across current proposals to ESRC or on-going ESRC grants.

All grants will be made to the institution hosting the principal investigator, and that institution will be subject to standard terms and conditions for ESRC grants with regard to the disbursement of funds to co-investigators at other institutions, and with additional scheme reporting requirements.

**Important note:** In addition to a formal recognition process explained above, all applicants and their organisations must register to use the Research Councils Joint Electronic Submission (Je-S) system before submitting a proposal. Je-S will be used to receive and process all proposals under this call. The section 'How to apply' below contains full information and guidance on this registration process. All applicants intending to submit a proposal are strongly advised to read this section carefully. All applicants and co-applicants must register to use the Je-S system.

### **Other collaborators (including consultants)**

It is possible to name other specific collaborators and consultants in the proposal - for instance public, private or NGO sector experts who could provide invaluable stakeholder input and advice to the project. These must be fully costed on the proposal and their role on the project must be made clear.

Consultants can also be included on a proposal, but clear justification must be provided to explain why a consultancy is the most appropriate way to staff this aspect of the project.

### **Studentships and visiting fellowships**

Doctoral students may be included on proposals provided the research project will be of three-years duration and the student will be based at an ESRC-accredited Doctoral Training Centre (DTC). Applicants who are considering including a doctoral studentship in their proposed research project should refer to the document 'How to include a grant-linked (associated) student', available to download from the call webpage (<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/funding-opportunities/32693/esrc-dfid-joint-fund-for-poverty-alleviation-research-outline-research-grants-call-2014-15.aspx>).

Visiting fellowships, both professorial and lecturer/researcher level, may be included in a research project. In this case the proposed fellow working on the grant should be known and named on the proposal. A rationale for their role and contribution to the project must be included in the proposal.

### **Decision-making process and assessment criteria**

This full call is open only to applicants who have been invited to submit a proposal. Any uninvited proposals will be **rejected**.

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.

Peer reviewers and the commissioning panel will be asked to comment on the following criteria when assessing proposals, and therefore applicants are advised to consider all of these criteria in preparing their proposals. Peer reviewers and commissioning panel members will 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.

### **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?

### How to apply

Proposals **must** be submitted to the Research Councils Joint Electronic Submission (Je-S) system by the call deadline **16.00 (UK time), 28 July 2015**. Electronic acknowledgements will be sent to the principal investigator and submitting organisation.

All proposals must be submitted in English costed in pounds sterling (£) and made on the official Je-S proposal. NB: Proposals can only be accepted by electronic submission through the Je-S system (<https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/jes2webloginsite/login.aspx>).

Application forms are available on the Je-S system. The proposal has two elements: an online form requesting key information; and a series of mandatory attachments, including the Case for Support, Pathways to Impact, Justification of Resources and CVs for all named individuals, which are to be completed offline and uploaded as (preferably PDF) attachments in the Je-S form. Generic guidance on the completion of the structured boxes and sections of the form is available from the Je-S Help screens, which can be found at the top right hand corner of each Je-S screen.

The Case for Support contains the substance of the research proposal, and it is essential that a coherent overview of the proposed project is presented which addresses the intellectual and academic case, potential for impact on poverty reduction in low-income countries, the proposed research methodology, any collaboration or partnership configuration, and an appropriate management plan. This needs to be developed in line with the specification for this call (<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/funding-opportunities/32693/esrc-dfid-joint-fund-for-poverty-alleviation-research-outline-research-grants-call-2014-15.aspx>), and needs to demonstrate that your proposal responds directly to the requirements set out in this document including addressing one or more of the overarching call questions.

Applicants must ensure that they have read and complied with the guidance set out in the call-specific document 'Je-S guidance for applicants' which is available to download on the call webpage (<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/funding-opportunities/32693/esrc-dfid-joint-fund-for-poverty-alleviation-research-outline-research-grants-call-2014-15.aspx>), as well



as the scheme criteria set out in this specification document. Where scheme-specific guidance differs from generic Je-S help, the **scheme-specific guidance should always** be followed. Care and attention must be given to completing the proposal correctly and complying with all technical requirements. Proposals that are **not** completed correctly **may be rejected** by the ESRC office.

In order to use the Je-S system **principal investigators (PIs)** and the **host organisation** need to register on the system. Registration of both the PI's organisation and their own details must be completed before the proposal can be formally submitted to the ESRC.

When setting up a Je-S account your institution will be asked to nominate **an approver** and **a submitter** whose roles are to check and then submit the proposal to ESRC.

The final submission process is the responsibility of the host institution, and the ESRC cannot accept responsibility for any delays which may occur. It is recommended that applicants submit in good time before the call deadline at this stage. We strongly advise applicants to confirm with their relevant administrator that the proposal has been submitted successfully to the ESRC.

## Contact details

The ESRC is responsible for the implementation and administration of joint DFID-ESRC calls. Jointly funded by the two sponsoring agencies, a scheme secretariat has been established to develop and manage the scheme policies and procedures.

All queries or comments about this call should be addressed in the first instance to the DFID-ESRC email address [dfid@esrc.ac.uk](mailto:dfid@esrc.ac.uk). Enquiries may also be addressed to:

- Cally Walker  
Telephone: +44 (0) 1793 413068
- Dan Sweet  
Telephone: +44 (0) 1793 413047

The Je-S Helpdesk may be contacted by email ([ieshelp@rcuk.ac.uk](mailto:ieshelp@rcuk.ac.uk)) or telephone (+44 (0)1793 444164) and is staffed Monday to Friday 9.00 to 17.00 (UK time, excluding public and other holidays).

Further details on the scheme are available at [www.esrc.ac.uk/dfid](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/dfid)