

Speakers:

Dr Jaideep Gupte – UKRI GCRF Challenge Manager for Cities and Sustainable Infrastructure

Lauren Clarke – UKRI International Policy Manager – Gender

Daniel Robinson – ESRC Senior Portfolio Manager – Off-Grid Cities call

Pamela Mason – ESRC International Development Team Head – Sustainable Energy call

[0:00:00]

INT: Good afternoon. Welcome everybody to this UKRI GCRF collective fund webinar. My name is Daniel Robinson, I'm a senior research portfolio manager at the ESRC. First thing, just on the technical note, can you hear me? If you could just use a chat window, please. Great, thank you Tracy, that's brilliant. Yes, wonderful. Great, brilliant, thank you very much, glad to know everything's working. Just to say that we will be recording today's seminar and making it available as an audio-visual record, we will also be producing a transcript as well. Just to check, can people see the slide? You should be able to see the title slide, UKRI GCRF collective fund, could you just confirm, please, that you can see the first slide? Brilliant, thank you very much. Again, we will be making all this available after the webinar, so don't worry if you miss any details or an email address or an internet address, we'll be sharing all this information afterwards.

So, just to say welcome again, glad you could all join us. Briefly, on a technical note, you'll probably tell that you can hear audio from our end and see the slides. Unless something has gone terribly wrong, you shouldn't be able to see me, which is a small mercy. In terms of delegates, as I say, I think you've all picked up, if can feed any questions or comments via the chat window and we will try and deal with those. Again, when we get to the questions and answers section at the end of the webinar, again, please put your questions into the chat or the Q&A section, and we will pick those up. Briefly, in terms of timings, we have scheduled officially an hour and a half for this webinar, we're not intending it to take that long. We appreciate you're all very busy, and we're actually incredibly grateful that you've made the time to join us today. In terms of timings, we are anticipating to present for about 30, 40 minutes, leaving 20 minutes to half an hour at the end for questions, if necessary, but we have a little bit of contingency to overrun if need be.

In terms of questions, we will obviously try and answer your questions as quickly and fully as we possibly can today. It maybe that it is a very specific question, or very particular to your project, it might be more appropriate if you contact us directly via the details that we provide. So, just to say again, if it's a very specific question, if it's something that relates very particularly to your potential proposal, it may be that we actually need to have a conversation offline after this webinar. But do please ask any questions that you have.

I will get moving. Just briefly, on the agenda, introduction, which we have covered. I'm joined today by my colleague Lauren Clarke from UKRI who will be speaking about gender equality and the gender equality statement that applies to both the Off-Grid Cities call and the Sustainable Energy call. We'll then be looking at the content and scope, and joined by

my colleague Dr Jaideep Gupte, who will be speaking about the content and the thinking about where these calls have come from, the issues we're trying to explore, what we're really after. Then I and my other colleague, Dr Pam Mason, will talk about call mechanisms, and we will then get to the questions and answers session at the end.

To say my name is Daniel Robinson, and just to recap what we're looking to do with this webinar, we're really trying to outline and give you as much of an insight from the horse's mouth, so to speak, about what we're looking for in applications, and really trying to encourage you and support you to submit the best and strongest bids that you can. It's entirely possible that at the end of the webinar you've come to the conclusion that these two calls are not for you, it would be sad if that is the case, but we'd rather that was clear now and you're able to make an informed decision so that you didn't invest a significant amount of time putting in an application that is unlikely to be successful. We hope that this webinar will be useful in helping you decide whether your idea fits these two calls, or not, and to help you put in the very best applications that you can, should you decide to submit them.

[00:05:13]

I'm going to pass on to my colleague, Lauren, who's going to speak about the gender equality statement.

LC: Thank you, Daniel. Hello, my name's Lauren Clarke, I work in the UKRI international development team. As of 1 April, UKRI have brought in gender equality statements, this means that any applicant to a GCRF or Newton Fund call will be required to submit a one-page gender equality statement. These are statements which outline how the project has taken meaningful and proportionate consideration to gender throughout the project. May I ask now that if you do have any questions around gender equality and gender equality statements that you ask them now, rather than at the end, and we can address them for you.

What we're really looking for in gender equality statements are that applicants have taken meaningful, yet proportionate, consideration as to how the project will contribute to reducing gender inequality, as required under the International Development Gender Equality Act. A sufficient gender equality statement will provide answers that show how the applicant has considered gender and potential gender issues in a way which corresponds in the size, scale, and impact of their project. Their answers provided should have meaning and be serious, important, and/or worthwhile, and the answers provided should be appropriate to the research and innovation content as well.

What we really want to see is how gender has been considered throughout the design of the project, implementation of the project, and the impact. For example, in your research teams that there's a gender balance, or if there isn't a gender balance it provides you an opportunity to explain why that may be the case. Also, if you're using research participants or your beneficiaries are a local community, what we really want you to do is to tell us who is that community and what is the make-up of that community. Through the gender equality statements we want you to just consider how an elderly male, for example, might benefit differently from a young female. Also to note, as well as gender, we also welcome you to

consider other inequalities or other characteristics, both throughout your gender equality statement and in the proposal as a whole. If there are any other marginalised groups, for example, that you're considering how they may impact differently, or how you may have to meet different needs and requirements of those people if they are involved in the actual research that you're undertaking.

[00:08:12]

I think, as you should see from the gender equality statement requirements, that although this is a standalone statement, I think what makes a good gender equality statement and considering gender equality in the proposal as a whole, is that it's actually entrenched throughout the application altogether.

I've seen that we've just had a question coming in, it's about, I'll read the question out, "Gender equality doesn't seem to be mentioned in the main assessment criteria for the call, against which criteria will this statement be assessed? And how will this assessment be weighted in the overall assessment of the application? Who will assess the quality of the statement?" To answer that, there's a two-stage assessment process. One stage is light touch office check stage, that will be done by people within UKRI and ESRC. That will just be making sure that applicants have provided gender equality statements, and that the statements have addressed the five mandatory criteria. Also, what we'll do at the office is we'll check that the answers that have been provided show that they are meaningful and proportionate. By that, I mean that if you've answered the question, that you've given it a good go. If you think the criteria is non-applicable to the content of your research or your project as a whole, that you've justified why that is the case as well.

Once these are considered sufficient in office, these will then go on to a panel assessment. Under the Fit To Call criteria, we will be expecting the panellists to review the gender equality statement and gender equality in the proposal as a whole. This will get the panel to think about whether the gender equality statement and the content of the answers is appropriate, based on the research content as well, so based on the project aims and what the project is trying to achieve. I'm seeing other questions come in. I hope that's answered the first question that who will assess the quality of the statements? It will be a light touch check by us in house, and then it will be a check on all panellists to look at the gender equality statements alone and also gender equality in the proposal as a whole.

"Are there any guidance notes on the statement, e.g. about the five criteria?" Within the call document you should be able to find the five criteria. There should also be links in the call document to guidance, which is online at the UKRI website. This guidance basically tells you what we would deem a sufficient response. There are also guidance and checklists on how to think about gender in your proposal as a whole, rather than just in the gender equality statement, things that you might want to consider at different stages of your proposals, and then, if funded, throughout the project.

I think just to reiterate what Daniel said at the start, that gender equality statements are required for the full application stage of both calls. Another question has come in, "Is this only for this proposal, or new for all GCRF proposals now?" This is a mandatory

requirement for all upcoming GCRF and Newton Fund proposals. However, if a call has opened and already had an intention to submit stage, or you've already put forward a full application, then you will not be required to produce a gender equality statement. Just to reiterate, this is for calls that were opened and launched after 1 April.

Something else that I wanted to talk about was the gender balance within the team involved in the application. As I mentioned, there is further guidance online, but what we really want to see in the research team is primarily that there is a gender balance or, if not, that there's justification as to why not. For example, in some remits and some areas of STEM and social science, the members of the community might have a disproportionate gender representation. So it's giving you an opportunity to say why. We also want to see that the gender balance reflects equal and meaningful opportunities for the people. For example, if you have a team of a female PI and all female Co-Is, that you're not just bringing male researchers on as PDRAs, so that these opportunities are meaningful for all as well, and that it's not just a token female or a token male on the team, for example.

[00:13:45]

If you have any other questions that would be great, if you could just send them in now. I've got another one, "How can we deal with addressing gender fluidity in communities where there are issues of legality?" This is a really tricky one when we're talking about gender fluidity, and I think that goes hand in hand with sexuality as well. Basically, the gender equality requirement is part of the legislation around ODA funding, but it's also seen as the right thing to do, and when we're thinking about no harm as well. I understand the difficulty of approaching gender fluidity within communities, it's not necessarily going out there and championing trans rights where it might not be appropriate, for example. But it's trying to get you to understand the cultural and social context of where you're working. For example, seeing if women do have meaningful opportunities in that community, and if not, why not? What we don't want you to do is to go into these communities and try and push for non-appropriate things within that context.

Like I said, there is some further guidance online, and I really would advise you to have a look at that and see what we're thinking about, and what we want to see from these gender equality statements and what would be a sufficient gender equality statement. On that webpage there's a link to the UKRI gender equality statement guidance. As I mentioned, there are also some resources online which allow you to think about incorporating gender in your proposal as a whole. Also, I should note that we are hosting a webinar specifically on gender equality and gender equality statements. This will be hosted by UKRI, it will also offer people that may not be applying for these specific calls and opportunity to ask questions and get answer to some of their questions they may have. This is on 10 May, and I think it's 11.00 to 12.00, but I will get my colleagues in ESRC to send link around for the webpage, and you can sign up to that webinar on the webpage as well.

We've just had a couple of other questions come in, "Given the well known issue of lacking female academics, how will teams led by less senior PIs be viewed, i.e. flexible assessment of track records?" What we will be doing and what the panel will be doing is looking at the team as whole, rather than just the single PIs. I guess this leads on to the next question

about team composition, “If the PI is a woman, then what did we say?” It’s not about favouring female PIs or favouring male PIs, for example, it’s thinking about the composition of the team as a whole. It’s thinking about the roles that people have within the research and innovation teams as well, and thinking about whether the research tasks that they’re performing within that project are suitable and appropriate. It’s looking at the project as a whole and the proposal as whole, so we won’t be marking down proposals which have male PIs or female PIs, for example.

[00:17:48]

Were there any other questions at all around gender that you feel you would like to ask now? Or, if you wanted to ask privately or specifically about your project, perhaps you could send them in and we’ll follow up with you offline. We’ve just got one come in, “Are we talking about gender equality in the team which is delivering the project, or about the target population who will benefit from that project impact?” We’re talking about everyone. We’re talking about the team, but we also are talking about the beneficiaries. What we want gender equality statements to do is showcase how you have considered the different needs and requirements of the beneficiaries and your research participants, as well as the team. What we want you to do, by considering gender throughout your application, is to create more robust excellent research which is suited to the people that you’re working with, and that you’re working for, and also that it’s implementable and sustainable as well.

We don’t currently have any examples of good gender equality statements. As I mentioned, this has only just come into force as at 1 April. These two calls are the first calls where we’ve asked for gender equality statements. So, after we’ve received some gender equality statements in from this call and other calls from other councils, what we’ll be doing is looking to create some more robust guidance for applicants on what we think is a good gender equality statement, and what we wouldn’t pass as sufficient.

I’m just waiting to see if there are any other questions. So, you are not required to provide gender equality statements at the expression of interest stage, I think I mentioned before that we will be expecting these at the full stage of the application. I think another comment which has just come in is, “We hope we don’t have to introduce members just to express gender equality.” That’s not what we’re trying to do at all. I think by saying what these questions do, especially when we’re looking at the research team, it offers you an opportunity to say why perhaps there is not a 50-50 percent gender balance as well. It’s just to get you thinking a bit more about your research team, it’s getting you ask questions about gender and think about these. As I mentioned, we won’t be marking down proposals just because they have one male or one female, we’ll be looking at the composition of the research team as well as the content of the research and whether that’s aligned to gender equality and not exacerbating gender inequalities.

I’m just going to answer the last question, if there are any more then I’d be more than happy to follow up after this. “Will less senior female PIs be given the same weighting?” I think that was one that came up before. It’s not necessarily about the seniority of the team or the seniority of the PI, I think it’s about the research team as a whole. I think in usual research grants, for example, the seniority of the PI is taken into consideration, but this is one of

many other things which are taken into consideration when we're talking about the whole team. Like I mentioned, I'll follow up any further questions. I just wanted to pass on to my colleague, Jaideep, who will go into the context and scope of the call. Thank you.

JG: Sure, thanks Lauren, and I hope people can hear me and will mention in the chat window if they can't, or stop being able to hear me at any stage. Just quickly to introduce my role, I'm the Challenge Leader for the Cities and Sustainable Infrastructure Portfolio of the Global Challenges Research Fund. That means that I'm involved in strategically leading, along with the GCRF team, including the challenge manager, Sarah Burgess, who's with me here, in setting strategic directions in this collective programme which has been set forth by the challenge leaders, myself, as well the challenge leaders for the other five portfolios, represent that for the strategic direction of travel.

[00:23:07]

I should also say that the, in particular reference to the Off-Grid Cities and the Sustainable Energy calls, I do expect my role to also involve bringing together the grants that are eventually successful. But we don't quite know what that will look like, obviously, depending on the grants that are successful. We are planning in some way to strategically and to increase impact, but also to leverage key synergies that arise, whether organically or structurally, across projects. This is certainly not a fund and forget type model, we're really looking to engage with the successful grants.

If we can click on. What I have here, just to set a little bit of the context and scope, both for the Off-Grid Cities and the Sustainable and Affordable Energy calls, is to put a string of pictures together, that will be the easiest way to get across some of these ideas. Hopefully the animation will direct you to the picture I'm talking about. To begin with, if you're looking at or talk of cities and sustainable infrastructure in today's context, often the hyperconnected smart city space is one of the images that shows up first, where connectivity and technology are shaping much of the urban form, as you can see in this image, but also, the temporalities of governance, even what it means to be a citizen in these cities. Of course, there are very many visions and images of the city that are relevant today, there's no singular image of the city, and connectivity can mean very many things to different people in different places, at different times. Indeed, one might argue that the entire urban experience is shaped along these intersectional lines where, for example, the materiality of the city, simply what shelter is built of, for instance, can provide some deep and complex insight into how citizenship is actualised, how urban transformations are shaping, for example, our sense of society, of wellbeing.

Also, heritage and historical trajectories matter a great deal, not just for our understanding of temporalities, as I mentioned, but indeed of our understandings of urban futures. How, for instance, contagion was dealt with in early 19th century Europe has a great deal of impact on how contagion and disease is understood in the megacities [inaudible 00:26:15]. I also wanted to point to particular cultural expressions where the urban form, and indeed urban architecture, plays a key role in conglomerating long trajectories of cultural heritage. These play in really interesting ways in terms of urban futures even, and contemporary visions of culture, I should say.

To end, I wanted to make sure that I didn't leave out the complexities of what is not urban in all of this, because there are no simple dividing boundaries between urban and non-urban. I guess that's the simplest way of describing these kinds of very operational landscapes. But these landscapes have quite a complex and a deep relationship with bounded cities, if you will. The point really is to interrogate where these boundaries lie, if there are these boundaries, and indeed tension, what it means to reflect on these various landscapes from the point of view of the urban, but also from the point of view of infrastructure.

[00:27:40]

I guess maybe we can just click through into some of these, rather than... Just to put some of this into words, rather than pictures. The focus of both of these calls is really coming from and understanding that the city, the urban, but also infrastructure is a complex system, or are complex systems, in many ways. For example, cities can be conceptualised as concentrating opportunities and jobs and services, they're afforded concentrations of knowledge, but they're not immune to failure. The built environment is also engendered in many ways, it's unequal, it's segregated, it's racialised, and importantly, urban is not simply a location. This is really something quite important in the ways in which these calls were conceptualised, and I think this points at some of the questions we have coming in, in terms of looking at location and locating research in particular urban or rural spaces or sites.

The point really is to interrogate what location means to your research question. For example, this may mean connecting the rural and urban through issues of land, or the land networks, for instance. It may mean connecting the built and the social and the natural environment, this particularly come to the fore in looking at issues around energy poverty, for instance. This may mean connecting issues around on grid and off grid, or indeed what the grid means. I just wanted to end on this list, it might also connect what's on the surface, but also what's below that surface. Not to forget the city beneath the city in terms of the infrastructures that are buried, but also spaces of conceptualising the urban.

Thematically, there are some key essentials to point out that the Global Challenges Research Fund is trying to leverage across all of its funding. In terms of these two calls, this really articulates itself in terms of connecting with the everyday realities of people. To recognise that these everyday realities are relational, they are universal, but there does need to be a sense of priority to foreground the most marginalised or the least resourced residents in some way. This explicitly makes these calls speak to the overseas development systems priorities, so it's well worth having a read through ODA and DAC documents, if you haven't already, they're listed in relation to this call. There's a variety of ways to do that, this is not simply a geographic event, but it does bring about interesting south-south connectivity, and these lighthouse linkages where key innovation in the global south is seen as leading and pushing the boundaries of what we can conceptualise and the direction of travel.

There is an essential interdisciplinarity at the heart of this. This really revolves around creating meaningful involvement for urban practices within research, and particularly in ways that are legible to local change makers, or local cultures, if you will, or local histories,

if you will. This is coming from the point of view of creating impact, yes, but that impact is best leveraged and best articulated across the entire research cycle where a team build up. This really leads off from the discussion, the really interesting discussion we had at the start on gender and its implications on team [inaudible 00:32:10] and team make-up. It's really situated how the team is built around the essentials for the research questions and what will make that team deliver the most impactful results and innovation.

[00:32:32]

Quickly to end, I did want to point some unique entry points, because we are speaking about these two calls together, but it is worth pointing out where they're unique. Where the Rethinking the Off-Grid Cities specifically places urban and city contexts at the centre, the Sustainable Energy call allows for a wider engagement with urban rural, and even remote locations; the focus really is on energy poverty and the infrastructure that that entails, both hard and soft. Another dichotomy, if you will, is that the Off-Grid Cities call allows for an engagement with one or more types of service flows, or types of grids, and the call document articulated five of these, water, sanitation, energy, transport, and communications, with the understand that this list can be much longer and interrogated in many ways. But we did need to introduce some starting points to provide a framework which you can then tension, which you can then interrogate in many ways.

The energy call is focused on the roots of energy poverty, and this has been articulated across a variety of priority areas, and we've asked that proposals engage with at least two of them. These are around technology interactions in society, natural resources, resilience system, broadly speaking, and governance and political economy. Each of these priority areas is detailed in the call documents, so please do have a look at them. The intention to address at least of two them is a recognition that there is a great deal of overlap and interconnectivity and synergies. These are really seen as strengths of the research questions that will arise.

Very quickly, to put a map and a geographic spread of where our current projects are located. You can view this map at the URL that's mention, and you can certainly do that later, it's a live tool. It's really useful where you can use the tab at the top to sort our projects by challenge area, and this is the listing of all the single cities and communities project. As you can see, there are some concentrations focusing around south Asia, around east Africa, southern Africa, these are reflective of particular research themes and particular research issues that arise in these areas. I should say that this map also points to certain neglected geographies, geographies that are greyed out in this map. It is recognised that we can't address this mismatch in any one call, but it is interesting that these neglected geographies exist and it would be powerful to see how proposers can think of interesting nuanced, but research grounded, ways of connecting geographies that are heavily represented and those that aren't. I'll stop there. Are we taking questions?

LC: Not yet.

JG: No, okay. I'll pass on to my colleague [inaudible 00:36:16] call mechanisms, and we can come back to questions.

DR: Brilliant, Jaideep, thank you very much for that. Now on to the call mechanisms and some of the more specific details about the two funds. I'm going to start with the Rethinking the Off-Grid City, human infrastructure interactions in the context of urban crises and urban change. This is being delivered with a number of partner organisations, all of whom have had input into the design of the call, again reflecting its very strong interdisciplinary focus. As well as ESRC who'll be leading, we'll be working in partnership with the British Academy, NERC, AHRC, and EPSRC. The objective is to support the most marginalised and least resourced urban residents in the face of acute shocks, chronic stresses, and urban change. The call will focus on the human infrastructure interactions and support research that leads to actional policy alternatives, engineering solutions, and social innovations.

[00:37:19]

Grants, quite a wide range, from £500,000 up to £2 million per grant, and for periods of up to three years. Again, I think it's worth just saying something about the breadth of the grant size is available on this call. This again came through very clearly from the academic community that we engaged in the scoping process, and reflected that this is an interdisciplinary call where, although it's being led by ESRC, we expect applications to come from social scientists, but also intended to come from engineering, or across the wide range of academic communities. This wide range of grants reflects that desire to encourage interdisciplinary applications from across the field.

The call opened on 23 April 2019, there's a non-mandatory intention to submit survey which is advertised on the call page. Again, this is very light touch, but it's very helpful for us if you can complete it because it gives us an idea of the sorts of applications that are being considered, and we can give potentially some initial feedback. It also helps us in the process of recruiting the right academics to the peer review process and to our panels. The call closes on 24 July, the panel will meet in November, and we're looking for grants to start in the new year, between 1 February and 1 April. If you have any questions, again all these details and the email address are on the UKRI and the ESRC websites, but there is a specific email address which we monitor closely.

I'll move on next to the Sustainable Energy and International Development Beyond Technology call. Again, this has been delivered and developed in partnership with other organisations, specifically NERC and Innovate UK. The objective is to deliver cutting-edge research that enriches our understanding of the intertwined social, environmental, cultural, political, and economic factors that affect and shape energy production, access, and use in developing countries. Again, a very clear emphasis, and we'll pick up on this in a bit, about GCRF as a whole. The projects are intended to be multisectoral and interdisciplinary, grants are for between £1 million to £1.5 million per grant for periods of up to three years. *[Please note that grants are permitted to be up to £1.5 million and can be below £1 million]* Again, this is launched at the beginning of April, there's another light, very easy intention to submit survey which can be completed via the webpage for the call, the deadline for that is 15 May. The main call itself will close in the second week of July, and the panel will again meet in November 2019, with grants again starting in the new year, 1 February to

1 April. There's a specific mailbox for this call as well, again this is on both the UKRI and ESRC websites, and will be on these slides, which we'll make available after this webinar, but the email address is there at the bottom.

I've gone through this quite quickly, most of the information has been available for a few weeks now on our website. I wanted to just pause here, and we'll just pick out some of the differences between the two calls. Jaideep has already done this in a very rich way, this is more my slightly more mechanical or technical gloss to his comments. So, before I actually start on differences, I should say something about similarities, and I'll say more about these in a moment, around ODA compliance, gender equality, which we've heard about, research excellence, again you'll have heard the term interdisciplinary used a lot. A very clear focus on the most disadvantaged and the most excluded. It's also clear, it's most explicit in the Energy call, but I think this applies to the Off-Grid Cities call as well, which is it's all about technology in context, it's not just about the technology, but what surrounds the technology, the interactions, the politics, the governance, the economics, the environmental factors. Again, both calls are very much about technology in context.

[00:41:54]

Just to tell you a little bit about the differences, I've mentioned two already, the difference in the grant sizes. In terms of focus, the Off-Grid Cities call, what we're saying is more than one country of focus, but the Sustainable Energy call is a bit more specific and actually asks for three countries, ideally within the same geographical region. Now, I had a couple of questions come in in advance of the webinar about what we mean by geographical region. The simplest answer is we tend to use the same definitions as the OECD, and you can look how they use the term regions on their website. More specifically, and I think it probably helps to explain where this came from in the development of this call, was again there's a very clear thing about partnerships in both calls, not just north-south, [inaudible 00:42:40] north-south partnerships, but south-south partnerships as well, and capacity building partnerships. So, with the three countries on the Energy call, there was a very clear piece of advice and guidance from the academic community who helped us develop it, they wanted to see these intercountry linkages. It's very much about saying three countries that can actually meaningfully interact and support and work with one another. So, that might possibly actually be three countries that technically fall in two different regions, but they are close to one another in one respect. So, it's that again, if there's justification for the three countries and why those three countries work particularly well together in a coherent call, then that's a case that can be argued.

In terms of region, both calls are the same, there is no priority region. There was a question that came up in the chat window about are we focusing on the least developed DAC list countries? No, there are no priorities countries, provided they are on the DAC list. But what we are saying with both calls is that we are very clearly trying to focus and reach the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in those countries. That is more important in terms of whether they're on the left or the right-hand column, if you like, of the DAC list.

What we have said with the Off-Grid Cities call, again is that there is officially no priority region, but going to Jaideep's point earlier, we would encourage people to look at the UKRI

website where there's that interactive tableau tool. Have a look at where we have funded a lot already and see if there are any obvious spots that are missing or have not been covered. They're not priority areas, but we're just asking you to be mindful of where GCRF has gone and how possibly your work could address some of those gaps, or build linkages between where there has been a lot of GCRF activity and the areas where there haven't been. [<https://www.ukri.org/research/global-challenges-research-fund/funded-projects/>]

[00:44:42]

Key criteria, now, I won't go through all of these in detail because, again, these are available on the UKRI-GCRF website. It's worth stressing, the criteria apply to both the calls, the Off-Grid Cities call and the Sustainable Energy call. We're looking for research excellence, that's research not constrained by traditional methodologies or disciplinary siloes. All applications, this is part the ODA compliance, so following the OECD guidelines, you'll have to do an ODA compliance statement, again that has a run through in terms of the applications. Again, I've mentioned it already, very strong emphasis on building equitable partnerships and building capacity. I know both calls' specification documents spell this out in more detail, and very clearly, impact focus, a problem solution focus. These are research grants, we're looking to fund research, but it's about research that is actionable, appropriate, and meaningful in its specific context.

Again, I'll save you death by PowerPoint, I won't read through every single one of these bullet points. But again, just to summarise, ODA compliance, very much focused on it is challenge led, you're looking at solutions or part solutions to problems, rather than starting with thematic areas, if you like. Applicants need to demonstrate a deep understanding of context, in country partners need to be appropriate, and again it's about meaningful partnership, we're really looking for evidence in applications that partners on the ground in the these DAC list countries have been engaged and have had a real input in shaping the proposal, and that there's a demand, as well as a social need, for the research outputs. Again, looking at building adaptability and resilience, it's about building capacity in the research community, but also in the countries in question. Again, just a cautionary note on impact, impact again is a phrase we use a lot, it's very important, but we we're also being realistic. This is three years, and actually given the complexity of the work that we're doing, the impact will be limited within the lifetime of the grant. We're looking for evidence of impact and plausible impact, but also realistic impact in the timeframe that is available.

A final note, I imagine a lot of you who have applied to research councils before will be familiar with the Je-S system. Again, there's a lot of information online, if you have any questions, we've put the Je-S helpdesk contact details there. The main thing really is to say get your applications together, submitted in advance, and where people sometimes fall short is putting in applications very late, because that's a limited time that we then, or the Je-S helpdesk can respond to you. So, please make sure when you're working with your research organisations that applications get in in plenty of time in advance of the deadlines, into the submitted pool so that they're submitted in good time. It happens, I even had a conversation today, I think we had an application that came in four minutes after the deadline, kind of thing. So, do please remember that that deadline is a hard deadline, so

do please get your applications together and submitted in time, and ask any questions that you have in good time.

Pathways to impact, again I've talked about impacts already, there's a lot of information about impact and pathways to impact on our website. Just to say, again, it's around having clear timelines and milestones, identifying significant measurable impacts, and also demonstrating an understanding of the context and the communities into which this research is speaking. Again, the impact bit is around is this actionable, is it meaningful, does this mean something, and is this useable by the policymakers, the organisations, the NGOs, the local groups working on the ground? Is it something that actually meets their needs and demands, and is something that they can run with? Again, this is in the call documentation for both calls, there's something beyond the grant, it's not just the grant ends, the research ends, that's it. We're looking at capacity, building a legacy beyond.

[00:49:53]

Notes on costs. Again, costed guidance is quite detailed. All this information is provided online on both calls, the guidance around documents, for eligibility, for both UKRI's and for international Co-Is. Again, this call, the key criteria, ESRC led, it has to be UK PIs, but we are very strongly encouraging overseas and DAC list Co-Is. We always say non-DAC list countries can be partners and organisations based in non-DAC list countries can be involved, but we do expect them to be making a significant contribution to the research partnership.

Lastly, and I'm very conscious that we've got lots and lots of questions flying in, I think this is pretty much almost my penultimate slide, and then we'll try and answer as many of your questions as we can. So, this is really just pulling together some of the key points I've mentioned over the last few slides. I apologise, it's been a little bit whistle-stop. But again, there's a clear need to demonstrate ODA compliance, research excellence, appropriate leadership, interdisciplinarity, the development of equitable partnerships, multi-partner engagement and collaboration, and value for money and sustainability. Again, these criteria are all spelled out in more detail in the course specification documents.

Brilliant, I'm just going to take a sip of water for a moment, if that's okay? We've had lots and lots of questions come in, which we're dividing them up around the people around the table. So, if you can bear with us for 30 seconds we will... My colleague, Pam, is going start.

PM: Hello everybody, I'm Pam Mason, I'm head of international development at ESRC. I've just been collecting some of your questions and I will try and answer them, probably in clusters because we've got a fair few in thematic areas. There are a few questions about the intention to submit. For both calls the intention to submit is not mandatory, it is something that we ask you to do because it's helpful to us in terms of managing the peer review process. But if you don't submit an intention to submit, you can still submit your full application. In terms of what we do with those intentions to submit, there isn't going to be any filtering or assessment of those, it's purely an administrative tool for us. What we will do is if there are any intentions to submit that we think don't meet the eligibility criteria of the

call, we will highlight that to you. But we acknowledge that your intention to submit has been received, so feedback will be purely, “Yes, received,” or feeding back some more information about eligibility.

Got a few questions about geographies. One question was, “Are there any encouragements to set up projects focusing on countries where fewer projects have been funded under GCRF to date? What is meant by overlooked areas?” This is what Jaideep was talking about before when he showed the map. Those countries that haven’t seen as much GCRF funding so far are those that we consider to be overlooked areas, so overlooked geographies, geographies and countries that haven’t much funding to date. In terms of your projects focusing on those countries where there hasn’t been as much funding, it won’t necessarily be taken as an advantage if you work in a country that hasn’t been represented. It’s about the quality of the research primarily. We are simply encouraging you to consider how your research can stretch beyond the usual suspect countries, if you like, into regions that have been less well represented. So, it won’t be a peer review advantage necessarily to go to an under represented country, but it will be something that we’re just asking you to consider.

[00:54:52]

There was a question about, “Are there any off-limits subregions?” No, is the simple answer to that. Any country that is on the OECD DAC list is valid, and we don’t consider any particular regions to have a higher or lower priority. Going back to this phrase of most disadvantaged, just to reiterate, we don’t want to see necessarily applications that are focused on the least developed countries, the left-hand side of the DAC list, countries on the right-hand side of the DAC list are equally valid. But we’re looking for research that impacts and has the potential to impact on the most disadvantaged communities within those countries. It might be a relatively wealthy upper middle income country, for example, but the research focused in that country needs to benefit the most disadvantaged, and not the more well off portions of those countries.

I’m just going to take a breath and rationalise my questions for a second. Anybody else want to dive in with any while I’m breathing?

DR: Just very quickly, “How many grants will be funded under the Off-Grid call?” That will depend slightly on what amounts are applied for, given the range. But the minimum we’ll be funding, providing we get enough good applications, and I’m sure we will, will be six. In theory, the maximum would be 24, I’ll the mathematicians to work out the total grant size from that. There was somebody spotted something, an error, and you’re absolutely correct. The call spec on the website, it’s 30 May for the intention to submit, not 29th, that’s obvious, I will correct the slide according. And, “Would Off-Grid include foods and the types of service flows in included?” That’s a really good question, when were doing the scoping phase of this, we wrote down how many kinds of grids potentially are there. I think very quickly we came up with a lot. We did narrow it down to, I think, five in the call spec, and food wasn’t one of them, because it was water, sanitation, energy, transport, and communications. Although, I could see how you could make the point that food could crop up in those. Food isn’t one of the five we specifically focused on, just because we had to

draw the line somewhere. But if food was something you were looking at in addition to one of those five, or can link into one of those five grids that we mention, then that would be fine.

PM: I have a couple more regarding the multi-country and geographical aspect. We had a question, “Is it preferable in Off-Grid to have countries in the same region?” It’s neither preferable nor the opposite, it’s about which countries are most appropriate for you to be working in, where do you have partnerships, where are the synergies likely to be between two countries that you’re going to work in, and whether they’re in the same region or different regions, for a close comparison or a more distant comparison, is entirely up to you in terms of the research design of your project. And it’s very much about where the impact of your research is going to happen. It’s the impact, if your primary country, for example, is India, but you also want to work with other south Asian countries, obviously that’s the same region and the impact might be easier to implement in a particular region. Whereas different continents might be more challenging, or there might be synergies. So, it’s all up to you to determine what’s the most appropriate to have the most impact.

[00:59:06]

Again, “Can you speak more about Off-Grid multi-country in terms of primary versus secondary focus, or equal focus of impact in each country?” Again, it’s up to you to determine, we’re not necessarily saying that you have to have two countries completely equally weighted in terms of the amount of work you’re doing in that country and the impact that the research is going to have. It’s much more subjective than that in terms of what your research is designed to do. We don’t want to put any kind of restrictions on that.

We had a bit of a question about energy in terms of, “Does energy have to concentrate on urban residents?” Absolutely not, it can look at rural, urban, rural-urban, and everything in between. There’s no restriction in terms of urban or otherwise for the Energy call. Again, there were a couple of things about the practicalities, got a question, “Do proposals have to include all disciplines?” No, proposals should include those disciplines that are relevant to your research. We expect teams to be multi and interdisciplinary, but that doesn’t mean that you have to have every single discipline represented, it’s about what is appropriate to delivering your project.

“Would you be using Research Fish?” Yes, we will be using Research Fish to gather your outputs in the same way as we do for everything else. “What do you mean by beyond technology,” this is a good one, “Is it, for example, developing technology and then looking at the environmental and economical aspect of it?” Yes and no. It’s about the environmental, economic, societal, etc, impacts of technology, but I wouldn’t expect it to be thought of in such a linear way as the technology is developed and then we look at the impact that it has. It’s about identifying the needs and requirements of a technology, prior to it being developed and as it is developed, that makes it more implementable and more impactable in society. It’s a much more holistic, cyclic way of thinking about things, rather than very linear way.

DR: The way I put it, the example that springs most to mind, I think Devex covered this recently, about the World Bank programme to roll out electricity in Kibera, Nairobi. The situation where they're just rolling out these grids, and then what's happening in some cases is at night cartels are coming along and either hijacking or removing them. Technology is clearly important in that situation; you can't have electricity without some kind of technology at the core of it. But the technology itself is never just the answer, it's always in the context of what's going on in those communities, of governance, of local economies. It's really trying to say, particularly with the Energy call, we're not looking at another new solar microgrid, because there's a lot of interest in work that's been done in that space. What we're interested in is what is it that will allow that technology that has been developed to be used most effectively and most appropriately.

[01:02:44]

PM: I've got another one regarding industry involvement, obviously Innovate UK have been involved in developing the Energy call, there's been a couple of questions about is industry involvement required and/or expected, or hoped for, in terms of Energy call applications? There's certainly no requirement or expectation that industry should be involved. But again, it's the same answer really as involving the right disciplines, it's if there is an obvious business partner, either UK based or internationally, that would make a positive contribution to your project, or an avenue for a pathway to impact, for example, then they should be involved in an appropriate way. It's all about having the right team and the right partners in order to get the most impact and the most outputs from your project.

DR: I'm just going to, a few questions here, one question was, "How much can we can change between expression of interest and full proposal?" I think the answer to that, in principle, a fair amount in the sense that intention to submit is not mandatory, we're not assessing it or sifting on that basis. Yeah, potentially it can change. It's more really for us getting an idea of the levels of interest, but also in relation to some more of the questions that have been asked here, when we start pulling together the panels and the peer review groups, that we're getting the right people on board as quickly as possible. Really the intention to submit is to give us a bit of advanced intelligence as to what's likely to be coming in when the full proposals are submitted. "Will you be disadvantaged if you don't submit an intention to submit?" No, you won't be.

In terms of, this seems a question I've already answered, but I'm going to mention it again, "Would proposals for the Off-Grid call be considered which focus mainly on infrastructure grids not in the initial five listed?" I think we're definitely preferring the initial five, that's what's in the call documentation. But again, we accept there are lots of lots of grids, we had to draw the line somewhere. That list isn't exclusive, you could be looking at other grids, but I think really to be true to this call it's making sure that those five are prioritised.

Energy, "What academic disciplines would be represented on the panel? Is more weight given to one discipline?" Again, what we try to do is reflect the applications that come in. Again, this is when intentions to submit are so useful, is that they give us a bit of advance intelligence ahead of the call deadline as to what's coming in. We'll try and recruit our peer reviewers and our panels based on the types of applications that we get, so that we have

the right expertise on board. Again, non-academic, we'll certainly be looking to have users on the panels. Pam, what sorts of non-academic reps might we have?

PM: We might have people from NGOs, we might have industry panel members, we might have other kinds of stakeholders and users of research in terms of policy making. It really depends on the kinds of projects that we're seeing coming in, what kind of expertise we look for on the panel.

[01:07:07]

I've got a few questions about NGOs and industry partner contributions, as well as how much money can go towards funding activity in the DAC list countries. I would just, rather than answer all these now, I'd direct you to the FAQs documents that are on the call websites, I believe all of these questions are answered. If you can't find the answer to your specific question there, please get in touch with us separately. But all the information you require should be there.

DR: I'm very mindful of time now, because we have got another 15 minutes or so available, but I'm just trying to wrap up as many of these questions as we can.

JG: Why don't I jump in to give you guys a bit of breathing room? I'll take one that's been asked around whether health systems perspectives are likely to be one of the systems that is used to understand the off grid. To broaden that question out to other systems perspectives, it would be entirely plausible in as much as they relate the physical grids that are specified in the call as starting points. Indeed, the idea, the objective is to really tension the physical conceptualisation of those grids in ways that might affect other systems, and health systems has some very significant ways that it connects with a variety of the materiality of the city, if you will. So, the idea is to really tension and rethink, as the call title mentions, rethink what it means to be off grid in the 21st century.

DR: Okay, so just quickly, "Can the PI be from a non-social science background?" I jumped in there because that's easy, that's yes. Although this call is being administered by ESRC, it's on behalf of UKRI, yeah, you do not have to be from a social science background to be a PI on either of these calls. Energy, "Would a sub-£1 million application be considered?" Yeah, I'm getting nods. Again, as long as it's justified. Certainly the indicative grant range is £1 million to £1.5 million, so that's kind of what you'll be compared against. Yeah, I think possibly, but I think really £1 million would be better, because that's the range that we're suggesting. It's a broader range on the Off-Grid call.

JG: If I can just jump in, Daniel? On the Energy call, the suggested range reflects the types of requirements the call document puts out in terms of having at least two of the listed priority areas, in terms of having a cross-regional perspective. It was felt that £1 million to £1.5 million range would be more reflective of those requirements.

DR: Thank you. Yeah, there's question here that just ties in with what Jaideep was asking about, which is, "If we're preparing a proposal that is not technology focused, should we aim at the lower end of the financial bracket?" I wouldn't say necessarily, no, I think

particularly with the Off-Grid call one of the reasons we put the upper end higher was more reflecting that we might, for example, have [inaudible 01:11:08] coming from natural sciences or engineering. If there were high, but justified, levels of equipment required for research purposes, consumables, we didn't want to exclude them. It was quite a balancing act getting that right grant amount so that it spoke to the full range of academic communities. What we'd say generally is as long as the budget is justified and appropriate, that's the most important thing.

[01:11:40]

"Will there be opportunity to connect with potential collaboration partners from those intending to collaborate and submit?" Yeah, possibly. There's a new platform that will be launched, I think the current date is 13 May, it's going to be launched by UKRI and it will be announced on the GCRF site. It's powered by a platform called Crowdicity, that's Crowd-i-city, [<https://ukri-gcrf.crowdicity.com/>] and it's essentially an ideas generation and collaboration platform. The hope is that that will be a way in which people who are interested in the key themes and the funding calls being explored under GCRF will be able to connect with one another. So keep an eye out on the UKRI website over the next couple weeks, and hopefully that will be one way. That's probably the best way, I think.

PM: I'm just going to pick up a couple of questions about funding going to ODA countries, the DAC list countries in terms of how much funding can go to the partners, I think we have probably answered that one. Basically, the answer is as much as the funding as needs to go outside the UK can go outside the UK. There's no limit on how much funding can go to an ODA country partner, and that funding will be paid at 100% SUC. All of that, again, is in the FAQs documents for both calls. So, do please have a look at that.

Just to say, apologies if we don't get to your question, we've got them flooding in and we are running out of time, so let's try and answer a few more. "Are calls only open to universities?" Calls are open to any eligible UK research organisation. That includes UK universities, but also research institutes and independent research organisations that have applied for and have been granted eligibility to apply for UKRI funds. Businesses and government departments are not eligible. In terms of intellectual property rules for GCRF funded work, it is exactly the same as other UKRI funded research in terms of that UKRI doesn't claim any ownership of intellectual property, and it's down to the institutions to determine what happens to intellectual property within a project.

I've got another one about, "Would existing partnerships be as valid as capacity building new partnerships?" I think this is asking if we've got an existing partnership, but you're asking us to capacity build, does that still count? I think there are different levels of capacity building, if you have existing partnerships obviously that should be seen as a strength because your relationships are already well developed. It would be beneficial, I think, to think, "Well, we've got this existing partnership, but how can we stretch that partnership into areas, countries, organisations, that we might not have engaged with before?" So, existing partnerships certainly are valid, but it would be, I think, beneficial to

think about where new partnerships can add value and have more impact from your research.

JG: There's one question asking whether non-ODA based data can be used in the analysis. I can't imagine why not, as long as the rationale is based around a set of questions, and indeed key beneficiaries that are located in DAC countries. Of course, as I mentioned in some of my earlier comments, the universality of favoured sustainable development goal framework can really be, for example, the channels through which non-ODA evidence is brought in to the analysis. But the driving framework really needs to reflect on development challenges located in DAC countries.

[01:17:05]

PM: I've just got another one here, "If the PI has been granted a GCRF project in recent years, would that make it more difficult for that PI to succeed this time?" No. Previous success in GCRF has no bearing on your ability to receive another project, the project will be assessed on its individual merits. The only thing that we do ask is that you make sure that an individual has the capacity to take on all of the projects that you could be successful in receiving. So, it's more about ensuring that you have the time to do more than one project, rather than it being a disadvantage that you've already received funds.

DR: Just a question about, "Will you be looking to support original data collection and analysis, or will focus be more on evaluating existing literatures?" I think it potentially can be both. What we come back to is impact and the actionability of the research, and making sure the research is appropriate and useful for the audiences to whom it's being addressed. Yeah, it could be secondary or primary in that respect.

PM: There's one, I think, maybe final question, "Will there be a peer review response stage during the call?" Yes, once the proposals have been out to peer review, principal investigators will be asked to do a PR response, in the same as we do with funded response mode calls. Then that response, as well as the reviews, will go to the panel. I think we're going to have to call it there. I'm aware that there are a number of other questions that we haven't been able to get to, but we will have a look at these afterwards, and if there's any things that we feel need responding to, we can put that in the transcript, or email directly to the question asker. Alternatively, if you haven't received an answer to your question, you can email us directly to the call mailboxes and we will respond to you directly in that way.

DR: Yes. Well, thank you very much for joining us, and for giving up your time. Really exciting to see how many people, I think we had over 100 people at one point during the call, which is certainly miraculous that the system didn't fall over sideways, 157 apparently, which is tremendous. So, thank you very much. Yes, as soon as we have the transcript and the recording of this webinar, we'll make those available via the webpages for the two calls. We'll try and answer as many questions as possible that we haven't managed to get through. But yeah, do use the specific mailboxes to get in contact with us. And, thank you very much for your time. I hope this has been helpful, and we look forward to receiving your applications.

[End of Transcript]