

Large Grants competition 2016/17

Call specification

Summary

The ESRC Large Grants competition invites proposals from eligible individuals and research teams to take forward an ambitious research agenda with the potential to effect significant economic or societal impact. Similar to our standard Research Grants, we welcome proposals for standard research projects, large-scale surveys, infrastructure projects, and for methodological developments in any area of the social sciences. We actively encourage inter-disciplinarity both within and beyond the social sciences.

Proposals should be between £1 million and £2.5 million (100 per cent full Economic Cost - fEC)) for a period of between three to five years. It is currently anticipated that the total budget will be approximately £6 million. We expect to make three or four awards.

This year's competition will run as a single-stage application process. Proposals should be submitted via the Research Council Joint Electronic Submission (Je-S) System **no later than 16.00 on 13 October 2016**. Proposals will be assessed through peer review and a panel meeting to be held in February 2017. It is expected that final funding decisions will be available from April 2017. Grants will commence on 1 October 2017 unless, exceptionally, applicants can make the case for an earlier start.

Scope

In spring 2016 we announced changes to our standard grants scheme, reducing the upper threshold from £2 million to £1 million. We announced that we still intended to fund large grants through an annual competition. This is the first such competition.

Our expectations are that Large Grants:

- undertake a programme of ambitious research
- show strong commitment for the career development of researchers (particularly at early-career stage)
- make significant contributions to scientific, economic or social impact
- involve potential users of research
- take advantage of international collaborative and/or comparative opportunities

Please note that studentships are **not** eligible under this call.

This call provides opportunities for promoting innovation and interdisciplinarity, both within and beyond the social sciences, whilst excellent research within a particular social science discipline is also welcome.

Funding

The call is for proposals ranging between £1 million and £2.5 million (100 per cent full Economic Cost - fEC) for a period of between three to five years. Detailed information on eligible costs can be found in the ESRC's Research Funding Guide (<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/research-funding-guide/>). Proposals will need to show 100 per cent of full Economic Cost of the proposed research. The ESRC will meet 80 per cent of the full economic costs on proposals submitted.

All UK Higher Education Institutions are eligible to receive funds for research, postgraduate training and associated activities. The higher education funding councils for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland determine whether an organisation meets the criteria to be a Higher Education Institution. Research Institutes for which the Research Councils have established a long-term involvement as major funders are also eligible to receive research funding (see www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/noparentrcs/). Independent Research Organisations (IROs) approved by ESRC are eligible to apply for ESRC funding. The current list of eligible IROs is available at www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/eligibilityforrcs/.

Investigators

Research proposals may be submitted by more than one applicant. However, there must be a principal investigator (PI) who takes the lead responsibility for the conduct of the research and observance of the terms and conditions. PIs must be based at an organisation eligible for ESRC funding for the duration of the award (see www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/eligibilityforrcs/). It is likely that successful applications will be led by experienced researchers with a well-established track record of publication and successful research project delivery. Investigator time must be costed into the proposal and justified in the 'Justification of Resources' attachment. Furthermore, all co-investigators must make a significant contribution to conduct of the research.

International co-investigators

ESRC attaches major importance to the position of UK social science in the international and global arena. We positively encourage active collaborations between UK researchers and those in other countries, where this will help to ensure that UK research is at the international leading edge. Co-investigators based in overseas research organisations can therefore be included in research grant proposals. Further information on the inclusion of international co-investigators is available at <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/inclusion-of-international-co-investigators-on-proposals/>.

Business, third sector or government body co-investigators

Business, third sector or government body co-investigators based in the UK can also be included on research grant proposals. Further information on the inclusion of co-

investigators is available at <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/inclusion-of-uk-business-third-sector-or-government-body-co-investigators-on-proposals/>.

Knowledge exchange and generating impact

While some research topics are more theoretical than others, awards made under this competition will provide for excellent research with economic and/or societal impact.

Applicants are expected to carefully consider how best to build links and contacts with potential beneficiaries and users of the research at the earliest possible stages of research design and development, and to work towards co-production of knowledge with research users where appropriate. In addition to knowledge exchange and impact strategies that focus on particular user groups and/or specific named beneficiary organisations, public engagement activities, which bring together researchers and the wider public, are also strongly encouraged.

Consideration of, and advance planning for, knowledge exchange (KE) and strategies to maximise economic or societal impact should be central elements of proposals submitted to the Large Grants competition 2016/17. In the 'Pathways to Impact' attachment, applicants should present initial plans for developing an impact strategy, promoting knowledge exchange, public engagement and effective communication with key stakeholders. We encourage the submission of creative and innovative Pathways to Impact.

A clearly thought-through and acceptable Pathway to Impact statement should be:

- project-specific and not generalised
- flexible and focused on potential outcomes.

Researchers are encouraged to:

- identify and actively engage relevant users of research and stakeholders at appropriate stages
- articulate a clear understanding of the context and needs of users, and consider ways for the proposed research to meet these needs or increase understanding of them
- outline the planning and management of associated activities including timing, personnel, skills, budget, deliverables and feasibility
- include evidence of any existing engagement with relevant users.

The resources required to undertake effective knowledge exchange will need to be accurately reflected and fully costed into the proposal.

The Impact Toolkit (www.esrc.ac.uk/impact-toolkit) includes information on developing impact strategies, promoting knowledge exchange and public engagement, and communicating effectively with key stakeholders.

Career development and capacity building

We will be looking for evidence of a strong commitment to supporting the development of researchers (particularly at the early-career stage) and of plans for capacity building.

Research ethics

Applicants must ensure that the proposed research will be carried out to a high ethical standard. It must clearly state how any potential ethical and health and safety issues have been considered and will be addressed. All necessary ethical approval should be in place before the project commences so that all risks are minimised. All proposals must comply with the ESRC Framework for Research Ethics: <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/research-ethics/>.

How to make an application

Applications must be made through the Research Councils' Joint Electronic Submission System (Je-S) (see <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/je-s-electronic-applications/> for detail).

The 'Je-S guidance notes for applicants' document (available to download from www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/funding-opportunities/large-grants-competition-2016-17) provides details on the information that applicants will be required to submit as part of their proposal. All applicants should consult the ESRC Research Funding Guide (<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/research-funding-guide/>), which sets out the rules and regulations governing funding.

Furthermore, please see the Je-S handbook for more information (via the Help option on the Je-S website (<https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/Handbook/Index.htm>)).

Proposal requirements and expectations

Proposals will be assessed against the following criteria:

Quality of proposal

- Research merit and contribution to knowledge
- Demonstrable capacity to undertake high-quality research, drawing on combinations of disciplinary and cross-disciplinary expertise and approaches
- Clear work plan with realistic and testable milestones, clear deliverables, convincing strategic management and a high probability of success.

Details and track record of applicants

- An outstanding track record in the relevant research field
- Demonstrate PI capacity to provide research leadership and to draw together an appropriate mix of expertise
- Potential to build upon, and add value to, the existing evidence base and stimulate research innovation and methodological development
- Proven project planning and management skills

Pathways to Impact

- Strong evidence of engagement with users at the project planning and inception stages through to completion of the project

- Evidence of considered and realistic engagement and dissemination plans to maximise academic, societal or economic impact, and the potential benefits to users.

Value for money

Reasonable and fully justified costs for the specified project.

Assessment process

An independent assessment process will be led by the ESRC. Proposals will be assessed by at least four expert academic peer reviewers. Applicants should nominate two academic peer reviewers. Up to two potential research users in business, government or the voluntary sector may also be nominated by applicants. Applicants should ensure that nominated reviewers have no conflicts of interest, and seek the reviewers' permission before nominating them.

Applicants will be given the opportunity to respond to anonymised reviewer comments before proposals are considered by the commissioning panel. The panel will meet in **February 2017**. Funding decisions will likely be available from April 2017. Awards will start from October 2017 unless, exceptionally, applicants can make the case for an earlier start.

Commissioning timetable

- Call announced – 27 May 2016
- Closing date for proposals – **13 October 2016**
- Commissioning panel meeting – March 2017
- Decisions to applicants – May 2017
- Grants commence – October 2017

Contacts

If you have any questions or would like further information about the scheme please email largegrants@esrc.ac.uk or contact:

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