

Large Grants Competition 2018

Outline 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 generate significant economic or societal impact. Similar to our standard research grants, we welcome proposals for standard research projects, large-scale surveys, infrastructure projects and methodological developments in any area of the social sciences. We actively encourage interdisciplinarity both within and beyond the social sciences.

Proposals should be between £1 million and £2.5 million (100% full economic cost (fEC)) for a period of between three to five years. We expect to fund up to four awards. ESRC will fund 80% of fEC.

This year's competition will run as a two-stage application process. Outline proposals should be submitted via the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Joint Electronic Submission (Je-S) System **no later than 16:00 on 14 June 2018**. Shortlisting decisions will be made in September 2018, when shortlisted applicants will be invited to submit full proposals (closing date November 2018). Proposals will be peer reviewed and assessed at a panel meeting in April 2019, with funding decisions available in May 2019.

Grants will commence from 1 October 2019.

Scope

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; however, excellent research within a particular social science discipline is also welcome.

Call details

Funding

The call is for proposals ranging between £1 million and £2.5 million (100% 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 (<https://esrc.ukri.org/funding/guidance-for-applicants/research-funding-guide/>). Proposals will need to show 100% of full economic cost of the proposed research. The ESRC will meet 80% of the full economic costs on proposals submitted; the balance must be guaranteed by the research organisation.

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 UKRI established a long-term involvement as major funders are also eligible to receive research funding (see <https://ukri.org/funding/how-to-apply/eligibility/>).

Independent research organisations (IROs) approved by ESRC are eligible to apply for ESRC funding. The current list of eligible IROs is available at <https://ukri.org/funding/how-to-apply/eligibility/>

Demand management

There is a quota system for this Large Grants competition. This is the same quota system that has been used for the recent ESRC Centres competition. Please refer to your Research Office for details on how many applications your Research Organisation can submit under this call. Your Research Office will have received this information (as part of the ESRC Centres outline call) by email in October 2017.

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. An applicant is permitted to act as PI on only one proposal under this call. PIs must be based at an organisation eligible for ESRC funding for the duration of the award (see <https://ukri.org/funding/how-to-apply/eligibility/>). 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 (Co-Is) 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 <https://esrc.ukri.org/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 <https://esrc.ukri.org/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, we also strongly encourage public engagement activities, which bring together researchers and the wider public.

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 2018. 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 costed into the proposal. It is recommended that a minimum of 10% of the overall budget should be dedicated to delivering the activities outlined in the impact summary. 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 available at <https://esrc.ukri.org/research/evaluation-and-impact/developing-an-impact-strategy/>

The impact toolkit (<https://esrc.ukri.org/research/impact-toolkit/>) includes information on developing impact strategies, promoting knowledge exchange and public engagement, and communicating effectively with key stakeholders. We encourage successful grant holders to

attend the one day media training course run by ESRC. Further details can be found at <https://esrc.ukri.org/skills-and-careers/media-training/>

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.

There are a range of career development opportunities, capacity-building activities and methods advancement that could be incorporated in the proposal. We expect these kinds of approaches to be summarised in the outline and addressed in detail in the full proposal.

Proposals should specifically enable early career researchers across the social science disciplines, particularly at the postdoctoral level, to move towards becoming independent researchers in the chosen field of the proposal. This may include leading workstreams with supervision or the development of a training and mentoring programme as a workstream within a grant or designed in a way that can be embedded across the initiative. We welcome innovative approaches to early career researcher development and will consider how these can be accommodated in detail at the full proposal stage.

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 all risks are minimised. All proposals must comply with the ESRC Framework for Research Ethics: <https://esrc.ukri.org/funding/guidance-for-applicants/research-ethics/>

How to apply

Outline applications must be made through the UKRI's Joint Electronic Submission System (Je-S) (see <https://esrc.ukri.org/funding/guidance-for-applicants/je-s-electronic-applications/applications/> for detail).

The 'Je-S guidance notes for applicants' document (available from <https://esrc.ukri.org/funding/funding-opportunities/large-grants-competition-2018>) provides details on the information that applicants will be required to submit as part of their outline proposal. All applicants should consult the ESRC research funding guide (<https://esrc.ukri.org/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

Outline 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

The assessment of proposals will be a two stage process. Outline proposals will be assessed and shortlisted in **September 2018** by an assessment panel. Shortlisted applicants will subsequently be invited to submit applications to the full proposal stage in late September 2018, with a closing date in **November 2018**. Further Je-S guidance will be issued at this time.

Full proposals will be referred to a minimum of four external peer reviewers, including reviewers from outside the UK. Applicants will be asked to nominate two academic peer reviewers, with one from outside the UK. Normally, one of these nominees will be approached as part of the peer review group. Applicants should seek the nominated reviewers' permission and commitment before nominating them. Applicants will also be asked to nominate two users of the research from outside the research community. We may also approach independent user reviewers.

Shortlisted applicants to the full stage of the call will be given the opportunity to respond to anonymised reviewer comments before proposals are considered by the commissioning panel. The full stage commissioning panel will meet in **April 2019**. Funding decisions are expected to be available in May 2019. Grants will commence in October 2019 unless, exceptionally, applicants can make the case for an earlier start.

Commissioning timetable

- Call announced – 16 April 2018
- Closing date for proposals – **14 June 2018**
- Shortlisting meeting for outline proposals – September 2018
- Full call (invitation only) open – September 2018
- Full call close – November 2018
- Commissioning panel meeting – April 2019
- Decisions to applicants – May 2019
- Grants commence – October 2019

Contacts

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