



Secondary Data Analysis Initiative: What Works Centre for Wellbeing highlight notice

Version: 14 February 2019

Summary

With support from the [What Works Centre for Wellbeing \(WWCW\)](#) the ESRC is seeking to fund a small number of projects via a highlight notice to ESRC's [Secondary Data Analysis Initiative \(SDAI\) open call](#), with a focus on 'Understanding Wellbeing' using secondary data.

With regards to this highlight we are interested in the analysis of secondary data that could lead to further insights surrounding the wellbeing of individuals, communities and the general public in the UK, including the factors that may contribute to wellbeing either positively or negatively. Projects should use existing data resources to explore the concept of wellbeing in a range of contexts, including but not limited to:

- work (including flexible, informal and self-employed)
- community relationships (including trust, empowerment, belonging, social connections, loneliness and isolation, living conditions)
- finance (including debt, financial uncertainty/precarity)
- health (including improving mental health and wellbeing through changes to nutrition, physical activity, arts/cultural intervention, etc.)
- wellbeing inequalities (for individuals or groups)

This highlight notice relates to proposals being submitted to the ESRC SDAI open call only and no other ESRC scheme.

Applicants **must** contact the Centre before submitting an application (contact details can be found in the 'contact' section of this document on page four) under this highlight notice to discuss the relevance of their proposal to the Centre and this call and the nature of the Centre's involvement in their application including in its co-development prior to submission. The Centre will ascertain whether the proposed project fits within the premise of the highlight notice. They will determine the degree to which it adheres to the broader aims and objectives of the Centre, as well as the extent to which the proposed level of involvement from the Centre's Hub is appropriate. Further details regarding how the Centre will review proposals can be found in Annex 1 of this document.

The Centre will communicate to applicants where they wish to support projects and consequently applications are expected to include a letter of support from the WWCW. Proposals should include named members of the Centre as co-investigators or partners on the project. In either case, the role that the WWCW will play in each proposal should be

clearly described and justified, as well as how the findings of the project will inform the work of the Centre.

The Centre will provide the applicant with a letter of support that should be submitted as an 'other attachment' by the applicant when submitting their proposal through the UKRI Je-S system.

Background

The WWCW is part of the [What Works Network](#), launched in 2013 with the aim of enhancing the use and generation of high quality evaluation evidence in policymaking. The What Works initiative aims to improve the way government and other organisations create, share and use high quality evidence for decision-making. It supports more effective and efficient services across the public sector at national and local levels. There are now seven Centres, acting independently from government, covering health and social care, educational achievement, crime reduction, early intervention, improving quality of life for older people and wellbeing. In addition, there are What Works Centres in Scotland and Wales supporting the use of evidence in the devolved administrations.

Highlight call for proposals

As specified in the main SDAI call guidance, from time to time SDAI will feature ad-hoc ring-fenced competitions in collaboration with ESRC's partner organisations (highlight notices), details of which will be published on the [SDAI webpage](#) at appropriate times.

Highlight notices will, due to their time-bound nature, operate on a different basis with set opening and closing dates (with highlight notices linked to specific Grant Assessment Panel (GAP) meetings). These will be communicated as part of the highlight notice.

For the current SDAI highlight notice, applicants are asked to submit proposals to the ESRC that seek to exploit any secondary data with a view to advancing scientific knowledge on wellbeing across a range of contexts, including but not limited to; work, community relationships, finance, health, and wellbeing inequalities. These projects should have the potential to influence policy and practice to improve the wellbeing of individuals, communities and the general public in the UK.

As successful projects are intended to inform the work of the WWCW in the first instance, it is important that any prospective applicants contact the Centre prior to applying to the ESRC. Following discussions with the WWCW, applicants should set out in their proposal how they plan to work with the WWCW and how the findings of their proposed research will inform and be of benefit to the work of the Centre.

We are expecting to fund up to six SDAI projects under this highlight notice (dependent on quality of proposals and funding available). Funding is for up to 24 months with a maximum funding contribution per project of £300,000 (100% full Economic Cost (fEC)) of which ESRC will contribute 80% from the ESRC.

Applicants are encouraged to submit proposals that:

- could answer specific policy questions relevant to wellbeing
- include co-funding from government departments who:
 - have been involved in shaping the research questions

- have an appetite to implement the findings
- include:
 - relevant experts from Government departments as co-investigators or members of the project team

Please refer to the [research interests of different government departments](#) for further details. Specific contact details for government departments can be found within Annex 2 of this document.

Further details regarding the inclusion of non-academic Co-Investigators can be found in the 'Eligibility' section below.

Proposals are permitted to include funding contributions from non-academic organisations, making the potential total budget of the project more than £300,000.

Applicants **must** include relevant expert members of the WWCW as co-investigators or partners on the project.

There is **no** requirement to use ESRC-funded data resources or infrastructure. However, applicants must be able to demonstrate in their proposal that they have agreed access to the secondary data resource they are using, providing clear evidence of access for resources, in particular, where access is likely to be difficult.

All other SDAI scheme requirements detailed in the specification and Je-S guidance of the [SDAI open call](#) are also required for the highlight notice.

Timing

This highlight notice applies to proposals that will be considered at the GAP meetings in **July and November 2019**. Up to six WWCW highlight projects are expected to be funded in total across the two panel meetings. The deadline for the receipt of proposals under the highlight is **31 March 2019 for the July panel** and **31 July 2019 for the November panel**.

Proposals that wish to be considered under this highlight should be prefixed with 'WWCW'. SDAI WWCW highlight proposals received after this date will not be considered for the funding available as part of the highlight but may still be considered (in open competition) for SDAI funding as part of the main call if its remit is met.

Proposals funded through the highlight notice are expected to commence by February 2020 (for a period of up to 24 months).

Assessment

Proposals submitted to the highlight notice will be considered at the GAP meeting alongside other proposals submitted to the SDAI scheme. For proposals to be funded under the highlight notice they must first meet the overall quality threshold of the SDAI scheme. Proposals will be ranked on the basis of their quality and ESRC will provide funding following the recommendations of the [ESRC Grants Delivery Group](#).

Eligibility

For this call, normal ESRC eligibility rules apply. This means principal investigators on proposals to this call must be based at a UK institution [eligible for research council funding](#). Co-investigators can be based anywhere in the world. Further information on eligibility is provided within the ESRC [Research Funding Guide](#); guidance on the inclusion of [international co-investigators](#) is also available and [UK government, Third Sector or Business co-investigators](#).

All other SDAI scheme requirements as detailed in the [open call documentation](#) are required in this highlight.

Successful grants

Successful grants will be managed by the ESRC, and will therefore be subject to ESRC's terms and conditions of grants which are published in the ESRC [Research Funding Guide](#). Projects will be affiliated with the WWCW and therefore expected to engage with both the Hub and any existing research evidence projects. Projects will have relevance to and complement the work of the Centre, contributing to their overall body of evidence. Successful grants will also be expected to engage with other investments funded under the SDAI. Further information will be provided to successful applicants.

Contacts

For initial enquires or those relating to the substantive theme of the highlight notice please contact: esrcwellbeing@esrc.ukri.org.

Applicants planning to submit a proposal under this highlight notice must initially contact the WWCW Hub to gain their support:

- Deborah Hardoon, Head of Evidence and Analysis, WWCW
Email: deborah.hardoon@whatworkswellbeing.org

For questions relating to ESRC's application processes please see the [research grant FAQs](#). For specific questions relating to the remit of the SDAI please refer to the SDAI FAQs or contact sdai@esrc.ukri.org

Enquiries relating to the Je-S application procedure should be addressed to:

- Je-S Helpdesk
Email: jeshelp@rcuk.ac.uk
Telephone: 01793 444164

Annex I – WWCW requirements for SDAI projects

The What Works Centre for Wellbeing was established in 2015 to develop and share robust, accessible and useful evidence that governments, businesses communities and people can use to improve wellbeing across the UK.

The centre's 2015-2018 evidence programme included 16 systematic reviews, conceptual and scoping reviews as well as secondary data analysis which looked at what works to improve wellbeing across the areas of culture and sport, work and learning and in communities. Each product has been reviewed by the centre's advisory panel and translated to accessible briefings and online communications. The centre has also developed methodological approaches, measurement and explored cross cutting wellbeing issues. The current 2018-19 evidence programme further develops the existing research streams and includes several practical tools for implementing evidence findings and illustrative case studies.

The SDAI highlight notice provides the opportunity for the centre to draw further on existing data to identify what works to improve wellbeing in policy relevant areas in the UK. The centre expects to work on up to six SDAI programmes in parallel during 2019 – 2021. Each one will seek to answer policy and/or practice relevant questions with respect to how to improve wellbeing.

The Centre will ascertain whether the proposed project fits within the premise of the highlight notice. They will determine the degree to which the proposal adheres to the broader aims and objectives of the Centre, as well as the extent to which the proposed level of involvement from the Centre's Hub from the outset and throughout the project duration is appropriate.

The Centre will use the following criteria in which to review proposals and decide whether they should offer their support:

Essential

- Adhere to the Centre's approach – independent, collaborative, practical open and iterative, with a desire for developing to accessible and useful evidence. As part of the centre, the research team will be expected to work collaboratively with other SDAI programmes to share findings, methodological approaches, integrate findings in centre wide reports and models and to represent the centre externally.
- Work closely with the centre's hub and advisory panel throughout the research process and particularly during the translation and dissemination of the research findings. This is to be fully costed into the proposal.
- Focus on an area of research where there is existing evidence of a causal link to wellbeing, but evidence gaps on policy relevant findings on what works. These can include (but not limited to):
 - Work (including flexible and informal and self-employed)
 - Community relationships (trust, belonging and social connections)
 - Finance (debt, financial uncertainty/precarity)
 - Health (improving physical activity and mental health)
 - Wellbeing inequalities

Desirable

- Co-funding from a relevant stakeholder¹ who will be involved in shaping the research questions² and an appetite for implanting the findings
- Focus on the mechanisms through which change happens, which are transferable to other contexts.
- Make use of existing datasets which include the 4 core personal wellbeing questions³.
- Pragmatic guidance for policy makers, including cost effectiveness analysis where feasible

¹ Previous funders of the Centre have included government departments (DCMS, BEIS, DWP, DfT, MHCLG, Historic England, Arts Council England, Sport England, Welsh Government, PHE, DfE, DoH), Big Lottery Fund, Power to Change, Bupa, BT, Nationwide

² For guidance of the research interests of government departments, please refer to the research areas of interest documents: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/areas-of-research-interest>

³ For a list of surveys that include the ONS 4 see:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/methodologies/surveysusingthe4officefornationalstatisticspersonalwellbeingquestions>. For longitudinal studies see appendix

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/user-guidance/well-being/publications/the-contribution-of-longitudinal-studies.pdf> as well as workplace surveys, including for the civil service <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/civil-service-people-surveys>

Annex 2 – Government department contact details

These details are subject to change whilst the call is open.

Historic England

Linda Monckton, Head of Wellbeing and Inclusion Strategy

Email: linda.monckton@historicengland.org.uk

Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)

Katie Green, Head of Evaluation

Email: katie.green@culture.gov.uk

Catherine Colebrook, Chief Economist

Email: catherine.colebrook@culture.gov.uk

Telephone: 020 7211 2473

Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS)

Cara Maguire, Economic Advisor

Email: cara.maguire@beis.gov.uk

Telephone: 0207 215 2287

Welsh Government

Richard Thurston, Deputy chief social research officer

Email: richard.thurston@gov.wales

Telephone: 0300 025 5324

Sport England

Andrew Spiers, Strategic Lead

Email: andrew.spiers@sportengland.org

Telephone: 0207 273 1872

Department for Transport

Claudia Senese, Senior Research Officer

Email: claudia.senese@dft.gov.uk

Telephone: 0777 364 3827