

Trust and Global Governance Large Grants Call specification

Summary

The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) wishes to invite proposals from eligible individuals and research teams to take forward an exciting research agenda in the area of trust and global governance.

We are looking for innovative and methodologically ambitious proposals that link foundational research on the nature and dynamics of trust and trustworthiness, with new empirical research on the relationship between trust and global governance. We actively encourage proposals characterised by interdisciplinarity both within and beyond the social sciences, and would particularly welcome proposals that include a significant international comparative component.

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

The call 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 Thursday 28 June 2018**. Proposals will be assessed through peer review and a panel meeting to be held in November 2018. It is expected that final funding decisions will be available from December 2018. Grants will commence from 1 March 2019.

Background and scope

Trust has a significant role to play in underpinning effective governance, and its presence or absence can have a palpable effect. However, we are living in a period where the conventional understandings of political and democratic process, trust in governance institutions and political and policy models are being continually challenged, and it appears that public trust is eroding. This can be seen not only at a national level, where the UK vote for Brexit has created a schism between 'leavers' and 'remainers', but it is also observable across Europe and internationally, with a perceived rise in populism and apparent growth in 'illiberalism'. This can not only be seen in established democracies around the world, but also in social and political contexts – non-democracies/limited democracies – where levels of trust have been historically low, and remain so.

In November 2017 the ESRC held an expert workshop to explore issues of trust and the consequences for global governance in more detail. The workshop confirmed that the contemporary dynamics of trust and its connections to global governance is ripe for further research under the following themes:

- Trust in a world of inequalities
- Trust and the future of democracy
- Identity, community, and the social and psychological foundations of trust
- Trust, ethics and international security.

A particular focus should be on linking foundational research on the nature and dynamics of trust and trustworthiness, with new empirical research on trust and global governance.

The Trust and Global Governance grants are being commissioned in the context of other ESRC investments – including UK in a Changing Europe (focusing on the implementation of Brexit and the Article 50 process) and Governance after Brexit (exploring the underlying causes and implications of Brexit for the UK state). We are also expecting to establish, as part of the NORFACE partnership, an initiative on governance in the European context. Funding under the Trust and Global Governance priority will therefore need to complement and add value to this other work; as such, we expect that research supported under this call will move beyond the boundaries of Europe in its scope.

Call details

This call seeks to explore issues of trust and their consequences for global governance. It places great emphasis on an interdisciplinary approach and on methodological innovation to capture the dynamics of trust over space and time, as well as combining micro- and macro-level and historical analysis.

The call also seeks to take a global perspective – moving beyond the traditional western/northern-centrism, and beyond state-centrism and formal institutions, to include non-state areas such as civil society, social movements, religion and the church, media, business and the private sector.

In particular, we are seeking proposals that move beyond the boundaries of Europe in their geographical focus. We encourage proposals that will deliver ambitious, internationally comparative research, and which deploy a suite of ambitious and potentially novel methodological tools to explore the questions posed.

It is also hoped research funded under this call will challenge normative assumptions about trust and governance – including whether a high level of trust is always good.

Four priority areas for research proposals have been identified under this call, outlined below. Whilst proposals may exclusively focus on one area, we would strongly encourage proposals to explore a range of questions within and between each of these cross-cutting priority areas.

- **Trust in a world of inequalities**

- Whilst there is evidence globally of increasing socioeconomic inequality, the connections between inequality, distrust and the decline of authority remain poorly understood.
- Issues of migration and mobility remain central to the dynamics of trust, but their impact on political trust is not clear. A broader focus on diasporas might be helpful in exploring issues of trust and globalism/global governance.
- Existing work on trust and inequalities has little to say on race, and the question of minoritised peoples and patterns of trust also provides rich potential.

- The consequences of trust, distrust and trustworthiness for individual and public health and the functioning of healthcare systems requires further investigation.
- **Trust and the future of democracy**
 - There is a requirement for additional work on the relationship between governance institutions and trust, and for a better understanding of how institutional changes can shape the dynamics of trust in its various dimensions. This includes both the 'softer' processes of institutions as well as their formal design.
 - There remains little understanding of how political mobilisation is shaped by (or shapes) patterns of generalised and particularised trust for individuals and societies. We also wish to understand how relationships of trust can be deployed in mobilising political engagement, participation and protest.
 - The role of the media in the shaping of the narrative on trust needs further exploration – especially the disruptive force of new technology in this space.
 - A global perspective is required on whether trust in democracy and democratic institutions is in decline.
- **Identity, community, and the social and psychological foundations of trust**
 - There is a need to better understand the psychological foundations of trust. The question of moral reliability, and how people perceive and make judgements on this basis, is critical to trust in all its forms.
 - We need to know more about how people live their lives in situations of extreme and generalised distrust and the role of community – especially where the state is absent. What are the alternatives to trust when trust is lacking?
 - A greater understanding is needed of the sources of trustworthiness and how trustworthiness is established and lost. The relationship between trust and religion is an important aspect of this.
- **Trust, ethics and international security**
 - We need to know if human rights are on the wane and or whether trust in human rights has always been fragile. A greater understanding is also needed of how human rights can be codified in the absence of trust.
 - A greater understanding is needed as to what counts as authority, and how this relates to legitimacy – especially in the context of international organisations and international law.
 - What kinds of governance solutions are necessary to shore up trust in international relations?
 - A default state-centrism permeates international relations scholarship on questions of trust. It is important to move beyond this to look at diverse regions and contexts.

Funding

The call is for proposals ranging between £1 million and £2.5 million (at 100% full economic cost - fEC) for a period of three to five years. Detailed information on eligible costs can be

found in the ESRC's research funding guide (<https://esrc.ukri.org/RFG>). 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.

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.

Other independent research organisations (IROs) may also be eligible if they possess an existing in-house capacity to carry out research that materially extends and enhances the national research base and are able to demonstrate an independent capability to undertake and lead research programmes. The current list of eligible IROs is available at: <https://www.ukri.org/funding/how-to-apply/eligibility/>

Grant co-ordination

There is no expectation at this stage that there will be any formal coordination of grants funded under this call. Nevertheless, the ESRC expects that the funded principal investigators and their teams will work collaboratively to draw together themes and to co-ordinate activities – especially with regard to non-academic impact – in order to add value and ensure coherence across their grants. In addition, where appropriate, we would also expect that links be established with other funded research and activities under the broader 'governance' portfolio.

Investigators

Research proposals may be submitted by more than one applicant. However, there must be a single 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 research council funding for the duration of the award (see <https://www.ukri.org/funding/how-to-apply/eligibility/>).

Please note that you can only be a PI on one proposal under this call. However, you may be a co-investigator (Co-I) on other proposals, provided that you have sufficient time available to meet the requirements of any successful grant.

Given the scale of the grants being funded under this call, it is likely that successful applications will be led by researchers with appropriate experience in research project management and 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 the conduct of the research.

Please note that studentships are not eligible under this call.

International co-investigators

ESRC attaches great 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 <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, we expect that awards made under this call will deliver excellent research with high potential for 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 and strategies to maximise economic or societal impact should be central elements of proposals submitted to the call. 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 (<https://esrc.ukri.org/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/mediatraining/>

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: <https://esrc.ukri.org/funding/guidance-for-applicants/research-ethics/>.

How to apply

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

The 'Je-S guidance notes for applicants' document (available to download from <https://esrc.ukri.org/funding/funding-opportunities/trust-and-global-governance-large-grants/>) 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 (<https://esrc.ukri.org/RFG>), 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/Handbook/Index.htm>)).

The call is expected to be open on Je-S from **late April 2018**.

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**
 - 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
- Project planning and management skills necessary to deliver a large research grant.
- **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

Proposals will be assessed by at least three expert academic peer reviewers. Applicants should nominate two academic peer reviewers. Up to two potential research users in business, government or the third 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 that are of sufficient quality are considered by the Commissioning Panel. The panel will meet in **November 2018**. Funding decisions will likely be available from December 2018. Grants will start from 1 March 2019 unless, exceptionally, applicants can make the case for an earlier start.

Commissioning timetable

- Closing date for proposals – **16.00 on Thursday 28 June 2018**
- Panel meeting – November 2018
- Funding decisions announced – December 2018
- Grants to start – 1 March 2019

Call documents

It is important to follow the correct Je-S guidance for the call you are applying to rather than the generic Je-S guidance. Please check the guidance available at: <https://esrc.ukri.org/funding/funding-opportunities/trust-and-global-governance-large-grants/>

Contacts

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

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