UKRI-GCRF Education as a Driver of Sustainable Development call for Research Grants

Call specification

Version: March 2019

Summary
ESRC, on behalf of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), are pleased to invite applications for Education as a Driver of Sustainable Development (EDD) research grants.

Funding has been allocated from the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF), which is a £1.5 billion fund to support cutting-edge research which addresses the problems faced by developing countries. GCRF will address global challenges through disciplinary and interdisciplinary research and will strengthen capability for research and innovation within both the UK and developing countries, providing an agile response to emergencies where there is an urgent research need. GCRF forms part of the UK’s Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitment, and funds will be awarded in a manner that fits with ODA guidelines.

This call is in addition to, and intended to complement, the Network Plus call relating to the same Education as a Driver theme. Applications are invited up to a maximum value of £2 million (100% fEC) and up to 36 months duration.

All proposals will have to make a clear case for how they comply with ODA guidelines. A short Expression of Interest (EOI) should be completed by those intending to submit to this call by 16:00 UK time on 25 April 2019.

Full proposals should be submitted via the Joint Electronic Submission system (Je-S) by the deadline of 16:00 UK time on 5 June 2019. Projects should commence by 1 February 2020.

Background and scope
The Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) is a key component in the delivery of the UK Aid Strategy: tackling global challenges in the national interest. The fund aims to ensure that UK research takes a leading role in addressing the problems faced by developing countries through:

- Challenge-led disciplinary and interdisciplinary research
• Strengthening capacity for research and innovation within both the UK and developing countries
• Providing an agile response to emergencies where there is an urgent research need.

The Collective Programme under the UKRI GCRF Collective Fund is a series of calls designed to enhance the coherence, strategic focus and overall impact across the six strategic GCRF Challenge portfolios:
• Cities and Sustainable Infrastructure
• Education
• Food Systems
• Global Health
• Resilience to Environmental Shocks and Change
• Security Protracted Conflict, Refugee Crises and Forced Displacement

The programme is being delivered by UKRI and steered by the GCRF Challenge Leaders. Interdisciplinary research excellence is central to the GCRF, and investigators from all disciplines are encouraged to apply for calls within the parameters of each call, regardless of the primary discipline focus. All received proposals will be shared with other constituent parts of UKRI as necessary to assist with processing. This call will be managed by ESRC on behalf of all UKRI research councils. Further information about the ESRC’s approach to GCRF and details of other current GCRF calls is available on our website.

Call details
Education is not only a fundamental human right, but also an indispensable tool in the pursuit of sustainable development. Over the past decade, the international education agenda has shifted to recognise education’s potential influence over social dynamics and the spheres of security, governance, health and economics. The levels of education of a population can be seen to determine economic growth, democratisation, and act as a catalyst for positive societal change, social justice and peace. Education empowers the most vulnerable, by increasing their chances of getting jobs, staying healthy and participating fully in society – and it boosts their children’s chances of leading healthy lives. Many development goals are underpinned by the potential for education to advance skills and understanding. Education is therefore understood to be crucial to driving development across a range of global goals.

Yet it is also increasingly acknowledged that education is not a neutral pursuit and not all kinds of education support sustainable development. For example, education that promotes economic growth alone may also lead to an increase in unsustainable consumption patterns, while exclusive education can oppress sections of the community and feed cycles of poverty. Education delivery is complex, and its relationship with wider development goals can be both positive and negative.

This call therefore seeks research proposals that examine the role of education in relation to other sustainable development goals, such as achieving healthy lives, eradicating poverty and promoting gender equality. Specifically, proposals should address in what ways education drives development and explore the complexity of that relationship. They should show how a deeper understanding of education’s role across the development agenda will significantly influence how education research can be effectively translated into policy and practice to achieve development outcomes.
There is currently a simultaneous call for a Network Plus with the thematic strand of EDD. This research grants call aims to complement and bring additionality to the Network Plus call which indicates examples of research areas that could be explored including:

- What is education’s role in supporting sustainable development?
- How does education play a role in reducing vulnerability and building community resilience to disaster risks?
- How can education assist in addressing social determinants for improving health?
- How can education contribute to making cities inclusive, safe and resilient?
- How can education empower adolescents for healthy lives?
- How can education enhance inclusive participation for sustainable urbanisation?
- How can education contribute to building peaceful societies?
- What is the inextricably linked relationship between education and poverty?

The examples above should only be considered as suggestions of research areas. Proposals should be framed within the core question of how education can drive sustainable development and should focus on looking at this overarching question through the lens of one or more of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) in depth. Research that is purely focused on Quality Education (SDG4) would not be considered a fit for this call. Associated expertise and knowledge should be drawn together for maximum impact on policy and practice.

Funded proposals will be expected to share knowledge and best practice with other projects funded by the funders involved in GCRF calls on education. Costs can be included for this purpose.

To ensure a joined-up approach to funding research in this area, proposals and EOIs received under this call will be shared between the funders involved in GCRF collective fund calls on education (UKRI and DFID).

Note that in addition to this call and the Network Plus call there are two other relevant, but separate, GCRF collective fund calls for proposals: one on education in relation to conflict, and one in relation to early childhood education. Further information about calls within the GCRF Collective Programme is available on the UKRI website.

**Assessment criteria**

Applications to this call will be assessed in accordance with the following criteria:

**Research quality of proposal**

- Anchored by a well-integrated interdisciplinary approach which demonstrates both research excellence and the ability to think across, between and within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the research must add significant value to existing global research efforts.
- Does the proposal develop novel methodologies for interdisciplinary working, knowledge exchange and innovation, including where appropriate, disciplines that haven’t traditionally been oriented towards international development challenges, and are they suitable to the aims and objectives?
• Does the proposed research have the potential to act as an example of research excellence and innovation in the field, to define and drive forward the agenda for the role of interdisciplinary research in international development?

Quality and coherence of the proposed activities
• Assessment will consider the quality and coherence of the proposed activities and determine whether they meet the requirements of GCRF, particularly in relation to ODA compliance.
• Are the proposed activities appropriate to the identified impact opportunity? Are the aims of the project realistic/achievable? Is there a clear explanation for the scale, timing and resources requested?
• Does the proposal demonstrate flexibility to adapt over the lifetime of the award and respond with agility to arising opportunities? Does the proposal outline an appropriate framework for monitoring and evaluation, and identify a robust set of deliverables, indicators and measures for success?

Capacity-building and international partnerships
• Assessment will consider the degree and quality of engagement with appropriate developing country partners (including researchers, practitioners and policymakers) and whether they have played a leading role in challenge identification and the design and implementation of the proposed approach.
• The proposal should identify an appropriate range of relevant partners, demonstrating how these partnerships are beneficial to the award, ethical, equitable and sustainable beyond the initial award. For example, is their engagement meaningful, substantive and clear? How motivated are they by the potential benefit of the research for them?
• The applicant should clearly articulate to what extent the award will develop new or enhanced research capacity for addressing international development challenges in the relevant partner countries. For example, is the proposal informed by evidence of previous impact research? Does the application involve new approaches or use established methods more innovatively?

Impact
• Assessment will consider the clarity and significance of the impact from the proposed activities. Does the proposed award identify realistic pathways with the potential to deliver a breadth of highly significant and measurable impacts?
• Have the applicants taken into consideration relevant developing country context and demonstrated local interest and capacity to implement solutions? Is there potential for the partnerships, resources, capacity and capability developed through the course of the project to be sustained and strengthened beyond the end of the award?
• What are the benefits for the researchers and non-academics taking part? Will the project inform future research, establish or strengthen relationships with partners, or increase impact from research already undertaken?

Management capability
• Reviewers and panel members will assess the applicant’s capacity to manage the project by considering whether they have demonstrated the appropriate skills and experience to deliver the proposed vision and effectively manage the proposed research activities.
• Is there a demonstrable expertise across the relevant disciplines the proposal draws on?
• Is there an appropriate balance of leadership and management between the researchers, including an appropriate balance between developed and developing country partners?

Value for money and sustainability
• Assessment will consider whether the proposed research is good value for money, i.e., the optimal use of resources to achieve the intended outcome.
• Is the scale of impact reasonable for the amount of funding requested and staff time requested? Are activity costs reasonable? Is the impact generating potential of the project, the likely contribution to the utilisation of knowledge, and the wider societal benefits commensurate with the requested resources?
• Is there a clear plan for maintaining the project and/or its outputs beyond the period of the award?

Research ethics
• Consideration of potential ethical issues within the project, including consideration of projects design, implementation and impact.

Applications will undergo peer review before being considered by a specially convened panel of academic and non-academic experts at a meeting in November 2019. The panel will be asked to assess the proposals against the fit to the call and the assessment criteria above. The panel will then make formal recommendations to the funders. The funders may wish to apply some conditions on grants, and there may be subsequent negotiations on the details of the support offered. Funding decisions are expected to be announced in November 2019 and awards are expected to commence on 1 February 2020.

Research Ethics
All GCRF projects must be underpinned by a strong research ethic based on mutual respect and understanding for different cultural, ethnic, social and economic beliefs and practices. Solutions to any development challenge(s) must be rooted in, and acceptable to, the institutions, communities and societies where they will operate.

Ethical issues should be interpreted broadly and may encompass areas where regulation and approval processes exist as well as areas where they do not. Applicants must ensure that the proposed research will be carried out to a high ethical standard and must clearly state how any potential ethical and health and safety issues have been considered and will be addressed, ensuring that all necessary ethical approval is in place before the research commences and all risks are minimised. More guidance can be found in the ESRC Framework for Research Ethics.

Capacity-building
An important aspect of GCRF is capacity development, and UKRI strongly encourages all proposals to this call to identify research capacity-building activities as part of, and not separate to, the stated research approach. The focus should be on the quality and impact of the proposed research activities, and how increasing capacity contributes to this. Examples of building capacity include:

• opportunities for those with relevant skills who have not previously worked on development-relevant research projects to orient their research towards global issues
• support and mentoring for more junior team members
• co-design of research and related activity, and implementation with developing country partner staff

Please note that studentships are not eligible under this call. Further information on capacity-building in relation to GCRF is available on the ESRC website.

Equitable partnerships
Partnerships are a key pillar of the GCRF strategy. UKRI developed the following statement of expectation for research partnerships in consultation with researchers from East Africa: “Partnerships should be transparent and based on mutual respect. Partnerships should aim to have clearly articulated equitable distribution of resources, responsibilities, efforts and benefits. Partnerships should recognise different inputs, different interests and different desired outcomes and should ensure the ethical sharing and use of data which is responsive to the identified needs of society.”

Funding
Applications are invited up to a maximum value of £2 million (100% fEC) and up to 36 months duration. We expect that the overall cost of applications will be determined by the nature of their activities. Please see Je-S Guidance for more information regarding costs and eligibility.

Funding of international co-investigators
GCRF calls will follow standard ESRC policies in that the ESRC will fund 100% of the justified costs for international co-investigators from research organisations of comparable standing with UKRI-recognised UK research organisations. ESRC’s policy on the inclusion of international co-investigators will apply, with the exception that for the GCRF Collective Fund Programme calls there is no cap on costs associated with international co-investigators’ contribution relative to the total project cost; ie no upper limit will be applied. This applies to all international co-investigators from all countries, whether on the DAC list or not, but all costs need to be fully justified, and principal investigators must be based at an eligible UK research organisation.

We strongly encourage international co-investigators from countries not on the DAC list to make a significant contribution to their own research costs. Please see FAQ document for more information on non-UK non-DAC list organisation costs. If a co-investigator is from a country flagged as likely to graduate from the DAC list during the course of the project, this should be treated as a country NOT on the DAC list.

The overhead rate for DAC list country co-investigators is up to 20% of the total direct costs (eg staff costs, T&S, conferences) incurred by that organisation. Please note that only DAC list country co-investigators are eligible for 20% of international directly related costs as overheads/indirect costs and that this does not apply to non-DAC list country co-investigators. If a co-investigator is from a country flagged as likely to graduate from the DAC list during the course of the project this should be treated as a country NOT on the DAC list.

Further guidance is provided in the call-specific Je-S guidance.
ODA compliance statement

To comply with ODA requirements, proposals must make clear how their primary purpose is to promote the economic development and welfare of a developing country or countries. There are no priority countries; proposals may relate to any country or countries on the DAC list except those which are flagged as likely to graduate from the list during the course of the proposed project. If a country is flagged as likely to graduate it cannot be the primary focus of a proposal, although it can be included as an additional case study or comparison.

Applicants must clearly demonstrate how they meet ODA requirements throughout their ‘Case for Support’ and ‘Pathways to Impact’ submission. In addition, all proposals must include a mandatory ‘Non-UK Components’ attachment addressing the following three questions:

1. Which country/countries on the DAC list will directly benefit from this proposal?
2. How is your proposal directly and primarily relevant to the development challenges of these countries?
3. How do you expect that the outcome of your proposed activities will promote the economic development and welfare of a country or countries on the DAC list?

Further guidance on how to submit the ODA compliance statement as an attachment is provided in the call-specific Je-S Guidance. General advice on ODA and links to other useful sources of information are provided on the ESRC website and the UKRI guidance on ODA in relation to GCRF.

Initial ODA compliance assessment will take place within the ESRC, though final decisions may include input from commissioning panels as well as external sources of ODA expertise.

ODA transparency and reporting

As part of the government’s commitment to ODA transparency and in line with DfID ODA reporting requirements, UKRI is responsible for publishing information about UKRI ODA grants including project titles and summaries via the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) registry and via DFID’s national statistics.

The purpose of publishing information via the IATI registry is to make information about ODA easily accessible to governments, stakeholders and other relevant groups in beneficiary countries. All UKRI funded projects from this programme will be published in this way. Please therefore write your project title and summary in such a way that they are meaningful and accessible to non-specialist audiences, following publication.

We would be grateful if you would ensure that the project title and summary are written in plain English and avoid the use of jargon, acronyms, puns and plays on words. Please also make clear in your project title and summary how your project is ODA-compliant, for example by identifying the development challenge(s) being addressed, the aims of the project and the beneficiary countries.

Eligibility
Proposals are invited from ROs eligible for UKRI funding across the UK. Proposals may be submitted by individuals who are not established members of the proposed host institution. In these circumstances, by submitting the proposal the RO confirms that it guarantees to provide facilities for the applicant as if an established member of staff for the duration of the grant. The lead organisation will be responsible for the overall management of the award including control, disbursement and assurance of funds, including financial reporting of funds going overseas.

Co-investigators may be based anywhere in the world, but, additionally for GCRF calls, the international co-investigator’s research organisation must submit a ‘Letter of Support’. (Further information is provided within the Je-S guidance.) This is to ensure comparability of standing between international organisations and UKRI-recognised UK research organisations and to ensure commitment to the project. Further information regarding eligibility can be found in the ESRC’s Research Funding Guide and International Co-Investigator Policy, although please note that the 30% cap does not apply to this GCRF call.

The ESRC does not allow the resubmission of previously unsuccessful proposals to any schemes, unless the applicant has been explicitly invited to do so.

**Due diligence**

As part of UKRI funding assurance, non-UK research organisations may be requested to complete a UKRI Overseas Due Diligence Questionnaire. Please be aware that research organisations may be contacted by UKRI at any point during the review process. This is in order to expedite our assurance process. If UKRI does contact any non-UK research partner organisation named on an application, the lead organisation will be informed.

For organisations hosting non-UK co-investigators, due diligence checks are for UKRI's assurance purposes only and do not replace the due diligence requirements of the lead organisation. However, when obtaining information from non-UK research organisations UKRI will request permission to share the provided information with the lead organisation. The lead organisation can then use this information for their own due diligence processes should they wish.

**Safeguarding**

UKRI condemns all forms of harm and abuse, including bullying and harassment. We take a zero-tolerance approach to harm and abuse to any individual employed through or associated with our programmes in all contexts; whether in humanitarian or fragile and conflict-affected settings, in other field contexts, or within the international or UK research and development community which we fund. We expect institutions to promote the highest standards in organisational culture, and have in place the systems and procedures required to prevent and tackle all incidents of harm and abuse. Applications must detail how they will identify and manage safeguarding risks and what policies and procedures will be in place to enable reporting and investigation of allegations when they arise.

**Reporting**

Successful applicants will be required to report research outcomes on Researchfish in line with standard UKRI Terms and Conditions. In addition to the standard outcomes all award holders will need to complete sections under the ‘GCRF Collective Fund’ outcomes.
Expressions of interest
We request that those considering applying to this call to submit an expression of interest (EOI), using the short online form. The deadline for submitting an EOI is 25 April 2019. Although it is not a requirement to submit an EOI we strongly encourage this. Please note that Expressions of Interest will not be assessed.

Application process
The closing date for proposals is 16:00 UK time on 5 June 2019. No proposal received after this deadline will be considered for funding.

Applicants can only be principal investigator on one application to this call. There is no restriction on the number of applications an individual can be co-investigator for, but they must have the capacity to undertake all projects applied for, should they be successful.

All proposals must be made through the Joint Electronic Submission (Je-S) system; only those proposals submitted through the Je-S system will be accepted for processing. Proposals must be costed and approved by the relevant institutional authority at the research organisation before submission.

In order to use the Je-S system, principal investigators, co-investigators and their organisations need to register on the system a minimum of one week before the call closing date. Registration of both the principal investigator’s organisation and their own details must be completed before the proposal can be formally submitted to the ESRC.

Proposals that are not completed correctly may be rejected by the ESRC office. The ESRC may require applicants to amend parts of proposals, such as the length of attachments or the inclusion of missing mandatory attachments, as a condition of accepting the proposal for processing.

All applicants are strongly advised to follow the Je-S guidance for this call and consult the ESRC’s Research Funding Guide, which sets out the rules and regulations governing its funding.

The final submission process is the responsibility of the host institution, and the ESRC cannot accept responsibility for any delays which may occur. It is recommended that applicants submit in good time before the call deadline at this stage. We strongly advise applicants to confirm with their relevant administrator that the proposal has been submitted successfully to the ESRC.

What we will do with your information
UK Research and Innovation understands the importance of protecting personal information and is committed to complying with the General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679 (GDPR). It is committed to fostering a culture of transparency and accountability by demonstrating compliance with the principles set out in the regulation.

GDPR sets out the rules for how organisations must process personal data and sensitive personal data about living individuals. It gives individuals the right to find out what personal data is held about them by organisations and to request to see, correct or erase personal
UK Research and Innovation needs to collect and process personal data about the people (including employees and individuals) it interacts with to carry out its business effectively. UK Research and Innovation is committed to ensuring that employees are appropriately trained and supported to achieve compliance with GDPR. For more details see UKRI’s full GDPR policy.

Please be aware that by submission of a proposal or EOI, the applicants and organisations involved will be giving consent to the sharing of data between the funders involved in this activity (the Research Councils that are part of UKRI and DFID).

**Commissioning timetable**
- Call for proposals opens: 12 March 2019
- Closing date for EOI: 16:00 on 25 April 2019
- **Closing date for proposals**: 16:00 on 5 June 2019
- Commissioning panel meeting: early November 2019
- Decisions announced: late November 2019
- Grants start: 1 February 2020

**Contacts**
All queries or comments about this call should be addressed to:
GCRF Education as a Driver Research
Enquiries relating to technical aspects of the Je-S form should be addressed to:
- Je-S Helpdesk
  Email: jeshelp@je-s.ukri.org
  Telephone: +44 01793 444164

The Helpdesk is staffed Monday–Thursday 08:30–17:00, Friday 08:30–16:30 UK time (excluding public and other holidays).