ESRC Centre Transition Funding
Frequently Asked Questions

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Who can apply for centres transition funding?
ESRC centre directors. ESRC centres are major ESRC strategic investments, with funding of £2.5-10 million (100% of full economic costs) over five years. This funding is not open any other types of investment.

ESRC centres fund experienced research leaders who require longer-term or extended support for research groups, inter-institutional research networks, project-linked programmes, medium-to-large surveys, other infrastructure or methodological developments, or any related larger-scale projects. Centres also have a distinct role in supporting the development of early career researchers and building new research capacity. They are expected to be high-impact investments over the longer term.

How do I apply?
ESRC centre directors will be invited to apply for centres transition funding in the last year of their grant, unless the centre is part of a wider strategic review (see Can I apply for transition funding if the ESRC is currently running a strategic review in my area?). This is not a competitive process; decisions will be based on a light-touch Transition Review.

Application will be through the Je-S online system. Full Je-S guidance will be provided on invitation.

An ESRC centre would not typically be invited for ESRC transition funding if it already holds another substantial ESRC grant (ie not centres-related) that is a clear continuation of the centre’s work programme or is worth more than the transition funding for which it would be applying. In this instance ESRC takes the view that continuation is already in place for that centre.

See the Centres Transition Review Guidance (http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-large-investments/esrc-centres-and-institutes/) for more information.

Are co-funded centres and What Works Centres affected by this policy?
Although this new type of funding could, in principle, be applied to co-funded centres and other investments such as What Works Centres, the process for application is likely to be slightly different and funding agreements and conditions will be subject to discussions with the co-funder(s). As funding arrangements for co-funded centres need to be agreed with the co-funder(s), continuation and level of funding for such centres will be arranged on a case-by-case basis.
**What are the aims of centres transition funding?**

ESRC centres transition funding provides graduated follow-on funding for centres coming to an end of their ESRC centre funding. It provides a lower level of funding for an additional three and five years to reduce the 'cliff edge' effects of a sudden drop-off in funding at the end of the centre grant and, at a minimum, maximise the impact of the research activity and investment to date.

Centre transition funding is also designed to reflect the mutual benefits, to the ESRC and the centre’s host research organisations (ROs), of supporting these high-profile and high-impact centres of excellence over a longer period. It is intended that this additional period of ESRC funding, while at a reduced level, will support the centre in securing the strategic and financial commitment of their RO, and potentially help leverage further funding from other sources, to support them in establishing a sustainable funding model for the longer term, should they wish to pursue and develop their research activities further. For this reason transition funding is designed to not only provide ESRC funding, but also embed centres in the strategic and financial planning of their host RO. Together the ESRC and RO contributions will 'co-fund' the full economic costs of the Centre, establishing a new relationship between the ESRC and the RO in supporting the development of a sustainable funding model for the centre.

**How much centres transition funding can be requested?**

The centre can request from the ESRC up to 25% of the full economic costs (fEC) of the ESRC centre grant that is coming to an end (including indexation). The RO will also be required to offer a contribution that equates to, or exceeds, the full economic costs of the ESRC request (ie 25% at 100 fEC). As ESRC funds at 80% fEC, the ESRC contribution will equate to 20% of the full economic costs of the existing centre grant in cash terms. This means that ESRC are looking for proposals that, in total, provide for a minimum 45% of the full economic costs of the ESRC centre grant coming to an end.

The exact ceiling amount that can be claimed from the ESRC will be confirmed by us on invitation to apply.

**What costs will be covered by centres transition funding?**

The proposal costs should meet the needs of the research programme of work proposed. The ESRC will fund *Directly Incurred costs only*. In other respects, standard ESRC funding policies apply. This means that we will fund 80% of these costs (except for existing exceptions).

To establish a sustainable funding model for the centre the RO contribution will be required to fund the Directly Allocated and Indirect costs of the proposal at a minimum. Additional DI costs, including the remaining DI costs not funded from the ESRC request, can also be funded by the RO. The proposal must provide evidence that the full economic costs of the proposal are funded.

**Can the centre request more than the ESRC contribution ceiling or offer more than the RO minimum contribution?**

The ESRC request cannot be higher than the offered ESRC grant ceiling. This is to manage pressure on the ESRC budget as this is not a competitive process.
The RO contribution must equal, but can also exceed, the full economic costs of the ESRC request (ie at 100% fEC).

**Can the minimum RO contribution be supplemented from other funding sources?**
No, unless the centre is hosted by an independent RO without access to HEFCE quality-related funding.

The host RO (and partner ROs) must demonstrate their strategic commitment to the centre through the minimum contribution required (ie to equal the ESRC requested amount at 100% fEC).

Over and above that minimum RO contribution, applications are welcome to provide evidence of additional support from other (non-higher education) partners. Please seek advice from the ESRC on evidencing these additional contributions through the Je-S application if needed.

**Can the Centre request less than the ESRC contribution ceiling (and consequently less RO contribution)?**
Yes, if the proposal still meets the aims of the funding.

The ESRC is looking for a level of research activity in Transition Review proposals that would be supported by the co-funded minimum (ie 45% of the full economic costs of the ESRC centre grant coming to an end). But costs should meet the needs of the research and an exact match may not be feasible.

If the ESRC request is lower than the ceiling amount, the RO contribution can scale down accordingly (ie the RO contribution should still equal, or exceed, the ESRC request at 100% fEC). The proposal must provide evidence that the full economic costs of the proposal are funded.

However, if the requested ESRC funding and/or full economic costs of the proposal (ESRC/RO contribution combined) are substantially lower than anticipated, applicants will need to justify why this lower request has been made. Assessors and the interview panel will consider whether the proposal meets the minimum aims of the funding. The interview panel may also, in these circumstances, raise questions for the RO about its strategic commitment to the centre.

ESRC will check costings attachments on submission of the application and contact the PI to provide an opportunity to address any issues ahead of interview.

**Does the transition funding need to be costed at the same amount per year?**
The proposed costs (both ESRC and RO contributions) should meet the needs of the proposed activities. Costs do not need to be the same amount every year. A centre could, for example, budget to spend more in the initial years than in the later years. However, a centre cannot claim more than 50% of the total ESRC contribution in any one year, and the ESRC contribution must be over a minimum of three years (and maximum five years).
Centre directors should explain the proposed profiling of costs on application and may be asked to justify them in interview.

**Can an ESRC associated studentship be included in transition funding?**
Studentships cannot be included in the ESRC contribution to transition funding. However, transition funding would not prevent students funded by an ESRC Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) or Centre for Doctoral Training (CDT) from linking with an area relevant to the activity of the centre.

Studentships funded by the RO can be included in the minimum RO contribution.

**Can early career researchers (ECRs) be included transition funding applications?**
ESRC would encourage centre proposals to include the participation of ECRs in the Transition funding application as co-investigators. Please refer to recent policy development around early career researchers in other ESRC funding schemes: [http://www.esrc.ac.uk/skills-and-careers/postgraduate-careers/early-career-researchers/](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/skills-and-careers/postgraduate-careers/early-career-researchers/)

**Can a different PI (centre director) lead an application for transition funding?**
Please contact the ESRC if you propose to change PI ahead of application or apply for transition funding with a new PI. Standard processes around change of grant holder may apply (see ESRC Research Funding Guide, p37: [http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/research-funding-guide/](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/research-funding-guide/)). If an application proposes a new PI (centre director) at the start of the award, the new PI may be named as PI on the Je-S application and attend the interview for Transition Review to discuss the proposed work programme. Whether a new PI is intending to take over the centre at the start or during the award, the application should also outline succession planning in the Centre Director’s Transition Review Report. It is up to the centre whom it wishes to attend the interview to address questions around the centre’s track record. Both former and new PI may attend the interview. It will be important that any such application demonstrates clear continuity in the work programme of the centre regardless of change of PI, so that the application is demonstrably not for a new centre.

**Can a centre based in an independent RO that does not have access to quality-related (QR) funding apply for transition funding?**
Yes. If an existing ESRC centre is hosted by an independent RO without access to QR funding, ESRC will require the same minimum RO contribution but will consider different arrangements for providing evidence of this strategic and financial commitment, and the sources of funding used. Where the RO has a specific funding agreement with the ESRC, in recognition of their different status, ESRC may consider paying other costs at its discretion.

**Can a centre apply for transition funding if the ESRC is currently running a strategic review in my area?**
No. As the research we fund and context we operate in evolves it is necessary for ESRC to undertake strategic reviews to refresh our approach. While such reviews are underway it is...
not appropriate to take decisions on funding in these areas. Therefore transition funding will not be available to centres operating in areas of strategic review unless explicitly stated.

**When can centres apply for the next Transition Review?**

We are currently inviting all ESRC centres ending before February 2021 to apply for Transition Review 2019. Centres involved in this process have been contacted.

The next round of Transition Review is likely to be in 2020 for Centres ending 2021-22. Guidance is likely to stay broadly similar but ESRC may make some changes in the light of lessons learned.

**Can a centre apply to the ESRC Centres Competition if it is already applying for, or in receipt of transition funding?**

We are aware that a number of existing centres may wish to apply to future rounds of the ESRC Centres Competition. If successful in centres competition, full funding would supersede the transition funding. You should outline in your Transition Review proposal your differing plans for transition funding should you be successful/unsuccessful in the competition.

Centre Directors should also note that under new ESRC centres policy a centre would be eligible to apply once for a centres competition during the period of their full centre competition grant (defined by the start and end date of the centre grant) and once again for centres competition funding during the term of the Transition funding (defined by the start and end date of the transition grant). This means during the eight to ten year period of full centre and transition funding the centre can apply twice to the open competition.

We anticipate that centres competitions will typically be held every two years.

If the new Centres Competition proposal is judged to be substantively different in scope and work programme from the existing centre with transition funding, this would be considered a new centre (and the ‘count’ for eligibility to apply for ESRC institute status would restart). Only in the circumstances that a centre director is proposing a new centre would dual involvement be considered. Standard ESRC research funding rules would apply for staff engaged in more than one ESRC grant (see ESRC Research Funding Guide, page 27: [http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/research-funding-guide/](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/research-funding-guide/)).

**Can Transition funding be used to support data infrastructure?**

No. Transition funding is intended to support projects that have a mix of research and impact generating activities, or impact generating activities alone. The funding (both ESRC and RO minimum commitment) cannot be used to support data infrastructure (curation/collection of large scale datasets, storage and managing access to datasets).

However, centres that have been funded to conduct research alongside developing data infrastructure may be invited to apply for Transition funding (where not subject to ESRC strategic review). The RO may choose to support data infrastructure over and above the minimum RO contribution.
My centre supported a data service / infrastructure to meet the needs of stakeholders and users in academia and beyond, as well as conducting research? Will this track record in meeting user data needs be considered as part of the track record of the centre in the process of Transition Review?

While Transition Review will not specifically assess the track record of the centre in terms of providing a service (as this will not receive transition funding), the application should outline the track record of the centre in meeting its aims and objectives to date, with a focus, as with other centres applying, on:

- Research excellence and scientific impact to date.
- Capacity building, knowledge exchange and impact through engagement with research users
- Management of the centre

The infrastructure investments should be described in terms of the foundations they provide for the planned activities going forward.

My centre supports data infrastructure as well as conducting research, and we have a large number of users (academic, government and industry) of the data across the UK. Can transition funding support activities relating to the provision of this data service?

Although ESRC transition funding cannot be used to fund data infrastructure/ provision of a data service, there are a number of ways in which transition funding could be used to support maximising the outputs and outcomes of the initial period of the centre investment (including the provision of the data service). Transition funding could be used to support impact and research activities that build on the foundations of investment in data infrastructure (eg using the data to conduct new research/ develop methods; activities to share skills and methods; research synthesis of findings based on the dataset and engagement of stakeholders; impact evaluation of the investment; collaborative research and capacity building with stakeholders to meet policy or business/ practice need).