Funding opportunity

Opening up the Environment 2025

Opportunity status:	Open
Funders:	**Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)**
Funding type:	Grant
Total fund:	£1,000,000
Maximum award:	£62,500
Publication date:	18 November 2024
Opening date:	18 November 2024 9:00am UK time
Closing date:	1 April 2025 4:00pm UK time

Apply for funding to:

- explore the potential your organisation or department has to increase diversity of representation attracting a wider talent pool into NERC science
- generate partnerships that identify, include and showcase a broad range of people and skillsets that contribute towards NERC science

You must be:

- based at a UK research organisation eligible for NERC funding
- in a role that meets the individual eligibility requirements

The full economic cost (FEC) of your project can be up to £62,500. We will fund 80% of the FEC.

Your project must start by July 2025 and end by March 2026.

Who can apply

Before applying for funding, check the following:

- **NERC eligibility guidance for applicants**
- **eligibility of your organisation**
- **check your project is in our remit**, if you are unsure whether your proposed research falls within the remit of Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) contact **nercremit@nerc.ukri.org**

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) has introduced new role types for funding opportunities being run on the new UKRI Funding Service.

For full details, visit **eligibility as an individual**.

Who is eligible to apply

We encourage individuals and organisations who do not usually apply to, or receive NERC funding, to consider applying to this funding opportunity.

This funding opportunity is open to research groups and individuals. We welcome applications from:

- individuals from multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary backgrounds
- individuals at any career stage, subject to NERC eligibility criteria

Project co-leads (previously co-investigator) can be based at a UK research organisation eligible for NERC funding. For this NERC funding opportunity, project co-leads may also be based at UK businesses, third sector or government organisations.

Read **including project co-leads from business, third sector or government bodies** for details of eligible organisations and costs. Note that costs associated with project co-leads from a UK business, third sector or government organisation's contribution to a project must not exceed 30% of the overall cost of the grant at 100% FEC. Additionally, eligible costs differ amongst organisation types, for example, for government organisations we will only fund travel and subsistence.

Other ways different organisations can be involved include:

- project partners: people who will not receive funding directly from the award but will have an integral role in the proposed project. Minor directly incurred costs, such as some travel costs, are acceptable
- subcontractors: people responsible for providing a service only

- dual roles: an organisation or individual can act as both a project partner and be paid non-minor costs to be covered by a subcontract, however this must be fully justified. An example of where dual roles might be required is when an organisation or individual is giving to the project in kind but are also funded to deliver other work to the project

Who is not eligible to apply

You may be involved in no more than two applications submitted to this funding opportunity. Only one of these can be as project lead.

Project partners fund their own involvement. We will only fund minor incidental expenses, such as some travel costs, if needed for project partners.

International applicants

As NERC is the lead funder for this funding opportunity, international researchers can apply as 'project co-lead (international)'.

We do not fund overseas organisations, except for specific costs for project co-leads from Norway and the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA). Read more about this in the **NERC eligibility guidance for applicants**.

You should include all other international collaborators (or UK partners not based at approved organisations) as project partners. This includes organisations from the business or financial sectors.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

We are committed to achieving equality of opportunity for all funding applicants. We encourage applications from a diverse range of researchers.

We support people to work in a way that suits their personal circumstances. This includes:

- career breaks
- support for people with caring responsibilities
- flexible working
- alternative working patterns

Find out more about **equality, diversity and inclusion at UKRI** and **NERC's diversity and inclusion action plan**.

What we're looking for

Aim

Our aim is to fund up to 20 pilot grants that develop partnerships and identify the potential to increase the diversity of representation in the NERC community.

Your project will set out equitable, inclusive plans to identify and include a broader diversity of people in the environmental solutions workforce of the future, contributing to increasing diversity and inclusion in the NERC community.

Your project will undertake emerging work to test, scope and pilot approaches that showcase a broader range of people and skill sets to inspire those who have the potential to be part of the future talent pipeline and contribute towards delivering environmental science solutions.

For more information about the current diversity of the NERC community see the 'Additional information' section.

Scope

Your project will focus on developing partnerships and activities that contribute towards increasing the diversity of the future NERC science workforce and those who contribute towards delivering environmental solutions.

Your project will focus on the UK research and innovation community, with clear focus on one or multiple specific areas of **NERC's remit**.

Your project will:

- explore and assess the potential your organisation or department has to increase, support and sustain diversity of representation to attract a wider talent pool to create the future research and innovation workforce that will enable and support NERC science. Your self-assessment should identify actionable activity to achieve project ambitions
- form new, or develop existing, partnerships that support the ambitions and actions needed to identify, include, and showcase individuals from the widest possible talent pool across the research and innovation sector to see "someone like me" working in environmental solutions. Plans will also consider how to increase the breadth of audiences who will be exposed to the skillsets and people delivering NERC science. Partnerships may include; regional partnerships, those with other institutions, other departments within your organisation and with charities or NGO's who share and contribute towards your project's ambitions
- evaluate the impact of your work undertaken from this funding opportunity including sharing relevant lessons learnt, and undertaking evaluation through your project

You should consider approaches that look at enhanced support for additional requirements associated with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. You can choose to focus on any appropriate area, across the protected characteristics, and other areas such as those with caring responsibilities, that may help support the widest pool of talent to be involved in environmental science and related careers. Other areas you could consider with your project may include:

- social mobility
- geographic location
- lived experience
- intersectionality

Explore and assess

You will explore and assess the potential your organisation or department has to increase, support and sustain diversity of representation to attract a wider talent pool to create the future research and innovation workforce that will enable and support NERC science. Your self-assessment should identify actionable activity to achieve project ambitions.

You should consider how positive changes may be achieved through innovative approaches and partnerships to achieve this.

Activities to undertake could include:

- evaluation of existing activities
- survey's and focus groups
- activities to identify work required within your area to bring you in line with other areas of best practice within your organisation or scientific discipline
- mapping of current activities, policies and processes in the organisation against a self-assessment tool
- **creation of a theory of change model (PDF, 101KB)**

You will have the opportunity to use a self-assessment tool, which we will provide, to successfully funded projects. If you anticipate wanting to use the self-assessment tool, you should factor in appropriate resource to engage with the tool and training provided. It is suggested that you set aside the time for two team members to dedicate four working days each to achieve this. You may use the tool to inform and shape your approach to delivery and inform future steps you may choose to take. The self-assessment tool is not available yet but will be shared with successful grant holders once projects commence.

You should consider undertaking ethical evaluation techniques when undertaking self-assessment activities, as detailed in the **SCOPE Principles of evaluating research responsibly report (PDF, 653KB)**.

Your application should include:

- your individual context and why you wish to undertake this work in your department or organisation

- what you understand already about the current state of play of your organisation or department's ability to increase, support and sustain diversity of representation to attract a wider talent pool to create the future research and innovation workforce that will enable and support NERC science

- a summary of your ambitions in increasing, supporting and sustaining diversity of representation

- barriers you think exist and the actions that could be taken to remove these, and why this is important in your context to do so

- what activities you'd undertake to build or develop partnerships to achieve your ambitions

- any other activities you anticipate undertaking to inform your future approach to increasing diversity of representation

Partnerships

You will enhance or form new partnerships that support the ambitions and actions needed to identify, include, and showcase a broader range of people and skillsets that contribute to delivering NERC science. Plans will also consider how to increase the breadth of audiences who will be exposed to the skillsets and people delivering NERC science.

Appropriate partnerships could be:

- across departments or teams
- across organisations
- between research teams and professional service teams
- across science research discipline areas
- with partner organisations, which could include educational establishments such as local technical colleges
- with local non-academic communities
- with specific national or regional non-academic communities
- with charities, NGO's or third sector organisations
- working with people with lived experience (PWLE)
- any others related to addressing the potential your organisation or department has to achieve increasing diversity of representation to attract a wider talent pool to create the future research and innovation workforce that will enable and support NERC science

The activities you may wish to cover can include:

- those which contribute towards building relationships with new partners or building upon existing ones
- hosting collaborative meetings (digitally or in person)
- transport to meetings

- exploring the benefits of collaboration to addressing the potential your organisation or department has to achieve increasing diversity of representation
- payment to partners working on the project
- evaluation of existing partnerships, to inform future approaches
- co-creation of theory of change models

Funding must be used to cover the staff time of individuals at your own organisation and the identified partners organisation, unless those partners are also in receipt of funding from this funding opportunity. Your organisation or department must not have their cost covered in more than one application for the same work deliverables, it is your responsibility as applicants to ensure that you are not applying for double funding.

As part of building partnerships, you will be required to interact and where appropriate collaborate with others in the funded cohort. With this in mind, you should set aside an appropriate amount of resource, including budget to enable engagement including attendance to one in person event, expected to be in October 2025 in the UK. Project leads will be expected to attend.

Your application must include:

- detail as to how you anticipate involvement and contribution to the collaborative working element and allocate resource as appropriate. For example, you may choose to allocate a percentage of an individual's time on the project to attend collaboration meetings, and appropriate budget to attend in person meetings
- consideration about how you wish to work with others in receipt of funding from this funding opportunity, and the wider NERC community. It is anticipated that you will be required to attend one in person meeting, and several virtual meetings (duration and amount to be discussed with funded projects). Here we expect to see detail of how you will share learnings from your work, with the wider NERC community. We suggested factoring in a minimum of 15 hours of staff time to engage in potential collaboration activities, if you wish to do so

Although we use the term partnership in this funding opportunity, to pay for the time of organisations staff involvement from this grant you must list them as a collaborator when completing your application. In this instance organisations can include charities, NGO's and third sector organisations.

If your team has members who are people with lived experience (PWLE), as individuals they can be listed in the core team but cannot claim overhead costs. It is up to that individual if they require payment for their time and the amounts. You may wish to explore the possibility of hiring PWLE on casual contracts at the project leads organisation for the purpose of your project.

Deliver collaboratively

By working with the cohort of other funded projects through this funding opportunity, you will explore ways of working to deliver shared ambitions, share learnings and develop skills. This may include identifying partnership or collaboration opportunities between projects now or in the future.

You will be required to work collaboratively where possible, as a funded cohort via the support network approach, to:

- share learnings
- take part in the appropriate workshops, training sessions and so on, as detailed in the support approach, see the 'Additional information' section for more details

Applications for funding must include:

- details on how you anticipate, or would like, to work with others within the funded cohort
- you must provide appropriate evidence of project resource being used to contribute towards this activity

Evaluating impact

You will evaluate the impact of work undertaken from this funding opportunity including sharing relevant lessons learnt, and undertaking evaluation throughout your project.

A short evaluation template will be provided. Your project evaluations must have appropriately allocated resource and an evaluation plan. Your evaluation approach must include:

- to what extent your project met its aims and objectives, including those of this funding opportunity
- celebration of achievements
- learnings from partnership working
- impacts and benefits achieved through funded work
- experience of receiving funding

Applications must include:

- details on how you anticipate to evaluate your project
- appropriate evidence of project resource being used to contribute towards this activity

Leadership team

You must create a leadership team founded on equitable partnerships with appropriate individuals, departments and organisations. Examples of achieving this could be through:

- ensuring equity across all the project members with clear roles and relationships, lines of responsibility and accountability, ways of working and safeguarding practices
- listening, collaborating and responding to needs, challenges and opportunities (with ability to adapt in-line with complex and uncertain situations), reciprocal learning
- planning in all costs associated with inclusion of the leadership team are fully justified and planning sufficient time for partnership activities
- considering potential issues of intellectual property

For this funding opportunity we require your leadership team to:

- have a minimum of two representatives with lived experience relating to the areas of under-representation you are intending to address. For example, if you are wishing to address barriers around accessibility for disabled members of staff, you are required to have two representatives with a lived experience of accessibility needs on your leadership team
- have professional enabling staff, beyond those usually involved in project delivery. This could include human resources (HR), recruitment representatives, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) specialists, engagement and communication specialists. These individuals' involvements would not be funded from the estates and indirect costs awarded
- host professional development opportunities for PhD students and early career researchers via full appropriate involvement in the leadership team where possible. More experienced members of the team will be required to provide the right support for these individuals to meaningfully engage with their leadership team role
- recognise research and innovation associates, allocating specific roles and responsibilities where appropriate
- recognise those in their early to mid careers outside of research facing roles, for example early career support staff or technicians

Portfolio approach

In order to ensure we fund a diverse portfolio of applications through this funding opportunity, a portfolio approach will be used.

This involves a secondary tensioning activity at the end of the panel meeting in which NERC staff will consider the diversity of funded projects across the following areas:

- the geographical spread of funded organisations
- diversity of areas of potential in addressing under-representation. These could be social mobility, lived experience, caring responsibilities and intersectionality

Duration

The duration of this award is nine months.

Projects must start by 1 July 2025.

Projects must end by 31 March 2026.

Funding available

The full economic cost (FEC) of your project can be up to £62,500.

We will fund 80% (up to £50,000) of the FEC with the following exceptions:

- eligible costs for international project co-lead (previously co-investigator) involvement would be funded at 100%

What we will fund

We will fund facilities costs for this funding opportunity.

What we will not fund

We will not fund:

- PhD studentship costs
- requests for equipment of £10,000 and over are not part of this funding opportunity. You should request smaller items of equipment (under £10,000 individually) under 'Consumables (other directly incurred costs)' in your application
- costs for ship and marine equipment (SME)

Supporting skills and talent

We encourage you to follow the principles of the **Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers** and the **Technician Commitment**.

Trusted Research and Innovation

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) is committed in ensuring that effective international collaboration in research and innovation takes place with integrity and within strong ethical frameworks. Trusted Research and Innovation (TR&) is a UKRI work programme designed to help protect all those working in our thriving and collaborative international sector by enabling partnerships to be as open as possible, and as secure as necessary. Our **TR&I Principles** set out UKRI's expectations of organisations funded by UKRI in relation to due diligence for international collaboration.

As such, applicants for UKRI funding may be asked to demonstrate how your proposed projects will comply with our approach and expectation towards TR&I,

identifying potential risks and the relevant controls you will put in place to help proportionately reduce these risks.

See **further guidance and information about TR&I**, including where applicants can find additional support.

Data management

You must adhere to UKRI open research policy and NERC data policy and complete the 'Data management and sharing' question.

For details of data centres, see the **NERC Environmental Data Service**.

We will pay the data centre directly on behalf of the programme for archival and curation services, but you should ensure that you request sufficient resource to cover preparation of data for archiving by the research team. Additional services from the data centres, such as database development or a specialist in project data management during your project, will need to be discussed with the relevant data centre prior to submission, costs for additional services will need to be funded from your grant.

Responsible research

Through our funding processes, we seek to make a positive contribution to society and the environment. This is not just through project outputs and outcomes but through the way in which projects are conducted and facilities managed.

All award holders are to adopt responsible practices, which are also known as responsible research practices as set out in the **NERC responsible business statement**.

Responsible research is defined as reducing harm or enhancing benefit on the environment and society through effective management of research activities and facilities. Specifically, this covers:

- the natural environment
- the local community
- equality, diversity and inclusion

You should consider the responsible research context of your project, not the host institution as a whole. You should take action to enhance your responsible research approach where practical and reasonable.

When addressing this in your project you may wish to detail why individual team members are involved. For example, if you have a centralised support staff involved from an organisational level, how their role links to or supports environmental science research.

How to apply

We are running this funding opportunity on the new UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Funding Service so ensure that your organisation is registered. You cannot apply on the Joint Electronic Submissions (Je-S) system.

The project lead is responsible for completing the application process on the Funding Service, but we expect all team members and project partners to contribute to the application.

Only the lead research organisation can submit an application to UKRI.

Watch our recording on **how to apply for an opportunity in the Funding Service**.

To apply

Select 'Start application' near the beginning of this Funding finder page.

1. Confirm you are the project lead.
2. Sign in or create a Funding Service account. To create an account, select your organisation, verify your email address, and set a password. If your organisation is not listed, email **support@funding-service.ukri.org** Allow at least 10 working days for your organisation to be added to the Funding Service. We strongly suggest that if you are asking UKRI to add your organisation to the Funding Service to enable you to apply to this funding opportunity, that you also create an organisation Administration Account. This will be needed to allow the acceptance and management of any grant that might be offered to you.
3. Answer questions directly in the text boxes. You can save your answers and come back to complete them or work offline and return to copy and paste your answers. If we need you to upload a document, follow the upload instructions in the Funding Service. All questions and assessment criteria are listed in the 'How to apply' section on this Funding finder page.
4. Allow enough time to check your application in 'read-only' view before sending to your research office.
5. Send the completed application to your research office for checking. They will return it to you if it needs editing.
6. Your research office will submit the completed and checked application to UKRI.

Where indicated, you can also demonstrate elements of your responses in visual form if relevant. You should:

- use images sparingly and only to convey important information that cannot easily be put into words
- insert each new image onto a new line
- provide a descriptive legend for each image immediately underneath it (this counts towards your word limit)
- ensure that files are smaller than 5MB and in JPEG, JPG, JPE, JFI, JIF, JFIF, PNG, GIF, BMP or WEBP format

Watch our **research office webinars about the new Funding Service**.

For more guidance on the Funding Service, see:

- **how applicants use the Funding Service**
- **how research offices use the Funding Service**
- **how reviewers use the Funding Service**

References

Applications should be self-contained, and hyperlinks should only be used to provide links directly to reference information. To ensure the information's integrity is maintained, where possible, persistent identifiers such as digital object identifiers should be used. Assessors are not required to access links to carry out assessment or recommend a funding decision. You should use your discretion when including references and prioritise those most pertinent to your application.

Reference should be included in the appropriate question section of the application and be easily identifiable by the assessors, for example (Smith, Research Paper, 2019).

You must not include links to web resources to extend your application.

Deadline

We must receive your application by 1 April 2025 at 4:00pm UK time.

You will not be able to apply after this time. Make sure you are aware of and follow any internal institutional deadlines.

Following the submission of your application to the funding opportunity, your application cannot be changed, and applications will not be returned for amendment. If your application does not follow the guidance, it may be rejected.

Personal data

Processing personal data

NERC, as part of UKRI, will need to collect some personal information to manage your Funding Service account and the registration of your funding applications.

We will handle personal data in line with UK data protection legislation and manage it securely. For more information, including how to exercise your rights, read **our privacy notice**.

Publication of outcomes

NERC, as part of UKRI, will publish the outcomes of this funding opportunity at **What NERC has funded**.

If your application is successful, we will publish some personal information on the **UKRI Gateway to Research**.

Summary

Word limit: 550

In plain English, provide a summary we can use to identify the most suitable experts to assess your application.

We usually make this summary publicly available on external-facing websites, therefore do not include any confidential or sensitive information. Make it suitable for a variety of readers, for example:

- opinion-formers
- policymakers
- the public
- the wider research community

Guidance for writing a summary

Clearly describe your proposed work in terms of:

- context
- the challenge the project addresses
- aims and objectives
- potential applications and benefits

Core team

List the key members of your team and assign them roles from the following:

- project lead (PL)
- project co-lead (UK) (PcL)
- project co-lead (international) (PcL (I))

- specialist
- grant manager
- professional enabling staff
- research and innovation associate
- technician
- visiting researcher
- researcher co-lead (RcL)

Only list one individual as project lead.

The project lead is responsible for setting up and completing the application process on the Funding Service.

The project co-lead international may only be used for collaborators based at the **International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA)** and in **Norway**, where NERC has collaboration agreements in place. We do not otherwise accept project co-lead (international) applicants.

Find out more about **UKRI's core team roles in funding applications**.

Application questions

Vision

Word limit: 2,000

What are you hoping to achieve with your proposed work?

What the assessors are looking for in your response

Explain how your proposed work:

- is of excellent quality and importance within or beyond the field or area
- has the potential to advance current understanding, or generate new knowledge, thinking or discovery within or beyond the field or area
- is timely given current trends, context, and needs
- impacts world-leading research, society, the economy, or the environment

Within this section we also expect you to:

- how your project addresses the priorities of the funding opportunity
- identify the potential direct or indirect benefits and who the beneficiaries might be
- explain the rationale for wanting to identify and include a broader diversity of people in the environmental solutions workforce of the future, than who are currently represented in the NERC community. within your department, or organisation

- highlight the challenges around under-representation you anticipate addressing

References may be included within this section.

You may demonstrate elements of your responses in visual form if relevant. Further details are provided in the 'How to apply' section.

Approach

Word limit: 2,000

How are you going to deliver your proposed work?

What the assessors are looking for in your response

Explain how you have designed your approach so that it:

- is effective and appropriate to achieve your objectives
- is feasible, and comprehensively identifies any risks to delivery and how they will be managed
- will maximise translation of outputs into outcomes and impacts

Within this section we also expect you to:

- engages with a specific public group or groups, relevant to your project's objectives, working with partner and intermediary organisations where appropriate
- embeds equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI)
- embeds detailed and considered evaluation plans to ensure your approach is fit for purpose, relevant and appropriate to your context
- demonstrate access to the appropriate services, facilities, infrastructure, or equipment to deliver the proposed work
- provide a detailed and comprehensive project plan including milestones and timelines in the form of a Gantt chart or similar
- include a detailed and appropriate plan for how you will acquire and manage data
- highlight how you will meet the aims and objectives of this funding opportunity
- if applicable highlight any previous work done on addressing under-representation challenges and how you intend to build upon this
- provide a high-level project plan detailing key milestones and high level timelines

References may be included within this section.

You may demonstrate elements of your responses in visual form if relevant. Further details are provided in the 'How to apply' section.

Applicant and team capability to deliver

Word limit: 1,650

Why are you the right individual or team to successfully deliver the proposed work?

What the assessors are looking for in your response

Evidence of how you, and if relevant your team, have:

- the relevant experience (appropriate to career stage) to deliver the proposed work
- the right balance of skills and expertise to cover the proposed work
- the appropriate leadership and management skills to deliver the work and your approach to develop others
- contributed to developing a positive research environment and wider community

You may demonstrate elements of your responses in visual form if relevant. Further details are provided in the 'How to apply' section.

The word limit for this section is 1,650 words: 1,150 words to be used for R4RI modules (including references) and, if necessary, a further 500 words for Additions.

Use the Résumé for Research and Innovation (R4RI) format to showcase the range of relevant skills you and, if relevant, your team (project co-leads, researchers, technicians, specialists, partners and so on) have and how this will help deliver the proposed work. You can include individuals' specific achievements but only choose past contributions that best evidence their ability to deliver this work.

Complete this section using the R4RI module headings listed. Use each heading once and include a response for the whole team, see the **UKRI guidance on R4RI**. You should consider how to balance your answer, and emphasise where appropriate the key skills each team member brings:

- contributions to the generation of new ideas, tools, methodologies, or knowledge
- the development of others and maintenance of effective working relationships
- contributions to the wider research and innovation community
- contributions to broader research or innovation users and audiences and towards wider societal benefit

Complete this as a narrative. Do not format it like a CV.

References may be included within this section.

UKRI has introduced new role types for funding opportunities being run on the Funding Service.

For full details, see **Eligibility as an individual**.

Additions

Provide any further details relevant to your application. This section is optional and can be up to 500 words. You should not use it to describe additional skills, experiences, or outputs, but you can use it to describe any factors that provide context for the rest of your R4RI (for example, details of career breaks if you wish to disclose them).

Ethics and responsible research and innovation (RRI)

Word limit: 500

What are the ethical or RRI implications and issues relating to the proposed work? If you do not think that the proposed work raises any ethical or RRI issues, explain why.

What the assessors are looking for in your response

Demonstrate that you have identified and evaluated:

- the relevant ethical or responsible research and innovation considerations
- how you will manage these considerations
- consideration for preventing environmental harm and enhancing environmental benefit in line with **NERC's responsible business statement**

If you are collecting or using data, identify:

- any legal and ethical considerations of collecting, releasing or storing the data including consent, confidentiality, anonymisation, security and other ethical considerations and, in particular, strategies to not preclude further re-use of data
- formal information standards with which your study will comply

You may demonstrate elements of your responses in visual form if relevant. Further details are provided in the 'How to apply' section.

Research involving human participation

Word limit: 700

Will the project involve the use of human subjects or their personal information?

What the assessors are looking for in your response

If you are proposing research that requires the involvement of human subjects, provide the name of any required approving body and whether approval is

already in place.

Justify the number and the diversity of the participants involved, as well as any procedures.

Provide details of any areas of substantial or moderate severity of impact.

If this does not apply to your proposed work, you will be able to indicate this in the 'How to apply' section.

Project partners

Add details about any project partners' contributions. If there are no project partners, you can indicate this on the Funding Service.

A project partner is a collaborating organisation who will have an integral role in the proposed research. This may include direct (cash) or indirect (in-kind) contributions such as expertise, staff time or use of facilities.

Add the following project partner details:

- organisation name and address (searchable via a drop-down list or enter the organisation's details manually, as applicable)
- project partner contact name and email address
- type of contribution (direct or in-direct) and its monetary value

If a detail is entered incorrectly and you have saved the entry, remove the specific project partner record and re-add it with the correct information.

For audit purposes, UKRI requires formal collaboration agreements to be put in place if an award is made.

Data management and sharing

Word limit: 500

How will you manage and share data collected or acquired through the proposed research?

What the assessors are looking for in your response

Provide a data management plan that clearly details how you will comply with UKRI's published **data sharing policy**, which includes detailed guidance notes.

Indicate:

- which NERC data centre is required to archive the data
- whether the total volume of data is likely to be larger than 1TB
- any other detail on how you will comply with NERC data policy

Resources and cost justification

Word limit: 1,500

What will you need to deliver your proposed work and how much will it cost?

What the assessors are looking for in your response

Justify the application's more costly resources, in particular:

- project staff
- significant travel for field work or collaboration (but not regular travel between collaborating organisations or to conferences)
- any consumables beyond typical requirements, or that are required in exceptional quantities
- all facilities and infrastructure costs
- all resources that have been costed as 'Exceptions'

Assessors are not looking for detailed costs or a line-by-line breakdown of all project resources. Overall, they want to be assured that:

- all resources are comprehensive, appropriate, and justified
- the project will make optimal use of resources to achieve the intended outcomes maximise potential outcomes and impacts

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How we will assess your application

Assessment process

We will assess your application using the following process.

Shortlisting

An expert panel will review the applications and provide comments and scores for each application. Shortlisted applications will go to an assessment panel who will make a funding recommendation.

Assessment panel

We will invite experts to use the evidence provided in your application to assess the quality of your application and rank it alongside others, after which the panel will make a funding recommendation.

Timescale

We aim to complete the assessment process within six months of the funding opportunity closing date.

Random allocation approach

Random allocation will only be used where necessary to allocate funding between equally scored applications.

For example, if there is sufficient budget to support all applications scoring 10 and nine these are automatically funded. In a situation where the budget can also support some applications scoring eight, but not all, those scoring eight are randomly allocated funding.

We undertake this approach to reduce the potential for unconscious bias, and the potential to improve diversity of awardees, though we understand this is not guaranteed due to the random nature of the process and the unknown nature of what applications are submitted to NERC.

We will use the recommendations of the assessment panel along with the overall funding opportunity requirements and the available budget to inform our funding decision.

We will make the final funding decision.

Feedback

We will give feedback with the outcome of your application.

We reserve the right to work with successful applicants post assessment to discuss any aspect of the application before award (for example, discuss panel feedback or requirements from NERC).

Principles of assessment

We support the **San Francisco declaration on research assessment** and recognise the relationship between research assessment and research integrity.

Find out about the UK Research and Innovation **principles of assessment and decision making**.

We reserve the right to modify the assessment process as needed.

Assessment areas

The areas against which your application will be assessed are:

- vision
- approach
- applicant and team capability to deliver
- ethics and responsible research and innovation
- resource and cost justification

Find details of assessment questions and criteria under the 'Application questions' heading in the 'How to apply' section.

Contact details

Get help with your application

If you have a question and the answers aren't provided on this page

Important note: The Helpdesk is committed to helping users of the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Funding Service as effectively and as quickly as possible. In order to manage cases at peak volume times, the Helpdesk will triage and prioritise those queries with an imminent funding opportunity deadline or a technical issue. Enquiries raised where information is available on the Funding Finder opportunity page and should be understood early in the application process (for example, regarding eligibility or content/remit of a funding opportunity) will not constitute a priority case and will be addressed as soon as possible.

Contact details

For help and advice on costings and writing your application, contact your research office in the first instance, allowing sufficient time for your organisation's submission process.

For questions related to this specific funding opportunity, contact **openingup@nerc.ukri.org**

Any queries regarding the system or the submission of applications through the Funding Service should be directed to the helpdesk.

Email: **support@funding-service.ukri.org**
Phone: 01793 547490

Our phone lines are open:

- Monday to Thursday 8:30am to 5:00pm
- Friday 8:30am to 4:30pm

To help us process queries quicker, we request that users highlight the council and funding opportunity name in the subject title of their email query, include the application reference number, and refrain from contacting more than one mailbox at a time.

See further information on **submitting an application**.

Sensitive information

If you or a core team member need to tell us something you wish to remain confidential, email **openingup@nerc.ukri.org**

Include in the subject line: Opening up the Environment; sensitive information; your Funding Service application number.

Typical examples of confidential information include:

- individual is unavailable until a certain date (for example due to parental leave)
- declaration of interest
- additional information about eligibility to apply that would not be appropriately shared in the 'Applicant and team capability' section
- conflict of interest for UKRI to consider in reviewer or panel participant selection

For information about how UKRI handles personal data, read **UKRI's privacy notice**.

Additional info

Background

NERC has published **funding investment data** around funding investments between 2014 to 2015 and 2019 to 2020 which reports on the community diversity and prevalence of differential outcomes for gender and ethnicity.

It is our ambition that these projects will deliver action 3.5 of the **NERC Diversity and Inclusion Living Action Plan 2022-2025**.

"Work in partnership with environmental science institutions (such as higher education institutions) to improve the diversity of visible role models to attract under-represented groups into environmental sciences, providing support to develop individuals."

Research and innovation impact

Impact can be defined as the long-term intended or unintended effect research and innovation has on society, economy and the environment; to individuals, organisations, and the wider global population.

Additional disability and accessibility adjustments

UKRI can offer **disability and accessibility support for UKRI applicants and grant holders** during the application and assessment process if required.

Webinar for potential applicants

We will hold a webinar on Wednesday 22 January 2025 at 2:00 to 3:00 pm UK time. The webinar will provide more information about the funding opportunity and a chance to ask questions.

Register for the webinar

A recording will be made available after the event for those who are unable to attend.

Partnership finder

To help support applications to this funding opportunity, we are piloting a partnership finder. If you are interested in offering your skills and expertise to partnerships, or seeking someone with particular expertise for your partnership, you can register your information to be shared.

Please note information provided will be publicly accessible via the link. All information will be stored and treated in line with **UKRI's privacy notice**.

Visit the **Opening up the Environment (OutE) partnership finder**.

Support network approach

To bring award holders together and facilitate the required collaborative approach for funding, we will pilot a support network approach through the delivery phase of the funding. Award holders are required to set aside resource to engage with this funding opportunity.

Details of this support are to be confirmed but are anticipated to include:

- in person meetings – at least one in October 2025
- digital meetings
- networking and collaborative opportunities with other award holders
- information, and question and answer opportunities with us about related funding opportunities
- shared training for related funding opportunities such as completing equality impact assessments, evaluation and impact planning
- access to mentoring and coaching in developing potential applications to related funded opportunities if desired

We are piloting this way of supporting award holders, and we are keen to ensure the support delivered matches the needs of the project teams.

Writing style guidance

To reduce the potential for unconscious bias in the assessment of your application, you are encouraged to write your answers to the assessment questions so they do not include identifiable information.

In this instance identifiable information would include anything related to the protected characteristics as covered by the Equality Act 2010.

Ways in which to achieve this include:

- for full names, use initials instead. For example: instead of writing John Smith or Jane Doe, write J.S or J.D
- for pronouns, use gender neutral terms instead. For example: instead of writing "she or he will be responsible for delivery of this project", write "they will be responsible for the delivery of this project"
- when talking around other areas of protected characteristics such as disability, race, ethnicity, or other identifiable characteristics, take care to write your application in a way that does not identify individuals who may hold that characteristic. For example: instead of writing "J.S, who is a wheelchair user, will be involved in the project", write "a member of the project team with lived experience of requiring access support, will be involved with the project"

We will still accept applications where identifiable information is included. The assessment panel will be briefed to assess responsibly and take action to reduce unconscious bias where possible.

Characteristics of previously funded grants

To help applicants to this funding opportunity, we are providing a high-level summary of project characteristics of previous proposals successfully funded from the NERC community engagement team (previously known as the public engagement team).

The advice given here is only a reflection of characteristics expected to be seen in applications to this funding opportunity.

These are areas for you to consider in your application. Characteristics of successfully funded projects include:

- applications co-written with specialists and academic leads (for example equality, diversity and inclusion specialists)
- appropriate range of project partners listed and involved in co-designing the project approach
- strong evaluation, considered throughout the whole project
- clear specified areas of scope, for example audiences and location, with clear rationale
- equality, diversity and inclusion well considered throughout the project

- realistic in delivery of project for example timelines and budget
- impact has been well considered and communicated

Our commitment to the principles of the Modern Slavery Act 2015

Modern slavery is a crime and a violation of fundamental human rights. It takes various forms which deprive a person of their liberty in order to exploit them for personal or commercial gain, such as:

- slavery
- servitude
- human trafficking
- forced and compulsory labour

We are committed to the principles of the Modern Slavery Act 2015, and the abolition of modern slavery and human trafficking.

Research disruption due to COVID-19

We recognise that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused major interruptions and disruptions across our communities. We are committed to ensuring that individual applicants and their wider team, including partners and networks, are not penalised for any disruption to their career, such as:

- breaks and delays
- disruptive working patterns and conditions
- the loss of ongoing work
- role changes that may have been caused by the pandemic

Reviewers and panel members will be advised to consider the unequal impacts that COVID-19 related disruption might have had on the capability to deliver and career development of those individuals included in the application. They will be asked to consider the capability of the applicant, and their wider team, to deliver the research they are proposing.

Where disruptions have occurred, you can highlight this within your application if you wish, but there is no requirement to detail the specific circumstances that caused the disruption.

Timeline

○ **18 November 2024 9:00am**
  Opening date

○ **22 January 2025 2:00pm**
Webinar

○ **1 April 2025 4:00pm**
Closing date

○ **1 July 2025**
Must start by

○ **31 March 2026**
Must end date

Guidance on good research

[Good research resource hub](#)

https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/opening-up-the-environment-2025