



Funding opportunity

Pre-announcement: UKRI Creating opportunities: rethinking economic (in)activity

Opportunity status:	Upcoming
Funders:	UK Research and Innovation, Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) , Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) , Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) , Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) , Innovate UK , Medical Research Council (MRC) , Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)
Funding type:	Grant
Total fund:	£1,200,000
Maximum award:	£1,200,000
Publication date:	2 December 2024
Opening date:	3 February 2025 9:00am UK time
Closing date:	6 May 2025 4:00pm UK time

Apply for funding to deliver an interdisciplinary project that will identify ways of supporting economic activity in places experiencing high rates of ill-health, disability, and informal care in the UK.

You must be based at a UK research organisation eligible for UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) funding. We welcome proposals that include team members and project partners from outside academia.

The full economic cost (FEC) of your project can be up to £1,200,000. UKRI will fund 80% of the FEC. Funding is for a single award.

The project must begin by 12 January 2026 and run for 24 months.

Who can apply

Before applying for funding, check the [eligibility of your organisation](#).

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) is introducing new role types for opportunities being run on the new UKRI Funding Service.

For full details please see [eligibility as an individual](#).

Who is eligible to apply

This is a UKRI-wide funding opportunity.

The project lead for this funding opportunity must be based at an organisation eligible for UKRI funding for the duration of the grant.

The project lead must ensure that they contribute a proportion of their time to the overall leadership and coordination of the grant, in addition to any time allocated to research and knowledge mobilisation activities.

Applications may be submitted jointly by more than one applicant. In such cases, one person must be regarded as the project lead taking the lead responsibility for the conduct of the project and the observance of the terms and conditions.

Correspondence regarding the proposal and grant will be addressed to the project lead only (and in the case of any offer letter, to their research office).

All project co-leads must make a significant contribution to the conduct of the project.

See [further information on costs that can be included](#).

International applicants

Project leads from non-UK organisations are not eligible to apply for funding for this opportunity.

Project co-leads based in non-UK research organisations can be included in research grant applications. See details of [eligible organisations and costs](#).

Business, third sector or government body project co-leads

Applicants are strongly encouraged to include project co-leads from business, the third sector or government bodies based in the UK.

See details of [eligible organisations and costs](#).

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
- joint lead applicants

Find out more about [equality, diversity and inclusion at UKRI](#).

Resubmissions

We will not accept uninvited resubmissions of projects that have been submitted to UKRI.

Find out more about [ESRC's resubmissions policy](#).

What we're looking for

This funding opportunity falls under UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)'s [Creating Opportunities, Improving Outcomes strategic theme](#), which seeks to improve outcomes for people and places across the UK by identifying solutions that promote economic and social prosperity.

Funding is for a single award.

Clarification of what we mean by key concepts used in this funding opportunity have been provided in the 'additional information' section.

Context

A record number of people are registered as economically inactive across the UK, with a significant proportion not in local labour markets because of ill-

health, disability, and informal caregiving responsibilities. This has profound implications for individuals, households, and local communities, as well as for the UK's economy and society as a whole.

Not everyone who is economically inactive due to health or care-related reasons wants a job, nor is work always appropriate for them. A high number of people do want to work, however, but are hampered from doing so due to complex and interrelated personal and structural factors.

These factors and their effects are not felt evenly across the country. Place plays an important role in a person's chances of accessing (and keeping) work when experiencing ill-health, living with a disability, or providing informal care. Labour market outcomes are influenced by local environmental, social, and economic conditions, including demographic trends, employment services, education and training, housing, health, transportation, and community networks.

Aim

Funding is for a single innovative, interdisciplinary, and collaborative project to identify ways of supporting good quality, sustainable economic activity in places experiencing high rates of ill-health, disability, and informal care in the UK.

Scope

The successful project will work across four areas.

The project will develop a deeper contextual understanding of place-based economic inactivity in the UK, with a focus on:

- how different place-based and systemic factors interact to shape and condition health, disability, and informal care-driven economic inactivity at the local level in the UK
- how this economic inactivity, in turn, shapes and conditions local economic conditions and local labour market opportunities
- what types of support are offered to people experiencing ill-health, disability, or informal caring responsibilities, to help them access, remain in, and progress in work. How does this vary between places? How have support offered and the actors involved changed over time?
- what types of support are most effective in assisting economic activity long-term among these groups, and in what contexts. How can this learning inform the design and implementation of effective future support?

In this opportunity, we are interested in informal caregiving as it relates to working age adults providing unpaid care for adult relatives, friends, and neighbours.

The project will actively bridge the research-to-practice gap by:

- better understanding how those designing policy and delivering support activities in the UK acquire and update their knowledge about best practice and ‘what works’, and how they apply this learning to their day-to-day practice
- mobilising this knowledge and developing practical recommendations to support learning and the use of evidence among those designing and delivering support in the UK (including policymakers and employers)
- working collaboratively with a local partner or local partners based in the UK to actively foster learning and evidence-based practice. This could include, for example, working in partnership with a local employer to co-develop targeted recommendations

The project will explore options for widening access to administrative data for inactivity research by:

- working in partnership with Administrative Data Research UK (ADR UK) and other key data stakeholders to co-identify what existing government and publicly held data could be linked to support future policy and research around economic (in)activity
- co-developing a roadmap and delivery plan for opening up future data access with ADR UK and data stakeholders. Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)’s ADR UK team will provide support for this part of the project, including data expertise and by facilitating connections with data owners, data users, and the Office for National Statistics (ONS)

The successful project team will refine the final agreed set of deliverables with ADR UK and UKRI. Applicants are encouraged to look at the [HM Revenue and Customs Research Future Strategy](#) as a recent example of a similar scoping project.

The project will explore and set out what a potential future research agenda in this space could look like. This could include:

- convening a series of workshops with relevant stakeholders to co-identify persistent and future trends, policy challenges and evidence gaps that require further investigation
- co-developing future research directions and articulating future questions
- exploring how administrative data and quantitative data can be appropriately linked with qualitative data to enrich the evidence base
- setting out the capacity-building, resource, and data infrastructure requirements needed to support future investments in this space

We are aware that terminology in this area can be contentious or sensitive and welcome fresh approaches to framing relevant issues, including those that draw on the views of people with lived experience as necessary.

Requirements

Place-based approaches

You must focus on places and communities in the UK. You can include a comparative or international dimension, but any findings, insights, and recommendations must have a bearing on the UK context.

For the purposes of this funding opportunity, we define place-based approaches as those describing a diverse range of activities that target a place or location, to build on local strengths or respond to a complex social and economic problem(s).

Applicants are free to define their own approach to 'place' but must provide rationales for this choice, explaining how the proposed activity and methodology will address place-based economic inactivity in the UK.

We recognise that place-based studies are not always easily generalisable to wider populations. You must, however, outline the transferability of your research findings and learning to other contexts within the UK. This is especially important if your research is conducted in a single locality or a small number of research sites.

Whole system approach

The successful project will incorporate a multi-dimensional approach to the phenomenon that goes beyond a focus on individual determinants and factors influencing economic (in)activity.

Partnerships

Partnerships and collaborative working are an integral component to this funding opportunity.

Preference will be given to proposals that include appropriate team members and project partners from outside of academia. You should check [UKRI eligibility rules](#) to ensure roles and costings are correct.

We welcome proposals that involve people with lived experiences (PWLE) of ill health, disability, and informal caregiving. Where proposals include PWLE, you should explain how you will be involved in the design, leadership, governance, and delivery of the project. You must ensure that the involvement of PWLE is fully costed and offer remuneration.

Due to the award's short duration (24 months), you must show evidence that foundational relationships with any non-academic project co-leads, team members, and project partners are already in place, with a clearly articulated and agreed approach to collaborative working.

A non-exhaustive list of non-academic team members and partners that could be involved, subject to [UKRI eligibility rules](#), include:

- government departments

- devolved administrations
- regional and local governments
- other public sector organisations
- employers (public, private and third sector)
- workers' representative organisations, including trade unions and non-union representatives
- private sector organisations, including individual businesses
- member organisations, including local government associations, and business and industry representatives
- professional organisations and bodies such as, the Health and Care Professions Council, the Royal College of Occupational Therapists, and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
- third sector organisations
- social enterprises
- community groups
- individual specialists (professional and non-professional)

Stakeholder engagement

The successful project will be expected to engage meaningfully with a diverse range of stakeholders from the academic, policy, and practitioner communities across different disciplines, policy areas, and the public and private sectors.

You should include details of your proposed stakeholder engagement plans, and your approach(es) to working with stakeholders.

[Innovate UK Business Connect](#) can help you to connect with business and experts outside your usual networks.

Interdisciplinarity

Proposals are expected to be interdisciplinary in nature and team composition, with the successful project embedding insights and approaches from across different disciplines to create new shared knowledge and having a coherent, interdisciplinary work programme.

Staff and expertise can be drawn from any discipline supported by UKRI, including:

- environmental sciences
- engineering and physical sciences
- economic and social sciences
- computational and statistical sciences
- applied mathematical modelling
- the arts, design and humanities
- biosciences

- medical sciences

We particularly welcome proposals that cross over multiple UKRI research council disciplinary boundaries, and which employ mixed-methods research approaches.

New insights and relevance to policy and practice

The successful project will go beyond updated descriptions of place-based economic (in)activity to provide new, actionable evidence. It will generate clear guidance and practical recommendations that policymakers and practitioners can easily adapt and apply to their local context(s).

To ensure proposals are feasible and grounded in local priorities and lived experience, you are strongly encouraged to engage with local stakeholders in a small number of places in the development of bids. Engagement with communities must be equitable and your plans should demonstrate that you have identified their needs and interests.

Your team

We are seeking an interdisciplinary leadership team led by a director, or two co-directors working as a job-share, based at institutions eligible for UKRI funding.

The project's core team should have suitable capability and capacity to undertake both substantive interdisciplinary research and sustained engagement and collaboration on research and knowledge exchange areas.

The core team should include people at different career stages and from different disciplines, who collectively offer:

- thematic expertise within and beyond academia
- the ability to successfully manage interdisciplinary teams and deliver interdisciplinary work packages
- an ability to bring together diverse expertise within projects, conceptually, methodologically, and theoretically
- specialist expertise to support the desired outcomes and knowledge mobilisation

The project core team will be responsible for the formation of a suitable advisory structure. Proposals should include detail of the advisory group, including academic and non-academic members, that will support the project's work programme and oversee the development of key activities. UKRI reserves the right to attend and observe advisory group meetings.

The successful grant holder will provide project progress updates to UKRI twice a year. The formats and timings of these updates will be agreed between the grant holder and UKRI within three months of the award start date.

Duration

The duration of this award is 24 months.

Projects must start by 12 January 2026.

Funding available

The total FEC of your project can be up to £1.2 million.

UKRI will fund 80% of the FEC. Applicants are encouraged to bid for the maximum funding available.

Funding is for a single award.

What we will not fund

Associated studentships are not eligible for inclusion.

A proposal will be automatically excluded from consideration if it does not:

- start by 12 January 2026 at the latest
- last for 24 months
- primarily focus on the UK
- fit the scope of this funding opportunity

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](#).

ESRC data infrastructure

ESRC supports a range of data infrastructures. Where relevant, we encourage applicants to consider whether the use of these resources could add value to the project. See [Facilities and resources](#) for information on finding and using ESRC datasets which are available across the UK.

Where relevant, details of datasets and infrastructure to be used in your project should be given in the Facilities section.

Data requirements

ESRC recognises the importance of data quality and provenance. Data generated, collected, or acquired by ESRC-funded research must be well-managed by the grant holder to enable their data to be exploited to the maximum potential for further research. See our [research data policy](#) for details and further information on [data requirements](#). The requirements of the research data policy are a condition of ESRC research funding.

Where relevant, details on data management and sharing should be provided in the Data management and sharing section. See the [importance of managing and sharing data](#) and [content for inclusion in a data management plan](#) on the UK Data Service (UKDS) website for further guidance. We expect applicants to provide a summary of the points provided. The UKDS [mail: datasharing@ukdataservice.ac.uk] will be pleased to advise applicants on the availability of data within the academic community and provide advice on data deposit requirements.

Research ethics

ESRC requires that the research we support is designed and conducted in such a way that it meets ethical principles and is subject to proper professional and institutional oversight in terms of research governance. We have agreed a framework for research ethics that all submitted proposals must comply with. Read further details about the [framework for research ethics and guidance on compliance](#).

Trusted Research and Innovation (TR&I)

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&I) 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 their 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 you can find additional support.

How to apply

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

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.

To apply

The 'Start application' link will be available when the opportunity opens on 3 February 2025. You should select this link and use the following guidance.

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. Please 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, 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 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 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 reference and prioritise those most pertinent to the application.

References 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.

Generative artificial intelligence (AI)

Use of generative AI tools to prepare funding applications is permitted, however, caution should be applied.

For more information see our policy on the [use of generative AI in application and assessment](#).

Deadline

Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) must receive your application by 4:00pm UK time on 6 May 2025.

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

ESRC, 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](#).

Sensitive information

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

Include in the subject line: [the funding opportunity title; 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
- the application is an invited resubmission

For information about how UKRI handles personal data, read [UKRI's privacy notice](#).

Publication of outcomes

ESRC, as part of UKRI, will publish the outcomes of this funding opportunity at [What ESRC 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 may 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
- approach(es) to partnership, stakeholder engagement and collaborative working
- 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
- doctoral student
- research and innovation associate
- technician
- visiting researcher

Only list one individual as project lead.

Find out more about UKRI's [core team roles in funding applications](#).

Application questions

Vision

Word limit: 600

What are you hoping to achieve with your proposed work?

What the assessors are looking for in your response

Explain how your proposed work:

- aligns with the funding opportunity objectives
- demonstrates a coherent strategic vision and establishes clear outcomes
- is of excellent quality and importance within or beyond the field(s) or area(s)

- has the potential to advance current understanding, or generate new knowledge, thinking or discovery within or beyond the field or area
- has the potential for direct or indirect benefits and identifies who the beneficiaries might be
- embeds a place-based approach

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 Funding Service.

Approach

Word limit: 2,500

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
- is interdisciplinary
- builds on and progresses the existing evidence base around economic (in)activity
- clearly describes the methodology and research methods used and provides justification for their choice. You should mention any challenges associated with any interdisciplinary and mixed methodological approaches, and explain how these will be mitigated
- illustrates your approach to place-based research
- clearly identifies what steps you will take to provide opportunities for users to benefit from your research, and to ensure that your research has maximum economic and societal impact
- describes how your, and if applicable your team's, research environment (in terms of the place and relevance to the project) will contribute to the success of the work
- provides a detailed and comprehensive project plan including milestones and timelines

All applicants planning to generate data as part of their grant must complete the separate Data management and sharing question.

References may be included within this section.

You may demonstrate elements of your responses in visual form if relevant, but these must be added to your application as an embedded image. Further

details are provided in the Funding Service.

Stakeholder engagement, collaborative working, and partnerships

Word limit: 2,500

How will you engage effectively and constructively with a diverse range of relevant stakeholders? How will you work collaboratively with any non-academic team members and partners? (if applicable)

What the assessors are looking for in your response

Explain how you have designed your approach to stakeholder engagement and partnership working 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
- includes an appropriate balance of stakeholders and project partners relevant to the areas of focus
- evidences that foundational relationships with project partners are in place with a clearly articulated approach to partnership working
- ensures equity across the partnership
- identifies what steps you will take to provide opportunities for stakeholders and project partners to benefit from your research
- details a suitable advisory structure

You may demonstrate elements of your responses in visual form if relevant, but these must be added to your application as an embedded image. Further details are provided in the Funding Service.

References may be included within this 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 service.

The word count 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 and 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

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).

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](#).

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

All proposals have to comply with the [ESRC framework for research ethics](#) which includes guidance for applicants and links to related web resources.

All necessary ethical approvals must be in place before the project commences, but do not need to have been secured at the time of application.

If you are generating data as part of your project, you should complete the Data management question and should cover ethical considerations relating to data in your response.

If you are not generating data and have not completed the Data management question you should address any legal or ethical considerations relating to your use of data here.

Additional sub-questions (to be answered only if appropriate) relating to research involving:

- human participants
- human tissues or biological samples

You may demonstrate elements of your responses in visual form if relevant. Further details are provided in the Funding Service.

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 Funding Service.

Research involving human tissues or biological samples

Word limit: 700

Does your proposed research involve the use of human tissues, or biological samples?

What the assessors are looking for in your response

If you are proposing work that involves human tissues or biological samples, provide the name of any required approving body and whether approval is already in place.

Justify the use of human tissue or biological samples specifying the nature and quantity of the material to be used and its source.

If this does not apply to your proposed work, you will be able to indicate this in the Funding Service.

Resources and cost justification

Word limit: 1,000

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 equipment that will cost more than £10,000
- 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 you to demonstrate how the resources you anticipate needing for your proposed work:

- are comprehensive, appropriate, and justified
- represent the optimal use of resources to achieve the intended outcomes
- maximise potential outcomes and impacts

You must identify how support for activities to either increase impact, for public engagement and or to support responsible innovation is costed in this application.

For detailed guidance on eligible costs please see the [ESRC research funding guide](#).

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. Project partners may be in industry, academia, third sector or government organisations in the UK or overseas, including partners based in the EU.

Add the following project partner details:

- the organisation name and address (searchable via a drop-down list or enter the organisation's details manually, as applicable)
- the project partner contact name and email address
- the 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.

Project partners letters or emails of support

Upload a single PDF containing the letters or emails of support from each partner you named in the Project partners section. These should be uploaded in English or Welsh only.

What the assessors are looking for in your response

Enter the words 'attachment supplied' in the text box, or if you do not have any project partners enter 'N/A'. Each letter or email you provide should:

- confirm the partner's commitment to the project
- clearly explain the value, relevance, and possible benefits of the work to them
- describe any additional value that they bring to the project
- be no more than one A4 page in length

The Funding Service will provide document upload details when you apply. If you do not have any project partners, you will be able to indicate this in the

Funding Service.

Ensure you have prior agreement from project partners so that, if you are offered funding, they will support your project as indicated in the project partners' section.

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

Do not provide letters of support from host and project co-leads' research organisations.

Data management and sharing

Word limit: 500

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

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.

Demonstrate that you have designed your proposed work so that you can appropriately manage and share data in accordance with [ESRC's research data policy](#) and [ESRC framework for research ethics](#), if applicable.

Within this section we also expect you to:

- [plan for the research through the life cycle of the award](#) until data is accepted for archiving by the UK Data Service (UKDS) or a responsible data repository
- demonstrate compliance with [ESRC's research data policy](#) and [ESRC framework for research ethics](#). This should include confirmation that existing datasets have been reviewed and why currently available datasets are inadequate for the proposed research
- cover any legal and ethical considerations of collecting, releasing or storing the data, including consent, confidentiality, anonymisation, security and other ethical issues
- include any challenges to data sharing, for example copyright or data confidentiality, with possible solutions discussed to optimise data sharing

If this does not apply to your proposed work, you will be able to indicate this in the Funding Service.

Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)

Word limit: 500

What approaches and activities do you have planned that will embed EDI into your proposed work?

What the assessors are looking for in your response

Explain how your EDI plan:

- is effective and appropriate to embed EDI
- comprehensively identifies the key EDI challenges and how they will be addressed and managed
- will report and measure EDI outcomes
- will maximise awareness of and mitigate against bias in your team and the wider community in terms of gender, ethnicity or any other protected characteristic through processes, behaviours and culture
- describes how your approach will build upon and integrate existing EDI good practice into your proposed work
- will share good practice with the wider community to ensure your research has maximum impact

You may demonstrate elements of your responses in visual form if relevant. Further details are provided in the Funding Service.

References may be included within this section.

How we will assess your application

Assessment process

We will assess your application using the following process.

Peer review

We will invite experts to review your application independently, against the specified criteria for this funding opportunity.

You will not be able to nominate reviewers for applications on the new UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Funding Service. Research councils will continue to select expert reviewers.

We are monitoring the requirement for applicant-nominated reviewers as we review policies and processes as part of the continued development of the Funding Service.

Application sift and applicant response

We will review the comments and scores for each application. Applications receiving sufficiently supportive reviewers' comments (average score of 4.5 or above on a one to six scale) will go to a panel who will make a funding recommendation. If your application is shortlisted, you will have 14 days to respond to reviewers' comments.

Applications with an average score of below 4.5 will normally be rejected at this stage.

Panel

We will invite an interdisciplinary panel of academic and non-academic experts to use the evidence provided by reviewers and your applicant response to assess the quality of your application and rank it alongside other applications. The panel will then make a funding recommendation.

Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) will make the final funding decision.

Timescale

We aim to complete the assessment process by October 2025.

Feedback

Comments from expert reviewers will be provided to applicants.

Principles of assessment

We support the [San Francisco declaration on research assessment \(DORA\)](#) and recognise the relationship between research assessment and research integrity.

Find out about the UKRI [principles of assessment and decision making](#).

Using generative artificial intelligence (AI) in peer review

Reviewers and panellists are not permitted to use generative AI tools to develop their assessment. Using these tools can potentially compromise the confidentiality of the ideas that applicants have entrusted to UKRI to safeguard.

For more detail see our [policy on the use of generative AI](#).

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

Assessment areas

The assessment areas we will use are:

- vision
- approach

- stakeholder engagement, collaborative working, and partnerships
- applicant and team capability to deliver
- ethics and responsible research and innovation (RRI)
- resources and cost justification
- project partners
- data management and sharing
- Equality, diversity, and inclusion

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 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 an 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 proposal please 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 please contact workinglives@esrc.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 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](#).

Additional info

Background to funding opportunity

This opportunity falls under UKRI's [Creating Opportunities, Improving Outcomes strategic theme](#), which seeks to improve outcomes for people and places across the UK by identifying solutions that promote economic and social prosperity.

This funding opportunity is being administered by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) on behalf UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

Conceptual clarification

We recognise that some of the concepts we have used in this funding opportunity have no common definition, are contested, or are sensitive. For the purposes of this funding opportunity, we have understood them as follows.

Economic inactivity

We have used the ONS definition of [economic inactivity](#) as referring to people aged between 16 and 64 years who are not in employment and who have not been seeking work within the last four weeks or who are unable to start work within the next two weeks.

We are specifically interested in the experiences of people for whom work is appropriate and who want to work, but who are prevented from doing so because of ill-health, disability, or informal caring responsibilities.

Proposals can also include these groups' experiences of unemployment (as defined by the [Office for National Statistics](#)) and under-employment (understood here as people wanting to work more hours), but the primary focus should be on economic inactivity as defined above.

Informal caregiving

For this funding opportunity, we are interested in the experiences of working age adults (16 to 64) who provide, unpaid, care for adult relatives, friends, and neighbours. This could be because of illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction.

Place

We understand place as a defined physical location that can be delineated by geographic boundaries, administrative or statutory responsibilities, economic zones, social, or relational groupings.

You can choose to use existing definable geographies, for example using electoral, administrative, health or other boundaries see [UK geographies \(Office for National Statistics\)](#) but are not restricted by them.

Practice and practitioners

The term practice here encompasses all activities, formal and non-formal, that provide support to help people get into or remain in work while experiencing ill-health, disability, or informal caring responsibilities.

Practitioners refer all actors, professional and non-professional, that design or deliver support activities to help people get into or remain in work while experiencing ill-health, disability, or informal caring responsibilities. Actors can be individuals, collective groupings, organisations (public, private, and third sector), and institutions (formal and non-formal).

Examples of professional actors include public employment services, local authorities, health and social care providers, social workers, and human resource specialists.

Examples of non-professional actors include volunteers, community networks, social enterprises, employees, managers, and employers.

Support activities

These include both formal interventions provided by public bodies (such as, public health programmes, local authorities, public employment services) and non-formal initiatives led by individuals, communities, employers, and third-sector organisations.

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.

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

- **2 December 2024 9:00am**
Pre-announcement
- **3 February 2025 9:00am**
Opening date
- **6 May 2025 4:00pm**
Closing date
- **May to July 2025**
Assessment stage 1
- **July 2025**
Project lead response
- **September to October 2025**
Panel meeting
- **October 2025**
Decision

○ **by 12 January 2026 at the latest**
Project start

Guidance on good research

[Good research resource hub](#)

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<https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/ukri-creating-opportunities-rethinking-economic-inactivity>