



Funding opportunity

Pushing the frontiers of environmental research: July 2025

Opportunity status:	Open
Funders:	Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)
Funding type:	Grant
Total fund:	£26,000,000
Maximum award:	£950,000
Publication date:	31 January 2025
Opening date:	5 February 2025 9:00am UK time
Closing date:	16 July 2025 4:00pm UK time

Apply for funding to pursue an ambitious, high risk and high reward curiosity-driven project in environmental research.

You must be:

- based at a UK research organisation eligible for Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) funding
- in a role that meets the individual eligibility requirements

We welcome:

- multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research
- projects delivered in partnership with other research funders and users

The full economic cost (FEC) of your project can be up to £950,000. We will fund 80% of the FEC.

There is no defined project duration, but awards are usually between three and four years.

Who can apply

To lead a project, you must be based at an eligible organisation. [Check if your organisation is eligible](#).

Before applying for funding, check the following:

- [NERC eligibility guidance for applicants](#)
- [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)

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

This funding opportunity is open to research groups and individuals.

Your research project must address a significant environmental science question, but we welcome applications from individuals who can demonstrate a capability to collaborate with experts from other disciplines to generate innovative research.

We:

- encourage multidisciplinary research and collaborations with other UK organisations
- welcome applications from individuals at any career stage, subject to the UKRI eligibility criteria

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

Demand management measurements are applied to the Pushing the Frontiers scheme. As such, there are restrictions on how many applications some research organisations can make. See [demand management](#) for further information and details of the organisational quotas that will apply to this funding opportunity.

International applicants

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

[UKRI can offer disability and accessibility support](#) for UKRI applicants and grant holders during the application and assessment process. Find out more about [equality, diversity and inclusion at UKRI](#) and [NERC's diversity and inclusion action plan](#).

What we're looking for

Scope

This funding opportunity supports researchers' curiosity and imagination to enable discoveries that unlock new knowledge with a degree of adventure previously unrealised.

We are seeking to invest in our best environmental researchers to be truly adventurous and ambitious in the pursuit of curiosity-driven, high risk and high reward projects.

We are looking for applications that can support pure, applied, technology-led or policy driven research but still address, or provide the means to address, clearly defined scientific questions.

We welcome, and are increasingly supporting, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research, designed, supported and delivered in partnership with other research funders and research users.

The research must sit predominantly within [NERC's research areas](#). We will work with other research councils to ensure that applications close to remit boundaries are assessed by the most appropriate lead council. We encourage you to contact us first to discuss your application if you believe your research may cross research council boundaries.

See our [remit query form](#).

Use of novel, critical technologies in your application

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) is seeking to support researchers and innovators to develop and make use of novel, critical technologies including artificial intelligence, engineering biology, and quantum technologies throughout its investment portfolio. We have also set out our aspirations for the future of data and technology in environmental science in our [digital strategy 2021 to 2030](#).

In developing your application to this funding opportunity, you may wish to consider how the innovative use of critical technologies, and approaches addressing the ambitions of NERC's digital strategy, might offer opportunities to address your research questions in new and novel ways. This might include the development of new collaborations across domains and disciplines.

Duration

There is no defined project duration, but awards are usually for between three and four years.

It is anticipated that grants will be able to start from July 2026, but it should be noted that start dates for all successful grants will only be confirmed following discussion with NERC regarding project requirements. For those projects requiring use of large infrastructure, start dates will be dependent on access to infrastructure being scheduled and confirmed.

Funding available

The full economic cost (FEC) of your project can be up to £950,000. Note that this funding limit takes into account indexation rates applied to all UKRI grants at award, so the maximum FEC value of individual awards will be £1 million.

We will fund 80% of the FEC with the following exceptions:

- justified equipment would be funded at 100%
- eligible costs for international project co-lead involvement would be funded at 100%

Costs for ship-time and marine equipment (SME) are not included in the application, so do not count towards the funding limit.

This funding opportunity sources its funds from the NERC budget.

Please note that for this funding opportunity we will require full costing information and a justification of resources as part of your application.

Most applications will be expected to be under £950,000. We recognise that a small number of projects have exceptional costs (for example, for use of large research infrastructure facilities) that may require the budget to exceed the maximum grant limit. We will require written justification as part of your application for any requests to exceed the maximum grant limit and reserve the right to reduce the amount awarded if not deemed reasonable or fully justified.

Justified equipment is funded at 100% FEC. Any requests for equipment over £10,000 must be fully justified as part of your application. You are reminded that funding for equipment is subject to consideration by NERC, based on the justification of resources and budget availability. We therefore recommend discussing with NERC in advance if you intend to request equipment of significant value within the costs of your project to ensure you know what information to provide.

What we will fund

We will fund:

- facilities costs (to be included within grant costs)
- cruise costs (in addition to grant costs)

What we will not fund

We will not fund PhD studentship costs.

Services and facilities

You can apply to use a facility or resource in your funding application.

You should discuss your application with the facility or service at least two months before the funding opportunity's closing date to:

- discuss the proposed work in detail
- receive confirmation that they can provide the services required within the timeframe of the funding

The facility will provide a technical assessment that includes the calculated cost of providing the service. NERC services and facilities (with the exception of NERC ship-time) must be costed within the limits of the funding.

You should not submit the technical assessment with the application, but you must confirm you have received it.

For more information, see the [NERC research grants and fellowships handbook](#).

Read the full list of [NERC facilities that require a technical assessment](#).

High Performance Computing (HPC), [Ship-Time or Marine Equipment \(SME\)](#) and the large research facilities at Harwell have their own policies for access and costing.

Ship-time and marine facilities

Applications may require ship-time and other marine facilities. If you wish to use NERC's marine facilities, then you must complete an online 'ship-time and marine equipment (SME) or autonomous deployment (ADF) application form' available from [Marine Facilities Planning](#). Include the SME or ADF number on the 'Facilities' section of your application.

SMEs or ADFs must be submitted to and approved by NERC Marine Planning by the time your funding application is submitted. A PDF of the SME or ADF can be attached as a facility form to your application. If you do not do this, your request may not be considered for inclusion in the NERC Marine Facilities Programme.

If you intend to apply for NERC's marine facilities, then see [the information on the website](#) which advises on facility availability from 2024 to 2029. You should contact marineplanning@nerc.ukri.org to discuss ship-time and equipment needs as soon as possible and by Wednesday 16 June 2025.

British Antarctic Survey (BAS) Antarctic logistics support

If you require NERC BAS Antarctic logistics support, then you must complete a [pre-award operational support planning questionnaire](#) (OSPQ) online.

You must email the Antarctic Access Office (AAO) at BAS afibas@bas.ac.uk stating your name, institution and project title.

The AAO will set up a new and numbered pre-award OSPQ and send the link to you along with instructions for completion.

The deadline for pre-award OSPQs to be submitted is Wednesday 2 April 2025. Any funding applications that request Antarctic logistic support without having received prior logistic approval will not be awarded. All funding applications

wishing to use Antarctic logistics support must add this to the facilities question in their application.

You should also be aware of the [NERC update on polar research planning](#) and [NERC marine facilities availability 2024 to 2029](#)

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](#).

International collaboration

We have agreements with the following funders:

- [National Science Foundation](#) (NSF) USA
- [São Paulo Research Foundation](#) (FAPESP) Brazil
- [Fonds Nationale de la Recherche](#) (FNR) Luxembourg

This can make it easier for UK researchers to collaborate with research partners around the world by removing the risk that a proposed project will receive funding in one country but not in another.

Find out about [getting funding for international collaboration](#).

If you wish to work with US-based researchers (NSF) then you must submit an expression of interest form. The deadline for submitting the form is Wednesday 2 April 2025.

Please refer to the relevant agreement guidance for additional requirements and information for applying these agreements to your application.

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&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 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.

[Further guidance and information about Trusted Research and Innovation](#), 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 research outputs and outcomes but through the way in which research is conducted and facilities managed.

All NERC grant holders are to adopt 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.

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

Your application may be rejected if images are provided without a descriptive legend in the text box or are used to replace text that could be input into the text

box.

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.

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

We must receive your application by 16 July 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](#).

Sensitive information

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

Include in the subject line: Pushing the Frontiers July 2025; 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 UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) to consider in reviewer or panel participant selection

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

Publication of outcomes

NERC, as part of UKRI, will publish the outcomes of this funding opportunity on [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.

UKRI has introduced a new addition to the 'Specialist' role type. Public contributors such as people with lived experience can now be added to an application.

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

Application questions

Vision

Word limit: 1,100

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(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
- 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:

- identify the potential direct or indirect benefits and who the beneficiaries might be

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: 2,750

How are you going to deliver your proposed work?

What the assessors are looking for in your response

Explain how you have designed your work 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
- uses a clearly written and transparent methodology (if applicable)
- summarises the previous work and describes how this will be built upon and progressed (if applicable)
- will maximise translation of outputs into outcomes and impacts
- 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

Within this section we also expect you to:

- 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

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 (appropriate to career stage)
- 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 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 following 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 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).

You should complete this section as a narrative. Do not format it like a CV.

References may be included within this section.

[The roles in funding applications policy](#) has descriptions of the different project roles.

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, and how you will manage them. This could include, but is not limited to:

- research involving animals
- research involving human tissues or biological samples, including the nature and quantity of the material used and its source
- research involving human participation, including the numbers and diversity of the participants involved and any procedures
- consideration of environmental sustainability, following [UKRI's environmental sustainability strategy](#), including preventing environmental harm and enhancing environmental benefit
- consideration of social responsibility including equality, diversity and inclusion, in line with [NERC's responsible business statement](#)

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

If you are collecting or using data, you should 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.

NERC international partnership joint funding

Word limit: 10

Are you submitting your application under a NERC international partnership joint funding agreement?

What the assessors are looking for in your response

If not, then enter 'N/A' into the text box, mark this section as complete and move on to the next section.

If your application is in partnership with the National Science Foundation (NSF) in the US, São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP) in Brazil or Fonds National de la Recherche (FNR) in Luxembourg, provide the name of the agreement you are submitting under in the textbox.

You should include further detail of the team, the collaboration and the added value to the project in the appropriate sections of the application, not here.

Add any further documentation required for the international funder as a single PDF attachment in this section.

Any involvement of international project co-leads from IIASA or Norway should be included in Core team, Applicant and team capability to deliver, and any other relevant sections and are not applicable to this question.

Upload guidance

Upload a single PDF containing the international funder documentation ensuring it is no larger than 8MB, if applicable.

For the file name, use the unique Funding Service number the system gives to your application when you create an application, immediately followed by the words 'international partnerships'. Then use the 'upload' button.

Unless specifically requested, do not include any personal data within the attachment.

Once you have uploaded, mark this section as complete and move to the next one.

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 that 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:

- 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.

No letters of support are required and cannot be attached to this funding opportunity.

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

Facilities

Word limit: 250

Does your proposed research require the support and use of a facility?

What the assessors are looking for in your response

If you will need to use a research council facility, follow your proposed facility's normal access request procedures. Ensure you have prior agreement so that if you are offered funding, they will support the use of their facility on your project.

For each requested facility you will need to provide the:

- name of facility, copied and pasted from the [facility information list \(DOCX, 42KB\)](#)
- proposed usage or costs, or costs per unit where indicated on the facility information list
- confirmation you have their agreement where required

If you have to attach a facility form, for example NERC ship-time and marine equipment, then upload it as a PDF. If you need to upload multiple forms, then combine them into a single PDF.

Facilities should only be named if they are on the facility information list above. If you will not need to use a facility, you will be able to indicate this in the Funding Service.

Upload guidance

Upload a single PDF containing facility forms ensuring it is no larger than 8MB, if applicable.

For the file name, use the unique Funding Service number the system gives to your application when you create an application, immediately followed by the words 'facility forms'. Then use the 'upload' button.

Unless specifically requested, please do not include any personal data within the attachment.

Once you have uploaded, mark this section as complete and move to the next one.

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
- any other detail on how you will comply with NERC data policy

Application history

Word limit: 30

Have you submitted this application to a previous round of NERC Pushing the Frontiers?

What the assessors are looking for in your response

Add the text "Yes" or "No" in the textbox.

If your response is "Yes", then also provide the previous Funding Service application number, in the format APP*****, and confirm which round your

application was submitted to (for example, January 2024 Pushing the Frontiers).

Resources and cost justification

Word limit: 2,000

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
- training 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

How we will assess your application

Assessment process

We will assess your application using the following process.

Panel

We will assess your application using a two-stage process where experts will be invited to form part of a panel to assess applications independently, against the published assessment areas for this funding opportunity. The panel will be comprised of [NERC Peer Review College](#) members, augmented if necessary by relevant experts from outside the college.

Applications not considered a priority for funding may not be invited by NERC to proceed to the second stage of assessment. All applications will receive feedback from stage one assessment.

Applications invited to proceed to the second stage of assessment will be asked to respond to stage one panel feedback, which will be considered by the assessment panel at stage two. All applications invited to stage two will be provided with feedback.

We will use the recommendations of the assessment panels along with the overall funding opportunity requirements and the available budget in making the final funding decisions. Random allocation will be used where necessary to allocate funding between equally scored applications.

Timescale

We aim to complete the assessment process within six months of the funding opportunity closing date. If you are given the opportunity to provide an applicant response after the stage one assessment, you will be notified as soon as possible after the stage one panel meeting.

Feedback

Feedback will be provided to all applicants.

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 or funders.

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 \(UKRI\) principles of assessment and decision making](#).

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

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](#).

Assessment areas

The areas against which your application will be assessed are:

- vision
- approach
- applicant and team capability to deliver
- ethical and responsible research and innovation

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 pushingfrontiers@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.

For further information on submitting an application read [How applicants use the Funding Service](#).

Additional info

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.

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.

Guidance on good research

[Good research resource hub](#)

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<https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/pushing-the-frontiers-of-environmental-research-july-2025>