UK Research and Innovation

Smart Data Research UK Fellowships

Opportunity status:	Open
Funders:	**Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)**, UK Research and Innovation
Funding type:	Grant
Total fund:	£2,000,000
Maximum award:	£200,000
Publication date:	14 July 2025
Opening date:	15 July 2025 9:00am UK time
Closing date:	23 September 2025 4:00pm UK time

Apply for a fellowship to undertake innovative, impact-focused research using smart data. Projects should address a significant real-world challenge which is relevant to the UK.

Projects must be clearly aligned to at least one of **Smart Data Research UK's four thematic pillars**:

- Productivity and prosperity for all
- Health and wellbeing
- Digital society
- Sustainability

The full economic cost (FEC) of your project can be up to £200,000. Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) will fund 80% of the FEC.

Projects may run for up to 18 months and must start on 01 February 2026.

You must be based at a UK research organisation eligible for ESRC funding.

Who can apply

To lead a project, you must be based at an eligible organisation. **Check if your organisation is eligible**.

Who is eligible to apply

This funding opportunity is open to researchers at all career stages. We particularly encourage applications from early career researchers.

Researchers new to using smart data are encouraged to apply. They should include mentoring and capacity building plans as part of their fellowship to support their research goals.

We encourage a minimum time commitment of 0.6 full-time equivalent for the fellowship, although we will accept fellowship proposals below this suggested time commitment. Applicants employed on part-time contracts should commit an FTE at a proportionate level. We encourage you to make full use of the opportunity presented by the data and funding available.

Who is not eligible to apply

- researchers who are named leads and co-leads with more than 0.2 FTE on SDR UK's Data Service grants are not eligible to apply
- SDR UK Accelerator award holders with more than six months left on their award on 31 January 2026 are not eligible to apply
- applicants from non-UK organisations are not eligible to apply for funding for this funding opportunity
- project leads (international), project co-leads (international), and international fellows are not eligible to apply for funding for this funding opportunity. You must be based within an eligible UK institution for the duration of the fellowship.

Resubmissions

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

Find out more about **ESRC's resubmissions policy**.

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.

Remit

If you are unsure whether your proposed research falls within the remit of this opportunity, please contact the Smart Data Research team for advice: **smartdataresearch@ukri.org**.

What we're looking for

Scope

Smart Data Research UK (SDR UK) invites applications for fellowships to conduct research using smart data to address a real-world challenge.

What is smart data?

Smart data is produced through our daily interactions with the digital world, such as when we purchase products or services, use social media, or get directions. It is collected when we use mobile phones, wearable health devices, store loyalty cards and smart technology.

You may use smart datasets exclusively, or in combination with other data (for example, administration and traditional survey data). Whilst we encourage you to use smart datasets held by our data services, this is not a pre-requisite for application.

A note on terminology: It is important to note that the term 'smart data' is sometimes used to describe the secure sharing of customer data, upon the customer's request, with Authorised Third-party Providers (ATPs), as with 'open banking'. Research focused on this conception of smart data is not relevant to this funding opportunity.

Objectives

We are looking for fellowship proposals that meet the following objectives.

Objective one: advance impactful and innovative research

Conduct original, high-impact research that demonstrates how smart data can address a significant real-world challenge.

Objective two: develop research leadership

Use the Fellowship to grow as a leader in smart data research – developing new skills, networks and areas of expertise.

Objective three: strengthen the smart data research community

Play an active role in building a connected, collaborative community. Fellows will take part in activities that support collaboration, knowledge sharing, and long-term impact.

Research focus

Research projects from any discipline are in scope for this fellowship funding opportunity but must be aligned to at least one of SDR UK's four thematic pillars (for more information see **SDR UK's Research themes**). The pillars are wide-ranging, interconnected, and focus on contemporary real-world challenges:

Productivity and prosperity for all: interrogating the drivers of economic growth and prosperity in the UK, at local, regional and national scales

This could include, for example, analysing financial transactions data to understand the responsiveness of household spending patterns during the cost-of-living crisis, or using GPS data to understand the distribution and concentration of economic activity in UK towns and cities to harness growth dynamics.

Health and wellbeing: supporting improvements in population and public health to enable healthier, longer, and fulfilling lives

This could include, for example, using wearables data to track and monitor in-home care provision, or analysing supermarket loyalty card data to understand purchasing behaviours and to support healthier food choices.

Digital society: understanding the challenges and opportunities presented by rapid advances in technology and our increasing engagement with digital systems

This could include, for example, analysing social media data to understand the spread of misinformation and its impact on public discourse, exploring the future of work and the societal implications of artificial intelligence, including AI-powered chatbots.

Sustainability: enabling environmental sustainability and supporting decarbonisation and the green transition

This could include, for example, using GPS data to optimise location of EV charging infrastructure, or assessing geospatial imagery to improve biomass measurement.

You must articulate a clear problem statement in your application which relates to a real-world challenge in one or more of the above-noted pillars and which is relevant to the UK. You must demonstrate how the challenge could be addressed through smart data research.

The dataset(s) to be used for the project must be identified in the application. Access to all required datasets must be established or agreed in principle at the time of application, with confirmation via letters of support from relevant data controllers and/or SDR UK's Data Services.

Costs associated with data acquisitions may be included under exceptions. Data management plans should include an assessment of existing data.

We will adopt a portfolio approach to select a diverse range of projects, balancing innovation, potential for impact, thematic and geographic focus and feasibility.

Impact

'Research impact' is understood as the demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy (broadly defined as delivering public benefit), see **Defining impact**.

Research communication and dissemination

Activities which may help demonstrate a high-quality approach to impact include:

- tailoring communication to policymakers, practitioners, or a segment of the public. This could include the production of short documents or engaging media products like video, animations and illustrations, supported by an effective dissemination plan
- organising an event which involves a wide range of stakeholders including policymakers and practitioners, and which supports public trust
- coordinating activities to establish networks and relationships with research users
- developing activities to influence policy at national and/or local levels

Research synthesis, cohort leadership and engagement

Activities which may help demonstrate a high-quality approach to impact include:

- time to collaborate with other fellows on co-authored journal articles and other research outputs (this funding cannot be used for article processing charges)

- liaising with other fellows and SDR UK data services, where appropriate, to organise a research event focused on an area of shared interest aimed at building a community and enhancing bodies of knowledge
- activities which pass on your expertise and help build a wider cohort of researchers who use smart data

Training and development opportunities

Activities which may help demonstrate a high-quality approach to impact include:

- training offered by you to the wider research community in support of enhancing the capability of other researchers to conduct smart data research
- training for yourself to allow you to capitalise on opportunities or enhance your capability as a smart data research leader. We expect training in this phase of the project to focus on skills related to impact and knowledge exchange or skills relevant to leading and delivering future research projects

We expect you to allocate a minimum of 20% of their award time on these impact focused activities.

It is expected that impact activities be pursued through the lifetime of the grant, rather than at its latter stages. Fellows will work with SDR UK to deliver impact activities, and support opportunities for engagement with relevant stakeholders.

Public engagement

SDR UK is committed to ensuring public engagement is embedded throughout the research process. Public engagement activities may take the form of:

- public consultation or dialogue with the general public, for example, focus groups, workshops, or online surveys
- activities with community representatives, in which members of organisations which represent sub-sectors of society are consulted

Where appropriate, fellows will be expected to build public engagement into their research activities.

Duration

The duration of this award is up to 18 months.

Projects must start on 1 February 2026.

Funding available

The FEC of your project can be up to £200,000. ESRC will fund 80% of the FEC.

What we will fund

To be considered for funding, applications must:

- meet the objectives of the funding opportunity set out above
- clearly link to one or more of SDR UK's four thematic pillars
- identify the potential impact(s) of the research and the real-world challenge it seeks to address
- demonstrate sufficient progress in gaining access to required dataset(s) (a letter of support from a data controller will suffice)
- involve significant impact-oriented engagement with stakeholders
- be able to start on 1 February 2026

Full details of how to demonstrate these requirements can be found in the 'How to apply' section.

Data requirements

We recognise 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 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** will be pleased to advise you on the availability of data within the academic community and provide advice on data deposit requirements.

Impact, innovation and interdisciplinarity

We expect you to consider the potential **scientific, societal and economic impacts of their research**. Outputs, dissemination and impact are a key part of the criteria for most expert review and assessment processes. We also encourage applications that demonstrate **innovation and interdisciplinarity** (research combining approaches from more than one discipline).

Knowledge exchange and collaboration

We are committed to knowledge exchange and encouraging collaboration between researchers and the private, public and civil society sectors. Collaborative working benefits both the researchers and the individuals/ organisations involved.

Through collaboration, partners learn about each other's expertise, share knowledge and gain an appreciation of different professional cultures. Collaborative activity can therefore lead to a better understanding of the ways that academic research can add value and offer insights to key issues of concern for policy and practice.

Knowledge exchange should not be treated as an 'add-on' at the end of a project but considered before the start and built into a project.

Research ethics

We require 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.

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.

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

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** 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.

When including images, you must:

- provide a descriptive caption or legend for each image immediately underneath it in the text box (this must be outside the image and counts towards your word limit)
- insert each new image on a new line
- use files smaller than 5MB and in JPEG, JPG, JPE, JFI, JIF, JFIF, PNG, GIF, BMP or WEBP format

Images should only be used to convey important visual information that cannot easily be put into words. The following are not permitted, and your application may be rejected if you include:

- sentences or paragraphs of text
- tables
- excessive quantities of images

A few words are permitted where the image would lack clarity without the contextual words, such as a diagram, where text labels are required for an axis or graph column.

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. Applicants should use

their 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.

General use of hyperlinks

Applications should be self-contained. You should only use hyperlinks to link directly to reference information. You must not include links to web resources to extend your application. Assessors are not required to access links to conduct assessment or recommend a funding decision.

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

ESRC must receive your application by 4.00pm UK time on 23 September 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: **smartdataresearch@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
- potential applications and benefits

Core team

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

- fellow
- specialist
- grant manager
- professional enabling staff
- research and innovation associate
- technician

Only list one individual as the fellow.

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 of its focus
- is timely, given current trends, context, and needs
- impacts world-leading research, society, the economy or the environment

The following must be included to support your response. Provide a clear problem statement in which you:

- identify a specific real-world challenge
- explain why this challenge is significant and relevant to the UK
- discuss the value of this research for better understanding or addressing the challenge
- explain the contribution it will make to the SDR pillar(s) it relates to such as the impacts your anticipate from your research

You should also explain how the proposed work uses smart data (exclusively or in combination with other data) in an innovative way to address the challenge identified.

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 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 work so that it:

- is effective and appropriate to achieve your objectives
- is feasible, and comprehensively identifies any risks to delivery and how you will manage them
- uses a clearly written and transparent methodology (if applicable)
- summarises the previous work and describes how you will build on and progress this work (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

You must also:

- identify the specific dataset(s) you will access and utilise for the project
- ensure access to all required datasets is established at the time of application, confirmation via letters of support from relevant data controllers and/or Data Services must be included with the application
- demonstrate you have a good understanding of the datasets you will use
- provide a project plan (for example, Gantt chart) with key project milestones, and a description of key risks and how they will be mitigated

- provide a brief impact plan which identifies the types of activities, schedule, key stakeholders including the public (where relevant), and anticipated outcomes

All applicants planning to generate data as part of their research must complete the separate data management questions.

References may be included in this section.

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

Applicant capability to deliver

Word limit: 1,650

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

What the assessors are looking for in your response

Evidence of how you have:

- the relevant experience (appropriate to career stage) to make best use of the benefits presented by this funding opportunity to develop your career
- the right balance of skills and aptitude to deliver the proposed work
- contributed to developing a positive research environment and wider community
- the appropriate team working or leadership skills (appropriate to career stage)

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

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 have and how this will help to deliver the proposed work. You can include specific achievements and choose past contributions that best evidence your ability to deliver this work.

Complete this section using the following R4RI module headings. You should use each heading once, see the **UKRI guidance on R4RI**. You should consider how to balance your answer, and emphasise where appropriate the key skills you bring:

- 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.

Career development

Word limit: 1,000

Why is this fellowship the right way to develop your career and how will you use it to benefit others?

What the assessors are looking for in your response

Ensure that you have identified:

- career development goals appropriate to the fellowship funding opportunity
- how the fellowship will provide a feasible and appropriate trajectory for your personal development and to achieve your stated career development goals (as appropriate to your career stage and field)
- how you will instigate positive change in the wider research and innovation community, for example through Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), advocacy or advisory roles, stakeholder engagement, participation in expert review, influencing policy, public engagement, or outreach
- what mentoring arrangements are proposed and how they are appropriate to you

Host organisation support

Word limit: 1,000

How will the host organisation support your fellowship?

What the assessors are looking for in your response

Provide a support statement including:

- evidence detailing how the host will support you, as appropriate for your career development and the vision and approach of the fellowship
- who you have engaged with in your host organisation (name and role)
- how your research environment will contribute to the success of the work, in terms of suitability of the host organisation and strategic relevance to the project

- how the host organisation will ensure your time commitment to the fellowship is protected
- what development and training opportunities will be provided and how they form a cohesive career development package tailored to your aims and aspirations
- what financial or practical support, such as access to the appropriate services, facilities, infrastructure, or equipment, is being provided and how this strengthens your application

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 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'

You can request costs associated with reasonable adjustments where they increase as a direct result of working on the project. For further information see **Disability and accessibility support for UKRI applicants and grant holders**.

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

For detailed guidance on eligible costs please see the **ESRC research funding guide**.

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

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

If you are collecting or using data you should identify:

- any legal and ethical considerations of collecting, releasing and/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 that your proposed work will comply with

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 Partner section. These should be uploaded in English or Welsh only.

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
- have a page limit of two sides A4 per partner

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 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 the 'Data Management' 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

For this funding opportunity, grant holders must deposit all data from the project in a SDR UK data service or the UK Data Service. If deposited in a repository which is not the UK Data Service, grant holders must create a metadata record in UK Data Service ReShare and submit metadata relating to the grant and data collection through this service.

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

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 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

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.

How we will assess your application

Assessment process

We will assess your application using the following process.

Assessment panel

We will convene a panel of experts to review your application independently, against the specified criteria for this funding opportunity.

Following UKRI office eligibility and remit checks, eligible applications will be sent to expert panel members for review. Each application will be assessed by at least two panel members.

Following assessment, applications will be allocated to one of three tiers. Funding will then be allocated to the applications in the top tier as priority. Applications in the middle tier may be recommended for funding using partial randomisation.

The final funding decision will adopt a portfolio approach to select a diverse range of projects, balancing innovation, potential for impact, thematic and geographic focus and feasibility.

ESRC will make the final funding decision.

For further information please see **How we make decisions**.

Timescale

We aim to communicate decisions in December 2025.

Feedback

If your application was discussed by a panel, we will give feedback with the outcome of your application.

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 expert 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
- Applicant capability to deliver
- Career development
- Host organisation support
- Ethics and RRI
- Resources and cost justification
- Data management and sharing

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 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 Smart Data Research UK **smartdataresearch@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.

For further information on submitting an application read **How applicants use the Funding Service**.

Additional info

Background

Additional Information

Smart Data Research UK (SDR UK) is a UK Research and Innovation infrastructure investment. Smart data is the data generated through everyday interactions with digital devices.

SDR UK is delivered by a family of data services based at leading UK universities and research organisations.

Each service acquires, stewards, and enables safe access to diverse smart data within secure environments that protect privacy while enabling breakthrough research.

You are encouraged to contact the data services to determine whether relevant datasets may be accessed for this funding opportunity. You may use smart datasets which are not held by a SDR UK data service. Access to this data must be obtained at the time of application (a letter of support from a data controller to provide access to data will suffice).

SDR UK's six data services are:

The **Financial Data Service (FINDS)** provides unprecedented insights into the UK's economic health through secure access to de-identified banking and finance data from millions of customers.

The **Geographic Data Service (GeoDS)** is the UK's leading source of linked and georeferenced smart data, drawing on more than a decade of success in delivering new insights into equitable and sustainable growth in the UK as part of the Consumer Data Research Centre.

The **Healthy and Sustainable Places Data Service (HASP)** represents a groundbreaking approach to understanding and improving our communities.

HASP will produce new ways of using smart data to understand food, lifestyle and mobility patterns and behaviours.

Imago, Data Service for Imagery is a data service that transforms the utility of satellite imagery to revolutionise our understanding of issues such as environmental vulnerability, urban development, housing, health and wellbeing.

The **Smart Data Donation Service** will help citizens across the UK to obtain copies of their digital trace data; assist them in using it to understand their digital lives; and offer them the opportunity to enrich and donate their data for use in scientific research.

The **Smart Energy Data Service, SENSE** will support new research into complex human and economic systems, enabling evidence-based decisions about energy infrastructure investment, reducing disparities in urban and rural areas, and improving energy efficiency in schools, hospitals and other public buildings.

Our data services can provide researchers with:

- access to open datasets that don't contain any personal or sensitive data
- controlled access to protected safeguarded and secure data
- expert help to understand and explore the data
- training

Where relevant, we encourage applicants to consider whether the use of these resources could add value to the project.

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.

Webinar for potential applicants

We will hold a webinar on 29 July 2025. This will provide more information about the funding opportunity and a chance to ask questions. The webinar will be recorded and made available for prospective applicants, together with a Q&A summary.

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.

Supporting documents

[EIA for the opportunity (PDF, 228KB)](#)

[FAQs (PDF, 132KB)](#)

Timeline

○ **15 July 2025 9:00am**
Opening date

○ **29 July 2025 1:00pm**
Webinar

○ **23 September 2025 4:00pm**
Closing date

Guidance on good research

Good research resource hub