



Funding opportunity

Pushing the frontiers of environmental research

Opportunity status:	Open
Funders:	Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)
Funding type:	Grant
Maximum award:	£950,000
Publication date:	30 March 2026
Opening date:	31 March 2026 9:00am UK time
Closing date:	Open - no closing date

Apply for funding to pursue an adventurous, ambitious, 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

This opportunity is open to organisations with standard eligibility. [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 NERC

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 UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) eligibility criteria

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

Resubmissions

We will not accept uninvited resubmissions of projects that have previously been assessed by UKRI.

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

International researchers

Under the [UKRI and Research Council of Norway Money Follows Cooperation agreement](#) a project co-lead (international) (previously co-

investigator) can be based in a Norwegian institution. Read more about this in the [NERC eligibility guidance for applicants](#).

If you are submitting your application under a NERC lead agency agreement (NSF, FAPESP or FNR), then please see the section entitled 'International collaborative proposals' for further information.

All other international collaborators should be included (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.

What we're looking for

Demand management

Demand management is not currently being applied to this funding opportunity. However, should the level of interest exceed what can be managed within the assessment process, UKRI may introduce limits on the number of applications that can be submitted. Further details will be clearly communicated where this is the case. UKRI encourages organisations to support applicants in preparing well-planned, high-quality applications that are competitive for funding relative to the funding opportunity.

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-reward

projects, which may or may not involve substantial risk.

Applications can propose pure, applied, technology-led, or policy-driven research but must address, or provide the means to address, clearly defined environmental science questions.

We welcome, and are increasingly supporting, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research, designed, supported and delivered in partnership with other research funders and research users. We welcome applications from individuals at any career stage, subject to the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) eligibility criteria. This funding opportunity is open to research groups and individuals.

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

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 your grant will be able to start within six months of receiving the offer letter, 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 FEC of your project can be up to £950,000.

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

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

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

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.

If you are planning to apply for more than £950,000, you must seek prior approval from NERC first. A case for why the costs are essential for the project, and why they exceed the maximum limit, must be submitted by email to pushingfrontiers@nerc.ukri.org before submitting an application to the Pushing the frontiers of environmental research opportunity. We aim to provide a decision within 10 working days.

Justified equipment is funded at 80% FEC. Any requests for equipment over £25,000 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.

What we will not fund

We will not fund PhD studentship costs or costs for data archival and curation services. All costs for data archival and curation services will be paid directly to the NERC Environmental Data Service (EDS) on behalf of the programme and should not be included. You should ensure that you request sufficient resource to cover preparation of data for archiving by the research team. Any specialist services, such as database development or project data management support, must be discussed with the relevant data centre before submission.

Services and facilities

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

If you will need to use a UKRI facility, follow your proposed facility's normal access request procedures. You should discuss your application with the facility or service in advance of submitting to the funding opportunity to:

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

You should ensure you have prior agreement from the facility before submitting to the funding opportunity and indicate this within your application.

The facility will provide a technical assessment that includes the calculated cost of providing the service. NERC services and facilities 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.

For more information regarding the use of HPC services, see the Applying to use [high performance computing service](#).

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. Applications submitted without an approved SME or ADF will be 'office rejected'. You will be eligible to resubmit once the SME or ADF has been submitted and approved. 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 on using NERC marine facilities, see [further information about facility availability](#). You should also contact marineplanning@nerc.ukri.org to discuss your requirements as early as possible.

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 then grant you access to the OSPQ portal where you can complete a Pre-Award OSPQ to detail your support requirements.

OSPQs must be submitted at least three months before the anticipated proposal submission date and approved prior to submission to this funding opportunity. Applications submitted without an approved OSPQ will be 'office

rejected'. You will be eligible to resubmit once your OSPQ has been submitted and approved.

All funding applications wishing to use Antarctic logistics support must add this to the facilities question in the application. See further information on [which Antarctic Logistic Support \(ALS\) costs should be included in your application budgets](#). These costs should be clearly identified in your funding application and included in the 'Resources and cost justification' as £XXX for ALS.

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

You must email the 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.

OSPQ's must be submitted and approved by the AAO prior to submission to this funding opportunity. Applications submitted without an approved OSPQ will be 'office rejected'. You will be eligible to resubmit once your OSPQ has been submitted and approved.

All funding applications wishing to use Antarctic logistics support must add this to the facilities question in your application.

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 \(NSF\), US](#)
- [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 \(Eoi\) form](#), and this must be approved by NSF prior to submitting an application to this opportunity. NERC-NSF applications submitted

without an approved EoI will be 'office rejected' from this funding opportunity. You will be eligible to resubmit once your EoI has been submitted and approved.

Applicants intending to apply through the UKRI/NSF Lead Agency Opportunity should be aware that the NSF has issued a [Statement on NSF Priorities](#) and guidance on the [Implementation of Recent Executive Orders](#), which are updated regularly. Additionally, you should be aware that processing timelines may be longer than usual through either the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) or NSF submission route.

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.

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](#).

Responsible research and innovation

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 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 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.

Please be aware that research office and finance teams undertake checks on hosting arrangements and financial eligibility. The ultimate responsibility for ensuring compliance with all opportunity requirements lies with the applicant.

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

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 will 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

References should be included within the word count of the appropriate question section. You should use your discretion when including references and prioritise those most pertinent to the application.

Hyperlinks can be used in reference information. When including references, you should consider how your references will be viewed and used by the assessors, ensuring that:

- references are easily identifiable by the assessors

- references are formatted as appropriate to your research
- persistent identifiers are used where possible

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

There is no deadline for the submission of applications to this funding opportunity. However, due to system requirements a closing date will appear on the Funding Service.

You should apply when your application is ready for submission. NERC will initiate the assessment process once an application is received, ensuring applicants receive a timely decision. NERC will commit to holding regular decision points.

Due to the continuing development of the Funding Service, we will occasionally need to make changes to this funding opportunity to allow technical updates or new policies to be implemented. When updates are required, we will communicate changes to this funding opportunity at least eight weeks before they are implemented, to minimise the impact on applications being prepared for submission.

Following the submission of your application to the funding opportunity, your application cannot be changed by you or us. If there is a problem with an application it may either fail our examination checks and be rejected, or your research organisation may request to withdraw your application. You would then need to submit a new revised application. Because there are no closing dates, you can do this more easily.

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: [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](#).

Institutional matched funding

There is no requirement for matched funding from the institutions hosting the project lead, project co-leads or other staff employed on the application, beyond the standard 20% FEC. Expert reviewers and panels assessing UKRI funding applications must not consider levels of institutional matched funding as a factor on which to base recommendations. Direct and in-kind contributions from third party project partners are encouraged.

This policy does not remove the need for support from host organisations who must provide the necessary research environment and infrastructure for award-specific activities funded by UKRI. For example, research facilities, training and development of staff.

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 role](#) may only be used for collaborators based in Norway, where NERC has a collaboration agreement in place. We do not otherwise accept funded project co-lead (international) applicants.

Any international research teams to be funded by international organisations as part of a lead agency agreement should be included within the International collaboration question. You should also include the lead international researcher as the project co-lead international role with a zero cost included in the resources and cost justification section. Do not include your lead agency agreement international team as project partners.

Lead agency agreements are in place with the [National Science Foundation in the US \(NSF\)](#), [State of São Paulo Research Foundation in Brazil \(FAPESP\)](#) and [Fonds National de la Recherche Luxembourg \(FNR\)](#).

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

Primary discipline classification

Word limit: 10

Please provide the primary discipline area of your proposal.

What the assessors are looking for in your response

Copy and paste from the [list of Primary discipline classifications \(PDF, 102KB\)](#).

This information is used to determine eligibility for NERC funding and to assist in the selection of appropriate reviewers.

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

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: 2,750

How are you going to deliver your proposed work?

What the assessors are looking for in your response

Explain how you have designed your 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
- 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

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.

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 Funding Service.

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

Use the R4RI format to showcase the range of relevant skills you and, if relevant, your team (project and project co-leads, researchers, technicians, specialists, partners, international collaborative team 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).

This section is only to be used if necessary to provide information that is supplementary to the R4RI and may be required to provide context.

Complete this 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.

Trusted Research and Innovation (TR&I)

Word limit: 100

Does your proposed work relate to UKRI's Trusted Research and Innovation principles?

What the assessors are looking for in your response

Demonstrate how your proposed work relates to UKRI's Trusted Research and Innovation principles including:

- list any dual-use (both military and non-military) applications to your research
- if this project is relevant to one or more of the [17 areas of the UK National Security and Investment \(NSI\) Act](#), please list the area(s)
- please read the [academic export control guidance](#) and confirm if an export control licence is required for this project and the status of any application(s)
- if your project involves any items or substances on the UK strategic export control list, please provide a list

We may ask you to provide additional TR&I information later, in line with UKRI TR&I principles and funding terms and conditions (RGC 2.6.2, 2.7.1 and 2.7.2).

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 contributions for example cash, donated equipment and resources, or staff seconded to the project, or indirect and in-kind contributions for example use of project partner's equipment, datasets, or 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 indirect) 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.

International collaborative proposals

Word limit: 200

If you are submitting your application under a NERC lead agency agreement (NSF, FAPESP or FNR), please provide the following details of the lead international applicant on this application:

- lead agency agreement type (NSFGEO, NSFDEB, FAPESP or FNR)
- lead international applicant name
- lead international applicant institute
- lead international applicant job title
- total budget being requested of the international agency

You should include your lead international applicant only as a project co-lead (international) in your 'Core team'. This role must be included with zero cost in the 'Resources and cost justification' section. Please do not include details of the international applicants within the lead agency agreement arrangements in the 'Project Partner' section.

You should include the international collaborative team's activity for this project within 'Vision', 'Approach', 'Team capability to deliver', and any other relevant sections. Please do not include costs associated with the international collaborative team 'Resources and cost justification'.

If you are submitting an NSF application, please upload here the NSF budget form together with the narrative budget justification as one single PDF.

Please see [further guidance on documentation required for funding international collaboration opportunities](#). Any further documentation required for the international funder should be attached as a single PDF attachment in this section.

Any involvement of international project co-leads from 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.

If not submitting an international collaborative project, enter 'N/A' into the text box, mark this section as complete and move on to the next section.

Upload guidance

Upload a single PDF containing the international funder documentation ensuring it is not larger than 8MB, if applicable.

For the file name, use the Funding Service number the system gives to your application when you create an application, immediately followed by the words 'NSF budget'. 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.

Facilities

Word limit: 250

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

What the assessors are looking for in your response

If you will need to use a UKRI 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

Applicants requesting the use of ship time or marine equipment or will be required to attach a facility form. This will need to be uploaded as a PDF. If you need to upload multiple forms, then combine them into a single PDF, ensuring it is not larger than 8MB if applicable.

See further information regarding [NERC marine facilities](#) availability.

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

Upload guidance

For the file name, use the 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, 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 1TB
- any other detail on how you will comply with NERC data policy

Application history

Word limit: 30

Have you submitted a related application to a previous NERC or UKRI funding opportunity?

What the assessors are looking for in your response

- You can use this response to note any preliminary or linked work submitted to a previous UKRI opportunity or reference a Pushing the Frontiers of environmental research invited resubmission.
- Add the text 'Yes' or 'No' in the textbox.

If your response is 'Yes', then also provide the Funding Service application number, in the format APP*****, and confirm which opportunity your application was submitted to (for example, Pushing the frontiers of environmental research).

Ethics and responsible research and innovation (RRI)

Word limit: 500

What are the ethical and RRI considerations, 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 and RRI considerations, including both the research or topic area itself and the design and delivery of the project
- the wider implications of the proposed work, and how you will maximise the positive societal, environmental, and economic benefits arising from the project, while minimising unintended negative impacts, such as research misuse or accidental harm
- how you will manage these considerations throughout the lifecycle of the project

If you are collecting or using data you should identify:

- any legal and ethical considerations of collecting, releasing and storing the data (including consent, confidentiality, anonymisation, security and other ethical considerations and, in particular, strategies to not preclude further reuse of data)
- formal information standards that your proposed work will comply with

Additional sub-questions (to be answered only if appropriate) will be included in the Funding Service. These will ask about numbers, species/strain and justification about the following:

- genetic and biological risk
- research involving the use of animals
- conducting research with animal overseas
- research involving human participation
- research involving 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.

Please refer to the [UKRI position statement on funding ethical research](#) and [Responsible innovation](#) for more information around our expectations on ethical and responsible research and innovation.

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: 2,500

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

What the assessors are looking for in your response

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

- project staff

- significant travel for field work or collaboration (but not regular travel between collaborating organisations or to conferences)
- any equipment that will cost more than £25,000
- 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'

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](#).

Justified equipment is funded at 80% FEC. Any requests for equipment over £25,000 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. To support this process, you should include the following information in your justification of resources:

- confirmation that the piece of equipment is not readily available for use within your host institution, or any other assessable location. For example, referring to any asset registers consulted such as [NERC's equipment data website](#)
- evidence that all other reasonable options have been considered
- if the equipment requested will replace existing equipment, details of what will happen to the existing equipment (if relevant)
- what contribution your research organisation make towards the cost of the equipment (if relevant)

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

NCAS or NCEO Research Centre

Word limit: 5

Is the application submitted under the auspices of either National Centre for Atmospheric Science (NCAS) or National Centre for Earth Observation (NCEO)?

What the assessors are looking for in your response

Indicate either NCAS or NCEO if appropriate. Enter 'N/A' into the text box if your application is not submitted under either NCAS or NCEO.

How we will assess your application

Assessment process

We will assess your application using the following process.

Expert 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.

Shortlisting

We will review the comments and scores for each application. If your application is shortlisted, you will have 14 days to respond to reviewers' comments.

Shortlisted applications and associated comments will be sent to a moderating panel who will make a funding recommendation.

Panel

We will review the comments and scores for each application. Shortlisted applications will go to a panel who will make a funding recommendation. NERC will make the final funding decision.

For more information on how we prioritise applications for funding visit [How we make decisions](#).

Timescale

We will aim to provide a funding decision within nine months of submission.

Feedback

We will give feedback with the outcome of your application. This will be in the form of reviewer comments.

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 [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, including to correct language, spelling, grammar and formatting. 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 assessment areas we will use are:

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

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

Contact details

Get help with your application

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

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, content or 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 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 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 more efficiently, 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

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.

Global Talent visa

Leaders or potential leaders are eligible for a [Global Talent visa](#) under the 'exceptional promise' category for future research leaders.

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.

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.

Guidance on good research

[Good research resource hub](#)

© 2026 Copyright UKRI

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