UK Research and Innovation

Funding opportunity

Embedding methodological development in social science research: 2022

Opportunity status:	Open
Funders:	**Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)**
Funding type:	Grant
Total fund:	£2,800,000
Award range:	£350,000 - £1,000,000
Publication date:	10 August 2022
Opening date:	9 August 2022
Closing date:	25 October 2022 16:00 UK time

Last updated: 9 August 2022

Apply for funding to refine recently developed methodological approaches to enable them to be fully embedded in social science research practice.

This is a highlight notice for the ESRC research grant opportunity.

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

Proposals can draw from the wider sciences, but the social sciences must represent at least 50% of the research focus and effort.

The full economic cost of your project can be up to £1 million. ESRC will fund 80% of the full economic cost.

Funding is available for up to three years.

Who can apply

Standard ESRC eligibility rules apply.

The principal investigator for this funding opportunity must be based at an organisation eligible for funding for the duration of the grant. Eligible organisations are:

- UK higher education institutions
- research council institutes
- UK Research and Innovation approved independent research organisations
- public sector research establishments
- NHS bodies with research capacity.

Check if you are eligible for research and innovation funding.

Co-investigators from business, third sector or government can be included in research proposals. We encourage active collaboration between UK researchers and those in other countries, and co-investigators based in overseas research organisations can be included through our international co-investigators policy.

Investigators

Research proposals may be submitted jointly by more than one applicant. In such cases, one person must be regarded as the principal investigator taking the lead responsibility for the conduct of the research and the observance of the terms and conditions. Correspondence regarding the research proposal and grant will be addressed to the principal investigator only (and in the case of any offer letter, to their research office). All co-investigators must make a significant contribution to the conduct of the research.

International co-investigators

ESRC attaches major importance to the position of UK social science in the international and global arena. We positively encourage active collaboration between UK researchers and those in other countries, where this will help to ensure that UK research is at the international leading edge. Co-investigators based in overseas research organisations can therefore be included in research grant proposals.

Read more about inclusion of international co-investigators on proposals.

Business, third sector or government body co-investigators

Business, third sector or government body co-investigators based in the UK can also be included on research grant proposals.

[Read more about inclusion of UK business, third sector or government body co-investigators on proposals](#).

What we're looking for

This is a highlight notice for the ESRC research grant opportunity.

Proposals funded through this highlight notice will refine methodological approaches developed since March 2020 to enable them to be fully embedded in research practice, maximising their contribution to social science research.

Many of the adaptations and innovations that occurred across a range of methodologies during the pandemic will offer long-term benefits to the community. This opportunity aims to maximise the impact of these by providing an opportunity for researchers to consolidate and refine methodological approaches to ensure they represent good practice and are accessible widely across social science research.

Proposal requirements

Proposals must identify:

- the methodological development that is the focus of the proposal
- when the methodological development took place
- the original research need, problem or question the methodological development was designed to address
- how and why this methodological approach was innovative
- how the methodological development continues to addresses an ongoing research need, noting the additional value of the novel method beyond the independent research organisation or research organisation community where relevant
- what further work is needed to embed the approach in research practice.

We expect you to explicitly justify all of these areas within the relevant section in your case for support.

This information will be used by the office to assess the eligibility of the proposal for funding through this highlight notice.

Innovative, cross-sector and cross-disciplinary approaches are encouraged. Proposals can draw from the wider sciences, but the social sciences must represent at least 50% of the research focus and effort.

[Read further information in the 'call details' section of the standard grants call specification (PDF, 150KB)](#).

We will not fund

Proposals developing new approaches that have not been adopted and tried out empirically are not eligible for funding. Proposals meeting the eligibility criteria for the 'Digital Footprints accelerator scheme' or the 'survey data collection methods collaboration' are also not eligible for this opportunity.

Ineligible proposals will be rejected by the office and will not be assessed.

Outputs, dissemination and impact

To maximise the impact of your research, you should actively consider within your proposal:

- the key audiences that will benefit from your research
- how these audiences can meaningfully engage with the research throughout the project lifecycle
- how the impact of your work can be maximised and developed.

Particular attention should be given to how the new methods developed and refined through the grant will be shared with the community, and the activity required to develop capacity and promote engagement or usage. Funding to deliver these plans can be requested in your proposal.

We encourage applicants to think particularly about use of social science research methods across policy, commercial and third sector settings.

You may find it helpful to refer to ESRC's guidance on **including impact in your research proposal**.

You can also refer to the **ESRC impact toolkit** which includes information on:

- developing impact strategies
- promoting knowledge exchange and public engagement
- communicating effectively with key stakeholders.

ESRC's National Centre for Research Methods (NCRM) delivers methodological training and resources on core and advanced social science research methods. Successful grants will be expected to work with NCRM to integrate any training they develop into the centre's broader social science training programme and to identify opportunities where further collaboration would be beneficial.

It may be beneficial to bring the projects funded through this highlight notice together to participate in value-added activities to develop synergies across projects and showcase research outputs. Proposals should include travel and subsistence costs of up to £1,000 to participate in two value-added activities.

Funding available

The full economic cost of your project can range from £350,000 to £1 million. ESRC will fund 80% of the full economic cost.

Duration

Funding is available for up to three years. Projects can start from 1 May 2023 and must start no later than 1 July 2023.

How to apply

You must apply using the Joint Electronic Submission (Je-S) system.

You can find advice on completing your application in the:

- **Je-S guidance for applicants (PDF, 302KB)**
- **Je-S handbook**
- **ESRC research funding guide**.

We recommend you start your application early.

Your host organisation will also be able to provide advice and guidance.

Submitting your application

Before starting an application, you will need to log in or create an account in Je-S.

When applying:

1. Select 'documents', then 'new document'.
2. Select 'call search'.
3. To find the opportunity, search for: Embedding Methodological Development in Research Practice 2022.

This will populate:

- council: ESRC
- document type: standard proposal
- scheme: research grants
- call/type/mode: Embedding Methodological Development in Research Practice 2022.

Once you have completed your application, make sure you 'submit document'.

You can save completed details in Je-S at any time and return to continue your application later.

Deadline

ESRC must receive your application by 25 October 2022 at 16:00.

You will not be able to apply after this time. Please leave enough time for your proposal to pass through your organisation's Je-S submission route before this date.

You should ensure you are aware of and follow any internal institutional deadlines that may be in place.

Attachments

Mandatory attachments with the application include:

- case for support (maximum of six sides of A4)
- justification of resources (maximum of two sides of A4)
- data management plan (for grants planning to generate data) (maximum of three sides of A4)
- CV (maximum two sides of A4 per person).

Further information can be found in the **Je-S guidance for applicants (PDF, 302KB)**.

How we will assess your application

Your application will be assessed based on five key criteria:

- originality and potential contribution to knowledge
- fit with the highlight notice
- research design and methods
- value for money
- outputs, dissemination and impact.

Your proposal will be sent to a minimum of three reviewers primarily drawn from ESRC's peer review college. We may include reviewers from outside the college if college members lack necessary knowledge and expertise for a particular application, and ask for comments from non-academic research users, such as businesses or charities.

We encourage you to nominate two academic and two non-academic user reviewers.

Once a required minimum number of responses have been received, the responses will be reviewed by an ESRC officer. Proposals with an average score of below 4.5 from the academic reviewers will normally be rejected at this stage without referral to the Grant Assessment Panels (GAPs).

If your proposal proceeds to the panel, you will be invited to respond to peer review comments. The application, reviewers' comments and your response will be considered by one of our GAPs in March 2023.

Proposals will be assigned to panels based on the discipline of the proposal.

GAPs will agree a prioritised list of proposals recommended for funding within this highlight notice. The lists will then be considered by ESRC's Grants Delivery Group (GDG) who make the final funding recommendations to ESRC.

When recommending proposals for funding, the GDG may take a portfolio approach to funding decisions and consider regional spread.

Decisions will be communicated in April 2023.

Contact details

Get help with developing your proposal

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.

Ask about this funding opportunity

Funding opportunity mailbox

Email: **esrcresearchmethods@esrc.ukri.org**

We aim to respond within three working days.

Get help with applying through Je-S

Email

jeshelp@je-s.ukri.org

Telephone

01793 444164

Opening times

Je-S helpdesk opening times

Additional info

ESRC's investment in research methods

ESRC has invested in research methods development and innovation over a long period of time, most notably through the training and research delivered through the National Centre for Research Methods (NCRM) but also through our:

- centres competition
- data and infrastructure investments
- responsive mode schemes.

We are committed to investing in this area, as demonstrated in our current and new delivery plan scheduled for release in autumn 2022.

Evidence from **NCRM's Changing Research Practices** project and an evaluation of social science research funded through the UK Research and Innovation rolling COVID opportunity undertaken by a team led by Professor Irene Hardill (Northumbria University) demonstrates that there has been considerable methodological creativity in social science research during the pandemic.

Many of these methodological adaptations and innovations will offer long-term benefits to the community. It is important to harness these developments and provide an opportunity for researchers to consolidate and refine the methodological good practice that has been developed so they can be utilised more broadly in social science research.

Related opportunities

We will shortly be publishing further funding opportunities for research methods-focused research and further information on these opportunities are outlined below. However, please note proposals addressing these challenge areas are not eligible for this highlight notice.

DigitalFootprints accelerator scheme

The DigitalFootprints accelerator scheme will support innovative proof of concept projects that meet challenges in the digital footprints data landscape, providing the foundations and knowledge for a transformational shift in creation, access and use of digital footprint data.

Foundational aspects which could be developed through this opportunity include but are not limited to:

- methodological development
- addressing major challenges around interpretation and status of digital footprints data (for example with regard to representativeness, uncertainty, provenance, bias and understanding of latent or proxy measures, or causal insights) and their strengths or weaknesses in the wider repertoire of social science research methods.

The accelerator scheme is intended to support a range of projects of varying size up. The full economic cost of projects is expected to be up to £500,000. Projects can have a duration of up to 12 months.

Investing in survey data collection methods

The pandemic imposed massive disruption on population survey data collection as studies adapted rapidly to the restrictions on in-home, face-to-face data collection. As a major funder of survey data collection for the research community, ESRC needs to:

- understand the impact of these mode changes on data quality and data collection methods to help inform our future data infrastructure investment decisions
- advance the science in this field more generally.

We are seeking to support a survey data collection methods collaboration to deliver a step-change in methods for collecting population survey data and ensure the UK survey research community can continue to meet the needs of social survey data users in academia, government and beyond.

We intend to announce a funding opportunity in the coming weeks to commission a single collaborative grant. The full economic cost of projects can be up to £3.35 million. ESRC will fund 80% of the full economic cost. Projects can have a duration of up to three years.

We anticipate that this grant will support secondary analysis of existing survey data and supplements to existing surveys or new bespoke data collections to test methodological innovations, as necessary to meet the research objectives.

ESRC research grant

The ESRC research grant invites proposals from eligible individuals and research teams for standard research projects, large-scale surveys and other infrastructure projects and for developments across the breadth of social science methodologies.

The opportunity offers researchers considerable flexibility to focus on any subject area or topic providing that it falls within ESRC's remit. We particularly encourage ambitious and novel research proposals addressing new concepts and techniques and those with the potential for significant scientific or societal and economic impact.

The full economic cost of projects can range from £350,000 to £1 million. Projects can have a duration of up to five years.

Proposals can be submitted at any time as there are no fixed closing dates.

Supporting documents

Je-S guidance for applicants (PDF, 302KB)
ESRC research funding guide
Equality impact assessment (PDF, 240KB)

https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/embedding-methodological-development-in-social-science-research-2022