Funding opportunity

AHRC Responsive Mode Pilot: Mission Awards Outline Stage

Opportunity status:	Closed
Funders:	[Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)](#)
Funding type:	Grant
Award range:	£2,000,000 - £3,000,000
Publication date:	13 May 2024
Opening date:	15 May 2024 9:00am UK time
Closing date:	18 July 2024 4:00pm UK time

Last updated: 17 June 2024 - **see all updates**

Timeline

○ **15 May 2024 9:00am**
Opening date

○ **23 May 2024 11:00am**
Webinar

○ **30 May 2024 12:00pm**
Webinar

○ **18 July 2024 4:00pm**

Apply for funding to advance arts and humanities research agendas, research leadership and research teams, at scale, through a pilot approach to team convening.

Mission awards will embrace a new model of research leadership and teamworking, convening expertise from across the research ecosystem to advance ambitious arts and humanities led research agendas.

You must be based at a UK research organisation eligible for Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funding.

The full economic cost (FEC) must be between £2 million and £3 million for projects lasting up to four years.

AHRC will fund 80% of the FEC.

Who can apply

Before applying for funding, check the **Eligibility of your organisation**.

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) has introduced new role types for funding opportunities being run on the new UKRI Funding Service.

For full details, visit **Eligibility as an individual**.

Team composition

We actively encourage applicants to think imaginatively about the composition of the team and to include leadership expertise from across the research ecosystem, such as technicians, professional service colleagues,

representatives from non-HEI organisations as well as academics, and ensuring that the team involves people at different career stages.

To ensure meaningful engagement with their project team in developing their project, individuals are permitted to be involved in only one application.

Project leads

Your application should be submitted by a nominated lead but must be co-created with input from all named team members and partners. The nominated lead can be drawn from across the entire team and need not be an academic.

For administrative purposes, we ask that you identify a single project lead and lead research organisation. The project lead must be affiliated with the lead research organisation. The project lead and their research office will be responsible for the administration of the award.

Before applying for funding, check the following applies for the project lead:

- **eligibility of their organisation**
- **eligibility as an individual**, UKRI has introduced new role names for funding opportunities being run on the new Funding Service
- check your **application is suitable for AHRC funding**
- use the **remit query form** if you are unsure whether your proposed research falls within the remit of AHRC

Project co-leads

Co-leads are supported by this funding opportunity. This includes international co-leads as per the guidance below.

Other roles

Other roles that are supported by this funding opportunity are listed in the How to Apply section below.

Early career researchers

We welcome applications which involve early- and mid-career researchers as lead or co-lead and regard this programme as an important means for developing researcher capacity.

Who is not eligible to apply

We do not support project studentships (funding PhD study) within this funding opportunity.

We will not fund applications with a traditional 'principal investigator' led project structure within this funding opportunity.

International applicants

International researchers are welcome to participate as co-leads. See sections two and three of the **AHRC research funding guide** for full details on eligibility of researchers, organisations and costs.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

We are committed to achieving equality of opportunity for all funding applicants. We encourage applications from a diverse range of researchers.

We support people to work in a way that suits their personal circumstances. This includes:

- career breaks
- support for people with caring responsibilities
- flexible working

- alternative working patterns

Find out more about **equality, diversity and inclusion at UKRI**.

What we're looking for

Scope

Mission awards support research teams to deliver large scale projects that advance arts and humanities research agendas and transform approaches to research leadership and teams.

Mission is a pilot opportunity within AHRC's responsive mode. The size of award offered, and the team convening approach required of project teams are novel for AHRC. We are looking for exceptional projects that embrace this new approach to significantly advance their chosen research agenda at a scale impossible without this funding.

We are looking to you to define your chosen research agenda and articulate the difference our funding can make. Projects can be single discipline, interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, or transdisciplinary. The majority of the disciplinary focus of the project must fall within our subject remit; see section seven of the **AHRC research funding guide** for our remit coverage. Practice-based and practice-led research is supported by this funding opportunity.

At the heart of your project should be an inclusive and collaborative team with diverse membership and ambitious, novel, and impactful research ideas.

The approach your project team takes to leadership should be a shared one, with the balance of activity and management across the team and partner

organisations allocated however you see fit. Collectively, you should have the skills, experience and knowledge to deliver a large scale project.

For this funding opportunity, applicant teams must demonstrate how they have adopted and will continue to implement the following principles throughout the development and delivery of their proposed research:

- identify individuals with the appropriate expertise to collectively deliver the project
- establish collective leadership, empowering team members to lead in their area of expertise
- design inclusive governance practices and clear decision-making processes
- identify ways to embed development for all, realised through the delivery of the project
- engage in reflexive practice, enabling adaptive ways of working and continuous learning

See 'Additional Information' for a diagram of these principles and some further details.

This is an outline stage, and we will only ask you for information regarding your chosen research agenda, your project team and the difference a Mission award will make.

Aims

We are developing this funding opportunity in partnership with the Thrive project. Led by the University of Liverpool in partnership with Advance HE, Thrive is a two-year project funded by the Research England Development Fund.

Informed by extensive sector engagement and drawing on a diverse range of experiences, skills and expertise, the Thrive project has articulated a team convening approach for team-based working. As part of the Thrive project, we are co-creating Mission as a live funding pilot in which to test this approach.

In so doing, our core aim is to kick start the transformation of arts and humanities research, setting out an alternative approach to inform the way in which future research is conducted across the research and innovation sector.

Between us, we are interested in piloting whether a team convening approach to project design and delivery supports the following:

- enhanced arts and humanities leadership of research teams
- innovative and inclusive approaches to supporting the breadth of staff involved in research
- bolder, impactful research ideas
- enhanced diversity of leadership voices in research, encompassing technical and professional services colleagues, early and mid-career academics and under-represented groups
- enabled and leveraged research excellence through combining the expertise of all members of the team

For more information on the background of this funding opportunity, go to the Additional information section.

Duration

The maximum duration of this award is four years.

Projects have a fixed start date of 1 May 2025. This date must be recorded on the outline application, and again on the full stage submission, if invited to complete.

Funding available

We anticipate funding two to three full stage applications.

The FEC of your project can be between £2 million and £3 million.

We will fund 80% of the FEC. Eligible costs related to international co-leads will be paid at 100% FEC.

Please note that costings are not required until an applicant team has been invited to make a full stage application. In line with our other responsive mode funding opportunities full stage applications will be encouraged to request and justify costs for the activities that best meet the aims of the project.

By applying to this outline stage, you confirm that a full submission will be between £2 million and £3 million FEC.

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

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.

Monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL)

We will work with the successful research teams to agree a monitoring and evaluation plan in the starting phase of the award. In addition to standard ResearchFish reporting, this is likely to be aligned with key stage gates for the Thrive project.

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 development of 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.

3. Answer questions directly in the text boxes. You can save your answers and come back to complete them or work offline and return to copy and paste your answers. If we need you to upload a document, follow the upload instructions in the Funding Service. All questions and assessment criteria are listed in the How to apply section on this Funding finder page.

4. Allow enough time to check your application in 'read-only' view before sending to your research office.

5. Send the completed application to your research office for checking. They will return it to you if it needs editing.

6. Your research office will submit the completed and checked application to UKRI.

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

- use images sparingly and only to convey important information that cannot easily be put into words
- insert each new image onto a new line
- provide a descriptive legend for each image immediately underneath it (this counts towards your word limit)
- files must be smaller than 5MB and in JPEG, JPG, JPE, JFI, JIF, JFIF, PNG, GIF, BMP or WEBP format

Watch our **research office webinars about the new Funding Service**.

For more guidance on the Funding Service, see:

- [how applicants use the Funding Service](#)
- [how research offices use the Funding Service](#)
- [how reviewers use the Funding Service](#)

References

Applications should be self-contained, and hyperlinks should only be used to provide links directly to reference information. To ensure the information's integrity is maintained, where possible, persistent identifiers such as digital object identifiers should be used. Assessors are not required to access links to carry out assessment or recommend a funding decision. You should use your discretion when including references and prioritise those most pertinent to 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.

Deadline

AHRC must receive your application by 18 July 2024 at 4:00pm UK time.

You will not be able to apply after this time.

Make sure you are aware of and follow any internal institutional deadlines.

Following the submission of your application to this 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

AHRC, 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**.

As part of the Mission Funding Opportunity your personal data will be anonymised, aggregated and shared with the Thrive team for the purposes of comparing Mission with our standard responsive mode approach.

Publication of outcomes

If your application is successful, we will publish some personal information on the **UKRI Gateway to Research**.

Summary

Word limit: 500

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
- professional enabling staff
- research and innovation associate
- technician

Only list one individual as project lead.

This is a team-based application, and the title of project lead is not intended to denote seniority. Please nominate the accountable individual who will be responsible for reporting and award administration as the project lead. Members of the team involved in the collective leadership of the project should be listed as project co-leads, with leadership of the project shared appropriately across this group and clearly set out in the main body of the application.

Find out more about **UKRI's core team roles in funding applications**.

Application questions

Discipline classification – primary

Word limit: 5

Please provide the primary research area of your application.

What the assessors are looking for in your response

You must select from one of these research disciplines.

This information will be used for the purposes of processing your application and in the selection of appropriate assessors. The research disciplines are:

- archaeology
- area studies
- classics
- cultural and museum studies
- dance
- design
- development studies
- drama and theatre studies
- education
- history
- human geography
- information and communication technologies
- languages and literature
- law and legal studies
- library and information studies
- linguistics

- media
- music
- philosophy
- political science and international studies
- social anthropology
- theology, divinity and religion
- visual arts

Discipline classification – secondary

Word limit: 50

Please describe, using keywords, the research area of your application and where relevant the approach, time period or geographical area.

What the assessors are looking for in your response

This will further help with the selection of appropriate assessors.

Outline vision

Word limit: 550

What is your proposed research agenda and how would your team use a Mission award to advance it?

What the assessors are looking for in your response

You will need to explain the nature of your research agenda, the scale and nature of the transformation you will enact and why you need a Mission award to do it. Assessors will be looking to see that your vision:

- is aligned to the scope and programme aims of this funding opportunity

- is of excellent quality and importance within or beyond the field(s) or area(s)
- has the potential to advance current understanding, generates 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
- is genuinely novel and only achievable in the context of a Mission award
- meaningfully engages with how a team convening approach will add value in delivering your vision

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

References may be included within this section.

Outline approach

Word limit: 550

How are you going to deliver your proposed work?

What the assessors are looking for in your response

Outline your team's current thinking on how you will use the team-convening principles listed below to deliver your project. Specifically, you will need to articulate your initial thinking on how your approach will:

- identify individuals with the appropriate expertise to collectively deliver the project
- establish collective leadership, empowering team members to lead in their area of expertise
- design inclusive governance practices and clear decision-making processes

- identify ways to embed development for all, realised through the delivery of the project
- engage in reflexive practice, enabling adaptive ways of working and continuous learning

As this is an outline stage, we do not expect you to have full detail on every element of your approach. Assessors will be looking for a credible plan relative to your current stage of project development. Assessors will want to understand your approach and have confidence in your ability to realise a full stage application that embraces the team-convening principles within your specific context.

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

References may be included within this section.

Outline team capability to deliver

Word limit: 750

Who are the project team and what skills, experience and knowledge are they bringing to the project?

What the assessors are looking for in your response

Evidence of how the team, will:

- identify a complete set of appropriate skills and expertise needed to address the mission, and plan to recruit the right expertise to fill any gaps
- combine expertise of all members of the team to achieve research excellence
- ensure careers of all team members are strengthened by this collaborative and inclusive approach

- ensure accountability through collective leadership
- ensure inclusion and diversity through the team-convening process

There will be an opportunity to expand your team if invited to complete a full stage application. This could include new collaborators or adding further details where appropriate.

The word count for this section is 750 words: 550 words to be used for 'Who are the project team and what skills, experience and knowledge are they bringing to the project?' (including references) and, if necessary, a further 200 words for Additions.

UKRI has introduced new role types for funding opportunities being run on the Funding Service.

For full details, see **Eligibility as an individual**.

Additions

Provide any further details relevant to your application. This section is optional and can be up to 200 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 outline team capability to deliver (for example, details of career breaks if you wish to disclose them).

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

References may be included within this section.

How we will assess your application

Assessment process

We will assess your application using the following process, noting that all elements of your application form will be shared with the assessors.

AHRC eligibility criteria

At the point of application submission, each will be checked against the following criteria:

- all applicants and named staff must be eligible under the funding opportunity requirements
- the application must meet the aims and criteria of the funding opportunity
- applications which do not meet these criteria will be rejected with feedback on why it could not proceed

Assessment panel: outline stage

We will invite experts to assess the quality of the outline applications received, and to shortlist a selection (likely up to 10 applications) to proceed to an invited full stage submission.

There is no written expert review or project lead response for this stage of this funding opportunity.

We reserve the right to use the panel recommendations to create a balanced portfolio of full stage applications that encompass a range of geographies and research themes.

Given the pilot nature of the funding opportunity, we may also consider differing approaches to implementing the team-convening principles in creating our balanced portfolio.

Assessment panel: full stage

We will invite experts to assess the quality of full stage applications and rank them alongside other full stage applications. After this, the panel will shortlist the strongest applications and invite those to proceed to the interview stage of the process.

There is no written expert review or project lead response for this stage of this funding opportunity.

Interview: full stage

For shortlisted applications, an expert interview panel will conduct interviews with applicants, after this the panel will make a funding recommendation.

At this stage, we anticipate holding interviews in the week commencing 24 March 2025. We will confirm the exact dates of interviews with full stage applicants.

AHRC will make the final funding decision and reserves the right to use full stage and interview panel recommendations to create a balanced portfolio of funded applications that encompass a range of geographies and research themes.

Given the pilot nature of the funding opportunity, we may also consider differing approaches to implementing the team-convening principles in creating our balanced portfolio.

Timescale

We aim to complete the full assessment process within nine months of receiving your application.

Feedback

Feedback will be provided to applications that proceed to an invited full-stage submission. This will be shared alongside the outcome of your full stage

application.

Resubmission policy

Our standard re-submission policy applies to this funding opportunity. Please visit the **AHRC research funding guide** for further information.

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**.

We reserve the right to modify the assessment process as needed. All applicants will be notified should this happen and will be provided with the same information.

Application sections

The application sections we will use are:

- outline vision
- outline approach
- outline team capability to deliver

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

Contact details

Get help with your application

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

Important note: The Helpdesk is committed to helping users of the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Funding Service as effectively and as quickly as possible. In order to manage cases at peak volume times, the Helpdesk will triage and prioritise those queries with an imminent opportunity deadline or a technical issue. Enquiries raised where information is available on the Funding Finder opportunity page and should be understood early in the application process (for example, regarding eligibility or content/remit of an opportunity) will not constitute a priority case and will be addressed as soon as possible.

Contact details

For help and advice on costings and writing your 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 **enquiries@ahrc.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.

Find further information on **submitting an application**.

Sensitive information

If you or a core team member need to tell us something you wish to remain confidential, email **enquiries@ahrc.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**.

Additional info

Background

We are piloting this funding opportunity in partnership with Thrive – a two-year project funded by Research England and in collaboration with the University of Liverpool and Advance HE.

The Thrive project has developed team-convening principles which you must incorporate when designing your application for this funding opportunity. These principles are designed to be followed in the sequence presented below, guiding applicants through the process of convening their team.

You should note that the principles below, and their contextual definitions, are not the assessment criteria. Instead, they offer a starting provocation that teams should use in the development of their project. You should refer to the stated assessment criteria for this opportunity, which will be used by assessors.

1. Identify Appropriate Expertise

Project teams should comprise team members who collectively have the appropriate capabilities to deliver the project – including the necessary knowledge, skills and ability to manage other elements of a large project. The definition of expertise here is broad and includes expertise beyond the academic.

Teams should be able to demonstrate their team's capability to co-develop and co-deliver the project in the round, carefully considering team composition and domain-leadership opportunities for a diverse range of team members.

2. Establish a Collective Leadership structure

No individual should lead every aspect of a project. Instead, expertise should be recognised, and leadership roles allocated to reflect this. Leadership

should be undertaken as matrix leadership (that is, shared and distributed across multiple people). Leaders should be empowered to lead decision-making in their domain and to contribute to decision-making across the team as appropriate.

Teams should be able to set out and explain their project's leadership structure and describe how it utilises diverse team members' experience and expertise, while delivering maximum benefit to the project.

3. Design Inclusive Governance

The organisational structure of the project should facilitate inclusive and transparent decision-making. Project teams should ensure accountability within a matrix leadership. Teams should determine a decision-making structure and processes that will enable the right team members to feel empowered to make decisions relevant to their area(s) of expertise.

Teams should be able to demonstrate how their decision-making structure will work to facilitate effective and inclusive ways of working in day-to-day practice across the project.

4. Identify ways to embed Development for All

Team development should be an intrinsic part of the delivery of the project. All members of the applicant team, irrespective of role or career stage, should identify at least one individual development goal which can be realised via the delivery of the project itself (for instance through peer development mechanisms such as collective learning, role-sharing, mentoring and secondments/internships).

Teams should also be able to set out their collective development ambitions, explaining how these will benefit the project as a whole. Time should be built into project plans for individual and collective goals to be realised, bringing about shared commitment to development and making intentional space for it to take place.

5. Engage in Reflexive Practice

Project teams should embed reflexive practice and encourage continuous learning. Teams should regularly consider evolving their ways of working, adapting their approach where necessary. This should enable challenges to be identified early and afford opportunities for adjustments to be made throughout the research project. Teams should be able to demonstrate how they have built reflexive practice into their planned activities, work packages and timelines.

These team-convening principles can also be found in diagram form in the 'Supporting documents' section below.

The findings from the Thrive project and this pilot will result in the development of ways of working in research teams which:

- promote a positive, inclusive and respectful research culture
- share the opportunities and responsibilities of research leadership
- capitalise on the individual talents of all team members

Read more about the Thrive project.

Webinar for potential applicants

The launch of the Mission funding opportunity was supported by two webinars for prospective applicants. The webinars were held on 23 May and 30 May.

Watch 23 May webinar recording.

Passcode: Q2%kcMjp

Watch 30 May webinar recording.

Passcode: 7myb2K.6

[View webinar slides (PDF, 1MB).](#)

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

[Diagram of Team-Convening Principles (PDF, 64.7KB)](#)

Updates

17 June 2024
Webinar recordings and slides added in Additional info.

https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/ahrc-responsive-mode-pilot-mission-awards-outline-stage