

AHRC Locally Unlocking Culture through Inclusive Access (LUCIA) Programme – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

In reply to a range of questions submitted before and during the LUCIA information webinar on the 10th October 2024, AHRC's Cities and Urban Environments portfolio team has compiled a list of responses to these questions.

Full information about the programme can be found on the [LUCIA funding opportunity page](#) on the UKRI website.

For further questions related to this specific funding opportunity please contact the AHRC Health, Environmental and Urban Humanities (HEUH) Inbox - HEUH@ahrc.ukri.org - and include 'LUCIA' in the subject line of your email for ease. We will respond to your query as soon as possible.

Q: Is the LUCIA funding opportunity concentrated on local communities in urban areas or cities only?

A: No, the AHRC Cities and Urban Environments portfolio has a broad definition of urban communities which includes cities and towns, suburban areas, peri-urban areas, coastal and island towns, as well as the relationship between urban and rural communities. This broad definition extends to the LUCIA programme.

We expect to see a clear focus on community within the built environment but, crucially, we do not want to be prescriptive in determining the scope of LUCIA network activities and the places and communities that may be part of each network. Therefore, projects concentrated on local communities outside of cities and distinctly urban areas would still fall within the LUCIA programme scope and will be assessed alongside all other applications by our assessment panel – composed of both academic researchers working in this research space and those who hold expertise by experience.

Q: Would research focusing on market towns/urban areas in rural counties be eligible?

Is the LUCIA programme open to research in rural as well as urban contexts?

A: Yes, we expect to see a clear focus on community within the built environment but, crucially, we want to avoid being prescriptive in determining the scope of LUCIA network activities, or the places and communities that may be part of each network. Therefore, market towns or urban areas in rural counties across the UK would be in scope for network activities, as would research into the relationship between urban and rural contexts.

Q: Please can you confirm if the LUCIA programme is specifically for projects engaged with urban renewal. Or are projects on coastal or island communities also eligible?

A: Urban renewal is a major focus of LUCIA, but the AHRC Cities and Urban Environments portfolio has a broad definition of urban communities and we do not want to be prescriptive in determining the scope of LUCIA network activities and the places and communities that may be part of each network.

Therefore, projects involving coastal or island communities, for example, would fall within the LUCIA programme scope and will be assessed alongside all other applications by our assessment panel – composed of both academic researchers working in this research space and those who hold expertise by experience.

Q: Is there scope to build on the work of existing networks of cultural practitioners?

Alternatively, can a new network formed after this webinar qualify for LUCIA funding? Or must it be an existing one?

A: Through LUCIA, we want to encourage pilots that are both continuations of pre-existing cross-sector partnerships and newly formed networks.

We have deliberately designed the call to run until 10th April 2025 to ensure applicants have both the time and space to explore new partnerships and build on those relationships already in place between researchers, cultural and community practitioners, and local, regional and devolved government.

Q: Can the proposed research network come from an existing network of organisations not currently focusing on research?

A: We expect to see at least one member of the leadership team that holds experience in research within the cities and urban environments area. For administrative purposes it is also necessary to identify a single project lead who must be affiliated with a lead research organisation. The project lead and their research office will be ultimately responsible for administration of the grant.

However, the balance of activity and management across the leadership team and partner organisations can be shared flexibly and however you see fit as a collective. Project co-leads from cultural, cultural policy and civic discourse, among other relevant sectors, as well as people with expertise by experience, must be included as part of the leadership team.

To reiterate what has been discussed earlier, co-leads from outside of academia can be costed at 100% FEC where justified. This should be utilised to ensure equitable representation and remuneration for different partners.

Q: How large do you imagine the team of community practitioners, researchers and policymakers will be?

A: There is no limit on the size of leadership teams and project co-leads involved, and it is up to applicants to consider suitability and economic feasibility of project leadership teams in order to ensure inclusive and equitable ways of working between project partners.

For project co-leads not based at eligible research organisations or international project-co leads combined costs cannot exceed 30% of the total FEC. This should also be taken into consideration when building your project team.

Q: As a HEI, is it better to apply as a consortium bid alongside other partners or apply as a sole institution?

A: For administrative purposes it is necessary to identify a single project lead who must be affiliated with the lead research organisation. The project lead and their research office will be ultimately responsible for administration of the grant.

However, the balance of activity and management across the leadership team and partner organisations can be shared flexibly and however you see fit as a collective.

Q: Would access to healthcare be within remit? E.g. health policy, overcoming health inequalities.

A: The core focus of the LUCIA programme is on widening cultural access and co-creating cultural policy design, but we also understand the significance of creativity and the arts in the health sector (e.g. AHRC's Health, Environmental and Urban Humanities (HEUH) team leads on the [Mobilising Community Assets programme](#)). If your proposed network is able to tackle both themes, and build equitable partnerships in the context of both, then this would be in scope.

Q: I would be keen to hear more about the combination of cultural policy and healthcare if possible? I'm thinking of, for instance, partnerships working with community and advocacy groups for disabled people.

A: Similarly, if your proposed network is able to tackle both themes in relation to partnerships with community and advocacy groups for disabled people, then this would be in the scope of the LUCIA programme.

Q: To what degree is place and or regional scope a criteria?

A: We encourage applicants to think collaboratively about the partnerships for each LUCIA network pilot and this can include thinking across different communities, places, and regions. We would expect to see justification around location choice, the feasibility of working within the place or region specified needs to be carefully considered.

Q: What are the expected or hoped for outcomes of the scheme? What would funded projects be expected to produce?

Please could you provide more detail on the types of activities you expect the networks to achieve within the 12-month period?

A: The core intention of LUCIA pilots is to build equitable urban partnerships as part of your network primarily, but we also expect to see meaningful activity around community co-design, cultural policy design and development of innovative research methodologies to enhance cultural access.

It's worth bearing in mind that this programme is a pilot for a broader strategic area. The AHRC is well placed here with other investments including our [Creative Communities](#) and [Place](#) programmes, as well as our [Mobilising Community Assets programme](#), which already have significant outputs. We're really looking for additionality of outcomes and how your network would add value to this well-established area. We'd like to see cultural policy design, with a greater emphasis on actively standing collaborations to drive the strategic agenda forward.

Q: Is emphasis in the end outcomes on the economic regeneration or the community cohesion benefit?

A: We're looking for additionality in this research area and anticipate that enhanced wellbeing in the community can encourage economic regeneration alongside community cohesion benefits.

Q: Would it be acceptable for a significant portion of the funding to be set aside for community groups self-identified activities?

A: We would expect to see activities specified in the application in order to give our assessment panel as much of an understanding of network activities.

However, these can be led by project co-leads outside academia and would need to adhere to the standards of equitable partnership that we would expect within this programme.

Q: What costs can be associated with project co-leads from outside academia?

A: AHRC will fund 100% of eligible costs for project co-leads not employed by eligible research organisations where these have been sufficiently justified. The combined costs for UK-based project co-leads not employed by eligible research organisations must be a minimum of 10% of the total fEC of the grant application. If the combined cost for UK project co-leads not based at eligible research organisations is below 10%, you must clearly articulate why and how partners from outside academia are equitably included within the project. The combined cost cannot exceed 30% of the total FEC.

Q: Will LUCIA affect AHRC's Catalyst scheme eligibility?

A: Applying for the LUCIA programme will not impact submissions to the AHRC Catalyst scheme, due to the LUCIA project lead role being for administrative purposes only.

Applicants listed as a project lead for the LUCIA programme will still be eligible to apply for the Catalyst scheme.

Q: Will AHRC actively manage the geographic spread of LUCIA awards?

A: LUCIA is intended to offer a coordinated UK-wide investment, with a spread of collaborative networks funded across locations, disciplines, community groups, and diverse approaches to research.

We would like to see a spread of networks across the UK, but, ultimately, the assessment panel will be empowered to recommend the strongest overall portfolio of proposals that they determine will provide the greatest added value. A sub-panel may be convened to consider the applications deemed fundable by the assessment panel and may decide on the final portfolio of applications to be funded.

AHRC will make the final funding decision and reserves the right to modify the assessment process as needed. For full guidance here, please see the 'How we will assess your application' and 'Portfolio balancing' section of the [LUCIA funding opportunity page](#) on the UKRI website.

Q: Are there any limits on the number of applications per research organisation?

Are there any priority and/or preference placed on projects/networks concentrating on communities local to the lead organisation?

A: To confirm, universities are permitted to submit more than one application as project lead for the LUCIA call. Similarly, if you are a cultural organisation or community partner who would like to be a project co-lead, you are able to be a part of more than one leadership team. There are no scheme-specific caps on the number of applications which any one research organisation can support for this opportunity.

Ultimately, there are no restrictions on the geographic concentration or reach of proposed LUCIA pilot networks. There needs to be a local and/or regional focus to pilot networks and we also

encourage project leads to consider inclusive and equitable connections and civic university agreements with their institutional research offices.

Q: Can a project lead make multiple applications for one opportunity?

A: Yes, although the project lead will be required to justify how their time will be spent, and that they have the capacity to work across multiple networks.

Q: Referring to the 'What we will fund' section of the LUCIA funding opportunity, could you expand on what you are looking for in terms of 'networks with scalable and sustainable funding plans'?

Is there a further scheme planned beyond the five pilot projects?

A: We would expect plans to have the potential to scale up pilot networks with the hope funding can be amplified in future.

We really hope we can be in a position to offer further funding for a wider network plus programme in future, however, we can't guarantee further funding in this space and we would therefore expect to see justification that the success of network outcomes wouldn't depend on further funding.

Q: Can you explain the process for making an application and the criteria for external partners?

A: The project lead is responsible for completing the application process on the Funding Service for administrative purposes.

We expect all team members and project partners to contribute to the application.

Once the application has been started by the project lead, collaborators may be added to the application to contribute to the draft - please note that project teams should coordinate when updates are made/work offline on a draft, to avoid timeout issues/duplications.

For full guidance on the application process, please see the 'How to Apply' section of the LUCIA funding opportunity on the UKRI Funding Finder. And if you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to drop us a line via the HEUH inbox - heuh@ahrc.ukri.org.

Q: Is it possible to access information about previously funded proposals under the LUCIA call or similar schemes, to help in understanding the types of projects that have been successful?

A: The LUCIA programme is a brand new funding opportunity from AHRC. We would encourage you to look at the [LUCIA workshop report](#), published to reflect discussions we held with community groups, researchers and policymakers in March and April to help further scope, co-design and build the LUCIA programme. In particular, please see Appendix A (page 9) which outlines some of the pre-scoping activities we have undertaken and the and the lessons learnt from exciting funding opportunities, past, present and further afield.

Q: I think the emphasis on paying non-HEI partners properly is of fundamental importance, but since you also want to see evidence of co-design and co-production at all stages of the application preparation, I am intrigued to know whether you have given any thought about how that pre-submission work will be funded, to make sure partners are not unpaid for that intense and intensive prep work? As things stands, you're not looking to support equitable

application development, meaning that only wealthy institutions will be able to support their PIs with funds to do this work properly, and this makes a mockery of the focus on EDI.

A: Unfortunately for this opportunity, we are unable to provide remuneration costs to compensate non-HEI partners in the application period. We strongly encourage project leads to consider approaching public engagement colleagues at their research organisations to discuss potential routes of funding to enable equitable partnership building in application preparation.

Q: Can exception costs for non-HEI partners include other DI costs too? The LUCIA webinar slides indicate only staff time.

A: Infrastructure costs (estates, indirect costs, etc.) for non-HEI partner organisations are not eligible. However, you may apply for all other costs associated with supporting non-HEI partners in conducting research as part of the LUCIA networks. Applications will need to clearly justify these exception costs and they will be subject to panel assessment.

Q: Can Early Career Researchers (ECRs) be LUCIA network leads or co-leads?

A: Yes absolutely, we particularly encourage applications from early career researchers (both as project leads and project co-leads) and regard this programme as an important opportunity to grow interdisciplinary researcher capacity in the UK.

Full information can be found in the 'Who can apply' section of the [LUCIA funding opportunity page](#) on the UKRI website.

Q: What happens if the project lead is an ECR currently on a temporary contract due to end during the LUCIA funding period?

It is no longer a requirement to provide evidence of contractual arrangements within an application. However, we do require that such an arrangement is in place at the point that the grant begins and we may ask for evidence of it during the assessment process. We would therefore expect to see full justification of your time commitment and whether you have suitable capacity and time to be a project lead of a LUCIA pilot network.

Q: Would the LUCIA Fellow be able to assist in areas where the local authorities are not members of the LGA?

A: Yes, our intention is for the LUCIA fellowship position to facilitate links with local authorities across the UK and is not contingent on LGA membership.

Q: Is there any restriction regarding the geographic reach of the proposed projects? Specifically, would proposals focusing on empowering communities in a couple of boroughs be seen less favourably compared to those with a more geographically dispersed network?

A: There are no restrictions on the geographic concentration or reach of proposed LUCIA pilot networks. The LUCIA assessment panel will be empowered to recommend the strongest overall portfolio of proposals that they determine will provide the greatest added value, whether that is in concentrated, more localised collaboration with specific communities or through more cross-regional approaches.

Q: Please can you be more specific about what you mean by 'people with expertise by experience' in the context of this call and arts and humanities research generally.

A: By 'expertise with experience', we are including people who bring expertise from a place of personal, lived experience and ensuring that those who have directly faced challenges this programme is looking to address are listened to and consulted. This could include representatives from charities, voluntary organisations or community groups etc. Applications should demonstrate equitable co-creation and co-production with a range of community partners and people with expertise by experience, and clearly identify any barriers to access for those participants.

Q: What is the definition of 'culture and the arts' that is being used? How broadly can this be interpreted?

A: To clarify, we do not seek to be prescriptive in terms of our definition of 'culture' in the context of LUCIA and see great value in defining as broadly as possible, both in terms of cultural access and participation, cultural policy design and also the cultural expression, identity and heritage of communities across the UK. We also expect arts and humanities methodologies and approaches to be at the core of proposed LUCIA networks.

Q: What do you mean by one member of the leadership team having to have worked in cities and environments research?

Can you give a bit more information about what you consider to be a track record in research in cities and urban environments? Can you give some examples of research works which would tick this box?

A: AHRC's Cities and Urban Environments portfolio covers a broad range of academic disciplines and is highly interdisciplinary in scope. Specialist areas include:

- Architecture
- Built environment design
- Infrastructure, and the implications for communities
- Urban planning, sustainability and policy design
- Heritage
- Inclusion and representation in urban spaces

This list is not intended to be exhaustive but key to all aspects is how research relates to specified communities. For further examples of how AHRC is addressing challenges in this research space, please see our [2022 publication 'Shaping our cities and urban spaces'](#) on the UKRI website.

Q: What does civic discourse mean in the context of LUCIA?

A: As discussed in the LUCIA workshop report, civic discourse and [intergenerational justice](#) are our framings of social cohesion and resilience. Both framings relate to broader thinking around an approach to community engagement which reflects the voices of the seldom heard and provides new opportunities for conversations that create impact and can help deliver positive change through the LUCIA programme.

Q: For the scope of the project, is the scheme expecting multi-arts networks or can networks focus on one art form (or cultural industry) e.g. museums, or film etc.?

A: LUCIA pilot networks will not necessarily need to focus on one aspect of the cultural sector and can focus on individual or multiple aspects depending on the challenges identified. Leadership teams should ensure pilot networks encourage innovative interdisciplinary approaches.

Q: Can you please explain the use of the term 'network'? How is this different from a partnership in terms of the LUCIA call.

A: By network, we are referring to a broader collaboration that brings together communities, research organisations and policy makers in order to identify, prioritise and develop emerging research and knowledge exchange challenges in this space.

Q: How broadly or narrowly are you defining 'policymaker' for the purposes of the LUCIA programme?

A: By policymaker we are broadly referring to all people responsible for formulating and/or amending policy, as well as those who have expertise in a particular subject area and play a role in informing or advising on the policy making process. This could be at a local government level, at a mayoral level, at the devolved level or the UK government level.

Q: How 'local' should LUCIA networks be? Should they be based within a single city, or regional? How broad in scope do you expect the LUCIA networks to be?

A: We're looking for applications which can articulate the need for and benefit to specific communities, whether that is, broadly defined, in a single city or town, regionally across different communities, or between urban and rural contexts. We would expect to see justification within applications as to why certain areas have been identified as the focus of pilot networks. Ultimately though, there are no restrictions on the geographic concentration or reach of proposed LUCIA pilot networks.

Q: As this is a pilot, what does future funding look like in terms of size, scope and timing (outside of the LUCIA fellowship)? Will future funding depend on the pilot?

A: We really hope we can be in a position to offer further funding for a wider network plus programme in future, however, we can't guarantee further funding in this space and we would therefore expect to see justification that the success of network outcomes wouldn't depend on further funding.

Q: To what extent do you expect each network to collaborate?

A: Collaboration will be vital to the success of individual networks. Co-creation and co-design are key elements of this programme and we expect to see strong evidence of collaboration in applications. There will also be an expectation that networks interact with one another to share best practice and lessons learnt from these pilot networks. Cross-network collaboration will be managed and facilitated by AHRC.

Q: Are LUCIA pilot networks expected to measure social impact within the 12 months of funding?

A: We fully recognise that social wellbeing impact will be a longer-term output from this programme, however applicants will be expected to demonstrate how they anticipate that their network will add additionality in terms of impact in this research space.

Q: The network (created in the 12-month funding period) is assumed to find its own way to sustain itself. Is this during the funding period, or can network leadership teams close off the project with strategic directions to become sustainable?

A: It's envisaged that applications show routes to sustainability, with full appreciation that we hope to be able to offer further funding in this research space. In case we're not able to continue this funding,

we would hope to see responsible attempts to ensure that relationships are sustainable at the end of the networks. This will potentially involve working closely alongside public engagement teams within research organisations to ascertain further funding/facilitation options.

Q: Can a cultural organisation be part of more than one leadership team application to the LUCIA fund with different universities leading on each application?

A: Yes, if you are a cultural organisation or community partner who would like to be a project co-lead/project partner, you are able to be a part of more than one leadership team and with different research organisations as project leads. There are no scheme-specific caps on the number of applications which any one cultural organisation or community partner can support for this opportunity.

Q: Are local authorities eligible to apply for funding for the LUCIA programme?

Local authorities cannot be project leads on LUCIA pilot networks but they might be eligible to form part of an application led by a research organisations, with the local authority/authorities included as either a project co-lead or project partner.

Q: Are businesses eligible to apply for funding for the LUCIA programme?

A: Our business eligibility guidance states that we are only able to award funding directly to businesses within Innovate UK programmes, and unfortunately not AHRC research programmes. Please see [here](#) for the full eligibility guidance which elaborates on this.

However, for the LUCIA programme, you might be eligible to form part of an application led by academic project leads, with your business included as a project partner.

Q: Please can you give us an idea of the number of people who attended the first LUCIA webinar so that we know the level of interest in the LUCIA funding opportunity?

A: This funding opportunity has received a lot of interest. We had approx. 190 registrants for the LUCIA information webinar held on the 10th October 2024.

Q: Is there an email/ notification list that we can sign up to in order to keep up to date with future events related to this funding call (rather than sporadically checking the webpage)?

A: Yes, AHRC's Cities and Urban Environments portfolio has a quarterly newsletter with regular updates on LUCIA and other AHRC and UKRI-related funding opportunities. To sign up for the newsletter, please contact the HEUH inbox - HEUH@ahrc.ukri.org - and include 'AHRC Cities and Urban Environments Newsletter' in the subject line of your email. We will then add you to our mailing list.