

P2R: increasing UK policymaker engagement with research

Applicant Webinar Questions & Answers

Wednesday, 12 February 2025

Eligibility and remit

Questions	Responses
<p>How are public and civil servants being defined?</p> <p>I do research with arm's length bodies and private NGOs which have statutory roles. Would they be eligible?</p>	<p>The beneficiaries of the P2R infrastructure should be 'public and civil servants' defined as employees of government departments, but also the broader public sector.</p> <p>The focus is on the public sector (e.g. central government, local authorities, devolved/regional administrations). Arm's length bodies can also be included, such as Executive Agencies ('EA'), Non Departmental Public Bodies ('NDPBs') and Non Ministerial Departments ('NMDs') (see page 5 of Public Bodies Handbook – Part 1. Classification Of Public Bodies: Guidance for Departments)</p> <p>Therefore, arm's length bodies would fit within the scope of the beneficiaries of the P2R infrastructure we are aiming to fund, but private NGOs would not.</p>
<p>What is the policymaker scope of this call – ESRC relevant policy or beyond?</p>	<p>This funding opportunity is open to interdisciplinary teams led by the economic and social sciences and with expertise in the flow of people, knowledge and skills across sectoral boundaries. The expectation is that this investment in P2R infrastructure will support academic and policymaker engagement across a range of themes, disciplines, and departments.</p> <p>We know from analysis of UK government ARIs that ESRC funded research is relevant across the full breadth of government departments so we would expect this infrastructure investment to be able to engage with a wide range of policy makers. Public policy challenges typically require an interdisciplinary approach, so whilst we expect the applicant team to be economic and social science led it will need to be able to bring in other disciplines.</p> <p>Please note that we will not fund applications that are limited to single academic disciplines or are limited to a specific policy challenge or area of research interest (see the 'What we will not fund' section on the Funding Finder page).</p>
<p>Who is eligible to apply for this funding?</p>	<p>To apply for funding, you need to be based at an organisation UKRI have already approved. Check if your organisation is eligible. If your organisation is not currently eligible, they can apply to be approved.</p> <p>Project leads and co-leads must have a substantial relationship with an organisation eligible for UKRI funding.</p>

	<p>Project co-leads with a justified role on the project can also be included: Inclusion of project co-leads from UK business, third sector or government bodies on applications – UKRI.</p> <p>Please refer to the UKRI guidance for further information: Research organisations eligible for UKRI funding – UKRI and Roles in funding applications: eligibility, responsibilities and costings guidance – UKRI.</p> <p>Please note: a list of eligible public sector research establishments is available here: Organisation eligibility – UKRI. PSRE establishments not on this list are required to apply to be eligible for UKRI funding, and should contact UKRI: grantssystemsupport@funding.ukri.org to discuss the eligibility process.</p>
<p>How are early career researchers, particularly those not on permanent contracts, expected to be involved in this opportunity and can they lead projects.</p>	<p>All applicants would need to agree with their own research organisation their suitability to lead or be part of an application to this opportunity. ESRC are not able to get involved in contracting agreements within research organisations.</p>

Costs

<p>Could you please provide information on eligible costs and overheads for the opportunity?</p>	<p>Information about the available budget for this opportunity is contained in the funding finder opportunity page. The maximum full economic cost (FEC) of an application is £3.8 million. ESRC’s maximum contribution will be £3 million. More detail is available in the Resource and costs section on the opportunity page under the How to apply section.</p> <p>Please refer to the ESRC research funding guide for the UKRI Funding Service – UKRI for more details, in particular the costs section. Standard UKRI rules apply for this opportunity, Please also see relevant UKRI guidance referenced on this opportunity web page including Roles in funding applications: eligibility, responsibilities and costings guidance – UKRI and Meeting terms and conditions for funding – UKRI.</p>
<p>Would it be allowable to charge for access to the services provided to policy makers in order to help with the sustainability of the investment?</p> <p>If we can charge for access -could this be during the funded period, or would it need to be outside of the funded period, or both?</p>	<p>Applicants should think critically about the infrastructure’s sustainability. This involves identifying potential risks, identifying future and alternative funding sources and opportunities to secure the project’s legacy and ensure its benefits continue to be realised over time.</p> <p>A post-funding period sustainability plan could include options regarding charging for P2R services post-funding and could be explored further during the scoping and co-design phase. We would suggest if a charge for access approach was proposed to ensure sustainability, applicants would need to weigh this up carefully against issues of equality and access.</p> <p>During the ESRC-funded period, we expect the funding provided to support the core activities, including offering</p>

	<p>P2R services free of charge. This is to establish demand, build engagement, and generate positive feedback. However, if demand significantly exceeds what can be delivered within the scope of ESRC funding, applicants may wish to explore other funding sources to extend their capacity within the funded period.</p> <p>That said, applicants should carefully consider any potential implications of charging for services while in receipt of ESRC funding. The Subsidy Control Regime (SRC) may place constraints on charging models within the funded period, and this would need to be assessed in detail by applicants.</p> <p>In summary, while ESRC funding should primarily support free access to services within the grant period, we recognise that additional funding may be sought to expand capacity both within the funded period and after. Any approach involving charging for services should be carefully considered, ensuring alignment with ESRC policy, equality of access, and compliance with regulatory requirements.</p>
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Leadership team and project partners

<p>Do you expect the project lead for the investment to be an academic with relevant research expertise in policy engagement, or is this more of a strategic and coordinating role? Does there need to be an academic project lead?</p>	<p>This funding opportunity is open to interdisciplinary teams led by the economic and social sciences. The exact composition of the applicant team is left to the discretion of the applicants. There is no requirement for the project lead to be an academic.</p> <p>Please refer to the UKRI guidance for further information: Research organisations eligible for UKRI funding – UKRI and Roles in funding applications: eligibility, responsibilities and costings guidance – UKRI.</p>
<p>If government stakeholders are not expected to be named as co-leads or partners on the application, who might potential co-leads and project partners be within the scope of this opportunity?</p>	<p>Applicant teams should be made up of a social science-led consortium of project co-leads and partners from across multiple research organisations, that demonstrate a range of expertise, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interdisciplinarity • expertise and experience in offering P2R activities • new departments/ research organisations to the P2R space • expertise in skills development/ talent management <p>Project co-leads with a justified role on the project can also include UK business, third sector and government bodies (see Inclusion of project co-leads from UK business, third sector or government bodies on applications – UKRI for details).</p> <p>However, we ask that you not contact the central government stakeholders identified on the Funding Finder page to endorse your application. Government stakeholders are expecting to work with whoever is successful and</p>

	<p>applicants should build in capacity to work with them once funding is awarded. Applicants should refer to their experience of working with government stakeholders, but we do not expect these contacts to be named as project co-leads and partners on the application. ESRC will facilitate introductions to these government stakeholders for the successful applicants during the 6-month scoping and co-design phase</p> <p>You may wish to name other public bodies in your application as project partners that do not receive funding (e.g. local authorities, devolved administrations, ALBs etc.).</p> <p>Please refer to: P2R: increasing UK policymaker engagement with research – UKRI for further information.</p>
<p>Could you confirm if the Sheffield Policy Campus and Darlington Economic Campus will be involved in the project as well as Central Government Departments identified in the call?</p>	<p>ESRC expects the full scope of government stakeholders and partnerships to be formalised during the 6-month scoping and co-design phase. However, applicants will need to demonstrate their ability to engage with government departments, and others, in shaping and delivering this investment. Applicants are also asked to consider how the proposed infrastructure and associated activities would contribute to the UK government missions.</p> <p>We ask that you not contact central government stakeholders to endorse your application. ESRC will facilitate introductions to key stakeholders for the successful applicant (see Partnerships section on the Funding Finger page).</p>
<p>Will there be a preference for academics who are already working with DSIT or GO-Science closely as advisers?</p>	<p>See above. However, the core team should demonstrate expertise around working in or with public sector organisations (local or national government) and experience in talent management skills development approaches.</p> <p>The successful application will include research organisations with an established track record of offering P2R opportunities, combined with clear proposals for new collaborations with underrepresented research organisations in this space.</p> <p>Introductions between the successful applicant team and DSIT, GO-Science and the Policy Profession will be facilitated by the ESRC during the 6-month scoping and co-design phase of the investment.</p>
<p>Could you provide clarity on what is meant by established academic providers in the P2R space that these applications are expected to engage with? Does this reference specific established providers, or just that each bid should include established providers?</p>	<p>The successful application will include research organisations with an established track record of offering P2R opportunities, combined with clear proposals for new collaborations with underrepresented research organisations in this space.</p> <p>Applicants should have a clear plan for how they will engage and coordinate with existing and new providers. The aim is not to replicate or duplicate existing infrastructure but to</p>

	build on expertise and experience, while addressing gaps in current provision.
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Aims and objectives

It is noted that “there are some excellent examples ... but ... the UK research sector’s current offer lacks the diversity, reach, scale and coordination needed”. Please would you clarify ‘what success would look like’ in addressing these issues?	<p>Success in the context of this investment would be the development of an infrastructure that diversifies the offer and range of P2R activities in the UK and achieves the objectives set out on the Funding Finder page, including increasing the scope and range of P2R activities, providing leadership on skills development, and developing a ‘one-stop shop’ for P2R opportunities in the UK.</p> <p>Please refer to the funding finder page, P2R: increasing UK policymaker engagement with research – UKRI, for further details.</p>
What does ESRC see as the role for existing infrastructure in this investment? What is the expected role for or relationship specifically with the Universities Policy Engagement Network (UPEN)?	It is not our intention to duplicate or replicate existing P2R offers but to build on, coordinate and fill current and existing gaps in the P2R landscape. It is up to applicants to consider how to draw on existing P2R infrastructure and experience, as well as introduce new providers to develop the UK-wide P2R infrastructure for the future.
What are the expectations in terms of geographical distribution of the partnership, and what are the identified geographical gaps in the current provision that you hope to address through this call?	The funding opportunity aims to increase the accessibility, range and diversity of the P2R offering in the UK, both in terms of the geographical spread of providers and of beneficiaries of the infrastructure. The exact nature of the geographical gaps is for applicants to determine as the experts in this field.
Could you specify the existing ESRC investments and ESRC centres that the call asks us to build on.	It is left to the discretion of the applicants to determine which existing ESRC centres and investments could contribute towards a P2R infrastructure. All ESRC activities can be found on the UKRI’s website by browsing the ESRC’s ‘Areas of investment and support’ .
What is envisaged as the long-term funding model for this initiative, once established?	<p>We aim to catalyse the creation of a P2R infrastructure that will become sustainable longer term and help build effective and trusted relationships between policymaking and practice, and academic communities. The project team is expected to think critically about how to ensure the infrastructure’s sustainability. This involves identifying potential risks, identifying future funding sources and opportunities to secure the project’s legacy and ensure its benefits continue to be realised over time.</p> <p>Please refer to P2R: increasing UK policymaker engagement with research – UKRI for further information.</p>
Please can you confirm whether the specification for the external evaluation has already been published and if not do you know the approximate procurement timeline and value?	The external evaluation will be commissioned by the ESRC. This means that applicants do not need to budget for the external evaluation in their application. However, we do ask that applicants provide clear plans for monitoring, learning and evaluation over the lifecycle of the award.

	<p>Applicants should also ensure you have capacity to engage with the ESRC’s externally commissioned evaluators. The successful team will be expected to work with the evaluators to ensure relevant data and evidence is collected to support the evaluation. The exact timeline will be developed in collaboration with the external evaluators and the grant holders.</p>
<p>How is this call different from the UKRI one last year for a Network Plus?</p>	<p>This funding opportunity is an infrastructure investment and not a Network Plus funding opportunity. Although there may be some overlap with previous opportunities, each new ESRC funding opportunity should be approached as a separate opportunity.</p> <p>Applicants who have submitted to previous opportunities who wish to apply to this funding opportunity need to submit a new application that meets the specific criteria for this opportunity. Uninvited resubmissions will not be accepted.</p> <p>Please refer to the guidance Resubmissions policy – UKRI and What constitutes a new application? – UKRI for further information.</p>