

Global Challenges Research Fund: Challenge Clusters

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Official Development Assistance (ODA)?

ODA stands for Official Development Assistance. It is an international definition owned by the OECD and is not only a RCUK or UK Government term:

The OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) defines Official Development Assistance (ODA) as "flows to countries and territories" which are on the DAC's list of ODA recipients, provided by official agencies to promote the economic development and welfare of countries on the list. It is expected that funding streams eligible for allocation from the UK's ODA budget should demonstrate how they aim to contribute to aims to reduce poverty and increase sustainable development is required. ODA is highly relevant to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to which 17 goals have been described as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including zero hunger and good health and well-being.

ODA compliance was checked at the first stage, will it be checked again at the second stage?

Yes, ODA compliance will be checked again at the second stage and all proposals which do not satisfactorily meet the ODA criteria will not be considered by the sift panel.

Your ODA compliance statement should explicitly demonstrate how the proposal meets key ODA requirements. It must answer the following three questions:

1. Which country/countries on the DAC list will directly benefit from this proposal?
2. How is your proposal directly and primarily relevant to the development challenges of these countries?
3. How do you expect that the outcome of your proposed activities will promote the economic development and welfare of a country or countries on the DAC list?

Particularly in the case of broad challenges affect a number of countries, applicants must explicitly identify aspects of these broader challenges which are particular to the partner country(ies) they are working with, as well as specific benefits in the target country(ies).

The RCUK guidance sets out the requirements for ODA compliance across GCRF.

www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/international/gcrfodaguidance-pdf/

Is there a preference for clusters to focus on with those countries in the 'Least Developed Countries' category of the DAC list?

All countries on the DAC list are eligible to be the primary country(ies) of focus. The only exception to this is for Chile, Seychelles and Uruguay which have now graduated from the DAC list. Whilst there is not a preference for specific countries within the DAC list, applicants are advised to focus on communities and/or populations which are the most vulnerable and in need.

Can programmes partner with more than one country?

Yes, applicants should work with the most appropriate country or countries relevant to the development challenge identified. This can include single or multi-country interactions.

What should the management and leadership structures look like?

There are no fixed requirements with regards to the management or leadership structures for each Cluster as we appreciate that this is likely to vary depending on the specific requirement of each Cluster. Whilst you will only be able to identify one individual as the Principal Investigator / Director on the Je-S proposal form, if appropriate you are able to identify other individuals as co-Directors/investigators when describing the team and key partnerships in the Case for Support.

When considering the leadership and management of the Challenge Cluster proposal, we would advise that applicants remain mindful of the core principle of GCRF calls around building and supporting equitable partnerships and the importance co-design and co-delivery of the proposed Cluster.

Where can I find more about partnership building?

The following resource at the UKCDS website provides a useful summary: <http://www.ukcds.org.uk/resources/finding-and-building-effective-partnerships>

In addition you might find this toolkit useful: <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/resources/about-us/rethinking-research-partnerships>

If you wish to identify potential partners based in, or with research interests relating to African development, you may wish to use the PEI exChange platform, developed by the Planet Earth Initiative: <http://pei.exchange/>

Can my research also benefit the UK?

Yes, we would expect that the research will also indirectly benefit the UK, in terms of the wider impacts such as new research knowledge, publications and training etc., however, DAC list countries should be the primary beneficiaries; and you need to demonstrate this in your application.

Can we include elements of UK focused capacity building?

The primary focus of capacity building activities should be on individuals and organisations based in DAC listed countries. There may be some indirect capability strengthening in the UK, improving the ability of UK researchers to participate in international interdisciplinary research which delivers development impacts.

Where can I find out more about capacity strengthening?

A number of resources are available, the following may be a good place to start:

- Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine Capacity Research Unit's guidance for researchers http://www.lstmed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/centre/Research_capacity_strengthening_lessons.pdf
- ESSENCE's Seven principles for strengthening research capacity in low- and middle-income countries <http://www.who.int/tdr/publications/seven-principles/en/>
- UKCDS capacity resources <http://www.ukcds.org.uk/work-theme/capacity-strengthening>

Where can I find out more about interdisciplinary approaches to research?

A number of resources are available, the following may be a good place to start:

- Interdisciplinarity: Survey Report for the Global Research Council 2016 Annual Meeting http://www.globalresearchcouncil.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/Interdisciplinarity_Report_for_GRC_DJS_Research.pdf
- Nature special on Interdisciplinarity <http://www.nature.com/news/interdisciplinarity-1.18295>

- HEFCE and British Academy Interdisciplinary conference report (UK focussed) <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/news/Events/2016/Name,110328,en.html>

Are there any special requirements if my Cluster includes animal research?

If your proposal includes animal research you must complete the animal research section on Je-S. In addition if the Cluster includes overseas animal research you must attach an animal research statement (attached as a Letter of Support). If your research involves use of rodents overseas you must also complete and attach (as a Letter of Support) the relevant form.

See page of the call text document 15-16 for more information.

Can my proposal include a clinical trial?

Early stage clinical trials may be included within Interdisciplinary Research Cluster proposals, however applications involving more advanced Phase 3 and 4 trials should be submitted to one of the dedicated Medical Research Council (MRC) calls.

The MRC support (in partnership with the Department for International Development, Wellcome Trust, and Department for Health) Phase 3 and 4 trials in global health intervention evaluation (clinical trials) which can be led by UK or LMIC partners and take place in multiple LMICs on the DAC list. This call is currently open: <https://www.mrc.ac.uk/funding/browse/jght-8/joint-global-health-trials-scheme-call-8/>.

MRC also have a further joint activity (with the Economic and Social Research Council, DH, DfID and WT) in health systems research, which can include systems interventions <https://www.mrc.ac.uk/funding/science-areas/international-global-health-research/funding-partnerships/health-systems-research-initiative/>.

Multidisciplinary trials can be supported by the above calls which can cover vector control interventions, behavioural & educational interventions, systems interventions etc. Additional information about global health funding partnerships and opportunities can be found here: <https://www.mrc.ac.uk/funding/science-areas/international-global-health-research/funding-partnerships/>.

Can the title of the Cluster change between the first and second stages?

Yes, providing the new title meets the required naming convention. You do not need to seek prior approval, however please be aware that UKRI will approve titles and branding prior to award.

Can the Principal Investigators and/or Lead Organisation change between the 1st and 2nd stages?

Generally speaking, no. Changes to the Principal Investigator and/or Lead Organisation will be considered on a case by case basis. The Research Office or applicant must contact the UKRI office via gcrf@urkri.org should they wish to change the Principal Investigator/Lead Organisation on the proposal.

Can the Co-Investigators and Project partners on the proposal change between the 1st and 2nd stages?

Yes, we anticipate that the partnerships involved in the Cluster will evolve as the full proposal is developed.

Can a researcher from a non-DAC list country outside the UK be a principal or co-investigator on this call?

Yes, they can be, providing their organisation meets the requirements for 'research partner organisations' and provide the appropriate support (as outlined in the call document).

Overseas PI's will be funded at 100% and that they will need to add their costs in Je-S under the Fund Heading 'Other Directly Incurred' and mark them as Exceptions

Can a partner from a third sector organisation (charities/NGOs) be a co-investigator on this call?

Yes, if the organisation is a research partner organisation (meeting the UKRI eligibility and assurance requirements). If this is not the case, partners from third sector organisations can be included as project partners (see the project partner section of the call text for details on eligible project partner costs).

Will all of the budget be awarded to the lead organisation?

Yes, all funds will flow from UKRI to the Lead Organisation. The lead organisation will then be responsible to disseminating the fund over the lifetime of the award.

Is there a desired balance of UK versus overseas partners or budget allocations?

No, we have purposely allowed flexibility in terms of the number of partners and budget allocated, in order for applicants to propose what is most appropriate in their specific circumstance. Partnerships should be incorporated and key work packages and activity designed based on the skills and expertise required to successfully implement and deliver impact from the Cluster. Budgets should be assigned in accordance with this. We would advise that applicants remain mindful of the core aims of the call around building and supporting equitable partnerships and the importance co-design and co-delivery of the proposed Cluster.

Within the resource summary on Je-S where should I include costs for overseas research partners, project partners and sub contracts?

- **UK research partner** costs should be included under the fund headings as for standard applications.
- **Overseas research partner** costs should be included under the 'Exceptions' category. As you will only be able to select one percentage for the Exceptions category, for DAC list countries 100% of the costs should be included in the 'Full Economic Cost £' column, but for non-UK developed countries, 50% of the total costs should be included in this column.
- All **project partner** costs should be included in the 'Exceptions' category irrespective of the organisations location.
- For **subcontracts** costs for those managed by a UK organisation should be included under 'Directly Incurred' costs; costs those managed by DAC partners and non-UK developed countries should be included under 'Exceptions' (100% and 50% respectively, as described for research partners).

Is a justification required for the Indirect costs requested for DAC partners?

Yes, You should include a full justification for any Indirect costs associated with DAC partners within the Justification of Resources document.

Can any UK costs be included as Exceptions?

UKRI will award the costs associated with externally contracted social surveys and NERC data centre costs at 100%. These costs should be included as 'Other Directly Incurred' costs and flagged as exceptions.

Overseas PI's will be funded at 100% and that they will need to add their costs in Je-S under the Fund Heading 'Other Directly Incurred' and mark them as Exceptions

Will UKRI assist in the administration and management of flexible funding?

Any flexible funding within Cluster programmes should be administered and managed by the project team. The governance structures put in place to oversee the Cluster activities should have ownership of any project risks and will have responsibility for ensuring compliance of this funding. Where appropriate, UKRI input can be sought via their role in these governance structures.

Can Open Access fees be included in the costs?

As UKRI award block grants to institutions to cover open access/publication costs, these are not eligible costs for UK organisations involved in the Cluster unless they are for non-academic publications. You could include open access/publication costs for DAC partners within the 'Other Directly Incurred' costs.

How do I represent the organisational contributions in my application?

For the full application a summary of the cash and in-kind contributions from the organisations involved (lead organisation, research partner organisations and project partners) should be included in the relevant organisations Letter of Support. In addition a brief summary table should be included within the Justification of Resources attachment.

Are partners who are self-employed eligible to receive costs from the Challenge Cluster award?

Individuals who are self-employed could be included as a project partner or subcontractors depending on the type of collaboration being proposed (intellectual collaboration versus provision of good or a discrete service). As we would consider these as partnerships with business, self-employed project partners would not be eligible to receive costs from the award. In the case of subcontracts, costs can be claimed and will be awarded based on the location of the organisation managing the subcontract.

Do I need to register all Co-Investigators and Project Partners on the Je-S system?

All applicants who are to be named as the Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator on the proposal need to have a fully registered (verified) Je-S account (Co-Investigator's organisations do not need to be registered). These accounts must be set-up by the individual. You should set up any additional Je-S accounts as soon as possible.

For Project Partners, individuals do not need to be registered on Je-S.

<https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/JeS2WebLoginSite/TermsConditions.aspx?mode=accountsetup>

What should be included in the Letter of Support from each organisation?

Each letter should confirm the organisations support of and commitment to the proposal and summarise what cash and/or in-kind contributions they will be making. In addition overseas research partner organisations should include a statement confirming that they believe they meet the minimum eligibility criteria as outlined in the call text.

Can we nominate peer reviewers?

Yes, you are able to nominate up to 4 peer reviewers. UKRI will allow up to 2 reviews from nominated reviewers. Please note that we will not approach any nominated reviewers who have active collaborations with named individuals on the proposal. In addition those employed by organisations named in the proposal will not be approached.

Do we need to submit letters of support from UK organisations or just overseas?

Yes, a letter of support should be included from each organisation named as a research partner or project partner irrespective of location.

Can we include support letter from organisations which are not listed as research partners or project partners?

Letters of support from non-partner organisations, are allowable however we would encourage applicants to be sensible about the number of these letters included and restrict these to instances of genuine and specific support. It is also worth bearing in mind that all individuals (and in some cases whole departments/organisations) submitting letters of support will be considered conflicted in terms of peer review.

Do all references need to be included within the stated page lengths?

Yes, any references/bibliography that you wish to include to support you proposal must be included within the stated page lengths and confirm with the stated font/text size requirements.

Can Travel and Subsistence costs for business/government project partners to attend Cluster events/meetings be included?

Yes. Whilst these partners cannot receive salary costs, other directly incurred costs or indirect you can include reasonable travel and subsistence costs associated with attendance of Cluster specific events and/or meetings.

Can an organisation have multiple roles in the Cluster e.g. as a Project Partner and a Sub-contractor?

In theory yes but only if strictly necessary. As a default an organisation should only participate in one way but we will consider exceptions on a case-by-case basis.

Does the lead organisation need to have a collaboration agreement with every organisation receiving funds from the Cluster?

The lead organisation will need a collaboration agreement or contract with every organisation they directly send money too but if you are sending money to organisation A, who then send it to organisation B then the lead organisation doesn't need an agreement with organisation B. The lead organisation will however need to be happy that they have sufficient assurance so that they can track the money down the line.

Where should Project Partners be listed on Je-S and where should their costs be included?

You should list project Partners in the Project Partner section on Je-S any costs being requested for Project Partners should be entered in the 'Other Directly Incurred' section and be flagged as 'Exceptions'.

Overseas PI's will be funded at 100% and that they will need to add their costs in Je-S under the Fund Heading 'Other Directly Incurred' and mark them as Exceptions

Can overseas Research Partners buy a vehicle to travel between field sites as it is cheaper than hiring one?

Yes, this is fine providing it is fully justified in the Justification of Resources and the vehicle they purchase is below £10,000 GBP.

My project involved surveying/interviewing people but no biological or medical testing, do I still need to complete the yes/no questions for human participation in the ethics section on Je-S?

If your proposal involves any form of human participation you should answer yes to the first question, and yes/no to the remaining questions as appropriate. Some of the questions are more relevant to certain types of studies e.g. biological and/or medical studies so if the project is only conducting a survey/interviews you may only end up answering yes to some of the five questions.

Can you confirm the margin sizes for the proposal document and whether there are any exceptions to the margin and font size requirements?

The margins for the following documents uploaded to the proposal should be 2cm top/bottom and left/right:

- Case for Support
- Justification of Resources
- Pathways to Impact
- ODA compliance statement
- CVs
- Animal research statement/additional questions (if applicable)
- Gender Equality Statement

The letters of support (research partner, project partner, cover and other), and diagrams are exempt from the font requirements, however these must be legible at A4 size.

Do the LMIC postdocs need to be listed within the researcher support posts section as well as Other Directly Incurred Costs in similar fashion to the non-UK Co-Is?

No, the researcher support staff employed by DAC based partners (e.g. research assistants and PDRAs) do not need to be included in the researcher staff posts section. They should only be included within the 'Other Directly Incurred' costs section.

Can we include web links within the case for support?

Within the list of references, URL links to relevant publications or online resources are permissible. The case for support should be a self-contained description of the proposed work with relevant background, and should not depend on additional information. Applicants must not include URLs to web resources in order to extend their Case for Support.

How can we enter the flexible fund for DAC organisations using the required budget format when we don't yet know which organisations will be receiving it?

You don't need to use the required format for the flexible fund providing it is clear whether the current intention is that the money will be spent in the UK, DAC or non-UK developing countries.

All other overseas costs (DAC and non-UK developed countries) must be included using the required format.

Contact

If you have any questions about the call, please refer to our FAQs document in the first instance. If you have any further questions please contact:

gcrf@rcuk.ac.uk

Or

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Change Log*

Name	Date	Version	Change

*as requests for information come in, these will be compiled and frequent Q&As added to this document.