



Virtual site surveys for scientific ocean drilling

Opportunity status:	Open
Funders:	Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)
Funding type:	Grant
Total fund:	£300,000
Maximum award:	£120,000
Publication date:	5 March 2021
Opening date:	5 March 2021
Closing date:	2 June 2021 16:00 UK time

Last updated: 12 March 2021

[Start application ▶](#)

Apply for funding for a virtual site survey investigation (VSSI) to support the development of proposals for an International Ocean Discovery Program (IODP) drilling expedition. A VSSI uses existing geophysical data.

Learn about [developing an IODP proposal](#).

The expedition must:

- have a high level of UK involvement and leadership, for example a UK lead proponent
- use a mission-specific platform, chosen to fulfil a particular scientific objective.

You must be a researcher from one of the following:

- UK higher education institution
- research council institute
- UKRI-approved independent research organisation.

You can claim up to £120,000 at 80% of full economic cost. Your project can last up to 12 months.

[Open all](#)

Who can apply

Normal individual eligibility applies, as described in section C of the [NERC research grant and fellowships handbook \(PDF, 792KB\)](#).

NERC research and fellowship grants for all schemes can be held at any of the following:

- approved UK higher education institutions (HEIs)
- approved research council institutes (RCIs)
- approved independent research organisations (IROs).

[Find full details of approved RCIs and IROs.](#)

Investigators can be involved in no more than two applications. Only one of these can be as the lead principal investigator.

We encourage proposals involving industrial partnership.

You must start your projects no later than 5 November 2021.

What we're looking for

Proposals for VSSI relating to the development of mission specific platform drilling proposals.

We encourage joint academia-industry proposals that use existing industrial or other seismic reflection data for VSSI.

We expect you to use the VSSI funding to support a postdoctoral research assistant (PDRA) or industrialist on secondment to a university. They will work up the data under the direction of the principal investigator (PI), and in collaboration with the industrial partners where relevant.

You must:

- read and follow the [IODP site survey, environmental and safety requirements \(PDF, 463KB\)](#)
- read and follow the [NERC data policy](#)
- submit an [outline data management plan using the template](#).

NERC will pay the data centre directly on behalf of the programme for archival and curation services. You must make sure you request enough resource for the research team to prepare data for archiving.

You must make sure you are familiar with the IODP site survey, environmental and safety requirements. Your plans must address all aspects and that the project collects the complete ranges of data required. UK members of the IODP science evaluation panel may be of assistance with these matters.

You can request up to £150,000 at 100% full economic cost and we will pay at 80% full economic cost.

How to apply

You must apply using the [Joint Electronic Submission system \(Je-S\)](#).

When applying, select:

- council: NERC
- document type: Standard
- scheme: Directed
- call: UKIODP VSSI JUL21.

This opportunity will close on Je-S at 16:00 on 1 June 2021 and it will not be possible to submit to the opportunity after this time. Leave enough time for your proposal to pass through your organisation's Je-S submission route before this date.

Your proposal will be office rejected and will not be considered if it is any of the following:

- incomplete
- does not [meet NERC's eligibility criteria](#)
- does not [follow NERC's submission rules](#).

Most attachments submitted through Je-S must be completed in single-spaced typescript using Arial with font size of at least 11 point, or another sans serif typeface of equivalent size. The margins must be at least 2cm. The only exceptions to these rules are support and services, facilities or equipment quotes.

We will reject any proposal that uses Arial narrow, Calibri or Times New Roman. References and footnotes must follow the same font requirements. You must not use headers and footers for references or information relating to the scientific case. If you refer to websites be aware that referees may choose not to use them.

Make sure your proposal conforms to all eligibility and submission rules or it may be rejected without peer review. Read more details on NERC's submission rules in the:

- [NERC research grant and fellowships handbook \(PDF, 792KB\)](#)
- [submission rules on the NERC website](#).

You must submit your proposal in standard grant format following the requirements outlined in section F of the [NERC research grant and fellowships handbook](#).

If you submit any documents with non-standard fonts (in scientific notation or diagrams, for example), make sure you convert it to portable document format (PDF) before attaching it to the proposal, and check the fonts are displaying correctly. If we receive any documents in other formats we will convert them to PDF. Any non-standard fonts may cause errors or font conversion, which could affect the overall length of the document. Even if the converted PDF document is unaffected in the Je-S system, when it is imported into the research councils grants system some information may be removed.

How we will assess your application

Proposals will be evaluated by an assessment panel consisting of independent experts and relevant members of the NERC Peer Review College where possible. You may be invited to give a presentation at the assessment panel and respond to questions.

The assessment criteria to be used will be:

- are the scientific objectives sound and fully justified?
- are the requested resources appropriate, and does the science team include all necessary expertise?
- is the VSSI related to an existing IODP drilling proposal with a high level of UK involvement?
- have applicants considered the future IODP expedition schedule?
- are synergies with national and international partners maximised and, if not, how could they be improved?
- will the resulting VSSI produce high-level scientific outcomes (or potential results) as a stand-alone mission?

We will provide feedback to both successful and unsuccessful applicants.

To make the final funding decisions, NERC will use the recommendations of the assessment panel, the overall opportunity requirements and the available budget.

Contact details

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Additional info

The IODP is providing a better understanding of:

- plate tectonic processes
- the Earth's crustal structure and composition
- environmental conditions and life in ancient oceans
- climate change.

IODP builds on the legacies of the early ocean drilling voyages, including the Deep Sea Drilling Project (1968 to 1983) and the Ocean Drilling Program (1983 to 2003).

The IODP is made up of an international partnership of scientists and institutions building on 50 years of scientific ocean drilling. The UK is an integral member of the European Consortium for Ocean Research Drilling (ECORD) which, together with the US, Japan and other international partners, funds and steers the research.

The UK IODP research programme supports the UK's engagement in IODP, enabling UK scientists to:

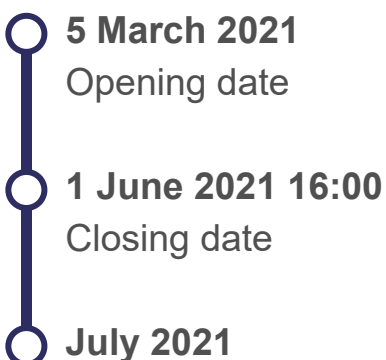
- help ensure IODP carries out the best and highest priority science
- participate in and obtain material from drilling legs
- capitalise on the results of IODP drilling and UK technologies, allowing them to benefit from technological advances in scientific ocean drilling.

The success of IODP depends on the development of excellent and innovative drilling proposals. To be successful, a drilling proposal must have outstanding science objectives. However, the geology of the proposed drill sites must also be well enough known to show that the targets required to address the scientific objectives can be drilled, and that the drilling can be done safely.

This requires detailed geophysical sub-seafloor characterisation of the proposed sites. That usually includes minimal crossing of seismic reflection lines and a range of geology-specific additional observations.

UK IODP has allocated funding for virtual site surveys for the interpretation of geological data in support of UK-led drilling proposals. For further information on the IODP Science Programme and drilling proposals see the [IODP](#) and the [Site Survey Data Bank](#) websites.

Timeline



NOTE This is the first phase of our new website – let us know if you have [feedback](#) or would like to [help us test new developments](#).

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