

ESRC ‘Project Co-Lead (International)’ Policy

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Summary of recent updates

- Minor wording update with correction to the eligibility section. Third Sector Organisations are eligible as International Project Co-Leads as long as they meet all the other eligibility criteria set out in the policy.

Background

ESRC's 'Project Co-Lead (International)' (PcL(I)) Policy provides the opportunity for UK researchers to collaborate with appropriate researchers from anywhere in the world to enhance and strengthen international collaboration, and to add value to research. The policy is **not a separate funding scheme** and therefore requires no additional forms or review. Rather it is intended to be a **simple and straightforward** mechanism which allows researchers from any country to be included on ESRC applications (exclusions may apply, check call guidance) with a UK-based Project Lead. There is no direct involvement from any overseas research funding agencies, or separate international decision-making process.

The Project Co-Lead (International) Policy allows researchers from a Research Organisation (RO) outside of the UK to be recognised intellectually and financially for their contribution to the work conducted and 'ownership of ideas'.

The Project Co-Lead (International) Policy encompasses the [agreement between UK Research and Innovation \(UKRI\) and Research Council of Norway \(RCN\)](#) which enables eligible UK Project Leads to submit collaborative applications with Co-Leads employed by Norwegian institutions.

Definition

A 'Project Co-Lead (International)' (PcL(I)) is an individual from a research organisation outside the UK who otherwise fits the normal definition for a Co-Lead on a research project (see the [ESRC Research Funding Guide](#)). That is, they assist the Project Lead in the management and leadership of a project. They would normally be expected to make a major intellectual contribution to the design and conduct of the project.

Eligibility

UKRI is introducing new role types for opportunities being run on the new Funding Service from 22 May 2023. For full details please visit [Eligibility as an individual](#).

Applications including PcL(I)s must feature a Project Lead based at a UK research organisation [eligible for Research Council funding](#). Any academic researcher from an established international research organisation which has the capacity and capability to conduct the specified work will be eligible. Profit making organisations and international government departments are not eligible under the Project Co-Lead (International) policy.

It is the Project Lead's responsibility to articulate in the application the added value that the PcL(I) will bring to the overall leadership of the research and their role in the management of the project, as well as the relevant research experience and expertise that they will bring to the project team. A Project Co-Lead (International) is affiliated with an international research organisation and cannot take over the leadership of a project from the Project Lead.

It is the responsibility of the lead UK research organisation to ensure that the PCL(I)s organisation is an appropriate organisation to receive, and has systems in place to manage, the funding provided. The UK RO will also need assurance that appropriate agreements are put in place for the delivery of the overseas activities funded under the grant. ESRC will not undertake eligibility checks as standard but reserves the right to undertake additional checks or seek further information from ROs if necessary.

To determine whether the PCL(I)s organisation has the necessary capacity and capability to conduct the specified work, the UK RO must consider the following questions before adding a PCL(I) to an application:

1. What is the organisation type (e.g. research organisation, NGO, charity) and who provides the core funding for the organisation? **Profit making organisations and international government departments are not eligible under the Project Co-Lead (International) Policy.**
2. What is the research capacity of the organisation? The organisation should possess in-house capacity to carry out research in the field or discipline in which it wishes to be funded and be able to demonstrate an independent capability to undertake and support research projects. The following criteria should be considered:
 - The number of researchers employed by the organisation and paid through payroll (not including temporary employees or consultancy staff). ESRC would expect a minimum of 10 researchers.
 - The portfolio of research projects led or co-led by staff while employed at the organisation over the last five years. Consideration should be given to the number of research projects, their duration, staff roles and contribution, the overall value of the projects and funding source.
 - Details of any collaborative research partnerships.
 - The organisation's research strategy, for example the ways in which the organisation has sought to maximise the wider impact and value of its research.
 - The organisation's ethical assurance procedures. For reference, please see the [ESRC's Framework for Research Ethics](#).
3. How will the organisation support the PCL(I) during the lifetime of the project?
4. If costs are requested for the salary of the PCL(I), are these absolutely necessary for their involvement in the project? The reason(s) for the inclusion of these costs must be clearly listed in the Resources and Costs Justification section of your application. Please refer to guidance in the section on Eligible Costs below and Annex A.

Please note that if funded it is expected the UK RO will have carried out appropriate due diligence on any third parties or collaborative partners used to deliver any part of the project, before any collaboration begins, as outlined in the [UKRI Terms and Conditions](#) (RGC 2.6). [Further guidance on UKRI Due Diligence and Trusted Research is available on the UKRI website.](#)

Introduction to the UKRI Funding Service

UK Research and Innovation are introducing a new grants system, the UKRI Funding Service, to replace the Joint Electronic Submission (Je-S) system, as part of the [Simpler and Better Funding](#)

[Programme](#). ESRC will develop opportunities via the Funding Service rather than Je-S as part of this transition. Details of the ESRC transition to the Funding Service can be found on [our website](#). During this transition, Je-S and Funding Service submissions will run simultaneously as the number of opportunities using the Funding Service increase.

Applicants must consider the submission mechanism used for the specific funding opportunity and follow the guidance provided.

Further guidance on the Funding Service can be found on [our website](#) alongside details of [how applicants use the UKRI Funding Service](#).

Registering Project Co-Leads (International) with the Funding Service

PcL(l)s do not need to have a Funding Service account for an application to be submitted. PcL(l)s will receive an email notification when the Project Lead has entered their details into the system. PcL(l)s are able to create an account by verifying their details, or selecting the 'Start Application' button on the Funding Finder opportunity. This will allow them to view and read the application. Contact the helpdesk for information and support using the Funding Service by email (support@funding-service.ukri.org) or telephone (+44 (0)1793 547490).

Registering Project Co-Leads (International)/International Co-Investigators with Je-S

UKRI is introducing new role types for opportunities being run on the new Funding Service. Project Co-Leads (International) are equivalent to International Co-Investigators in Je-S. In order for an International Co-Investigator to be included on an application using Je-S, they must be registered.

To do this, the International Co-Investigator should go to the [Je-S website](#) and select 'Create Account'. They will need to complete their details until they reach the 'Research Organisation' screen.

If the international research organisation is not listed, the International Co-Investigator should contact the Je-S helpdesk either by email (jeshelp@je-s.ukri.org) or telephone (+44 (0)1793 444164) and provide details of the project with which they wish to be associated (reference number, title, Project Lead). The Je-S Helpdesk will then register the International Co-Investigator, allowing the Project Lead to add them to the application.

Applicants should ensure that, if they are submitting to a closed call (i.e. working towards a specific deadline after which time the call will close and further submissions will not be possible), the international research organisation should begin the process of registering the International Co-Investigator with Je-S **as soon as possible and no later than seven working days prior to the date of submission**.

Please note that formal recognition of the international research organisation will only be pursued following a positive funding decision. The Je-S Helpdesk is available 9:00- 17:00 (UK time), Monday to Friday.

Eligible costs

Applicants who include PcL(l)s must fully justify the associated costs within the Resources and Costs Justification section of your application. ESRC will fund 100% of justified costs, however the costs associated with a PcL(l)s contribution to a project must not exceed 30% of the overall cost of the grant at 100% FEC. (It is important to note that the **combined** costs for PcL(l), and

Project Co-Leads from UK business, third sector and government organisations **must not exceed 30% of the total FEC of the grant application.** If the Co-Lead is based at an overseas campus, but is recruited and employed by a UK institution, they should not be included as a PCL(I) – they should be funded at 80% FEC as a UK Project Co-Lead.

- PCL(I) salaries – **Considered** (see Project Co-Lead (International) salaries section below and Annex A for examples)
- Estates and other indirect costs - **No**
- Directly incurred costs - **Yes**
- Overseas Research and Innovation Associates/ Research Assistants – **Yes**

Project Co-Lead (International) salaries

ESRC will consider paying salaries for PCL(I)s **only** in circumstances where payment of salaries is absolutely required for the research project to be conducted. For example, where the policy of the PCL(I)s home institution requires researchers to obtain funding for their salaries for time spent on externally-funded research projects. See **Annex A** below for examples.

In instances where the research funding structure of the collaborating country is such that national research funding organisations equivalent to the ESRC do not normally provide salary costs, these costs will not be considered. Alternative arrangements to secure researcher time, such as teaching replacement costs, will be considered where these are required by the PCL(I)s home institution.

UK institutions preparing applications for submission are **strongly advised to liaise closely with the PCL(I)s named on the application** to ascertain any requirement for salary cost requests. The PCL(I) is best placed to advise what costs they can typically request on applications to their national research funding agency. The reason(s) for the inclusion of these costs must be clearly listed in the Resources and Costs Justification section of your application. Please refer to guidance in the section on Costs below and Annex A.

Estates and other indirect costs

Practically, it is not possible for the ESRC to accurately check and monitor the calculation of estates, overheads and indirect costs for institutions outside the UK because they do not use the Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) methodology. In addition, institutions in the UK receive funding for maintaining and developing the UK research infrastructure via the higher education funding councils for England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. Because of the significant variation in practices, it is not deemed to be appropriate for the ESRC to provide funds which could be used to develop the research infrastructures of other countries at this time. For these reasons the ESRC will not consider any estates, overheads or indirect costs pertaining to PCL(I)s.

Survey Costs

Where a survey will be undertaken in house, by staff at the PCL(I) organisation, the cost of the survey may be costed as a 100% FEC. Surveys undertaken in-house by the lead UK research organisation, or at a UK-based Project Co-Lead organisation should be costed at 80% FEC.

Costs associated with a PCL(I)s contribution to a project, including any survey costs, **must not exceed 30% of the overall cost of the grant at 100% FEC.**

Please note: Some funding calls (for example some co-funded opportunities) operate under different rules and are subject to different allowable costs. Applicants seeking to include PcL(I)s should **always** consult the opportunity specific eligibility requirements.

Inputting Project Co-Leads (International) using the Funding Service

Applicants must consider the submission mechanism used for the specific opportunity during the grants system transition from Je-S to the new Funding Service. This section details guidance using the Funding Service.

PcL(I)s must be added to the system as a 'Core Team member' including their name, email and organisation. The PcL(I)s organisation will show in the 'Resources and Costs' section. The organisation staff section must be completed with full economic costs (FEC) for PcL(I)s and demonstrated in the breakdown of costs 'Exceptions'.

Applicants may apply for funds to cover a small amount of administrative support for PcL(I)s. Costs for other international Professional Enabling Staff such as data management, communications or administrative roles etc, can be included in the application. This will be assessed in the context of the application as a whole and must be fully justified in the Resources and Costs Justification section of your application. Professional Enabling Staff should be entered in the organisation staff section with full economic costs (FEC) for Professional Enabling Staff and demonstrated in the breakdown of costs 'Exceptions'.

Similarly, applicants may apply for funds to cover the cost of overseas Research and Innovation Associates to support research activities in collaborating countries. Overseas Research and Innovation Associates may be locally recruited in the collaborating country, or recruited in the UK and based overseas.

Overseas Research and Innovation Associates who are recruited and employed at an institution outside of the UK should also be entered under their organisation in the organisation staff section with full economic costs (FEC) and demonstrated in the breakdown of costs 'Exceptions'.

Please note: Costs for Research and Innovation Associates who are based overseas, but recruited and employed by a UK research organisation, should be entered under their organisation in the organisation staff section with full economic costs (FEC) and demonstrated in the breakdown of costs 'Directly incurred' as they will be paid at 80% FEC.

Reasonable and fully justified travel and subsistence costs can be requested for PcL(I)s in accordance with normal ESRC guidelines. These costs should be demonstrated in the breakdown of costs 'Exceptions'.

Inputting Project Co-Lead (International)/International Co-Investigator using Je-S

UKRI is introducing new role types for opportunities being run on the new Funding Service. Project Co-Leads (International) are equivalent to International Co-Investigators in Je-S. Applicants must consider the submission mechanism used for the specific opportunity during the grants system transition from Je-S to the new Funding Service. This section details guidance using Je-S.

International Co-Investigator salaries must be entered in the co-investigator section on the Je-

S system. International Co-Investigator salary costs are entered as an 'Exception' cost type and will attract 100% FEC funding. Detailed instructions on how to complete the co-investigator section in Je-S for PCL(l)s can be found in **Annex B**.

Applicants may apply for funds to cover a small amount of administrative support for International Co-Investigators. Costs for other international project support staff such as data management, communications or administrative roles etc, can be included in the application. This will be assessed in the context of the application as a whole and must fully justified in the justification of resources. These costs should be entered in the application under Other – DI costs marked as 'Exception'.

Similarly, applicants may apply for funds to cover the cost of an overseas Research Assistant (RA) to support research activities in collaborating countries. An overseas RA may be locally recruited in the collaborating country, or recruited in the UK and based overseas. Where an RA is locally recruited and employed by an overseas institution to support the International Co-Investigator, these costs will be paid at 100%: In Je-S, the RA should be entered on the application under Staff – Researcher and ticked as an 'Exception' cost. In cases where an RA is recruited and employed by a UK-based institution but is based overseas, their costs should not be ticked as an 'Exception' costs as they will be paid at 80% FEC.

Reasonable and fully justified travel and subsistence costs will be provided for International Co-Investigator in accordance with normal ESRC guidelines. Other directly incurred costs (as outlined in the [ESRC Research Funding Guide](#)) may be applied for, provided they are fully justified.

All other costs associated with International Co-Investigators must be entered in Je-S under 'Other Directly Incurred Costs', prefixed with 'Overseas' and should be marked as an 'Exception' using the tick box. To enable UKRI to meet transparency and external audit requirements all overseas costs must be entered into this section using the format 'Organisation: Country: Cost Category: Cost Description'.

'Example

'University of Nairobi; Kenya; Staff; 1 x PDRA'

'University of Nairobi; Kenya; Travel and Subsistence; 4 x flights'

'University of Nairobi; Kenya; Other Directly Incurred Costs; 5 x Workshops including catering and accommodation'

'University of Nairobi; Kenya; Equipment; Name of equipment'

Project Partners

An international collaborator from any organisation may be included on an application as a Project Partner where they are making a financial or in-kind contribution to the project. **Please note that it is not permissible to be both a Project Partner and a Project Co-Lead (International) on a project.**

Consultants

Costs associated with overseas collaborators may be included on the application; however, overseas consultants will not be recognised as PCL(l)s within the application.

It is expected that in most cases a consultant will not make a significant scientific contribution to the project overall, but rather facilitate the research. For example, if it was required that an individual outside the main project team conduct some data analysis, this individual could be costed as a consultant.

However, we recognise that there may be cases where a researcher cannot participate unless they do so as a consultant, for example, if an overseas collaborator who would clearly make a valuable intellectual contribution to a proposed research project, is based in a developing country where the funding system is such that it is normal to supplement a low salary with research consultancy work for organisations outside the employing institution (e.g. governments or NGOs). If this is the case, and if participation in an ESRC project would require the overseas collaborator to forego this income, then the Project Lead is required to specify that they will be given proper recognition for their contributions. The award may also be subject to conditions to safeguard this.

All overseas collaborators should calculate costs at a daily rate appropriate to the going rate for their level of expertise in their country. These costs will be paid at 80% FEC.

Reimbursement of Project Co-Lead (International) costs

In line with ESRC policy, payments on all grants are made in arrears in accordance with a specific payment schedule, as agreed with the ESRC at the time the grant is awarded. This includes grants including PCL(I)s. In all cases, funds are transferred to the UK Project Leads research organisation in the first instance. It is then the responsibility of that institution to disburse funds to Project Co-Leads, international or otherwise. Particular attention should be paid in the Case for Support to the management and communication protocols in place to enable this to happen smoothly.

Project Co-Lead (International) Eligibility for Salary Costs Examples:

A Project Co-Lead (International) is **eligible** to request salary costs where:

- A PcL(I) is employed by a university on a contract that requires they obtain external funding for their salary to work on research projects.
- A PcL(I) is employed at a university which requires teaching replacement costs to allow them to participate in the project. This is only permissible for PcL(I)s.
- A PcL(I) is employed by a university on a contract which specifies that they are expected to teach and carry out research for X months of the year. The remaining X months, they are expected to supplement their income with external contracts. They are eligible to request salary costs as an ESRC PcL(I) for the X months of the year they are not under contract from their institution or are on a sabbatical from research and teaching.
- A researcher is employed by a university in a developing country. Their base salary is expected to cover teaching and research but does not constitute a living wage. They would normally supplement their salary through several consultancy contracts with the national government or NGOs. The individual would clearly make a significant intellectual contribution to the proposed ESRC project but would have to forego their normal consultancy work in order to participate in the ESRC project. The researcher could be costed into the grant as a PcL(I) with salary costs. Alternatively, they could be included as a consultant at the going local rate, if more appropriate.

A Project Co-Lead (International) is **not eligible** to request salary costs where:

- A PcL(I) is employed by a university on a contract which specifies that they are expected to teach and carry out research throughout the year. This is the norm in their country and their national research funding agency therefore does not normally pay salary costs on its research grants.

Project Co-Lead (International) Salary Cost Entry on Je-S

UKRI is introducing new role types for opportunities being run on the new Funding Service. Project Co-Leads (International) are equivalent to International Co-Investigators in Je-S. When an International Co-Investigator is added to the Je-S form, the cost type of that new entry defaults to 'Directly Allocated' cost type. For International Co-Investigators the **'Exception'** cost type must be ticked. Costs under the 'Exceptions' cost type are paid at 100% FEC.

The screenshot shows the 'Co-Investigator' form in the Je-S system. The 'Cost Type' field is highlighted with a red circle, showing three radio button options: 'Directly Allocated', 'Directly Incurred', and 'Exception'. The 'Exception' option is selected. Other visible fields include 'Name' (Professor Marius Smuts), 'Post will outlast project?' (Yes), 'Total number of hours to be worked on the grant over duration of the grant:' (244), 'Start Date' (01/07/2020), and 'Duration Months' (24).

The following details must be entered for the International Co-Investigators:

Select Name	The Co-Investigators name from the database. All applicants must have a Je-S Account that allows them to be included within the application as either 'Primary Investigator', 'Co-Investigator' or 'Researcher Co-Investigator'
Will the post outlast the project	Answer should be 'Yes'
Total Number of Hours to be worked on the grant	Maximum hours per year cannot exceed 1,650
Select Exception	The Exception option is applicable to International Co-Investigators. Salaries paid under the Exceptions cost type are paid at 100% FEC.

Start Date	The Date will default to the current date. To amend this click on the calendar icon or enter the date in the DD/MM/YYYY format
Duration Months	The period, in whole months to be spent working on the Project
FTE %	This is the percentage of time that the post holder will spend working on the project based on a full-time post. This does not relate to the contracted working hours of the post holder. For example, someone that is contracted to work at their Research Organisation for 50% of full time and will be spending the whole of this time devoted to this project should put 50% as the FTE%
Scale	Enter the Research Organisations pay scale. This can be alpha or numeric
Effective Date of Scale	The date on which the scales used came into use
Increment Date	The Date will default to the proposed project start date. To amend this click on the calendar icon or enter the date in the DD/MM/YYYY format
Starting Salary	Annual salary when starting on the project
London Allowance	If in receipt of London Allowance include the £ Value (numeric)
Other Allowances	If applicable
Super Ann and NI	Superannuation and National Insurance costs over the duration of the project (numeric)
Total Costs	Enter the total cost of the Post over the period of the project (numeric)