Including Impact in Research Grant Proposals

The ESRC expects applicants to consider the potential scientific, societal and economic impacts of their research, with outputs, dissemination and impact a key part of the criteria for most peer review and assessment processes.

It is important therefore to set out how you intend to identify and actively engage relevant users of the research and stakeholders (within and beyond the academic community including, for instance, the public sector, private sector, civil society or the wider public in general) and include evidence of any existing engagement with relevant end users. You should articulate a clear understanding of the context and needs of these users and consider ways for the proposed research to meet or impact upon these needs. The proposal should also outline how the legacy of proposed activity will be managed to engage beneficiaries and increase the likelihood of its impact in providing lasting value to participants, stakeholders and the wider social science community.

Opportunities for making an impact may arise, and should be taken, at any stage during the research lifecycle: the planning and research design stage; the period of funding; and all activities that relate to the project up to – and including – the time when funding has ended. The research lifecycle therefore includes knowledge exchange and impact realisation activities – including reporting and publication, and the archiving, future use, sharing, and linking of data. It is important that researchers have in place a robust strategy for maximising the likelihood of impact opportunities and their own capacity for taking advantage of these. To be effective, all communication, engagement and impact activities must be planned in detail and properly resourced in the proposal.

Throughout the relevant sections of the research proposal, applicants should therefore actively consider how these impacts can be maximised and developed. In particular, the following issues should be considered as part of the proposal's Case for Support:

- Consider potential beneficiaries and users involved in the development of the proposal and the delivery of the grant where appropriate. This should cover who will benefit from the proposed research, and the relevance of the research to these beneficiaries.
- Explain what steps you will take, to provide opportunities for users to benefit from your research, and to ensure that your research has maximum economic and societal impact.
- Indicate the expected outputs - both academic and those orientated to (potential) users (e.g. articles, papers, datasets, events). Where possible, describe the expected impact.

Excellent research without obvious or immediate societal or economic impact will not be disadvantaged in the peer review and assessment process. If you consider that your research has no obvious or immediate societal or economic impact, you should explain your reasoning in the Case for Support.