Secondary Data Analysis Initiative (SDAI) Call Specification

Summary

The Secondary Data Analysis Initiative (SDAI) aims to deliver high impact, policy and practitioner relevant research through the deeper exploitation of the major data resources created by the ESRC and other agencies. The SDAI provides up to 24 months funding for grants with an overall limit of £300,000 (100 per cent full Economic Cost (fEC). Funding for this initiative is being provided through an open date responsive mode call through which it is expected to fund 12-15 grants each year.

Scope

The UK has world-leading data resources for social and economic research, providing a huge opportunity for comparative analysis into some of the most pressing challenges facing society in the UK and internationally.

Given the richness of these, and other resources, the main aim and focus of this call is to

deliver high impact, policy and practitioner relevant research through the deeper exploitation of the major data resources created by the ESRC and other agencies.

Related to this, the call further aims to develop the capacity and skills of the social sciences communities in using large and complex secondary data and encourage partnerships with non-academic stakeholders to ensure impact on policy and practice.

Previously, it was required from applicants to use at least one ESRC-funded data resource and to include a named early career researcher as principal investigator or co-investigator. These restrictions have now been lifted. Following an evidence based review, ESRC decided to open SDAI for applications that seek to exploit secondary data from a range of UK and international data resources including longitudinal studies and other data infrastructures, as long as applicants can provide confirmation that they have access to these sources and data. The use of at least one of ESRC-funded resource or longitudinal study is still encouraged. However, if the use of ESRC-funded resources are not appropriate, applications proposing the use of alternative data resource(s) will not be disadvantaged. Please find a list of recommended ESRC-funded data resources at Annex 1. Also, the ESRC still encourages applications from early career researchers as principal investigators or co-investigators, but this is not a requirement for applying to the call.

Proposals should focus on the generation of non-academic impact through addressing substantive research questions. Methodological and capacity development as part of this work is encouraged but should not be the core focus. The SDAI will therefore support the innovative and creative use of data or methodologies and support capacity-building in the area of secondary data analysis.

In summary, this call:
- requires the use of secondary data from at least one existing UK or international data resource;
- is flexible and open to using any appropriate UK and international data resources but encourages, in particular, the use of at least one ESRC-funded data resource;
- is flexible and open to the inclusion of researchers at different career stages, who wish to develop their skills in using secondary data, but also encourages applications from early career researchers as principal investigators or co-investigators;
- encourages proposals which include non-academic partners.

Call details

Funding

The call is for proposals up to £300,000 (100 per cent full Economic Cost (fEC)) for a period of up to 24 months. Detailed information on eligible costs can be found in the ESRC's Research Funding Guide (http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/research-funding-guide/). Proposals will need to show 100 per cent of full Economic Cost of the proposed research. The ESRC will meet 80 per cent of the full economic costs on proposals submitted.

Please note that costs for training courses for early career researchers may be included in

the grant proposal.

Open call part of ESRC's Research Grants

The call will operate alongside ESRC's Research Grants open call (www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/funding-opportunities/research-grants/). Following peer review, projects will be assessed by a standing Grants Assessment Panel (GAP) specifically constituted to support this initiative. The Panel will make recommendations on which proposals to fund. Following the Panel recommendations, the Grants Delivery Group will make final funding decisions. For more information on the assessment process please see www.esrc.ac.uk/about-us/governance-and-structure/advisory-committees/research- committee/responsive-mode-grant-assessment-process/.

GAPs meet in March, July and November of each year. The SDAI annual budget will be around £3 million. It is expected that three to four proposals will be funded at each GAP round therefore we expect around 12-15 grants will be funded each year (dependent on quality).

Proposals can be submitted at any time and there are no set closing dates. However, given annual funding levels and expected number of submissions at each GAP round, applicants are required to carefully consider the timing of the submission of their proposal to the ESRC. Large volumes of proposals will adversely affect success rates at each GAP round and will count towards the demand management statistics of the applicant's research organisation.

Data access

SDAI will only consider projects which seek to exploit secondary data from one or more existing UK or international data resource(s), providing that applicants have access to these.

Proposals seeking to use resources where data is readily accessible and routinely available for research use as part of established processes do not require a letter of support.

The ESRC acknowledges that in some cases, data infrastructures may not have readily access to data but may have to negotiate and secure access to this from data owners on a project by project basis. This is the case, for example, of three ESRC-funded data resources, which seek to offer researchers' access to data from the private sector and from local government. These are:
- the Business and Local Government Data Research Centre (http://www.blgdataresearch.org/);
- the Consumer Data Research Centre (https://www.cdrc.ac.uk/); and
- the Urban Big Data Centre (http://ubdc.ac.uk/)

When seeking data from such resources, applicants are required to contact the relevant data research centre at the first instance and obtain approval from the relevant approvals body prior to submitting their proposal for SDAI funding. Applicants should include proof of this approval as part of their proposal. This is to offer assurances to the ESRC, SDAI peer reviewers and commissioning panel that if a proposal is successful, the dataset(s) will be accessible; (subject to approval from

external access committees where necessary).

New Datasets

Additional primary data collection will not be funded under this call. However, new datasets created through data linkage are permitted. Where new datasets are created applicants are required to include a data management and sharing plan which discusses how this data will be stored and shared.

Please see the ESRC research data policy (https://esrc.ukri.org/funding/guidance-for-grant-holders/research-data-policy/) for further guidance. All applicants are expected to comply with this policy.

Impact

In line with the UKRI position on Excellence with Impact (https://www.ukri.org/innovation/excellence-with-impact/), we expect that our researchers will have considered the potential scientific, societal and economic impacts of their research.
ESRC applicants should actively consider how these impacts can be maximised and developed within their proposal. Applicant's plans to maximise and develop the potential impacts of their research will form part of the peer review and assessment process.

Opportunities for making an impact may arise, and should be taken, at any stage during 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.

It is important 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.

To be effective, all communication, engagement and impact activities must be planned in detail and properly resourced in the proposal.

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.

The ESRC's **Impact Toolkit** gives you detailed advice on how to achieve the maximum

impact for your work. The toolkit includes information on developing an impact strategy, promoting knowledge exchange, public engagement and communicating effectively with your
key stakeholders: http://www.esrc.ac.uk/research/impact-toolkit/.

COVID-19 Guidance for Applicants

Accounting for the unknown impacts of COVID-19
UKRI acknowledges that it is a challenge for applicants to determine the future impacts of COVID-19 while the pandemic continues to evolve. Applications should be based on the information available at the point of submission and, if applicable, the known application specific impacts of COVID-19 should be accounted for. Where known impacts have occurred, these should be highlighted in the application, including the assumptions/information at the point of submission. There is no need to include contingency plans for the potential impacts of COVID-19. Requests for travel both domestically and internationally can be included in accordance to the relevant scheme guidelines, noting the above advice.

(Reviewers will receive instructions to assume that changes that arise from the COVID-19 pandemic, post-submission, will be resolved and complications related to COVID-19 should not affect their scores.
Where an application is successful, any changes in circumstances that affect the proposal will be managed as a post-award issue.)

Non-academic partnerships

We are committed to encouraging dialogue and collaboration between social scientists and research users, in order to maximise the potential impact of social science research on policy and practice. We expect that this initiative will deliver research that provides demonstrable policy and practitioner impacts.

The fundamental ambition of the initiative is to highlight the role that secondary analysis has played in directly delivering effective policy interventions and positive changes in practice. In support of this, all proposals are strongly encouraged to include non-academics in the co-production of knowledge through direct involvement in the research project. Applicants are encouraged to engage directly with users in shaping the research agenda and apply social science and data analysis to current policy, strategy or practice issues.

Although we are principally keen to see a demonstrable commitment to co-production of knowledge, co-funding from project partners may also be included either as contributions in-kind, or combinations of cash and in-kind contributions. Applicants are expected to demonstrate in their proposals that there is genuine commitment from project partner organisations.

Please note, it is the research organisation's responsibility to claim the contribution from the partners as specified in the proposal, and costs to be met by project partners should not be included in the total requested from ESRC.

Criteria for Early Career Researchers, if included

If applications include early career researchers as principal investigators or co-investigators, then these early career researchers should meet the following criteria:

- Applicants cannot be current or former principal investigators on ESRC or other UKRI grants, except ESRC Postdoctoral Fellowships.
- As part of their proposal, applicants must articulate why they should be considered an early career researcher and how the award of a SDAI grant will have a demonstrable impact on their trajectory to becoming an independent researcher.
- Proposals must include a programme of skill development activities to support their continued development
- The call is open to applicants with or without a permanent academic post, subject to the above restrictions.
- Applicants who already hold a professorship will not be eligible to apply as there is an expectation that they have already obtained these research and management skills.

Proposals should also outline the career development opportunities that will be provided for the named early career researcher(s).

As part of projects including an early career researcher(s), applicants are also encouraged to include wider programmes of training and capacity-building that develop capacity around the understanding or use of particular data resources, methods or topic areas. This might be through seminars, workshops or other mechanisms, and should take account of training and events already being offered through other ESRC investments such as the National Centre for Research Methods (www.ncrm.ac.uk/), UK Data Service (www.ukdataservice.ac.uk/) and Doctoral Training Partnerships (https://esrc.ukri.org/skills-and-careers/doctoral-training/doctoral-training-partnerships/).

International co-investigators

This call offers the opportunity to work with international partners and to use data resources from other countries. ESRC attaches major importance to the position of UK social science in the international and global arena. We positively encourage active collaboration between UK researchers and those in other countries, where this will help to ensure that UK research is at the international leading edge. Co-investigators based in overseas research organisations can therefore be included in research grant proposals. Further information on the inclusion of international co-investigators is available at https://esrc.ukri.org/funding/guidance-for-applicants/inclusion-of-international-co-investigators-on-proposals/.

Business, third sector or government body co-investigators

The ESRC encourages applicants to collaborate with non-academic partners. Business, third sector or government body co-investigators based in the UK can also be included on research grant proposals. Further information on the inclusion of coinvestigators is available at https://esrc.ukri.org/funding/guidance-for-applicants/inclusion-of-uk-business-third-sector-or-government-body-co-investigators-on-proposals/.

Highlight notices

SDAI will also feature ad-hoc ring-fenced competitions in collaboration with ESRC's partner organisations, details of which will be published on the SDAI webpage (https://esrc.ukri.org/funding/funding-opportunities/secondary-data-analysis-initiative-sdai-open-call/) at appropriate times. These calls may focus on exploitation of specific datasets or research questions identified by the partner organisations that differ from those in the standard call. In these instances additional funding will be available which will be ring-fenced specifically for these projects.

Highlight notices will due to their time-bound nature operate on a different basis with set opening and closing dates (with highlight notices linked to specific GAP meetings). These will be communicated as part of the highlight notice.

Where a highlight notices differs in remit from the open call, further guidance will be provided.

Research ethics

Applicants must ensure that the proposed research will be carried out to a high ethical standard. Applicants must demonstrate in the proposal that they have considered any potential ethical issues and how they will be addressed - ensuring that an ethics review is in place before the project commences and that all risks are minimised.

We expect researchers to have thought about and detailed the potential ethical implications of their research during the lifecycle of the project (including knowledge exchange and dissemination), what measures will be taken for ongoing review, what type of ethics review is required and how the review will be secured. Applicants should also state if ethical approval has already been obtained, or when and how this would be sought if the proposal were to be funded.

All applicants must comply with the ESRC Framework for Research Ethics (www.esrc.ac.uk/researchethics).

How to apply

Application process

Proposals addressing the aims of the initiative and scope of this call must be submitted via the Joint Electronic Submission System (Je-S) at https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk.

Applicants wishing to apply for ESRC funding should also refer to the 'guidance for applicants' section on the ESRC website (www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/applicants/) and consult the ESRC Research Funding Guide (www.esrc.ac.uk/rfg) which sets out the rules and regulations governing funding. Where guidance differs, please follow the scheme-specific guidance for applicants.

Eligibility

Applicants are eligible for funding whether or not they are established members of an ESRC recognised research organisation (RO) (https://www.ukri.org/funding/how-to-

) eligible for responsive mode funding. Applicants who are not established members of a recognised RO must be accommodated by the RO and provided with appropriate facilities to carry out the research. These requirements also apply to individuals named as co-investigators. Further details about eligibility of applicants can be found in the Research Funding Guide (www.esrc.ac.uk/rfg).

Peer review and assessment criteria

Once accepted, following basic office checks, proposals are sent to three reviewers primarily drawn from ESRC's Peer Review College. Sometimes more reviewers will be approached depending on the nature of the project. Where the College may not have the necessary coverage of knowledge and expertise for a particular proposal, case officers may approach reviewers outside the college. Non-academic research users will be approached for their comments as appropriate.

Proposals will be assessed on the basis of six core criteria:

Originality, innovation and potential contribution to knowledge

- Is the proposal innovative in terms of identifying problems or formulating research questions to address stated issues?
- Will the proposal lead to new understanding, insights, advice or solutions to the stated problems?
- Does the proposal offer to address shortcomings in the current state of knowledge and understanding?
- Is the proposal novel and timely?

Research design and methods

- Is there a clear understanding of the issue addressed through this research?
- Is the conceptual framework of the proposed research appropriate to address the issue?
- Is there clarity and coherence in the research design between research questions, research methods and anticipated intellectual outcomes?
- Is the proposal methodologically innovative?
- Are the research questions clearly set out?
- Are the research methods clearly specified, robust and appropriate to the stated questions? Are issues of data validity and reliability appropriately addressed?
- Are plans for data linkage feasible, and will they deliver the proposed objectives?
- Do data management plans follow best practice, and adhere to ESRC data policy?
- Has appropriate considerations been given to ethics issues arising from this project?

Potential for capacity-building

- Are any identified capacity-building activities set out in relation to the core intellectual agenda of the research?

- Does the proposal include wider programmes of training for the designated early career researcher, if any is included, and are these appropriate to their stated career development aspirations?

Project management and research partnerships

- Are the project management plans and configuration of roles and responsibilities reasonable, appropriate and credible for the proposed project?
- Are the credentials of the investigators and research organisations appropriate to deliver the project?
- Have project partners been fully involved in the design of the research, and do they have a clear and meaningful role in future activities?

Outputs, dissemination and potential for impact on theory, policy and practice

- Does the project have real potential for impact on theory, policy and/or practice?
- Does the proposal demonstrate that there is effective demand for the research from policymakers and other non-academic stakeholders beyond the academic community?
- Are the stakeholders and/or potential users of research outputs properly identified, and the processes and means for engaging with them appropriate, at all stages of the research process?
- Are there clear plans to make findings available to target audiences and to maximise potential research impact?

Value for money

- Is the budget appropriate and reasonable for the proposed programme of work, including all staff costs, travel, data analysis tasks, and knowledge exchange and impact activities?
- Are there any components of the project costs which appear excessive? (Estates and indirect costs should not be commented on)
- Time commitments of research staff:
    - Are staff doing the appropriate level of work? Is the amount of senior staff time on the project appropriate?
    - Is the mix of the team right?
    - If consultancy costs are claimed, is this the most appropriate mechanism of staffing and are the rates reasonable?

Successful grants

Our full terms and conditions of grants are published in the ESRC Research Funding Guide (www.esrc.ac.uk/rfg). Successful grants will be expected to engage with other investments funded under this initiative.

Further enquiries
For questions relating to ESRC's application processes please see the research grant Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), available at [insert link to FAQs].

For SDAI specific questions please refer to the SDAI FAQs. For any other enquiries please contact sdai@esrc.ukri.org

Enquiries relating to the Je-S application procedure should be addressed to:

- Je-S Helpdesk
  Email:
  jeshelp@rcuk.ac.uk
  Telephone: 01793 44416

Annex 1 – Eligible ESRC-funded data resources and infrastructure

Previously, it was required that applicants use at least one ESRC-funded data resource, this is no longer the case. If the use of ESRC-funded resources are not appropriate, applications proposing the use of alternative data resource(s) will not be disadvantaged.

If ESRC-funded resources are used, this call will only consider projects which exploit one or more of the following ESRC-funded resources. These have been listed under headings for presentational purposes only.

Please note all resources are accessible via the UK Data Service (www.ukdataservice.ac.uk/) unless stated otherwise.

Longitudinal resources
- British Household Panel Survey
- Understanding Society
- 1958 National Child Development Survey
- British Cohort Study 1970
- Next Steps (Longitudinal Study of Young Persons in England)
- Millennium Cohort Study
- UK Census Longitudinal Studies (http://calls.ac.uk/guides-resources/applying-to-use-the-lss/)
- English Longitudinal Study of Ageing

Biosocial resources
- Understanding Society Biosocial Sweep
- 1958 National Child Development Study Biosocial Sweep
- English Longitudinal Study of Ageing Genome-Wide Association Study
- Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (www.bristol.ac.uk/alspac/researchers/data-access/)

Big Data resources
- Administrative Data Research Network (www.adrn.ac.uk)
- Business and Local Government Data Research Centre (www.blgdataresearch.org)
- Consumer Data Research Centre (www.cdrc.ac.uk)
- Urban Big Data Centre (www.ubdc.ac.uk)

Election resources
- British Election Study
- British election study ethnic minority surveys
- Scottish Election Studies
- Welsh Election Studies
- Northern Ireland Election Study
- Scottish Referendum Study
- Local Election Studies Database

Employment resources
- Skills and Employment Survey Series
- Workplace Employment Relations Surveys

International comparative resources
- European Social Survey

- Harmonised European Time Use Study 2000 (The data from the Harmonised European Time Use Study 2015 will be available from March 2016 and will offer comparative opportunities through a harmonised dataset)
- International Social Survey Programme (www.gesis.org/en/issp/home/)
- Multinational Time Use Study (http://www.timeuse.org/mtus.html)

Linguistics resources
- British National Corpus
- British Sign Language Corpus

Qualitative resources
- Timescapes (http://timescapes.researchdata.leeds.ac.uk/)
- Poverty and Social Exclusion Qualitative Surveys
- Ritual, Community and Conflict Ethnographic Dataset on Ritual (www.icea.ox.ac.uk/fundedprojects/ritual00/data/ethnographic-resources/)
- Access Research Knowledge Qualitative Archives on Ageism and Conflict (www.ark.ac.uk/qual/ageism/)

Other resources
- Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK: Research Surveys 2012
- Northern Ireland Life and Times
- Kids' Life and Times
- Young Life and Times Survey