



Embedding methodological development in social science research (2022)

Frequently asked questions

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Does the proposed method have to be linked to the pandemic?

Projects that develop learning from the pandemic are encouraged but grant proposals are not required to be related to Covid-19. The proposed research must refine methodological approaches developed since March 2020.

Will methodological approaches developed pre-March 2020 be considered?

ESRC cannot confirm in advance the eligibility of any proposals before submission but it recognises that methodological research is often incremental and builds upon prior work. In such cases, eligibility would depend on there having been substantive developments/adaptations/innovations in the methodological approach since March 2020. The onus is on the grant proposal to justify and evidence any claims of substantive development within the method after March 2020.

What does it mean that the methodological approach needs to have been 'adopted and tried out empirically' for the proposed project to be eligible?

ESRC will not fund new, untested, methodological research through this funding opportunity. We recognise that applicants may not have been able to publish on their research yet as the method needs to have been developed since March 2020, but we expect that the methodological approach must have already been put into practice (albeit requiring further development to be fully embedded and to maximise its contribution to social science research). The onus is on the grant proposal to justify and evidence any claims that the proposed methodological research fits within the parameters of the highlight notice.

Researchers wishing to undertake new and untested methodological research can apply for funding through the ESRC research grants call but proposals will not be considered under this highlight notice.

How do I know if I should apply to the Digital Footprint Data (DFD) accelerator scheme?

ESRC has published the details of this [funding opportunity](#) on Funding Finder.

The scheme is designed to support proof of innovative concept projects to provide the foundations and knowledge for a transformational shift in the creation, access and use of DFD. DFD reflect an increasingly digital society where people's interactions with the world and each other create 'footprints', such as:

- internet and social media data
- geo-spatial data
- commercial and transactional data
- sensor and image data.

Although not originally created for research, DFD can be harnessed to understand and address key research, business and policy questions. However, DFD cannot currently be used to its full potential: researchers are limited by a number of challenges including: insufficient data access and infrastructure, underdeveloped methodology and theoretical development, and opaque ethical procedures. To address such challenges, this accelerator scheme welcomes proposals in a range of relevant areas, including methodological development to address major challenges around interpretation and status of DFD and their strengths/weaknesses in the wider repertoire of social science research methods. For example, this could be with regard to: representativeness; uncertainty and, provenance; bias and understanding of latent and /proxy measures or causal insights.

The full economic cost of projects is expected to be up to £500,000. Projects can have a duration of up to 12 months.

Grant proposals addressing this challenge area should be submitted to the DFD initiative and are ineligible for this highlight notice.

Please refer further questions about the call to DFAProgramme@ukri.org.

How do I know if I should apply to the Survey Data Collection (SDC) methods collaboration funding opportunity?

ESRC has published [the details of this funding opportunity on Funding Finder](#).

We are seeking to support the survey data collection methods collaboration to deliver a step-change in approaches to collecting population survey data. The pandemic imposed massive disruption on population survey data collection as studies adapted rapidly to the restrictions while developing new innovations. The nature and scale of the challenges facing population survey data collection require a collaborative, whole community response, driven by a shared vision and community-owned objectives. Collaborators from outside academia will have an important contribution to make to the collaboration and can be included on proposals.

The funding will ensure:

- the UK's social surveys can continue to effectively capture complex phenomena across different modes, as well as deliver inclusive data that reflect the experiences of everyone in society
- social survey commissioners, directors and users can effectively assess data quality and manage mode effects as data collection modes diversify
- methodological innovations in survey methods are developed and widely disseminated, leading to improved survey practice in the UK and beyond.

This work will have a direct impact on social survey commissioners and users. Engagement and impact plans will be expected to reflect this.



ESRC expects to contribute up to £3.3 million. The collaboration is expected to start in April 2023 and be funded for up to three years.

Grant proposals addressing this challenge area should be submitted to the SDC methods collaboration and are ineligible for this highlight notice.

Please refer further questions about the call to SDCCollaboration@esrc.ukri.org.