



Economic  
and Social  
Research Council

## **Economic and Social Research Council**

### **The Survey Data Collection Collaboration: Questions and Answers**

## Contents

### Questions from the webinar on Monday 03 October 4

The call specification for Embedding methodological development in social science research: 2022 states that “Proposals meeting the eligibility criteria for ... the ‘survey data collection methods collaboration’ are ... not eligible for this opportunity.” Could you clarify what this means? Does it, for example, mean that any research that could contribute to the “step change in approaches to collecting population survey data” is ruled out (and should therefore be included in survey data collection methods collaboration bids), or only that complete bids that would be eligible for survey data collection methods collaboration are ruled out? ..... 4

What is the relationship with topics that are not immediately related to population survey data collection (e.g. combining data from different sources, use of admin data etc)? Can these be featured in a bid response? ..... 4

How will bids that look at only one segment of the population (e.g. children and young people) be looked upon if there is a core methodological outcome? ..... 4

Is it important from the ESRC's perspective that proposals are UK-wide (i.e., including representation from all four nations)? ..... 5

Does the data collection need to be a) UK focused-only b) international or c) a mix of UK and International? ..... 5

Is it possible for a researcher to be a Co-Investigator on several bids? ..... 5

Can salary costs be claimed for co-investigators from government, business or industry? ..... 5

How does ESRC envisage a ‘whole community collaborative response’? Is the intention to have only one bid from the whole of the community or are several bids allowed or encouraged? ..... 5

Given that only one proposal will be funded and bids need to be inclusive, will ESRC be helping innovations to come together? ..... 5

Is there a way for people who don't want to be a bid leader to engage with the bid winner? In other words, can they express an interest while being agnostic to who leads? ..... 6

In the case of several bids are being submitted and some institutions being unsuccessful, would these institutions have an opportunity to join the collaboration/network in some way? ..... 6

What is the role of survey practice organisations in this bid and how are they being involved? Would it be possible to include the offer of a joint group of survey suppliers in more than one bid? ..... 6

How does the ESRC see the role of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) (or other government departments)? ..... 6

Is there scope for international collaborations? ..... 7

The call refers to “knowledge mobilisation expertise”. Please could you clarify what you mean by this? ..... 7

You’ve mentioned in the specification that you are looking for a collaborative whole-community response. You also state that you want an external independent assessment panel but this could prove tricky if the winning bid has embraced the whole community. How are you defining independent? Obviously, the Panel could not include individuals who have been named in the grant but could it include individuals from their organisations or university departments? ..... 7

“The combined associated costs of all non-academic and international co-investigators must not exceed 30% of the overall cost of the grant.” What is meant by ‘associated’ costs? Will these costs cover the time of the co-investigators rather than any new data collection or other research activities carried out by others within the organisations of these co-investigators? ..... 7

Can non-academic partners be included at 100%FEC? Usually this would be only under exceptions which is for data collection. .... 8

Why are you deducting costs for the research funding programme then adding them back on to the grant?..... 8

Are institutional contributions envisaged? If yes, from what type of organisations? ... 8

### **Other frequently asked questions asked about this funding opportunity**

#### **9**

Could I and a potential collaborator apply to this call as joint Principal Investigators?9

Does being PI on a bid rule someone out from being on another bid (as a co-I or another role)? ..... 9

Would the ESRC be willing to consider a slightly later start date for the collaboration? ..... 9

## Questions from the webinar on Monday 03 October

### Scope of the call

The call specification for [Embedding methodological development in social science research: 2022](#) states that “Proposals meeting the eligibility criteria for ... the ‘survey data collection methods collaboration’ are ... not eligible for this opportunity.” Could you clarify what this means? Does it, for example, mean that any research that could contribute to the “step change in approaches to collecting population survey data” is ruled out (and should therefore be included in survey data collection methods collaboration bids), or only that complete bids that would be eligible for survey data collection methods collaboration are ruled out?

While ESRC cannot advise on eligibility of grant proposals in advance of submission, it reserves the right to reject any proposals not in the scope of specific schemes. If a grant proposal focused on collecting population survey data was submitted to the “Embedding methodological development in social science research” call, it would have to justify why it had been submitted to the appropriate opportunity – i.e. why it was not eligible for the survey data methods collaboration call – to reviewers and introducers.

**What is the relationship with topics that are not immediately related to population survey data collection (e.g. combining data from different sources, use of admin data etc)? Can these be featured in a bid response?**

While ESRC cannot advise on eligibility of grant proposals in advance of submission, we can emphasise that this funding opportunity aims to support the development and wider dissemination of methodological innovations in survey methods. Projects that engage with broader topics in a manner that aligns with the overarching objectives of the collaboration would be scope. The onus is on the applicant to demonstrate how the proposed research fits with the aims and objectives of the funding opportunity.

**How will bids that look at only one segment of the population (e.g. children and young people) be looked upon if there is a core methodological outcome?**

ESRC wants to fund a collaboration that will lead to a set of methodological research projects that address the aims of the call while providing opportunities for other projects to be funded beyond the original proposal.

A proposal focused exclusively on data collection from a specific population would be unlikely to deliver the aims of this wide-reaching and strategic funding opportunity. However, applicants can propose projects undertaken within the context

of the collaboration – either initially or at subsequent stages – that will focus on specific populations and which contribute to the bid's overall scientific objectives.

**Is it important from the ESRC's perspective that proposals are UK-wide (i.e., including representation from all four nations)?**

This funding opportunity addresses a collective challenge that affects the entirety of the UK and it would be difficult for a proposal to meet the collaboration's objectives – including the need for inclusivity – if it failed to engage with the devolved nations. However, ESRC is not mandating that all proposals need to engage collaborators from all nations within the UK.

**Does the data collection need to be a) UK focused-only b) international or c) a mix of UK and international?**

ESRC has no pre-determined view on this but encourages applicants to consider how any proposed data collection or analysis will address the aims and scope of the funding opportunity. The onus is on the applicant to make a persuasive case for how any proposed activities will add value and deliver the objectives of the call.

**Who can apply**

**Is it possible for a researcher to be a Co-Investigator on several bids?**

Yes. Individuals can only be a principal investigator on one proposal submitted under this opportunity but other individuals may be on multiple proposals.

**Can salary costs be claimed for co-investigators from government, business or industry?**

Some staff salary costs can be claimed although it depends on the sectors from which the co-investigators come. Please see our guidance on including **UK business, third sector or government** on proposals for more details on what can and can't be funded.

**Collaboration**

**How does ESRC envisage a 'whole community collaborative response'? Is the intention to have only one bid from the whole of the community or are several bids allowed or encouraged?**

This is an open, competitive research opportunity and applicants are responsible for deciding how to structure their bids. We will only be funding one bid and encourage proposals to be as inclusive as possible (although we are not expecting only one bid to be submitted).

Applicants can only be a principal investigator (PI) on one bid but other individuals can be named on multiple grant proposals.

**Given that only one proposal will be funded and bids need to be inclusive, will ESRC be helping potential applicants to come together?**

We have structured the grant and phased its funding in a way to enable the leadership team to work with the community to identify other research ideas and

proposals. We would expect that the grantholders would undertake community engagement to develop subsequent phases of research projects. This may lead to other opportunities for researchers who were not part of the original bid to become involved.

**Is there a way for people who don't want to be a bid leader to engage with the bid winner? In other words, can they express an interest while being agnostic to who leads?**

It is for applicants to decide how they will be involved in proposals. However, we would expect the successful bid to engage with the wider community and to have mechanisms in place so that the collaboration could grow and contract as required, including enabling people who weren't part of the original collaboration to contribute.

**In the case of several bids being submitted and some institutions being unsuccessful, would these institutions have an opportunity to join the collaboration/network in some way?**

ESRC is not intending to mandate that the successful bid incorporate applicants from other proposals but we do expect the successful collaboration will be as inclusive as possible. It should have in place community engagement mechanisms that are agile and responsive to evolving needs and be able to bring in new stakeholders as required during the course of the grant.

**What is the role of survey practice organisations in this bid and how are they being involved? Would it be possible to include the offer of a joint group of survey suppliers in more than one bid?**

Applicants should articulate in their proposal a clear vision for engaging with communities working in this area and the partnerships necessary to successfully deliver the aims of the call. It is expected that grant proposals will offer a whole community response to the research methods challenges in survey data collection by involving a range of collaborators, including survey practice organisations. Practitioner organisations can contribute to the bid in different ways, such as Co-Investigators, project partners or consultants. Applicants should decide which and how many survey organisations should be involved in the bid. Involvement should be consistent with ESRC funding rules, with particular attention paid to procurement requirements and policies.

**How does the ESRC see the role of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) (or other government departments)?**

Partnerships with government (and other sectors) are expected to be crucial to deliver the anticipated outcomes and impact of this funding opportunity. As frequent survey commissioners, government departments are key stakeholders in this area and likely to benefit from research focusing on developing modes and methods for data collection. In addition to being a stakeholder interested in the collaborators' outputs, such organisations may be able to offer data as a mechanism to help advance methods research. Collaborators from government can be included on the bid as a Co-Investigators, project partners or consultants.

With regards to ONS specifically, this organisation is both a data collector and public sector research institution and – unlike other government bodies – ONS staff are eligible to have costs for their research time covered. You should note that ONS is an ‘eligible public sector research establishment’ so should be treated as a research organisation on proposals.

### **Is there scope for international collaborations?**

Yes. As with any ESRC grant, we would encourage international collaboration.

### **Proposal requirements**

#### **The call refers to “knowledge mobilisation expertise”. Please could you clarify what you mean by this?**

More generally, knowledge mobilisation refers to [knowledge exchange](#)/transfer activities that enable research findings to be embedded in practice and the wider community.

Applicants should consider what expertise is needed within the collaboration to enable the grant outcomes to be embedded in the wider community. For example, the team may need administrative support and staff with skills in key areas, such as project management, communicating externally and maximising the impact of the grant’s outcomes.

### **Assessment of proposals**

#### **You’ve mentioned in the specification that you are looking for a collaborative whole-community response. You also state that you want an external independent assessment panel but this could prove tricky if the winning bid has embraced the whole community. How are you defining independent? Obviously, the Panel could not include individuals who have been named in the grant but could it include individuals from their organisations or university departments?**

ESRC is fully aware of this issue. Our typical approach would be to avoid including individuals from the same department as an applicant and we are seeking to avoid that outcome. ESRC will consider different strategies to manage conflicts of interest, such as inviting international members to join the Panel.

### **Costings**

#### **“The combined associated costs of all non-academic and international co-investigators must not exceed 30% of the overall cost of the grant.” What is meant by ‘associated’ costs? Will these costs cover the time of the co-investigators rather than any new data collection or other research activities carried out by others within the organisations of these co-investigators?**

It includes all of the costs associated with the co-investigators. How you include the costings for data collection needs to be considered when preparing bids and you should consult the [guidance on what costs can be claimed](#). You should give consideration to how collaborators are expected to contribute and then identify the



appropriate role/mechanisms to include them, including whether they are best placed to be a co-investigator, project partner or consultant.

**Can non-academic partners be included at 100%FEC? Usually this would be only under exceptions which is for data collection.**

You should consult the guidance on costs for co-investigator roles and other roles for non-academic partners in the [ESRC Research Funding Guide](#) and our guidance for including [co-investigators from business, third sector or government bodies](#).

Non-academic collaborators can be included in the grants in variety of roles and you should consider how people will be contributing in order to identify the best way to involve them in the grant.

**Why are you deducting costs for the research funding programme then adding them back on to the grant?**

Costs need to be included on proposals so that we know the full cost of the grant when assessing it. However, we recognise you are unlikely to know the costings for the research funding programme, and the funding categories they need to fall under, at the point of application. The costs will therefore be removed from the successful proposal and added back onto the grant through an additional funding stream once commissioned so the costs can be included correctly on the grant.

**Are institutional contributions envisaged? If yes, from what type of organisations?**

Co-funding is not a requirement of the call. ESRC's contribution is £3.3m but the overall cost of the grant is not limited and funding from other sources can be included in proposals. Further guidance on co-funding can be found in our [Research Funding Guide](#). Proposals that include co-funding should explain how the additional funding will add value to the initiative.



## Other questions frequently asked about this funding opportunity

**Could I and a potential collaborator apply to this call as joint Principal Investigators?**

No. Proposals must have one principal investigator.

**Does being PI on a bid rule someone out from being on another bid (as a co-I or another role)?**

ESRC has not mandated against a PI on one bid applying in another role on a different proposal but applicants should consider holistically their contribution to and role on competing bids.

**Would the ESRC be willing to consider a slightly later start date for the collaboration?**

The award will commence in April 2023 and must start no later than 1 May 2023.