



Funding opportunity

# Expression of interest: Expanding Excellence in England (E3) fund: round 2

Opportunity status:	Closed
Funders:	<a href="#">Research England</a>
Funding type:	Grant
Total fund:	£180,000,000
Publication date:	5 December 2022
Opening date:	5 December 2022
Closing date:	24 February 2023 12:00pm UK time

Apply for funding to scale up small and excellent research units, clusters, and departments within English only higher education providers.

Your project must:

- fund the strategic and sustainable expansion of a small excellent research unit
- push the frontiers of human knowledge and deliver transformative impacts
- enhance the skills base and diversify talent in any given disciplines

This is not funding for a research project. Applications must come through the office of the Pro-Vice Chancellor of Research (or equivalent).

Up to £180 million is available for institutions. Owing to the range of disciplines and institutions eligible for funding we are not setting a minimum or maximum threshold for awards.

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## Who can apply

This fund is only available to higher education providers (HEPs) in England.

Unless submitting as part of collaborative bid, HEPs in receipt of significant quality related allocations through Research England are advised to consider whether they fully meet the expectation that successful applicants to this round of E3 funding are unable to fund such capacity building activity from their existing research income.

This opportunity is open to all disciplines and interdisciplinary units are also welcomed to apply.

Joints bids from university partnerships or groups are also particularly welcome.

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## What we're looking for

The Expanding Excellence in England (E3) fund aims to support the strategic growth of excellent research units and departments across England. To expand excellence, E3 focuses only on units and departments within higher education providers (HEPs) where:

- they are operating at a limited scale of activity
- demonstrable research excellence already exists
- they do not have the internal resources to support strategic investments

At the expression of interest stage we also expect units to be able to summarise:

- what makes their proposal distinctive
- the potential for the activities to have local or regional impact
- how they will deliver on their capacity building
- how they will achieve a sustainable footing

## Funding available

Owing to the range of disciplines and institutions eligible for funding we are not setting a minimum or maximum threshold for awards.

By way of example, in round 1, the 13 successful units received between £900,000 to £8 million over 3 years of funding.

We expect E3 funding in the final year of the award (academic year 2028 to 2029) to taper as the funded units achieve a sustainable footing, aligned with additional institutional financial support.

## Costs

You can apply for 100% of the full economic cost and these costs will be met should the unit be successful. The requested budget must be realistic, matching the scale of activities planned to reach a critical mass and taking account of the wider inflationary environment and the timescale of the award (5 years).

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To achieve the sustainable growth of research units, the E3 fund can be used flexibly to include the following types of spend:

- staff recruitment (research, technical and professional)
- activities related to conducting research and creating a conducive research environment, for example including (but not limited to) training, PhD stipends, conferences, workshops
- capital investment (refurbishment, new build, equipment over £10,000)

We expect most of the requested budget to be resource in nature, focused particularly on staff contracts and developing a talent pipeline.

## Duration

Your award can last up to 5 years.

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## How to apply

Higher education providers (HEP) wishing to apply should read the [expression of interest guidance \(PDF, 466KB\)](#) and complete the [expression of interest application template \(DOCX, 64KB\)](#).

Once completed, you must forward the template by email to [expandingexcellence@re.ukri.org](mailto:expandingexcellence@re.ukri.org) by 12pm on 24 February 2023.

## Documents

Expression of interest submissions should include the following documents:

- a completed expression of interest template for each proposed project (maximum of 5 sides of A4 and no greater than 1MB)
- a letter of institutional support signed by the PVC or equivalent of the host institutions (maximum of 1 side of A4)

Proposals should take the form of a single PDF document covering the submission and any evidence to support the case. This should include a supporting letter of no more than 1 side of A4 from your Pro-Vice Chancellor of Research (or equivalent), and any HEP collaborative partner in the case of a bid from several institutions.

If your institution is submitting more than 1 bid, the Pro-Vice Chancellor of Research supporting letter should include a clear narrative as to why this is the case and the priority order of bids from the institution's perspective.

Proposals should be predominately text-based. You should use Arial font and text should be no smaller than font size 10. Please do not alter the page margins.

Shortlisted HEPs will be invited to submit full bids in May 2023 for submission on 15 September 2023.

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## How we will assess your application

The assessment panel will apply the expression of interest assessment criteria to all bids and will recommend a shortlist to proceed to full stage bid development, considering the number of bids received and the funds available.

Expression of interest bids judged by the panel not to present a strong case for funding or do not meet the requirements of Expanding Excellence in England (E3) will be rejected at this stage.

The assessment panel will also pay due regard to the relative capacity and experience available for bid writing within the HEPs that submit applications to support a level playing field across the sector.

The letter submitted by the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research (or equivalent) should outline why the institution has not been able to invest in an area they also consider a strategic priority.

## Expression of interest assessment criteria

### Scale and excellence

The application demonstrates that the submitted unit:

- can build upon existing research excellence
- is currently operating at a small scale in contrast to national comparisons. Exceptional cases may be made using international comparisons where this is pertinent to the nature of the unit

### Distinctiveness and opportunity

The application demonstrates that the capacity building programme will:

- make a distinctive contribution to the UK research base and broaden the regional spread of research excellence
- support the region where the unit is located, in leveraging nationally or internationally competitive research and innovation strengths to drive greater local economic, environmental or social benefits

### Planning

The application will establish:

- the extent to which the proposed activity matches the objectives of the E3 programme
- it can be achieved within the funding period and budget outlined

### Sustainability

The application will establish:

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the extent to which both the unit and host institutions have accounted for the long-term sustainability of the expanding unit

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## Contact details

### Get help with developing your proposal

Please note that this is an institutional level fund to expand research capacity and not funding for a research project.

Queries and applications must therefore be made through the office of the Pro-Vice Chancellor of Research (or equivalent).

### Ask about this funding opportunity

Email: [expandingexcellence@re.ukri.org](mailto:expandingexcellence@re.ukri.org)

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## Additional info

The Expanding Excellence in England (E3) fund was established in 2018.

In the first round Research England allocated over £76 million to 13 projects across England.

Read more about the [E3 fund](#).

## Webinar

Watch a recording from our webinar for potential applicants:  
Video credit: Research England

Video transcript and on-screen captions are available by watching on YouTube.

[Webinar questions and answers \(PDF, 179KB\)](#)

## Supporting documents

[Expression of interest application template \(DOCX, 64KB\)](#)

[Expression of interest guidance \(PDF, 466KB\)](#)

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## Timeline

 **5 December 2022**

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## Guidance on good research

[Good research resource hub](#)

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<https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/expanding-excellence-in-england-e3-fund-round-2>