UK Research and Innovation

UKRI Cross Council Interdisciplinary Responsive Mode Pilot Webinars

The webinar will begin shortly

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Welcome

Professor Alison Park

Interim Executive Chair ESRC

SRO UKRI Cross Council Interdisciplinary Responsive Mode Pilot Scheme

Introduction to the team

- **Alex Amey** - Strategic Lead, Interdisciplinary Responsive Mode Programme
- **Samantha Aspinall** - Head of Interdisciplinary Research Development, Horizons Institute, University of Leeds
- **Jenny Morris** - UKRI Interdisciplinary Responsive Mode Senior Programme Manager
- **Stephen Meader** - Programme Director, Future Leaders Fellowships

- **Montana Walcott** - UKRI Interdisciplinary Responsive Mode Funding Officer
- **Matt Freeman -** UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships Senior Programme Manager

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Webinar Aims:

- Introduce the UKRI cross research council responsive mode pilot scheme
  - How this fits with other UKRI schemes
  - Assessment and timelines
  - What we mean by interdisciplinarity
  - Scheme objectives
- Outline application process
- Assessment criteria and process
- What a full stage application will look like
- Opportunity for questions

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Background to the scheme

New scheme will address a gap in UKRI's current provision identified by the 2016 Nurse Review and the 2022 Grant Review:

- Current council responsive schemes fund interdisciplinary research but sometimes difficult to find a 'home' research council to which they can submit their proposal

- Existing council schemes support research and innovation with transformative indirect or unexpected benefits; this scheme would do the same for research at the interface between different disciplines.

Cross Research Council Responsive Mode Pilot

- The scheme is aimed at new interdisciplinary ideas emerging from the research community. It will support projects that transcend, combine or significantly span disciplines, involving different knowledge and methodological spheres.
- We are piloting over two rounds of funding, allowing us to assess demand, and to test and refine our processes.
- We anticipate making around 36 awards in each round and ask that research organisations are mindful of this number (£32.5M per round).
- Projects will last up to two years with a full economic cost of between £200,000 and £1.2M (with UKRI funding 80% of the full economic cost).
- We encourage research organisations to prioritise diverse and distinctive ideas that tread new ground, and to help support a diversity of applicants to the scheme.

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Existing UKRI funding mechanisms for interdisciplinary research

The existing research council responsive mode schemes remain open for a wide range of interdisciplinary research applications, both within council boundaries and across council boundaries through the Cross-Council Remit Agreement.

You should carefully consider whether your proposal meets the criteria set out for this new scheme, or whether it or would fit existing council led responsive mode funding opportunities through the Cross-Council Remit Agreement. **Interdisciplinary research applications that fall within a single research council boundary are ineligible for this scheme.**

A small proportion of applications might be suitable for both this call and existing responsive mode schemes via the Cross-Council Remit Agreement. You must determine which scheme to make your submission to. **Duplicate applications are not permitted.**

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Assessment process

Application comprises two stages:

- submission of an outline application (Je-S – Joint Electronic Submission system)
- invited submission of a full application (UKRI Funding Service)

- College only assessment - no external peer review
  - Prevents ‘death by 1000 cuts’ peer review with focus only on specific discipline
  - Allows us to appoint interdisciplinary experts who understand interdisciplinary applications
  - Allows us to train panel members on scheme aims and how to assess interdisciplinary applications
  - Reduces community written peer review burden

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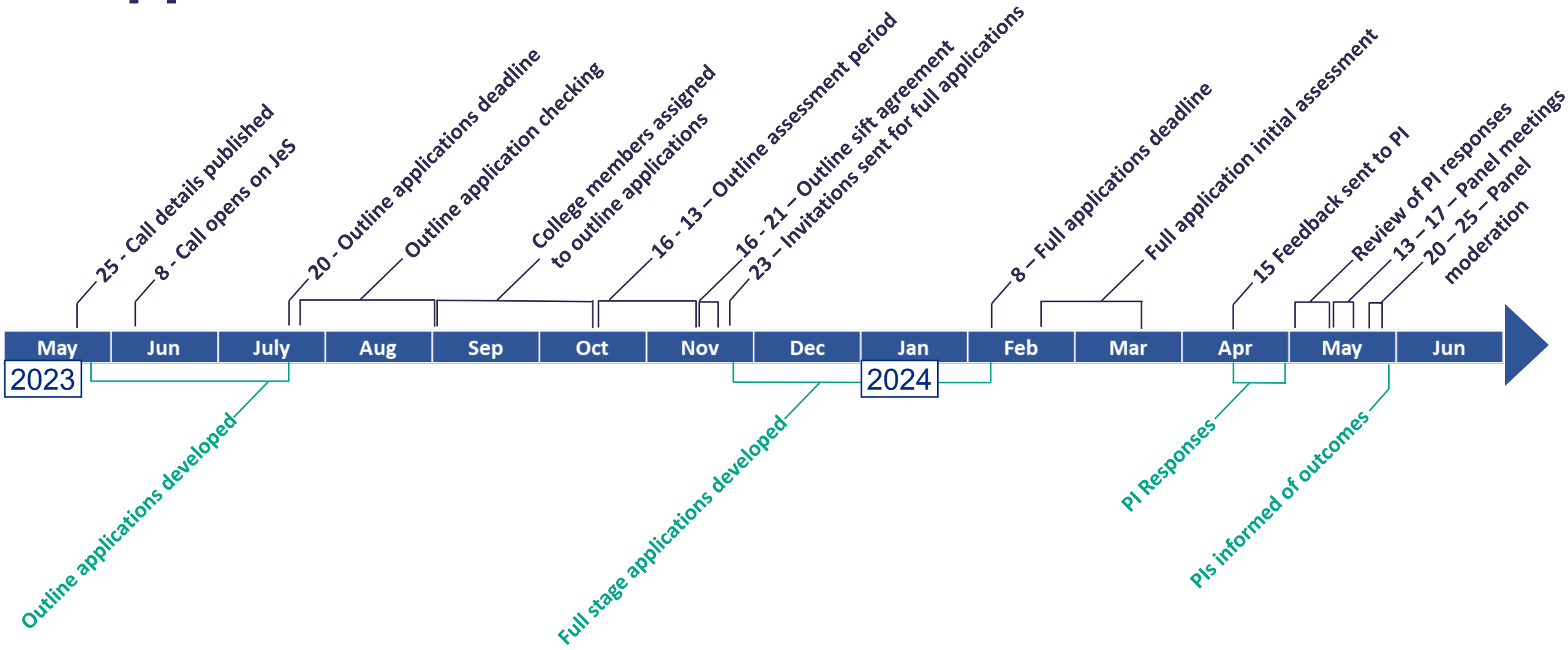
Application Timeline Round 1



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UKRI Interdisciplinary Assessment College

The College will support the new cross research council responsive mode pilot scheme, which is designed to support new interdisciplinary ideas emerging from the research community outside current disciplinary boundaries.

In this pilot scheme, we are initially seeking around 200 members, and 20 people as chairs, who have experience of recognising interdisciplinary research ideas or peer review processes to enable us to respond to potential demand and scope of applications.

Of the 200 members, some people will be assigned as roving panel members to help with consistency across the different panels.

The number of College members who are used as assessors for the first round of funding, will depend on the applications received.

Members of the college will still be eligible to apply for funding through the UKRI cross research council responsive mode pilot scheme.
The scheme will have a clear conflicts of interest process in place.

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https://www.ukri.org/about-us/work-for-us/join-an-advisory-committee-panel-or-network/ukri-interdisciplinary-assessment-college/

Closing date: 20 June 2023 16:00

Interdisciplinarity

For the purposes of this scheme, we are using the following definition of interdisciplinary from the REF 2021 Interdisciplinary Advisory Panel final report:

“Interdisciplinary research is understood to achieve outcomes (including new approaches) that could not be achieved within the framework of a single discipline. Interdisciplinary research features significant interaction between two or more disciplines and / or moves beyond established disciplinary foundations in applying or integrating research approaches from other disciplines”

- A project where weather radar networks could be used to monitor wildlife - bringing together methods from atmospheric and radar physics that might typically have a home in EPSRC with problems faced by conservation biologists who are more closely associated with NERC.
- A project where techniques for bioprocessing for industrial applications and engineering fluid dynamics can be applied to develop laboratory based human gut models. These can be used to explore the role of medicines and food on the human microbiome.

Scheme Objectives

This funding is to support interdisciplinary research, including to:

- unlock new research, new approaches or new methods that would not emerge from established disciplinary thinking
- demonstrate reciprocal research benefits through the integration of distinct disciplinary perspectives and spheres of knowledge
- support breakthrough or disruptive ideas and collaborations
- incentivise new and unexpected types of interdisciplinary research not routinely funded through existing UKRI responsive mode schemes
- encourage speculative, early stage and high potential interdisciplinary research proposals, embracing new concepts, techniques, or technologies

Scheme Objectives

We are seeking:

- high quality, and creative ideas that transcend, combine or significantly span research council remits
- new, unexpected and novel projects that have the potential to lead to breakthrough ideas and collaborations
- research that can only be addressed through interdisciplinary collaboration
- projects combining disciplines to create new approaches to a research question, new methodologies or new ways of working
- reciprocity across the disciplines, with the disciplines involved being changed or transformed by working together
- projects that catalyse new interdisciplinary research through co-creation and design
- ideas with no clear ‘lead’ UKRI research council for responsive mode funding including applications that significantly span two or more research council remits

What is out of remit?

We are not seeking:

- applications where there is a clear alternative research council responsive mode scheme including interdisciplinary research that fits within a single research council remit
- projects where the programme of work appears siloed and where interdisciplinary research outcomes are limited, for example, where work packages are discrete and discipline specific rather than integrating disciplinary knowledge
- projects where there is an imbalance of the intellectual content and some disciplines appear ‘bolted’ on

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Outline application process

Who can apply: eligibility

Organisation

Research grants are open to organisations normally eligible for funding from the UKRI Research Councils, including:

- UK higher education institutions
- research council institutes
- UKRI approved independent research organisations
- public sector research establishments

Any organisation that does not meet normal eligibility for funding can still be included as project partners, including businesses.

Individual

- You can apply as an individual or consortium, based in a single institute or across a number of institutions.
- You may be involved in any number of applications provided you have the capacity to meet these commitments.
- You may be the principal investigator on only 1 application to this round of the pilot scheme.

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Who can apply: roles

Principal investigators and co-investigators

- a postgraduate degree, although we expect most applicants to have a PhD or equivalent
- based in the UK and employed by an eligible research organisation. The exceptions to this are if:
  - your project will involve long periods in another country
  - you are located at an eligible international research organisation
  - you will be moving to the UK to take up an already agreed contract at an eligible organisation and will remain resident in the UK for the duration of the proposed project.
- a contract of employment at least at lecturer level or equivalent that either:
  - extends to beyond the duration of the proposed grant (or, if not employed by the submitting organisation, a formal non-salaried arrangement that extends to beyond the duration of the proposed grant),
  - or an assurance from the submitting organisation that, if the proposal is successful, a pre-existing contract of employment (or pre-existing formal commitment to provide support if not employed at the organisation) at lecturer level or equivalent will be extended beyond the end date of the grant.

Who can apply: roles

International co-investigators

This funding opportunity is primarily to support interdisciplinary ideas emerging from the UK research community, but in specific circumstances we will allow international co-investigators.

An international co-investigator is an individual:

- from an established international research organisation that is of comparable standing to a recognized UK research organisation,
- who would otherwise fit the normal eligibility for a co-investigator.
- who assists the principal investigator in the management and leadership of a project.
- who would not be expected (or normally eligible) to take over the lead of the project at any point.

Current co-funding arrangements via international lead agency agreements with individual research councils, including the UKRI Norway agreement, do not apply to this round of this pilot.

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Who can apply: roles

Researcher co-investigator

If you are a researcher who is not eligible as a principal or co-investigator, but who has provided significant intellectual input in design and grant writing, you may included in the grant as a researcher co-investigator.
For Je-S purposes, please include researcher co-investigators as co-investigators.

Project partners

A project partner is defined as a third-party person or organisation (including international or non-academic collaborations) who provides specific contributions to the team and project, in cash or in kind.
We do not require any letters of support from project partners. Project partners can be added to the proposal between the outline and full stage. We are asking you to identify known project partners at the outline stage to manage conflicts of interest in the assessment.

Project subcontractor

A project subcontractor is defined as a third-party individual who is not employed as staff on the grant, who is subcontracted by a participating organisation to deliver a specific piece of work.

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Timings and costs

Duration and start date

Your project can last up to two years. The earliest start date for your project can be 1 July 2024. A period of up to six months from the date of the award letter to the commencement of grant activity is permitted.

Costs can cover:

- directly incurred costs
  - staff payroll
  - travel and subsistence
  - access to facilities and resources
  - other costs, such as consumables (including equipment costing less than £10,000 including VAT)
  - single item equipment above £10,000 including VAT, of which UKRI will fund up to 50% of the full economic cost
- directly allocated costs
  - principal investigator and co-investigator salaries
  - estates costs and shared resources
- indirect costs, such as research organisation administration

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Costs that cannot be included:

- fees or stipends associated with Masters and PhD studentships cannot be included

Costs for international co-investigators

- For international co-investigator costs, UKRI will award funding to the UK lead organisation.
- This organisation will then be responsible for distributing funds to the international research organisation
- Eligible and justified costs will be funded at 100%.
- The total costs claimed for international co-investigators contribution to a project must not exceed 30% of the overall cost of the project, calculated at 100% full economic cost.

Costs can cover:

- directly incurred costs, such as travel and subsistence
- research assistants (e.g. salary costs)
- salary costs, only where these costs are fully justified and it can be demonstrated that the funding of salaries by grants is the standard practice of the international research organisation, and these costs cannot be covered through other sources

Costs that cannot be included:

- estate and indirect costs for international co-investigators.

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Use of Research Council facilities and services

If you need to use a research council facility the following will apply:

- costs will be funded at 80% fEC
- you will need to check you are eligible to access the facility.
- you should discuss your research proposal with the facility or service you want to use before submitting your outline funding application
- you should make sure that you are aware of the access procedures, resource availability and timelines at an early stage in developing your proposal. You may need to apply directly to the facility or service as well as including it in your funding application.
- you will need to provide a technical assessment (which may be in the form of a quote) and confirmation that you can use the facility or service only at the full stage application
- extension to grants will not be given due to unavailability of facilities intrinsic to the project. You should make sure that the facility will be able to provide access or services during the period of your grant. Under UKRI terms and conditions your grant needs to start within six months from the date of the award letter.

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Submitting an outline application

- All investigators require a Je-S account. Project partners do not, but where known should be listed in the Je-S form under Project Partners.

- When applying:
  - select ‘documents’, then ‘new document’.
  - select ‘call search’.
  - to find the opportunity, search for: ‘UKRI cross research council responsive mode scheme round 1 outline stage July 23’

- This will populate:
  - council: MRC
  - document type: Outline Proposal
  - scheme: Standard Outline
  - call name: UKRI cross research council responsive mode scheme round 1 outline stage July 23

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Once you have completed your application, make sure you ‘submit document’.

Submitting an outline application

The outline application requires a:

- Je-S proposal form
- case for support attachment

Je-S proposal form

The Je-S proposal form includes the following fields:

- **project details**: submitting organisation, project title, and proposed start date and duration (mandatory)
- **investigators**: the roles, names, and organisations of the principal investigators and co-investigators) (mandatory)
- **summary**: a summary of the vision and approach to your project and how it fits with the scheme objectives (mandatory, up to 4000 characters)
- **project partners**: list any known or potential project partners at this stage (optional)
- **classifications**: research council relevance and a minimum of 5 keywords (mandatory)

Attachments

- **Case for support** (2 pages) - mandatory
- **Sensitive information letter** - optional
    - If you need to flag any significant issues or provide any sensitive information to UKRI head office staff confidentially (such as conflicts of interest that are not apparent from your application), there is an option to provide this information in an additional attachment (cover letter type). This attachment will not be shared with college members assessing your proposal, so it should not be used to describe your proposed research and should only be used if necessary.

Project costs and justification of resources are not required at the outline stage. No other attachment types (e.g. CVs, letters of support) will be accepted.

Case for support

The case for support should be no more than two sides of A4 and providing evidence that it meets the scheme objectives by addressing the following questions:

1. **What are you hoping to achieve with your proposed work?**

Use this question to describe your project vision, aims and objectives.

2. **How does your project align to the scheme objectives?**

Use this question to demonstrate the interdisciplinary nature of your project.

- As guidance, we would expect to see half of your case for support focused on each question.
- We are not expecting extensive references for outline proposals. Any references included must be within the page limit.
- At a minimum, font size 11 in Arial or other sans serif typeface of equivalent size must be used with a minimum of single line and standard character spacing. Page margins should be no less than 2 cm.

Assessment Criteria

The Interdisciplinary Assessment College will assess proposals based on the following assessment criteria:

1. **What are you hoping to achieve with your proposed work?**
    - does the proposed work have the potential to advance current understanding and generate new knowledge, thinking, concepts, techniques, methods or technologies or discoveries through interdisciplinary collaborations and disruptive ideas?
    - is the proposed work timely given current trends, context and needs?
    - is there a high potential for delivering ground-breaking and transformative outcomes that could only be achieved through interdisciplinary research?

Assessment Criteria

2. How does your project align to the scheme objectives?

Does the proposed work:

- clearly demonstrate that the research involves disciplines from more than 1 research council and explores new types of, and approaches to, interdisciplinary research not routinely funded through existing UKRI responsive mode schemes?
- include a project team with the expertise in the disciplines required for the delivery of the project?
- demonstrate the potential for reciprocal research benefits through the integration of distinct disciplinary perspectives and spheres of knowledge?
- demonstrate how potential challenges will be addressed in conducting interdisciplinary research and outline how these will be overcome?
- show co-creation and design involving all disciplines required for successful delivery of the project?

UKRI Interdisciplinary Responsive Mode Assessment Process Overview

Applications submitted on JeS for outline: Full stage on TFS

Applications Received

UKRI Remit Checks

Proposals are checked for remit: research must be interdisciplinary and include disciplines from >1 council

Fail remit check

Applications that fail remit checks are informed

Application Matching

Proposals are matched to college members

Outline Application Review

Applications sent to 3 college members.
Applications scored based on assessment criteria outlined in call text
Chairs to review applications with divergent scores

Application Sift

Sift based on scores and balancing to ensure a diverse portfolio

College Chairs Sign off

College chairs to agree applications to be invited to full stage (Max 300)

Outline Rejects

Unsuccessful applicants are notified. General rather than individualised feedback is available from the sift panel.

Notification of Outcome

Successful applications are invited to submit full applications on TFS

OUTLINE STAGE

FULL STAGE

Full Proposals developed

Successful applicants are sent full proposal details and prepare applications

Panel Assignment

Each application is assigned to 3 college members.
Themed panels created based on applications submitted

Full Application Review

College members submit scores and comments.

College members agree feedback to send to applicants

PI Response

College member comments sent to PI.
PI response sent back to Panels

Panel Assessment

Panel meetings to agree final scores and agree quality bandings of applications

Panel Tensioning

Roving Panel members input to the tensioning process

College Chair Moderation and Finalisation

Panel Chairs to recommend final applications to be funded n = 36. Top scoring applications are funded.

Randomised allocation process applied to applications meeting agreed quality threshold with stratification applied to ensure diversity of the final portfolio

Full Application Rejects

Unsuccessful applicants are notified.

Feedback

Feedback is sent to applicants

Notification of Success

Candidates are notified of the success of their application.

Announcement

Outcomes are published

Submitting a full stage application

- Successful outline applications will be invited to submit a full application in late November 2023.
- The main sections and core questions that will be asked at full application stage will include:
  - **Vision and approach** (building on the information from the outline stage):
    - what are you hoping to achieve with your proposed work?
    - how does your proposed work fit the scheme objectives?
    - how are you going to deliver your proposed work?
  - **Applicant and team capability to deliver**:
    - why are you the right individual or team to successfully deliver the proposed work?
    - the format for this section will follow the Résumé for Research and Innovation (R4RI).
  - **Resources and cost justification**:
    - what will you need to deliver your proposed work and how much will it cost?
  - **Ethics and Responsible Research and Innovation** (RRI):
    - what are the ethical or RRI implications and issues relating to the proposed work?

Submitting a full stage application

- Submission of the full applications will be through the UKRI Funding Service.
- The Funding Service has a digital question and answer format with sections addressing application questions.
- Since the announcement of the cross research council responsive mode pilot, UKRI has revises project role types to harmonise roles across the councils for the preparation of the first funding opportunities to launch on the Funding Service.
    - For example, “principal investigator” will become “project lead”.
- Applicants invited to submit a full application will be given instructions on how to convert roles submitted at the outline stage in Je-S to the new role types for the Funding Service.
- Further information on changes to project role types can be found here: https://www.ukri.org/news/ukri-revises-project-role-types/

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Evaluation

- This is a pilot scheme and we will be evaluating the process to support UKRI in developing programmes for interdisciplinary research.

- You may be contacted for feedback as part of this evaluation process.

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Important Dates

25 May 23	Call details for outline applications published
8 June 23	Opening date for outline applications in Je-S
13 & 22 June 23	Webinars for call details
20 July 23	**Closing date for outline applications**
late November 23	Invitations to submit full application
8 February 24	Closing date for full applications
late May 24	Outcomes announced
June 24	Launch of round 2

Where to get help

For help and advice on costings and writing your proposal please contact your research office in the first instance.

For specific queries relating to this call:

UKRI Interdisciplinary Responsive Mode Team: Email: ukrirm@ukri.org

Getting help with applying through Je-S, including eligibility enquiries:

Email: jeshelp@je-s.ukri.org

Telephone: 01793 444164

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Questions?

contact: UKRIRM@UKRI.org

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