BRAID: Scoping to embed responsible AI in context webinar
Wed 28 June 2023 14:00 – 15:00

Q&A Session

Could you elaborate on what constitutes a 'discipline' eg is one person who works in field of art education and another in art practice distinct enough?

It is up to the applicant themselves to justify the disciplinary spread, and to explain why you think that is enough for the area that your application is going to focus on. You could have those two disciplines and then you could add something which would broaden that, but in the application, you will just need to explain why that is specific. One of the strengths of the call is that it is quite broad, so each different sector or applied area might be quite different. There is nothing prohibiting that as long as you can justify the different disciplines.

Is there any more information about the demonstrator that these 6-month projects might feed? What's the aim of the demonstrator, its scope, size, shape, etc?

Subject to UKRI funding commitments, we expect to fund a later round of demonstrator projects which we hope would leverage outcomes from this round in order to expand and allow further research interventions. The vision for the future funding opportunity is to promote responsible and ethical innovation, including the capture and dissemination of best practice, and about live projects in real world settings. The ambition is to demonstrate the power of embedding responsible, human-centred approaches at the earliest stage of the AI R&D pipeline. We would imagine them to be much larger scale, and they would involve co-funding and partners. They might have commercial business led or public and third sector challenges, but they would also be brought in with the technical knowledge and expertise in responsible AI. We would imagine them to be larger and we hope the scoping projects will be able to be part of the production and development leading up to those.

Can a researcher be involved in more than one submission?

Yes, there are no rules that restrict this. Within the usual UKRI rules in terms of time and how much researchers can cost of their own time; they could be involved in more than one.

How many co project leads are possible?

There are no restrictions. It would be up to the applicant to justify what is appropriate for what you are suggesting, and how each one of those people brings either experience, connections or the element that's important for the grant.

How will the pillars be approached? Are you looking for a project to address one pillar, or one main pillar and touching on another for example?

The pillars are things that run throughout the whole program. We are flexible as to whether a project addresses one of them or where it goes across them. In the overall BRAID program, through all the funded opportunities and the central work of the program directors, that's where those 3 pillars would come across.

Could we include a co-I from Computer Science, if we can justify their role?

Yes, and we would encourage you to include co-leads and co-is from other disciplines outside of the AHRC remit, and we can see the strength in that. You should justify what would be appropriate for your proposal and the work that has been suggested. We are working across different councils

within UKRI and would expect that some, if not all, projects would work across different remits as well.

Do the different disciplines need to be represented by colleagues in academia, or could we have a multi-disciplinary team with colleagues from both academia and industry?

Yes, it can consist of both academia and industry. This is why we have allowed the non-academic co-leads, to ensure that people who are involved in the project can be accurately represented and rewarded for their work.

Is it anticipated that the Project lead (PI) would come from Arts & Humanities rather than from IT, Business, Engineering etc?

There is nothing in the funding opportunity that restricts what background the project lead should come from. Most of the research needs to be within the arts and humanities, which is around 50%. However, if it is suitable and appropriate for the project lead to be outside of AHRC remit then that is allowed, as long as there is relevant expertise within the leadership team overall.

Can two of the three/four disciplines be within the same department?

Yes. In terms of where the disciplines are, it is about making sure that you've got the relevant expertise for the area and the project that you are suggesting. If you can justify that, and you feel that you have the breadth to be able to do that and to be able to scope that area, that then is for you to put in the justification.

Would the context of physical education in schools be considered? As this theme doesn't align to the Arts or Humanities.

Yes, it is about the research. In the call scope we have given a university as an example of a particular organization type and sector, and we have also given a classroom as an example of a particular setting. There is nothing that would prevent this in the call documentation, so the context of physical education would absolutely be considered as long as you can justify it and include information about why it is relevant. The responsible AI side would certainly fall in the arts and humanities.

Would this 6 month project proposal be expected to incorporate a small scale demonstrator pilot, or would it just be aiming to deliver research to inform a future larger scale intervention?

We have tried to be very realistic and very fair about what we're expecting considering the timeframe. We wouldn't be expecting the small-scale demonstrator project. It's more about the things we have asked for within the call document. For example, the preliminary study, early stage mapping and scoping of the area. The call text has all of the details about exactly what we are expecting. We are very realistic about the 6 month time frame, so we have tried to be clear about that in terms of the expectations.

Would you please explain the type and sector, setting, cases or applications existing responsible AI research tools and practices? It appears you want us to use all of these. But you said we could focus on one of these, please would you clarify?

We would not be expecting you to do all of them. These are just suggestions and areas that you could do. You can select one of them to focus on.

"Well-scoped context for AI" – the examples on the webpage all seem to be outside the arts e.g. a bank – can context in arts and humanities be a context for the AI?

Yes, absolutely.

How important are industry partners here?

We see that in the large-scale demonstrators that we hope to be in the future, partners would play a large role. In this small-scale, and considering the timeframe, it's not central that you have partners. However, there will be support for the funded projects, through the programme, to potentially support the sourcing, finding and networking of partners.

Some recent calls are asking for all investigators to have a similar time contribution - does that follow for this call?

No, we do not have any mandatory time limitations for this call. If you can justify what time is needed from different investigators, then this is fine.

Is responsible AI solely focused on ethics in AI, or does it also encompass explainable AI in general, since it can contribute to trustworthiness, accountability, and transparency?

We would see it as being the broad understanding of responsible AI. It is down to the applicant to make that argument. We certainly would consider trustworthiness, accountability, transparency and all of those different aspects as being within the scope. Within the program, what we're looking for is for the arts and humanities to tell us what's missing to some extent and make a case for that. We do have some examples here, because they are the examples we are familiar with. But we'd hope that people would build upon that and bring something new to the table as well.

Should we aim to have academic, industry, policymaker, and wider public represented as team members?

For this funding opportunity, we would not expect that. This something that we would be looking for in the in the larger-scale call. It could be that you have some of them, or it could be that you could have none of them. We have not restricted that in this form.

Are projects that build on work done in other UKRI projects but take it in new directions within scope (e.g. a project that builds on work done as part of an EPSRC project, but which is focused on further developing humanistic issues rather than the scientific issues that were the EPSRC project's main focus)?

Yes, this would be within scope. You are taking existing knowledge and applying it in new context within the arts and humanities, with a kind of human-centred focus.

How does this call out broadly differ to the one coming up in September?

The call in September is going to be collaborative fellowships, so it is going to be very different in scope. This call is more about scoping out in preparation for a specific area or context of applied AI. The fellowship's work will be more specific. The simplest way of understanding the fellowships is that they are about the individual in some respects rather than about the project collaborative process. The way we are seeing it at the moment, is that there will be 2 strands. One is the traditional fellowship route where somebody would find a collaborative partner from a sector outside of academia to work towards a specific question that responds to an aspect of responsible innovation. The other strand is where we have already identified potential contacts from the sectors, and they set a series of challenges and questions, and then people can individually apply to respond to those

specific challenges. The benefit of that is to allow people, for example, early career individuals to apply to work with an industrial partner. So, if you don't have all the contacts that you need to be able to get a big hitter, then those people would be available to apply for fellowships, too.

If AHRC will cover 80 percent, who will cover the other 20 percent? In my case, I would have to convince University College London to fund the other 20 percent?

This is a standard for all UKRI grants in the way they are costed. It is not really about convincing the university or institution to fund the other 20%, because these costs will be worked out by the research office using the track methodology which tops up the 80%. It is very standard for research councils to only fund 80% of the full economic cost of a proposal, so your first port of call on this query would be your specific research office.

Specific queries on the way UKRI grants are costed can be sent to support@funding-service.ukri.org.

Would a research approach that's less fully within the AHRC discipline list/remit be considered if it's what's required to achieve the scoping outcomes needed to underpin a later arts and humanities focussed demonstrator? E.g. qualitative research methods from the social sciences employed at scoping stage in order to understand and map out a potential space for an art-based intervention and demonstrator stage?

Approaches outside of the arts and humanities will be permitted where the proposal meets the aims of the funding opportunity. For any proposals where other disciplines are intended to be included in the future, these should be engaged with in the creation of the proposal to ensure equitable partnerships from the beginning.