



NERC Innovation Projects 2018: Open call

Announcement of Opportunity

1. Background

This call opens in **Je-S on Wednesday 4 July 2018** and will **close at 4pm (local UK time) on Wednesday 26 September 2018**.

The Innovation Projects call reflects NERC's vision and emphasis on delivering impact. It provides funding to increase and accelerate the uptake and impact of Research Council-funded research outputs by supporting translational and knowledge exchange activity that delivers direct tangible and demonstrable benefits to end-users (such as private, public or third sector organisations and institutions).

NERC is inviting proposals for awards up to a maximum of £155,000 at 100% Full Economic Cost (FEC) and duration of up to 18 months, per project. NERC would pay 80% FEC for UK research organisation costs and 100% of any agreed direct costs to international partners.

Funds will be used to support projects which focus upon generating user applicable outputs from past and/or current Research Council-funded research and which translates them into outcomes that achieve impact within the [NERC remit](#) (in the UK and/or in developing countries). The following type of proposals are invited:

- Proposals to increase and accelerate the uptake and impact of Research Council-funded research outputs to drive innovation in the UK, working with UK end-users for primarily UK-based impacts.
- Proposals to increase and accelerate the uptake and impact of Research Council-funded research outputs to address challenges faced by, and enable innovation in, developing countries; specifically with the primary purpose to promote the economic development and welfare of Low and/or Middle Income Countries (LMIC) on the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) list of Official Development Assistance (ODA) recipients.

2. Scope

This call picks up where research grants leave off, enabling research outputs from Research Council-funded research to be taken further and developed into practical (non-commercial) application, so their potential outcomes (greater efficiency, policy, social, welfare) can be realised. The practical application should benefit third parties and not the Principal Investigator's (PI's) institution.

Since the strength of the relationship between end-users and researchers is often what underpins the likelihood of success of any translational and knowledge-exchange activity, it is essential that end-users are involved in both the development and delivery of proposals.

They should be engaged by the applicant in the co-creation of the project at the earliest possible point. This should help ensure the project's activities are impactful and sustainable.

Please note that this funding call does not support commercialisation of research outcomes. Applicants interested in applying for funding to realise commercial potential from Research Council-funded research are encouraged to seek further information about support available via NERC's Follow-on Fund call.

2.1 Possible activities to be supported in this call

The call is designed to be flexible to encourage applicants to be innovative in their approach to accelerating the uptake of Research Council-funded research by end-users through translational and knowledge exchange activities. The Innovation Projects open call will fund activities that aim to achieve outcomes that deliver impact.

Projects could include for example:

- Launching technology-based or online/web-based, innovative products and services such as tools for decision making; forecasting; design; monitoring; sensors and instrumentation (ranging from deep sea to satellite)
- Direct embedment of new knowledge in user organisations to deliver improvements in process, service provision, etc.
- Direct embedment of new knowledge in user organisations to support better decision-making, inform policy and enable good practice
- NERC also welcomes projects that are aimed at improving economic growth and welfare in developing countries.

Applications to this call should have a primary focus on the translation of research and/or knowledge, and the following are **ineligible**:

- Projects focused solely on delivering training
- Academics acting as consultants for commercial third parties
- Projects which only involve/engage the academic community or between the

research base and the general public

- Projects focused on realising commercial potential (these kind of proposals should explore opportunities through NERC's Innovation Follow on call 2018)
- Research (These kinds of proposals should explore opportunities through [NERC's discovery science \(responsive mode\)](#) funding stream, or other NERC/UKRI research funding opportunities).

2.2 Innovation projects in developing countries

Successful proposals aiming to work with a country on the [DAC list of ODA recipients](#) will form part of NERC's [Global Challenges Research Fund \(GCRF\)](#) allocation. GCRF forms part of the UK's Official Development Assistance ([ODA](#)) commitment, which is monitored by the [OECD](#). ODA-funded activity focuses on outcomes that promote the long-term sustainable growth of countries on the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) list. Funding within this call will therefore be awarded in a manner that fits with ODA guidelines.

- When applying to this part of the call it is important that applicants take time to consider whether or not their proposal is [ODA Compliant](#). It will be important to ensure that it is clear in the proposal how the work is ODA eligible as defined by 'administered with the promotion of the economic development and welfare of developing countries as its main objective'.
- All proposals in this call will be required to include a **mandatory** attachment setting out how they fulfil the criteria for ODA compliance.

Applicants should:

- Seek to investigate a specific problem or seek a specific outcome which will have an impact on a specific developing country (or countries) on the DAC list
- Provide evidence as to why this is a problem for the developing country or countries
- Address the issue identified effectively and efficiently
- Use the strengths of the UK to address the issue, working in collaboration with others as appropriate
- Demonstrate that the underpinning Research Council-funded research on which the proposal is based is of an internationally excellent standard
- Identify appropriate pathways to impact to ensure that the developing country benefits from the research
- The maximum duration of the successful projects is 18 months, and as a condition of funding, successful grants must have started by 01 April 2019.

3. Programme Requirements

3.1 Dates and funding

NERC is inviting applications for awards up to a maximum cost of £155,000 at 100% Full Economic Cost (FEC) per project.

The call opens in Je-S on Wednesday 4 July 2018 and will close at 4pm (local UK time) on Wednesday 26 September 2018. Proposals must be submitted through Je-S.

Successful proposals are expected to start by 1 April 2019.

3.2 Eligibility

This call is open to current or past Research Council grant-holders meeting NERC eligibility rules as set out in the [NERC Research Grants Handbook and the UKRI Eligibility for Funding](#).

Please note that researchers based at organisations on the [UKRI list of eligible Independent Research Organisations \(IRO's\)](#) are eligible to apply to this call. Organisations on the UKRI list of eligible IROs are however not eligible to act as partner organisations for this call.

Applications must build on the outputs of recent or previous NERC-funded research activity, or build on a Research Council-funded research activity which falls within [NERC remit](#). The case for support should outline this previous funding (and how it meets these criteria where it was funded by another Research Council).

The [DAC list](#) of ODA recipients was reviewed in 2017 and Chile, Seychelles and Uruguay all graduated from the list, meaning that they are no longer eligible for ODA funding. If the focus of a proposal benefitting a DAC country which is likely to graduate within the timeframe of the project duration, then the proposal should be developed to show how it both contributes towards the economic development and welfare of that country and also articulates a broader applicability to other DAC countries. Countries under review for proposed graduation are currently Antigua and Barbuda, Palau, and Cook Islands.

3.3 Project Partners and End-users

Successful projects are those that generate sustainable outcomes and impact. In order to achieve this, all proposals to this call **must** involve some end-users as project partners and they should be engaged by the applicant in the co-creation of the project at the earliest possible point, defining the issues to be addressed, the project objectives, and the specification of outputs, ensuring value and utility to the end-users. Providing evidence to this effect is essential. This should help ensure the project's activities are impactful and sustainable. Applicants must provide the names of these project partner organisations (and their representatives) in the 'Project Partner' section of the Je-S form.

Private, public or third-sector organisations or institutions with an interest that

falls within NERC's remit are eligible to be considered as end-users in the context of this call. These include: private industry, public bodies (such as government departments, local government, regulatory authorities, etc.) and non-government organisations or charities. Research Council Institutes, HEIs and IROs are **not** eligible as end-users. Where a project partner is actively involved in the proposed work (for example through contributing staff, time, money, facilities etc.) and has a clear input to the process in order to maximise the quality of the project activity, details of the contribution should be provided in the 'Project Partners' section. The stability of the organisation and if appropriate, the commitment of funds (or in-kind contribution) should also be guaranteed for the duration of the proposed activity in a Letter of Support from the project partner.

Recognising that proposals enabling innovation in developing countries will involve overseas project partners, travel and subsistence resource and exceptionally other incidental costs such as consumables, material costs, etc, to support their involvement can be requested as part of the application. This can be requested at 100% as an exceptional cost (see details in step 3 of the [how to apply guidance](#)). To note that only such resource for overseas project partners in countries on the DAC list of ODA recipients may be requested at 100% direct cost.

Applications should explain how any stakeholder collaboration and knowledge exchange activities strengthen the pathways to impact and likelihood or scale of beneficial outcomes. This should include any specific commitments from institutions or enterprises from the UK or developing countries to adopt or apply outcomes of the research, and where appropriate it is helpful to outline how this enhances local innovation and research capacity at an individual, institutional or whole system level.

For more information on Project Partners, please refer to the [how to apply guidance](#).

3.4 Intellectual property (IP) and collaborative work arrangements

Collaborative agreements must be put in place to enable all parties to better understand their roles on the grant and to clarify the IP rights (IPR) position. NERC does not need to see these but applicants are advised to carefully consider these arrangements and discuss and agree them where necessary with project partners in developing the grant proposal, in order to protect their best interests. University and business collaboration support tools including the Lambert toolkit can be accessed via [the Intellectual Property Office](#).

Applicants are also strongly advised to contact their Technology Transfer Office for advice and support.

NERC will make awards on the understanding that the project partner will commit the resources to the project as described in their Letter of Support. Where such commitment cannot be fulfilled NERC expects that equivalent support and resources will be found in the duration of the project.

3.5 Due diligence

It is important to highlight that the lead Research Organisation is responsible for the conduct and administration of the grant, should the proposal be recommended for funding. It is accountable for the effective use of public funds, and must therefore ensure that all grant monies are subject to proper financial management processes. It is the Research Organisation's responsibility to ensure that expenditure on collaborations in the UK and abroad is subject to robust controls to ensure value for money and propriety and that all costs should be fully vouched and maintained for possible inspection and checks by, or on behalf of NERC.

In particular, for any proposals aiming to work with a country on the DAC list of ODA recipients, it is the Research Organisation's responsibility to undertake due diligence checks to ensure that the funding will be appropriately used by the overseas organisation. Due diligence should therefore be considered from the outset and should be proportionate. It is not expected, for example, that Research Organisations will carry out the same level of due diligence checks for £2k of funding being distributed as they would for £200k; the level of due diligence should be commensurate with the risk. For further guidance, including suggested steps to take at each stage of proposal development, please see the [UKRI due diligence guidance for UKRO's](#).

3.6 Reporting requirements

In addition to standard annual grant reporting procedures, recipients of Innovation Projects call funding may be required to submit a final report on the progress made against the project's objectives and to identify any outcomes or impacts.

NERC reserves the right to approach project partners and named end-users on funded grants to understand their benefits from the grant, and grant-holders will be expected to assist NERC and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) with any other reporting requirements as required, including any additional requirements for those in receipt of ODA funding.

4. Application Process

Proposals must be prepared and submitted through the Joint electronic Submission (Je-S) system.

The call will close on Je-S at 4pm (local UK time) on Wednesday 26 September 2018 and it will not be possible to submit to the call after this time.

Please refer to the [How to Apply](#) section for further details.

5. Assessment of Proposals

5.1 NERC proposal checks

All proposals are subject to initial checks by the NERC office prior to assessment. In order to be considered fundable, proposals must:

- Meet the eligibility criteria for this call
- Address the scope and objectives of the call as presented in this document
- Be based on Research Council-funded research
- Fall within [NERC remit](#)
- Be primarily focused on translational and knowledge exchange activity that delivers direct tangible and demonstrable benefits to end-users
- Be fully ODA compliant (if working in a DAC-listed country).

Proposals that do not meet the criteria above may be rejected by NERC, without reference to the Assessment Panel.

5.2 Assessment Process

Proposals will be assessed at a Panel meeting according to the assessment criteria (point 5.3 below). The Panel will involve both academic and end-user experts. Please note that there is no formal refereeing stage or PI response stage for this call.

The Panel will make funding recommendations to NERC via a ranked list of the proposals, which NERC will use to fund the projects that best meet the aims of the call within the available budget.

Applicants will be given feedback from the Panel summarising the reasons why the proposal was successful/unsuccessful. No further feedback will be available.

5.3 Assessment Criteria

Proposals will be assessed on the following criteria:

Fit to Call

Innovation Project grant applications must satisfy NERC on the following:

- The project is based on a sound understanding of the market or society needs and opportunity clearly indicating how the project will change “business as usual” within the project partner, or be transformative to their industry sector as a whole; and strength of engagement from project partner/s.
- The proposed work programme is robust and designed to optimise the economic and/or societal benefit derived from the grant.
- If applying to work in a DAC listed country, applicants must also demonstrate that their proposal is focused upon outcomes that promote the long-term sustainable growth, economic development and welfare of developing

countries as its main objective.

Excellence

Excellence in this context is based upon the potential impact of the proposed translational and knowledge exchange activities, as appropriate to the country of focus (i.e. UK or specific DAC list country).

This assessment will be based upon consideration of the following factors:

- Outcomes (not just outputs) and benefits
- Strength of end-user involvement
- Mechanisms for delivery of outcomes and potential impacts
- Sustainability of the project once the NERC funding has ended
- Quality of the underpinning research which the project aims to translate (as projects based upon good quality research are more likely to have a high impact).

Applicants should note that translation or knowledge exchange activities with one or multiple end-users are potentially equally valid. However, unless clear justification can be provided for the involvement of only a single end-user (particularly where multiple end-users would benefit), there is a risk that the proposal may be considered as contract/consultancy work rather than translation and knowledge exchange.

5.4 Confidentiality and grant proposals

Innovation Projects proposals are provided to NERC in confidence. NERC will not use the information contained in the proposal (or any further information provided later in support of the proposal) for any purpose except the purpose of reviewing the grant proposal and monitoring it, should it be funded. NERC may disclose the proposal to its employees and panel members and, possibly other funding bodies for the purpose of assisting it in deciding whether or not the proposal should be funded.

Details of funded proposals are made available on the website and possibly other public funded databases. The following information will routinely be made available:

- Name of host Research Organisation;
- Details of applicants (title, forenames, initials, surname, department);
- Project title;
- Technical and non-technical summaries of the research;
- Duration of the project; and
- Funding provided by NERC.
- Whether the project forms part of the UK's ODA commitment and applicable

DAC countries.

Applicants should ensure that where there is commercially confidential or sensitive information contained within the proposal, it is worded in such a way to protect this.

6. Timetable

Call launched:	June 2018
Call opens in Je-S:	Wednesday 4 July 2018
Call closes:	4pm (UK local time) 26 September 2018
Assessment panel:	November 2018
Announcement of Awards:	January 2019
Project start date:	1 April 2019

7. Contacts and Help

For any queries relating to this funding call, please contact:

Tessa Edgecombe
Senior Programme Manager (Innovation)
Telephone: 07788 190531
Email: tjed@nerc.ac.uk

8. How to Apply

Proposals must be submitted using the Research Councils Joint Electronic Submission system (Je-S). The proposal will comprise a Je-S proforma and a number of attachments (see [required attachments](#)). Details of what is required in each document and section of the proposal are given in this guidance.

In order to prepare a Je-S proposal submission, the Principal Investigator must log onto Je-S and create a new proposal. Please note that this person will need to have a verified Je-S account before they will be able to submit the proposal. Full details are available on the [Je-S website](#).

Applicants should also ensure that they leave enough time for their completed proposal to pass through their organisation's Je-S submission route, to ensure that their proposal is processed and **submitted to NERC in advance of the application deadline**. Applicants are advised to discuss their application with their Grants Office at the earliest opportunity.

Applications **must** be received by NERC via the Je-S system before the deadline of 4pm (local UK time) Wednesday 26 September 2018, in order to be considered for funding.

Step 1: Log in with your Je-S account, click on Documents and create a new Document.

For guidance on using the Je-S system, and for any Je-S related queries, please refer to the [Je-S Handbook](#), or contact the Je-S helpdesk:

Email: JeSHelp@rcuk.ac.uk

Phone: +44 (0) 1793 444164

Step 2: Complete Add a Document:

Select Council: **NERC**

Select Document Type: **Standard Proposal**

Select Scheme: **Innovation**

Select Call/Type: **NERC Innovation Projects 2018**

Step 3: Complete the Je-S application:

Applications should be prepared and submitted by the lead research organisation (RO), but should be co-created with input from all investigators and project partners, and should represent the proposed work of the entire consortia.

Applications should largely be completed in the normal way, following the guidance in the [NERC Research Grants Handbook](#) and the [Je-S Handbook](#), and noting the following additional information specific to this call:

- **Project title:** Clearly state as a prefix to your project title either “UK” (if your project focusses on innovation in the UK) or “International” (for proposals aiming to work with a country on the DAC list of ODA recipients).
- **Joint proposals:** Joint proposals are permitted for this call.
- **Other Support:** Please complete this section in the normal way, also ensuring that you include details of the NERC-funded or Research Council-funded research activity which this application builds on, and any relevant [NERC Pathfinder](#) award or other similar awards from other Research Councils.
- **Project Partners:** All projects should have project partners from stakeholder organisations (i.e. business, policy or civil society). Please complete this section for each project partner involved in the project providing details of the contributions and support (both cash and in-kind) which the partner will make to the project. Cash and in-kind contributions from the project partner should be carefully costed to ensure there is no double counting. Access to data already freely available in the public domain cannot be counted as in-kind support and care should be taken so as not to over-value in-kind contributions.

As an exception to the standard NERC guidance, for this particular call overseas project partners for proposals aiming to work with a country on the DAC list of ODA recipients may request in the proposal their overseas project partner’s travel and subsistence costs, and exceptionally other incidental

costs such as consumables, material costs, etc (see resources note below). These costs should not represent the majority of the resources requested, and may not include any staff costs or overheads.

- **Resources:** A maximum project cost of £155,000 can be requested per project, inclusive of any resources requested to support the involvement of the overseas project partner(s). Costs should largely be requested at 80% fEC, with the following exception:

Travel and subsistence costs, and exceptionally other incidental costs (such as consumables, material costs, etc) to be incurred by any overseas project partners in countries on the DAC list of ODA recipients may, if required, be requested at 100% cost. These costs should be included within the appropriate section of the resources section, with the “Exception” box ticked against these items.

- **Beneficiary Countries:** for proposals aiming to work with a country on the DAC list of ODA recipients, please ensure that you select the relevant country(ies) from the DAC list of ODA recipients which your project proposes to directly work with.

Step 4: Complete and upload attachments:

As well as the completed Je-S proforma, a number of attachments, containing information to support your proposal and further demonstrate how the proposal meets the call assessment criteria, must also be uploaded and submitted with your proposal.

All attachments must comply with the NERC standard formatting requirements as listed in the [NERC Research Grants Handbook](#):

- With the exception of Letters of Support and services/facilities/equipment quotes, all attachments submitted through the Je-S system must be completed in single-spaced typescript of minimum font size 11 point (Arial or other sans serif typeface of equivalent size to Arial 11), with margins of at least 2cm. Please note that Arial narrow, Calibri and Times New Roman are not allowable font types and any proposal which has used either of these font types within their submission will be rejected.
- References and footnotes should also be at least 11 point font and should be in the same font type as the rest of the document.
- Headers and footers should not be used for references or information relating to the scientific case.
- Embedded diagrams or pictures or numerical formulae may contain text that is smaller than 11 point but applicants should ensure that the font is legible. Text in tables and figure labels not within embedded diagrams should be at least 11 point.
- If applicants are not able to use Arial font and are unsure whether the font type they plan to use will meet NERC guidelines then they should contact the NERC Grants Team at researchgrants@nerc.ac.uk before submitting their proposal for confirmation of whether or not the font type they plan to use is acceptable.

- The correct attachment type should be used in Je-S as that determines whether attachments are visible to reviewers and/or moderating panel members.
- Letters of support must be on headed paper and signed/dated.
- Attachments must not exceed the page limits specified for the attachment type and scheme (see below), regardless of the number of component Research Organisations. They should be converted to PDF and checked prior to attaching to the proposal in Je-S, as PDF conversion of documents with any non-standard fonts (scientific notation, diagrams etc.) can result in changes, such as missing data or increased document length. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that font size and margins remain the same when documents are converted to a pdf.

The following attachments: case for support, CV, justification of resources, project partner letter of support and Official Development Assistance (ODA) statement (for proposals aiming to work with a country on the DAC list of ODA recipients), must be uploaded to your application before submission to NERC:

1. **Case for support** (up to 10 sides of A4 total) – Please provide a case for support outlining the project and its desired outcomes, including previous track record (up to 2 sides of A4) and a description of the proposed work (up to 8 sides of A4).

As well as following the standard NERC guidance, applicants are also encouraged to consider the following call-specific points when putting together their case for support:

Case for Support Section 1 (Previous track record):

- Recent translation/KE activity, research and funding in the science area covered by the proposal.
- Information about previous work which has achieved significant academic or socio-economic impact, contributed to a country's competitiveness or improved quality of life and/or public good.
- Existing relationship with the proposed project partners.

Case for Support Section 2 (Description of the proposed work):

- Specific reference to the NERC-funded or Research Council-funded research activity which this application builds on.
 - Why the work is needed and how beneficiaries and end-users will benefit from the outcomes of the work.
 - Clear definition (through a workplan/gantt chart) of which elements of the proposed work programme will be conducted by the project partners, project teams, etc, and how end-users/stakeholders will be engaged.
2. **CV** (up to 2 sides A4 per CV) – Please provide a CV for each applicant and named research staff involved in the project.
 3. **Justification of Resources** (Up to 2 sides of A4) - A full justification of the resources requested within the proposal, including, for proposals aiming to work with a country on the DAC list of ODA recipients, any resources

requested for the overseas partners. The Justification of Resources should explain how the resources requested (staff time, travel and subsistence costs, and accommodation) are appropriate for the proposal and represent value for money, in reference to the project objectives. It should not be simply a list of the resources required, as this is already given in the Je-S form. Please note that salary costs in themselves do not need to be justified, rather the amount of time to be devoted to the project by the applicant(s), and whether this is essential, sufficient and fully justified for the work proposed.

- 4. Project Partner Letter of Support** (up to 2 sides of A4 per partner) – Please provide a letter of support from each project partner. These should be uploaded as attachment type ‘Project Partner Letter of Support’ within the Project Partner section in JeS. Letters of support should, where possible, be on headed paper, and provide contact details of, and be signed by, the project partner representative. Letters of Support establish the strength of the relationship between the applicant(s) and the project partner and will be taken into account in the assessment process.

You should encourage your partners to include the following in their letters of support:

- The partner organisation’s support of the proposed project.
 - How the proposed activity will benefit the partner and their organisation (eg: organisational drivers for involvement in the proposal, project partner objectives that the proposed activity will help achieve, likely outcomes/ impacts of the activity, etc.).
 - The nature of the collaboration, how the project partner will be involved in the work and provide added value to the project.
 - Contributions (both cash and in-kind support) which the project partner will make and an assurance that the project partner is committed to the project for its duration and that those contributions will be made.
 - A statement of the likely impacts of the proposed project within and beyond the partner organisation, including a plan of how the outputs will be followed up, and the potential for follow-on activities.
- 5. ODA Statement** (up to 1 side of A4) – To be submitted as attachment type “Non-UK component”. ODA funding is reported, scrutinised and published by the OECD via DFID. As a requirement of funding, proposals aiming to work with a country on the DAC list of ODA recipients are required to demonstrate that their project is ODA-compliant, and has the primary purpose to promote the economic development and welfare of developing countries on the DAC list, by providing an ODA compliance statement as part of their proposal.

You should consider using the questions below when preparing this statement:

- Which country/countries on the DAC list will directly benefit from this proposal and are these countries likely to continue to be ODA eligible for the duration of the research?
- How is your proposal directly and primarily relevant to the development challenges of these countries?

- How do you expect that the outcome of your proposed activities will promote the economic development and welfare of a country or countries on the DAC list?

There are various guidance documents which have been published to assist with ensuring that proposals submitted under the Research Councils ODA schemes are ODA compliant. Applicants are encouraged to read the available [GCRF ODA Guidance](#) and the [OECD ODA Guidance](#) before writing their ODA compliance statement.

Step 5: Submit application to NERC

Applicants must ensure that their proposal is received by NERC by 4pm (UK local time) on Wednesday 26 September 2018. The Je-S system will close at 4pm and proposals to this call will not submit to NERC after that time.