

NERC Regional Impact from Science of the Environment (RISE) Programme

Frequently Asked Questions Updated August 11 2017

1. How does RISE differ from the Environmental Science Impact Programme?

The objectives, assessment criteria, application process and funding are similar but proposals should take a flexible and creative approach to delivering against the purpose outlined in the of the Industrial Strategy Green Paper. As was the case with ESIP, programmes should be designed to support the strategic ambitions of the research organisation(s) involved while understanding and gaining benefit from the opportunities offered by their region. The name of the funding call has been changed to make it clear that this programme is targeted at developing innovation based on the strengths of a region. RISE replaces ESIP.

2. How do we define a region?

RISE provides an opportunity for regionally based consortia, led by academic organisations, to come together to propose large scale innovation programmes that create impact and bring economic benefit to that region. Built on local science strengths and aligned with the strengths of local businesses, policy bodies and other stakeholders, the region may be defined by the opportunity. It need not be constrained for example by political boundaries and may be specific instead to a geographic area e.g. a stretch of coastline, river catchment(s) a city region or an area defined by a particular land use. It could also be developed as a result of a critical mass of local strength in research and innovation that has direct relevance to a defined sector or challenge which may have a more distant impact (e.g. disaster risk reduction, financial services) but in developing the services, tools and technologies provides local economic gain.

Additional notes;

- The regions are not defined by Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) areas, although we do recognise LEPs and similar regional innovation bodies as key players in helping to identify the needs and opportunities in the region.
- Existing descriptors including well established groups of regional universities or other relationships with commonly used tags (e.g. 'Midlands Engine') may provide platforms for partnership but have no particular weight in defining a region.
- It is possible for more than one region to be included in a proposal where it can be clearly demonstrated that this enables impact to be unlocked and/or multiple benefits to be derived.
- This initiative is UK focussed in the first instance. However, recognising the point above and the global nature of supply chains, overseas non-academic partners can also be part of a proposal, or incorporated into programmes later on, as the relevance to their needs becomes clear.

We recognise the significant opportunity that collaborations between research organisations, businesses, policy makers and other non-academic organisations in their region offer, combining research excellence with regional strengths to deliver substantial economic gains. Transformative impact will be achieved through the translation of NERC science into actions or policies that improve performance, resilience and sustainability, and support growth.

The remainder of NERC's science and innovation funding will continue to be allocated on a national basis to the strongest proposals on the basis of excellence. The ARISE awards are a way to build potential global competitive advantage by focusing on the potential strengths of a region by working with business, LEPs, policymakers and civil society organisations.

3. Is any region in the UK eligible to be considered?

Yes. Awards will be made on merit. Regions that were funded in the first round of ESIP are also eligible to apply into this round of RISE.

4. Are those who were unsuccessful in the first round of ESIP allowed to reapply in this round of RISE?

Yes feedback was provided to enable applicants to decide whether to further develop their proposal and resubmit. Applicants should reference the Industrial Strategy Green Paper in their revised proposal. The objectives of ESIP Round 1 and the Industrial Strategy are closely aligned.

5. Is this a block grant to be administered in various ways by the research organisation?

No it should not be thought of as a block grant but rather as an integrated programme of related activities towards a common set of objectives. A measure of impact will be that after five years, economic activity in the region will be enhanced as a direct result of the work that has been undertaken on the programme. We would expect the programme to be centrally administered to ensure this coherence.

6. Can broader environmental issues such as climate change, natural hazards or volcanic ash be the focus of an RISE award?

The institutions should be able to demonstrate that by working together on the issues they bring benefit to the region. So for example there may be strength both in businesses and science on disaster risk tools and technologies. Building on this creates new jobs in the sector which attract inward investment or result in selling the 'products' somewhere else but bringing benefit to the local economy, and this is fine. The issues themselves don't need to be local.

Do we consider using environmental science to tackle issues that affect the supply chain for a key business(s) in the region to be eligible?

Yes.

7. Is the number of applications from any particular institution limited?

There is no limit. However, bearing in mind we only expect to make 2 awards, applicants should ensure that they justify clearly their role in the consortium, either as lead PI or Co-I and have the confidence that they will be able to provide sufficient resource to any proposal in which they participate. We received 27 outline proposals in round 1. We invited 7 to go through to the full proposal stage.

8. Can translational research be included in the proposal? (new)

The intention of this funding is that no new research should be generated. However there may be circumstances where research needs to be extended to meet the needs of the user. The questions to ask are:

- Is this just generating more of or tweaking what we already have?
- Is it purely targeted at the needs of the user?

If the answer to both is positive then you can undertake the work providing that the total amount undertaken does not skew the proposal so that it no longer appears to be mostly about innovation/knowledge exchange.

9. Is it just the lead organisation that submits a supporting letter from a senior member of staff to support the bid?

Yes.

10. Can we include recurrent items in our proposal such as water/air quality sensors? (new)

Yes, providing that each item costs less than £10k and that the total investment in these is less than 10% of the cost of the proposal.

11. Can we develop a spin out as part of the proposal? (new)

Yes commercial activities can be included as part of the proposal.

12. Will the other innovation calls continue?

Yes calls for smaller sums, such as innovation projects and Knowledge Exchange Fellows will continue.

13. Is it possible to sub-contract some of the work to partners so that they are paid?

A small percentage of the funding can be used in this way if the expertise is not available within the research organisation and is not part of the partners' contributions in kind. Please note that the term partners means non-academic organisations and in

completing the JeS form you should list the non-academic partners when it asks for partners, not other universities.