

Biodiversity and Ecosystem Service Sustainability (BESS)

Announcement of Opportunity: Knowledge Exchange Grants

AO published: 30th October 2013; Call open on JeS: 5th December 2013

Proposal deadline: 14th January 2014, 16:00 GMT

Accompanying documents to be read in conjunction with this announcement:

- BESS Programme Science and Implementation Plans
<http://www.nerc.ac.uk/research/funded/programmes/bess/>
- Ecosystem Markets Task Force Final report April 2013 <http://www.defra.gov.uk/ecosystem-markets/files/Ecosystem-Markets-Task-Force-Final-Report-.pdf>

Summary

The Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) is inviting proposals for Knowledge Exchange Grants within its Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Sustainability (BESS) programme. The aim of this targeted call is to stimulate and support innovation and collaboration between research organisations and the business sector in relation to managing ecosystem services and the benefits they provide to society.

The BESS programme is a 6-year (2011-2017), £13 million research programme which is addressing the NERC strategic challenges regarding biodiversity research and the UK Government's strategic priorities with respect to biodiversity, ecosystems and their services.

This call is for Knowledge Exchange Grant proposals of a maximum 18 months duration, with costs between £30,000 and £100,000 (cost to NERC- i.e. 80% FEC). NERC has £300,000 allocated for this call.

Activities proposed should contribute to the goals of the BESS programme. As a demonstration of their commitment and genuine engagement with the project, NERC encourages contributions from the business partner to the costs or facilities required by the project. The degree of engagement of the business partner will be one of the evaluation criteria for assessing proposals.

Requirements

NERC is looking to support Knowledge Exchange Projects costing between £30,000 and £100,000 that will help business and industry address challenges associated with managing ecosystems to promote the three objectives of economic growth, social wellbeing and resilient ecosystems. The projects may include (but need not be limited to):

- technology development (e.g. smart phone applications, web-based interactive resources or toolkits);
- the promotion of industry standards (e.g.; the development and promotion of frameworks to include biodiversity assessments as standard measures alongside, for example, carbon emissions);
- the translation of environmental data into solutions for business;
- the development of tools to enhance decision-making; and
- the exchange of people between a research organisation and business or industry, in order to share experiences and develop collaborations.

NERC funding will be directed preferentially towards proposals addressing **the role of biodiversity and ecosystem services** in one or more of the following areas:

- Land use planning, including biodiversity offsetting
- Connecting consumers with ecosystem services
- Sustainable intensification
- Energy production, manufacturing and food supply chains
- Housing and infrastructure development
- Corporate accounting
- Resilience to extreme events

Applicants must ensure their proposed work is congruent with, or complementary to, the themes within the BESS programme. Proposals building on these themes in relation to other NERC biodiversity-related programmes such as Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation (ESPA), Human-modified Tropical Forests, Macronutrient Cycles, Marine Ecosystems, and Valuing Nature are also encouraged.

Data management

Where a project will generate new data, any such data should be collected and archived in accordance with the BESS Data Management Strategy (http://www.nerc-bess.net/documents/BESS_Data_Strategy_140912.pdf). Each project will be expected to work with the BESS Directorate and the Environmental Information Data Centre (EIDC) to ensure data management is carried out in accordance with (BESS/NERC) best practice.

Application process

Full proposals must be submitted using the Research Councils Joint Electronic Submission system (JeS). Select Council: **NERC > Document Type: Standard Proposal > Scheme: Directed > Call: BESS Knowledge Exchange**

Applicants must ensure that their proposal is received by NERC by 4pm on the closing date of 14th January. Applicants should leave enough time for their proposal to pass through their organisation's Je-S submission route before the closing date. Any proposal received after the closing date, or which is incomplete, or does not meet the eligibility criteria of this call, will not be considered.

Proposal components:

1. JeS Proforma.

The JeS proforma includes a summary of the proposed project, project partner information and the finances requested.

As well as information required on the Call Form, please upload the following required attachments:

2. Case for Support (up to 8 sides of A4) made up of:

- Previous Track Record (up to 2 sides of A4) which should include:
 - a summary of recent Knowledge Exchange activity and/or research in the science are covered by the proposal;
 - specific expertise available at the host organisation(s) for the proposed work; and
 - Information about previous work that has contributed to the UK's competitiveness or to improving the quality of life and public good.
- A description of the proposed work (up to 5 sides of A4) which should include:
 - How the proposal addresses the aims of the call and complements the themes and objectives of the BESS programme;
 - Specific objectives for the project and rationale for why the work is needed, how the end-user (and therefore the economy or public good) will benefit for the work, and how the applicant will benefit from the interactions with end users;
 - Methodology and activities, including work programme with milestones and Gantt chart (activities of project partners should also be included);
 - Outputs – what are the anticipated outputs from the project; and
 - Outcomes and Impact – what are the anticipated outcomes and impacts, including potential benefits to the end-user, researcher and the UK.
- Outline Data Management Plan (up to 1 side of A4). Please provide details if you expect to be generating new data as part of your project. If you are not, please write 'not applicable' on the attached document.

3. Justification of Resources (up to 2 sides of A4).

4. CVs for named staff (up to 2 sides of A4 each).

5. Price quotations/documentary evidence of estimated cost for equipment costing more than £25,000. NERC will fund 50% of capital costs¹.

6. Letters of Support from formal project partner(s) are compulsory, and must be signed and dated and be on headed paper (providing contact details of the end-user

¹ See [Grants Handbook](#) section E for guidance regarding requests for equipment.

organisation/representative) and uploaded under the Project Partner section of the JeS form. Letters must also contain the following information²:

- A benefit statement from the project partners describing how the proposed activity will be of benefit;
- The nature of the collaboration, how the project partners will be involved in the work and provide added value; and
- What contributions (for example cash or in-kind support etc.) the project partner will make, and an assurance that the project partner is committed to the project for its duration and that those contribution will be made.

Letters from other collaborating parties are also welcome, and should be uploaded as a 'Letter of Support'.

Information on NERC eligibility and standard application guidance can be found in the NERC Grants Handbook (<http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/application/howtoapply/forms/grantshandbook.pdf>).

Assessment of Proposals

Assessment process

Proposals will be evaluated by an expert panel with membership drawn from the business and academic sectors. There are no formal refereeing or PI response stages. The panel will provide a ranked recommendation list to the BESS Programme Executive Board (PEB), which will make the final funding decision.

Assessment Criteria

Proposals will be assessed against the following criteria:

1. **Potential Impact**³ (primary criteria): taking into account the following points:
 - a. tangible outcomes and benefits for business and other end users;
 - b. involvement of end users – including demonstration of user commitment and buy-in; benefits to end user (note that project partner letters of support will be used to help evaluate this);
 - c. long-term sustainability beyond NERC funding – for example of stewardship of databases, models or data management tools, uptake by users; and
 - d. Delivery mechanisms – including the appropriateness of the workplan; range and scope of methods to engage end-users; appropriate management.

Further information on impact assessment criteria can be found on <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/application/howtoapply/pathwaystoimpact/pathwaystoimpact-policy.pdf>

² For further information on project partner requirements see <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/available/schemes/innovation-projects/ip-guidance.pdf>

³ Further information on impact assessment criteria can be found on <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/application/howtoapply/pathwaystoimpact/pathwaystoimpact-policy.pdf>

2. **Fit to scheme** (primary criteria): How closely a proposal fits NERC remit, the aims of the BESS programme and the requirement of the call (see announcement of opportunity).
3. **Excellence** (secondary criteria) – proposals funded under the BESS programme must meet a threshold level of excellence. Although this call is primarily concerning impact activities it is acknowledged that high impact is more likely to come from excellent science, and thus will be taken into account during assessment. However, as a secondary criteria proposals with a lower level of science quality, but high potential impact, may be recommended for funding over those with higher science quality but lower impact.

Resources requested on the proposal will be scrutinised by the panel along with their justification. The panel may make recommendations for amendments to requested costs if they are not fully justified.

Timetable

Call published – 30th October 2013

Call open on JeS – 5th December 2013

Proposal deadline – 16:00 GMT, 14th January 2014

Assessment panel – w/c 24th February 2014*

Applicant notification – March 2014

Successful projects actual start date can be no later than September 2014

Contacts

For queries about the eligibility of the proposed KE activities, and general queries about the call please contact:

Andrew Richardson ajri@nerc.ac.uk 01793 411526 or

Lynne Porter lyn@nerc.ac.uk 01793 411791.

For queries about fit to BESS objectives, please contact the BESS directorate:

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* provisional date, may be subject to change.