

Future Research Leaders Call Specification 2012

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Summary

The ESRC’s strategy is to invest in the most talented people by offering diverse and flexible training to outstanding individuals at all stages of their careers. As a priority we aim to expand and integrate transferable skills development into postgraduate training and other career-development schemes. The Future Research Leaders Scheme forms a key part of this strategy.

The scheme is open to high-quality candidates from anywhere in the world who have a maximum of four years’ postdoctoral experience and the support of an eligible UK research organisation. The proposed host research organisation will be required to demonstrate a high level of commitment to the applicant’s career development. The scheme aims to:

- Enable outstanding early-career social scientists, in partnership with their host organisation, to acquire the skills set to become the future world leaders in their field.
- Fund excellent social science research projects.

We will run a two-stage peer-review process. In the first stage outline proposals were to be submitted by 15 September 2011. In January shortlisted applicants will be invited to submit full proposals by **16.00 on 22 February 2012**. Final decisions will be made in June 2012 with grants commencing in October 2012.

Outline proposals will be assessed against the following criteria:

- originality, potential contribution to knowledge, ie research excellence
- research design and methods
- outputs, dissemination and impact
- level of research organisation support.

Grants will be for a maximum of three years with an overall limit of £215,000 at 100 per cent full Economic Cost (fEC). We aim to fund around 70 grants through this call.

Scope of the call

Future Research Leader grants will provide up to three years' funding with an overall limit of £215,000 (100 per cent fEC) per grant (cost to ESRC of £172,000 at 80 per cent fEC). We will only fund up to 60 per cent of the Future Research Leader grant holder's time; the host research organisation must support the remainder of the grant holder's normal salary throughout the period of the grant. Successful proposals will include:

- A well-defined, high-quality research project with strong plans for maximising potential impact.
- A programme of research skills development in collaboration with the grant holder's host organisation, including the appointment of a named research mentor of high international research standing.
- A programme of activities to develop skills in knowledge exchange, and a clear strategy to build relationships and networks with potential beneficiaries and users of the grant holder's research, potentially including the business community and/or the public sector and/or the third sector.

Inter/multidisciplinary working is strongly encouraged both within and beyond the social sciences, as long as at least 50 per cent of the proposed programme of research is within ESRC remit. Applicants may request costs associated with networking across disciplines, including one or more dedicated periods of time spent in another research environment, as applicable. Applicants are welcome to nominate a second mentor from another disciplinary background, if appropriate.

Please note that we no longer operate a joint Fellowships scheme with the Medical Research Council (MRC). However, proposals which include elements of medical research are welcome through this call, and may be considered for potential co-funding by MRC on a case by case basis.

Grant holders will be expected to attend a yearly workshop/conference for Future Research Leaders.

Research themes

In this year's call we particularly encourage research proposals involving secondary analysis of existing datasets and the application of innovative research methods. However, proposals are welcome in any topic which falls within ESRC's remit.

Mobility: UK and international

We are particularly keen to support Future Research Leaders to develop links with leading researchers in their field both in the UK and internationally. We encourage research visits to one or more internationally leading research organisations - either in the UK or abroad - for the purposes of research collaboration, training, and/or access to data or other resources not available at the applicant's home organisation. Where a long-term overseas visit is planned, applicants are required to name a second mentor at the overseas host organisation. However, for the majority of the grant the grant holder should be at their home UK research organisation.

Whilst we seek to enable mobility through this activity, we also recognise that long-term mobility in particular may be difficult or impossible for researchers with disabilities or caring responsibilities. Candidates will therefore not be disadvantaged for not including a mobility element. Applicants for whom mobility is restricted may wish to consider alternative mechanisms for enhancing collaboration through their grant, such as hosting short visits from collaborators, or utilising information technology to develop and sustain collaborations.

Any mobility elements in the proposal must be fully justified in the case for support.

Knowledge exchange

Through this scheme we aim to produce a new national cohort of ESRC researchers who will act as advocates for social science research, and who will carry out and actively promote the importance of knowledge exchange with the business community, the public sector, the third sector and the wider community.

Applicants are required to consider carefully how best to build links and contacts with the potential beneficiaries and users of their research, and to work towards co-production of knowledge with research users where appropriate. We recognise that some research topics are more theoretical than others; but all social science research ultimately engages with the real world and it is vital that the economic and societal impact of all research funded by ESRC is maximised.

Public engagement activities are also encouraged, which bring researchers and the public together. Activities could range from engaging people with social science concepts through staging public debates, to engaging key stakeholders in shaping research priorities and direction.

Contributions of the host research organisation

The choice of host research organisation must be fully justified by the applicant in the case for support. Above and beyond the standard support offered by a research organisation to an ESRC grant holder, we expect the following two aspects to be carefully considered by the proposed host organisation in supporting a Future Research Leader application.

Provision of the mentor

All applicants are required to have a named mentor based at the research organisation where the grant is to be held. The mentor proposed should be of high academic standing and have a strong interest in the applicant's field of research, but should not normally be the applicant's former PhD supervisor. The mentor should also be able to offer the applicant advice and assistance in building suitable links with leading researchers in their field, as well as potential beneficiaries and users of the applicant's research.

The role of the mentor is to support the work of the grant holder, both scientific and non-scientific, but the mentor will not be directly involved in running the project. It is expected that regular contact will be maintained between the grant holder and mentor through the course of the project and that the mentor will help the grant holder to review progress against agreed milestones, including the implementation of the training and development programme.

Provision of career development support

The costs of a dedicated programme of research and broader skills development may be included in the application. However, we are seeking to support grant holders in partnership with their host research organisations. We expect the host organisation to work closely with the applicant to develop their training and development programme and to see a clear commitment from the host organisation to supporting the applicant's career development.

ESRC will support a maximum of 60 per cent of the Future Research Leader grant holder's time; the host research organisation must support the remainder of the applicant's normal salary throughout the period of the grant. The remainder of the grant holder's time should be spent on activities supporting - or at least not incompatible with - their Future Research Leaders responsibilities.

The application requires a letter by the Pro-Vice Chancellor of Research or equivalent to detail this support at both the outline and full proposal stages. We expect to see only a limited number of outline applications from a single research organisation; only bids from outstanding individuals, with the potential in Research Excellence Framework - www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/ terms to become the 4* researchers of the future, should be submitted through this call. Our expectation is that Future Research Leader grant holders should move into permanent academic positions at the end of the grant, if they are not already in such a post.

Eligibility

This call is open to high-quality candidates from anywhere in the world to further their research careers. However, all potential applicants must have the strong support of an eligible research organisation in the UK to host them if they are successful. We expect research organisations to consider very carefully whether to support any individual's application before a proposal is submitted to ESRC through this call.

Applicants must meet the following eligibility criteria on the call closing date 15 September 2011

- Applicants should have a maximum of four years' academic research experience following the completion of their PhD, or be of equivalent professional standing. The four-year period is measured from the **submission date of the PhD thesis**. Career breaks will be excluded from the four-year period.
- Applicants may not be current or former principal investigators on ESRC or other Research Council grants, except ESRC Postdoctoral Fellowships and Research Councils UK Fellows.

The call is open to applicants with or without a permanent academic post, subject to the above restrictions.

Expected outcomes

At the end of the grant, we expect Future Research Leaders to have completed both a high-quality research project and a structured programme of career development activities, including skills development in research management, knowledge exchange and how to maximise the potential impact of their research. Grant holders should have begun to build up an extended network of academic contacts and potential beneficiaries and users of their research. They should be in a very strong position to advance a career at the forefront of the social sciences in the UK and internationally. Our expectation is that Future Research Leader grant holders should move into permanent academic positions or other leadership roles, normally in the UK, at the end of the grant, if they are not already in such a post.

Budgetary information

Grants will be for a maximum of three years with an overall limit of £215,000 (100 per cent fEC) per grant (cost to ESRC of £172,000 at 80 per cent fEC). We will only fund up to 60 per cent of the Future Research Leader grant holder's time; the host research organisation must support the remainder of the grant holder's normal salary throughout the period of the grant. All costs included in the proposal must be fully justified. We aim to fund approximately 70 Future Research Leaders.

Applicants may request funding for the following, subject to the standard fEC regulations, which apply to all cost categories:

- investigator time (maximum 60 per cent)
- research assistant support
- travel, fieldwork, data collection, etc
- technical and clerical support
- investigator skills development and training
- research assistant development and training (specific to the research project)
- knowledge exchange activities, such as seminars, workshops and work placements - www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/tools-and-resources/impact-toolkit/what-how-and-why/knowledge-exchange/index.aspx
- UK and international networking and collaborations
- public engagement activities
- cross-disciplinary networking and discipline-hopping activities
- dissemination activities for previous research, for example PhD results.

The applicant's proposed starting salary should be agreed by the applicant with the host research organisation in accordance with the organisation's grade structure for academic researchers. The level of the appointment should be fully justified in the proposal.

The mentoring time should be between one and three hours per week. The costs of providing the mentor's time should be covered by the organisation, reflecting the fact that these grants will be funded by ESRC in partnership with the host organisation, and may **not** be claimed as part of the proposal to ESRC.

No linked studentships may be supported under Future Research Leader grants.

Application process

There will be a two-stage peer-review process. In the first stage outline proposals should have been submitted by 15 September 2011. In January shortlisted applicants will be invited to submit full proposals by **16.00 on 22 February 2012**.

Proposals must be costed using the full Economic Costing (fEC) model. Applicants invited to submit a full proposal should submit their proposal using the Research Councils' Joint electronic Submission (Je-S) System (<https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/>) by **16.00 on 22 February 2012**. When creating a new proposal, the applicant should select 'Call Search', and when prompted type in the call title 'Future Research Leaders Full'. Detailed guidance on the information required as part of the application is provided in the Je-S Guidance Notes for Applicants: www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/funding-opportunities/15938/future-research-leaders.aspx

Details of which Research Organisations have registered to use Je-S are available from www.so.stfc.ac.uk/jes/jes1/jes1system.asp#RegistrationOrganisations. The call is open to all Research Organisations approved by the ESRC to hold **responsive mode grants**. Please see www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/Pages/Eligibilityforrcs.aspx for more information.

Peer review process

Outline proposals will be reviewed by a pool of external assessors. Shortlisted applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal.

Full proposals will be reviewed by at least three external peer reviewers. Proposals will then be assessed, scored and prioritised for funding in competition with other Future Research Leader proposals by a specially convened panel. Further details of panel membership will be published in due course.

Proposal assessment criteria

Proposals will be assessed against the following criteria:

- Originality, potential contribution to knowledge, ie research excellence, including
 - The academic potential of the applicant
- Research design and methods, including

- Appropriateness of collaborations, including but not limited to multi-disciplinary/international links, etc
- Outputs, dissemination and impact, including
 - Quality of the plans to develop knowledge exchange skills and the proposed activities to maximise the impact of the research
- Organisational support, including
 - Quality of the proposed skills development plan, and the appropriateness of the proposed mentor(s)
 - Commitment of the host research organisation to the applicant's career development.

Timetable

The timetable for the commissioning process is:

Publication of the call specification	28 June 2011
Closing date for outline proposals	15 September 2011
Full proposals invited	January 2012
Deadline for full proposals	22 February 2012
Final funding decisions	June 2012
Grants to start	October 2012

Contacts

If you have any questions or would like further information about the scheme contact:

- Tracy Davies, Future Research Leaders competition owner
 Email: futureresearchleaders@esrc.ac.uk
 Telephone: 01793 413063

Enquiries relating to the Je-S application procedure should be addressed to the Je-S helpdesk at:

- Email: jeshelp@rcuk.ac.uk
 Telephone: 01793 444164