

# ESRC Delivery Plan, 2011-15



# CSR Outcome



# Funding

- ▶ Budget 11-12 approx. £203m
- ▶ 12% cut in real terms to Programme budget
- ▶ 23% cut in real terms to Administration budget
- ▶ Important to continue to invest in the future:
  - Long-term infrastructure
  - Next generation of research leaders
  - Areas of major national importance

# Impact

- ▶ ESRC does excellent research that has impact (broadly defined)
  
- ▶ Creating, assessing and communicating impact is central to all our activities
  - Pathways to impact
  - Impact toolkit
  
- ▶ Research Excellence Framework (20%)

# Strategic Priorities



# Seven Challenges to Three Priorities

- ▶ Sharpened our focus with the introduction of three strategic priorities:
  - Economic Performance and Sustainable Growth
  - Influencing Behaviour and Informing Interventions
  - A Vibrant and Fair Society
- ▶ To be delivered through:
  - Enhancing impact from existing investments
  - Encouraging investments to work together
  - And, only exceptionally, new investments
- ▶ To be refreshed annually

# Refining the Priorities – the Process

- ▶ Three Task Forces drawn from committee and network members
- ▶ Framework agreed by the ESRC Council in February
- ▶ Issues further refined through:
  - Engagement with government, devolved administrations, business and civil society bodies
  - Webinars with learned societies
  - Inviting individual comments from research and research user communities
- ▶ Inputs considered by Task Forces, the ESRC Policy Chairs Group, and ESRC Council in May

# Refinement – Key Suggestions

- ▶ Retain quality, impact and independence
- ▶ Tackle deep difficult issues
- ▶ Exploit existing resources
- ▶ Enhance international opportunities
- ▶ Avoid disciplinary capture
- ▶ Join up ESRC activities to enhance impact

# Economic Performance and Sustainable Growth

- ▶ What are the determinants of economic performance and sustainable growth?
- ▶ How to secure benefits for populations in the UK and in other countries?
- ▶ How to improve stability and resilience of economies?

# Economic Performance and Sustainable Growth

- ▶ What are the determinants of economic performance and sustainable growth?
  - From existing commitments: innovation, workforce skills, demographic changes
  - From selective new investments: entrepreneurship and small businesses, rising powers, infrastructure e.g. energy production and transmission, digital economy

# Influencing Behaviour and Informing Interventions

- ▶ How to understand behaviour and risks at multiple levels and settings?
- ▶ How and why do behaviours change?
- ▶ How does the interplay of childhood, family, community and wider society influence inequalities in wellbeing?

# A Vibrant and Fair Society

- ▶ What are inclusive communities and how best can we achieve them?
- ▶ How do individuals and communities most effectively make their voices heard?
- ▶ How mobile is our society?

# Strategic Priorities – Misconceptions

## **Not:**

- ▶ A long list of new research programmes
- ▶ A steer to research grants –commitment to vibrant, innovative response mode
- ▶ A narrowly UK-centric agenda
- ▶ A narrow, applied agenda
- ▶ All about research
- ▶ Everything we do

# Data Infrastructure



# Data Strategy

- ▶ Strong data infrastructure is an essential core resource
- ▶ ESRC supports some of the world's leading studies
- ▶ Underpins research and training, and provides evidence to both academic and non-academic researchers
- ▶ Only ESRC supports these kinds of large, long-term investments
- ▶ The longitudinal 'jewels' appreciate in value
- ▶ Despite cuts to capital, we will protect prioritised data infrastructure

# Major Investments

- ▶ Understanding Society (USoc)
- ▶ Centre for Longitudinal Studies (CLS)
- ▶ Birth Cohort Study and Cohort Resources Facility
- ▶ National Centre for Research Methods (NCRM)
- ▶ European Social Survey (ESS)
- ▶ Economic and Social Data Service (ESDS)
- ▶ Secure Data Service (SDS)
- ▶ Census Programme
- ▶ *Administrative and other transactional data*



# Simpler and More Strategic

- ▶ Streamlining – fewer but more flexible research competitions
  
- ▶ Focusing resources on longer, larger grants – ambitious social science
  - Phase out Small Grants scheme
  - Increase lower and upper thresholds for Research Grants scheme (formally Standard Grants)
  - Merge Centres and Large Grants competitions

# Scope of Schemes 2011-12

## ▶ Research

- Seminars Competition
- Future Research Leaders Scheme (combining First Grants and Postdoctoral Fellowships)
- Research Grants Scheme (re-branding Standard Grants scheme, including new innovation funding)
- Professorial Fellowships Scheme
- Centres and Large Grants Competition (combined competition)

# Scope of Schemes 2011-12

- ▶ International
  - International Co-Investigators
  - Open Research Area
  - International Partnership and Networking Scheme
  
- ▶ Knowledge Exchange
  - Knowledge Exchange Opportunities Scheme (e.g. Placement Fellowships)
  - Follow on Funding Scheme

# Future Research Leaders

## ▶ Aims

- To enable early career social scientists to acquire the skill set to become future world leaders in their field
- Fund excellent social science research projects

## ▶ Characteristics

- Well defined research project
- Programme of research skills development
- Programme of activities to develop KE skills
- Strong partnership with the host HEI

## ▶ Open call, but secondary data analysis and innovative research methodology particularly encouraged

# Research Grants

- ▶ Continue to lie at heart of ESRC strategy
- ▶ Remain completely responsive
- ▶ Longer, larger (£200k - £2m)
  - More flexible menu of opportunities for researchers
  - Greater opportunity for inclusion of training/career development
- ▶ Interdisciplinary within and beyond social sciences
- ▶ International Co-Investigators
- ▶ New innovation phased funding

# Innovation Funding

- ▶ Phased funding allowing development and testing of novel ideas and concepts
- ▶ Application for full project with break point identified within first half of grant
- ▶ Not all projects will proceed to second phase, but this is expected

# Professorial Fellowships

- ▶ Characteristics similar to previous years
  - Supports leading social scientists
  - Seeks to achieve a significant contribution to the development of social science
  
- ▶ Open scheme but encourage applications in areas of strategic priorities where more theoretical work is required

# Centres and Large Grants

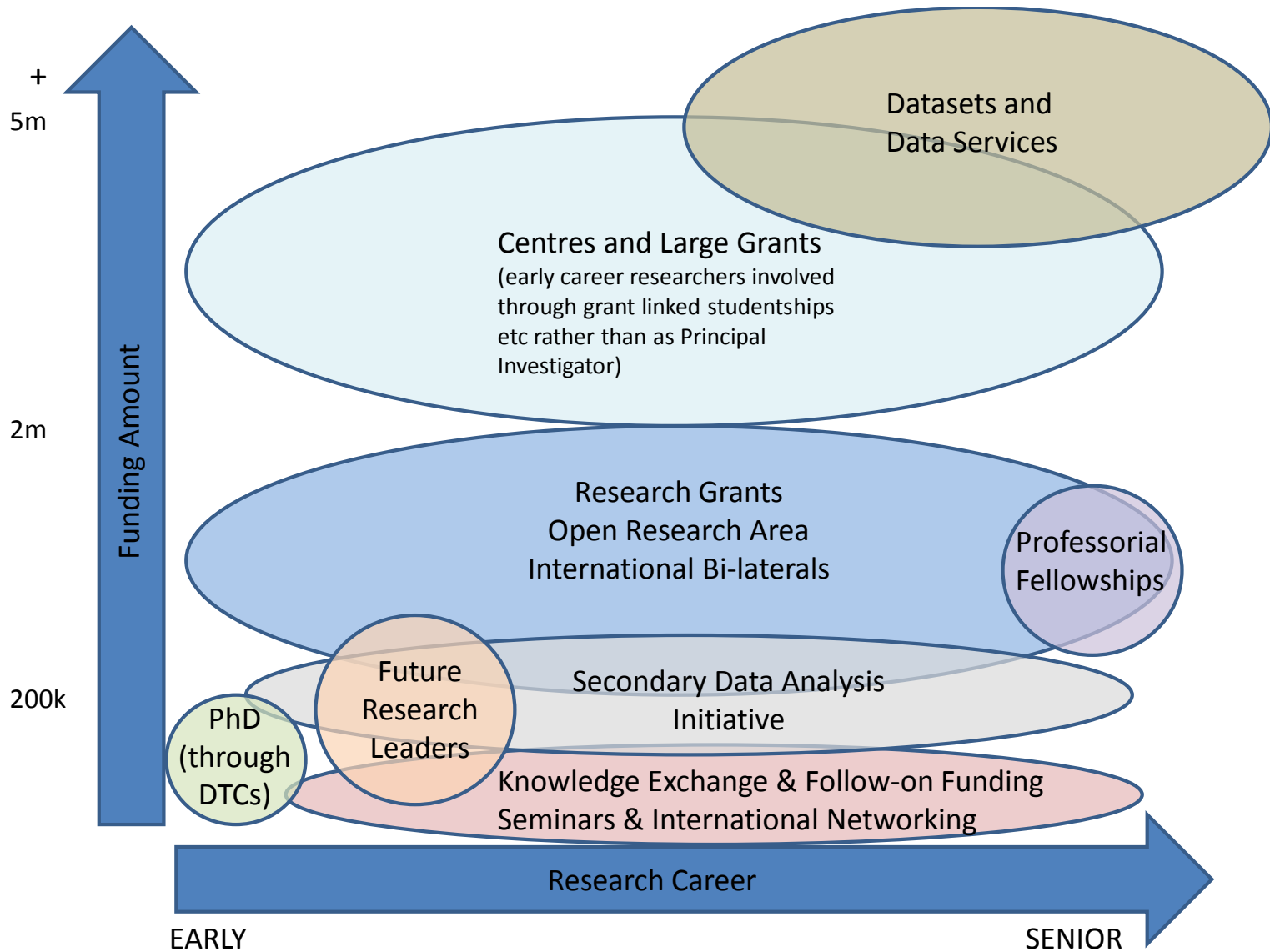
- ▶ Combined competition (£2m - £5m)
- ▶ Renewed emphasis on
  - Maximising impact through working with other investments
  - Strong partnership with host HEI
  - International Co-Investigators
- ▶ Open competition but with a strong steer towards areas within the three strategic priorities

# Secondary Data Analysis

- ▶ Identified as a high priority from the process of refining the strategic priorities
- ▶ Need to maximise use of world class datasets
- ▶ Need to increase the skills in quantitative data analysis
- ▶ Strategic investment in small awards

# International Partnership Scheme

- ▶ Flexible support for activity designed to establish sustainable collaborations including
  - Scholar exchanges
  - Workshops
  - Summer schools
  
- ▶ Encouraged to secure additional co-funding



# National Capability



# National Capability

- ▶ Providing support across all stages of the career
- ▶ Expanding training and development opportunities – building a national training infrastructure
- ▶ Targeted initiatives:
  - National QM strategy
  - Partnership with HMT to build capacity in macroeconomics
- ▶ Opportunities for early and mid-career through Future Research Leaders and Research Grants

# Doctoral Training Centres

- ▶ Discontinue accreditation and separate competitions for studentships
- ▶ 21 Doctoral Training Centres drawing together the best social science training
- ▶ Concentrating studentships in strategic areas (e.g. QM and macroeconomics)

# Doctoral Training Centres

- ▶ The DTCs will develop National Capability through:
  - Transferable as well as core research training
  - Building capacity in five priority areas
  - Setting benchmarks to ensure health of disciplines is upheld
  - Developing an integrated advanced training network linking DTCs, NCRM and RDI

# Partnerships




# Co-funding and Co-production of Research

- ▶ Collaboration with private, public and third-sector bodies through co-funding of research and people exchange
  - ESRC attracts £28m of additional co-funding from government departments, civil society and international bodies
  - Co-production ensures research is better placed to inform policy and practice
- ▶ Private sector prioritised for increased engagement and co-funding
  - Focus initially on financial services, green business and retail
- ▶ Continued support for relationships with public and civil society bodies, especially in 3 strategic priorities

# Dialogue with Academic Community

- ▶ Strengthening strategic relationships and regular dialogue with HEIs, e.g. on
  - Managing demand for grants
  - Doctoral training centres
  - Increasing the impact of research
- ▶ Regular dialogue and consultation with our academic community and learned societies on key issues
  - Strategic priorities
  - Demand management

# Public Engagement

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- ▶ ESRC achieves public engagement through:
    - Support for public engagement as part of research projects
    - Annual ‘Festival of Social Science’ (29 Oct – 5 Nov)
    - RCUK concordat
    - Membership of committees and networks

# International Partnership

- ▶ Continue to encourage and promote international collaboration across all our activities
- ▶ Focus on key international partners – 3 RCUK offices
- ▶ Actively encourage social scientists to engage with international funding opportunities e.g. ‘FP8’
- ▶ Continue successful partnership with DfID



# Introduction

- ▶ Last 5 years has seen a 33% increase in number of applications
- ▶ No additional funding available leading to fall in success rates
- ▶ Success rates for Research Grants down to approx 13%
- ▶ Places burden on researchers, reviewers, universities and the ESRC
- ▶ All Research Councils committed

# Introduction

- ▶ Scheme restructuring will lead to some reduction in volume but we can not rely on this alone
- ▶ Delivery Plan sets an ambitious target of halving the number of Research Grant applications by 2014
- ▶ Focus on:
  - Identifying and supporting the best social science
  - Reducing the number of applications that are uncompetitive

# Initial Measures

- ▶ We expect to see individuals and HEIs demonstrate that they are improving self-regulation
- ▶ To help meet these expectations we will:
  - Maximise transparency, including regular provision of performance data to institutions
  - Develop and disseminate good practice guidelines on grant application writing and HEI quality assurance mechanisms
  - Introduce an invited-only resubmissions policy with associated guidance

# Initial Measures

- ▶ Reduce the external peer review burden through revised sifting mechanisms (greater use of outline applications and earlier sifting for standard grants)
- ▶ Simplify the RCUK JeS outline application process
- ▶ Issue more tightly specified calls on managed mode schemes which address the ESRC strategic priorities
- ▶ Work with other RCUK partners to harmonise any demand management measures

# Reviewing Progress

- ▶ After an initial 12 months we will review the effectiveness of these measures to establish whether further steps need to be taken. We will assess:
  - Progress in reducing the overall volume of applications
  - Progress in increasing the overall quality of applications
  - Progress in reducing the level of applications at an institutional level
  - Progress in increasing the quality of applications at an institutional level
  - Whether institutions can demonstrate formal quality assurance measures
  - Whether external peer review has been reduced across our schemes
  - Whether overall success rates have improved, comparing institutional performance against average success rates

# Further Options

- ▶ 12 week consultation on additional measures - we hope that no additional measures will be needed
- ▶ Demand management options will be informed by the impact of the initial programme of measures
- ▶ The four main complementary demand management tools under consideration are:
  - Researcher sanctions
  - Institutional sanctions
  - Institutional quotas
  - Charging for applications

# Timetable

- ▶ Initial programme of measures starts 1 June 2011 and will be reviewed in June 2012
- ▶ Consultation closes 16 June 2011
- ▶ Council will consider the outcome of the consultation in September 2011
- ▶ Announcement of potential additional measures Autumn 2011
- ▶ Initial programme of measures reviewed Summer 2012
- ▶ Any additional measures implemented Autumn 2012