



## Secondary Data Analysis Initiative (SDAI) Call specification

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### Summary

To date, the ESRC has run three successful rounds of the Secondary Data Analysis Initiative (SDAI), with the primary focus of demonstrating the value of existing data resources by utilising them to deliver high-quality, high-impact research. The SDAI provides up to 18 months funding for grants with an overall limit of £200,000 (100 per cent full Economics

Cost (fEC). Funding for this initiative is now being provided through an open date responsive mode call through which is expected to fund 18-21 grants each year.

## **Background and scope**

The UK has world-leading data resources for social and economic research, and this provides a huge opportunity to address some of the most pressing challenges facing society.

The ESRC has contributed significantly through investments in a wide range of world-leading data resources, from our portfolio of longitudinal studies such as Understanding Society ([www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/](http://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/)), to international cross-sectional studies such as the European Social Survey ([www.europeansocialsurvey.org/](http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/)) through to world-leading qualitative resources such as Timescapes ([www.timescapes.leeds.ac.uk/](http://www.timescapes.leeds.ac.uk/)). More recently, the ESRC's Big Data Network ([www.esrc.ac.uk/research/our-research/big-data-network](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/research/our-research/big-data-network)) is supporting innovative centres and other projects that are facilitating the access to and analysis of different types of data, including administrative data held by government departments and data from local government organisations as well as data controlled by the private and third sectors.

Given the richness of these resources and the scale of the investments made, the focus of this call is to ensure that they are fully exploited and that capacity is developed within the academic community to make best use of them.

Based on the experience of previous rounds, and to tie in with ESRC's strategic priorities, SDAI will continue to focus on the following core principles as established in Phase 3:

- Maximising the use of key ESRC-funded data resources
- Developing the capacity of early career researchers (as defined below) to undertake research using complex data resources
- Working collaboratively with non-academic stakeholders to extract value from data resources for mutual benefit, and ensuring that the accumulated learning and ongoing research impacts from previous phases and projects is captured.

## **Call details**

Based on these SDAI principles above, this call will:

- require the use of at least one ESRC-funded data resource or infrastructure (as defined in Appendix I)
- support proposals addressing ESRC strategic priorities
- require the inclusion of at least one early career researcher as principal or co-investigator
- strongly encourage proposals which include non-academic partners

Proposals should focus on the generation of non-academic impact through addressing substantive research questions. Methodological and capacity development as part of this work is encouraged but should not be the core focus. The SDAI will therefore:

- support the innovative and creative use of data or methodologies

- support capacity-building in the area of secondary data analysis

## **Timing of application**

The call will operate alongside ESRC's Research Grants open call ([www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/funding-opportunities/research-grants/](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/funding-opportunities/research-grants/)). Following peer review, projects will be assessed by a standing Grants Assessment Panel (GAP) specifically constituted to support this initiative. The panel will make recommendations on which proposals to fund. Following the panel recommendations, the Grants Delivery Group will make final funding decisions. For more information on the assessment process please see [www.esrc.ac.uk/about-us/governance-and-structure/advisory-committees/research-committee/responsive-mode-grant-assessment-process/](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/about-us/governance-and-structure/advisory-committees/research-committee/responsive-mode-grant-assessment-process/).

GAPs meet in March, July and November of each year. The SDAI annual budget will be around £3 million. It is expected that six to seven proposals will be funded at each GAP round therefore we expect around 18-21 grants will be funded each year (dependent on quality).

Proposals can be submitted at any time and there are no set closing dates however given the annual funding levels and expected number of grants to be funded at each GAP round, applicants are required to carefully consider the timing of their proposal. They must provide a clear rationale for timing in their proposal and allow sufficient time for the proposal to be processed. Large volumes of proposals will adversely affect success rates at each GAP round and will count towards the demand management statistics of the applicant's research organisation.

## **Highlight notices**

SDAI will also feature ad-hoc ring-fenced competitions in collaboration with ESRC's partner organisations, details of which will be published on the SDAI webpage ([www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/funding-opportunities/secondary-data-analysis-initiative-call/](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/funding-opportunities/secondary-data-analysis-initiative-call/)) at appropriate times. These calls may focus on exploitation of other datasets or research questions identified by the partner organisations that differ from those in the standard call. In these instances additional funding will be available which will be ring-fenced specifically for these projects.

Highlight notices will due to their time-bound nature operate on a different basis with set opening and closing dates (with highlight notices linked to specific GAP meetings). These will be communicated as part of the highlight notice.

Where a highlight notices differs in remit from the open call, further guidance will be provided.

## **ESRC data resources**

SDAI will only consider projects which seek to exploit in innovative ways one or more of the ESRC resources identified in Appendix I of this document and which deliver substantive impact in order to showcase the value of these resources. These resources have been selected on the basis of offering a breadth of data for different substantive interests or their strategic value.

Only one named resource is required to be used in order to be eligible for the scheme although applicants may choose to use more than one. These might be used in conjunction or comparison with datasets from other agencies, including international datasets.

### **Letters of support**

Letters of support are required where data is being accessed from Big Data Resources (see below) if data being used is not normally available for research purposes or where such data is being linked. This is to provide clarification where there are ambiguities surrounding access to the dataset(s), in order to offer assurances that if a proposal is successful the dataset(s) will be accessible (subject to approval from external access committees where necessary). Proposals utilising resources which are routinely available for research use as part of established processes through the UK Data Service (UKDS) or elsewhere do not require a letter of support.

### **Big Data resources**

For data to be considered part of these resources it must be uniquely accessible through one of the resources listed in Appendix I and not available through other mechanisms. This applies to all projects seeking to utilise Big Data Resources whether or not this is in conjunction with other forms of data.

Proposals seeking to access data via the Administrative Data Research Network (ADRN) must meet the criteria of an ADRN project as outlined here: [adrn.ac.uk/using-the-network](http://adrn.ac.uk/using-the-network). Part of these criteria is that applicants should not seek to access data via the ADRN if they can access it via other means. Applicants are strongly encouraged to develop such proposals in parallel with the ADRN. For such proposals, applicants must obtain support from the approvals panel prior to submitting their proposal and include proof of this as part of their proposal.

For proposals seeking to access non-open data from the Big Data Network 2 Centres, applicants are required to contact the relevant data research centre and obtain approval from the relevant approvals body prior to application. Applicants should include proof of this approval as part of their proposal.

### **New datasets**

Additional primary data collection will not be funded under this call. However, new datasets created through data linkage are permitted. Where new datasets are created applicants are required to include a data management and sharing plan which discusses how this data will be stored and shared.

### **Generating impact**

Applicants need to consider the potential scientific, societal and economic impacts of their research and how these can be maximised and developed. Applicants are strongly encouraged to seek early engagement with research users in the public, private and civil

society sectors when developing proposals. This emphasis on partnership and research impact is reflected within the assessment process and will be taken into account by the GAP.

A clearly thought-through and acceptable Pathways to Impact statement should be:

- project-specific and not generalised
- flexible and focused on potential outcomes.

Researchers are encouraged to:

- identify and actively engage relevant users of research and stakeholders at appropriate stages
- articulate a clear understanding of the context and needs of users, and consider ways for the proposed research to meet these needs or increase understanding of them
- outline the planning and management of associated activities including timing, personnel, skills, budget, deliverables and feasibility
- include evidence of any existing engagement with relevant users.

The Impact Toolkit ([www.esrc.ac.uk/impact-toolkit](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/impact-toolkit)) includes information on developing impact strategies, promoting knowledge exchange and public engagement and communicating effectively with key stakeholders.

### **Non-academic partnerships**

We are committed to encouraging dialogue and collaboration between social scientists and research users, in order to maximise the potential impact of social science research on policy and practice. We expect that this initiative will deliver research that provides demonstrable policy and practitioner impacts. The fundamental ambition of the initiative is to highlight the role that secondary analysis has played in directly delivering effective policy interventions and positive changes in practice. In support of this, all proposals are strongly encouraged to include non-academics in the co-production of knowledge through direct involvement in the research project. Applicants are encouraged to engage directly with users in shaping the research agenda and apply social science and data analysis to current policy, strategy or practice issues.

Although we are principally keen to see a demonstrable commitment to co-production of knowledge, co-funding from project partners may also be included either as contributions in kind, or combinations of cash and in-kind contributions. Applicants are expected to demonstrate in their proposals that there is genuine commitment from project partner organisations. Please note, it is the research organisation's responsibility to claim the contribution from the partners as specified in the proposal, and costs to be met by project partners should not be included in the total requested from ESRC.

### **Capacity-building**

A key element of our aim to stimulate further use of social and economic data resources is to ensure that there is academic capacity to undertake that analysis in order to continue to demonstrate the value of the resources. In order to promote training and capacity-building

of secondary data analysis, this call will only consider proposals which include an early career researcher as principal investigator or co-investigator. The ESRC considers an early career researcher as meeting the following criteria:

- Have a maximum of four years academic research experience following the submission of their PhD, or be of equivalent professional standing (please note that RCUK eligible IROs will be considered as equivalent experience to universities and employment at such bodies will count towards the maximum four years research experience). This period is measured from the submission date of the PhD thesis to the date on which the proposal was submitted. Career breaks will be excluded from the four-year period.
- Have submitted their PhD or have equivalent experience by the start date of the grant.
- Not be a current or former principal investigators on ESRC or other Research Council grants, except ESRC Postdoctoral Fellowships and Research Councils UK Fellows.

A clear statement should be included in the CV(s) of early career researchers explaining how they meet these criteria. Proposals should also outline the career development opportunities they will provide for the named early career researcher(s).

As part of their projects applicants are encouraged to include wider programmes of training and capacity-building that develops capacity around the understanding or use of particular data resources, methods or topic areas. This might be through seminars, workshops or other mechanisms, and should take account of training and events already being offered through other ESRC investments such as the National Centre for Research Methods ([www.ncrm.ac.uk/](http://www.ncrm.ac.uk/)), UK Data Service ([www.ukdataservice.ac.uk/](http://www.ukdataservice.ac.uk/)) and Doctoral Training Centres (<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/skills-and-careers/studentships/doctoral-training-centres/>)

### **International, business, government and third sector co-investigators**

International co-investigators from anywhere in the world can be included on proposals. For further information, please see our guidance and FAQs on the inclusion of international co-investigators on ESRC proposals ([www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/inclusion-of-international-co-investigators-on-proposals/](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/inclusion-of-international-co-investigators-on-proposals/)).

Business, civil society or government body co-investigators based in the UK can also be included on proposals. For further information, please see the Research Funding Guide and our guidance on the inclusion of UK business, third sector or government body co-investigators ([www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/inclusion-of-uk-business-third-sector-or-government-body-co-investigators-on-proposals/](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/inclusion-of-uk-business-third-sector-or-government-body-co-investigators-on-proposals/)).

The ESRC will fund 100 per cent of eligible, justified costs for international co-investigators and co-investigators in UK business, civil society and government bodies; however, the project costs associated with these types of co-investigators must not exceed 30 per cent of the overall cost of the grant (at 100 per cent FEC).

### **Funding**

The call is subject to the full Economic Cost (fEC) funding model. SDAI will provide up to 18 months funding with an overall limit of £200,000 (100 per cent fEC) per grant. If successful, ESRC will meet 80 per cent of the full economic costs on proposals submitted and the host research organisation is expected to contribute the remaining 20 per cent.

Please note that costs for training courses for early career researchers may be included in the grant proposal.

## **Research ethics**

Applicants must ensure that the proposed research will be carried out to a high ethical standard. Applicants must demonstrate in the proposal that they have considered any potential ethical issues and how they will be addressed - ensuring that an ethics review is in place before the project commences and that all risks are minimised.

We expect researchers to have thought about and detailed the potential ethical implications of their research during the lifecycle of the project (including knowledge exchange and dissemination), what measures will be taken for ongoing review, what type of ethics review is required and how the review will be secured. Applicants should also state if ethical approval has already been obtained, or when and how this would be sought if the proposal were to be funded.

All applicants must comply with the ESRC Framework for Research Ethics ([www.esrc.ac.uk/researchethics](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/researchethics)).

## **Data generation**

Primary data collection will not be funded under this call. However, new datasets created through data linkage are permitted, provided the applicants submit a data management and sharing plan as part of their proposal. It is part of our data policy that datasets generated from ESRC-funded research, including through data linkage, should be available for re-use and deposited in an appropriate repository where possible. Please discuss how this data will be shared with the relevant ESRC Data Research Centre or UKDS prior to applying and detail this in your data management and sharing plan.

In exceptional circumstances, and in the case of proposals using data via the ADRN, it may not be possible to share datasets or elements of them. In these instances, a case should be made in the data management plan for why it is not possible to deposit these data following a conversation with the relevant data infrastructure (UK Data Service, Administrative Data Service or Big Data Network Phase 2 centres). Please see the ADRN website for guidance on what to include in data management plans.

Please see the ESRC research data policy ([www.esrc.ac.uk/datapolicy](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/datapolicy)) for further guidance. All applicants are expected to comply with this policy.

## **How to apply**

### **Application process**

Proposals addressing the aims of the initiative and scope of this call must be submitted via the Joint Electronic Submission System (Je-S) at <https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk>.

Applicants wishing to apply for ESRC funding should also refer to the 'guidance for applicants' section on the ESRC website ([www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/applicants/](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/applicants/)) and consult the ESRC Research Funding Guide ([www.esrc.ac.uk/rfg](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/rfg)) which sets out the rules and regulations governing funding. Where guidance differs, please follow the scheme-specific guidance for applicants.

## **Eligibility**

Applicants are eligible for funding whether or not they are established members of an ESRC recognised research organisation (RO) ([www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/eligibilityforrcs/](http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/eligibilityforrcs/)) eligible for responsive mode funding. Applicants who are not established members of a recognised RO must be accommodated by the RO and provided with appropriate facilities to carry out the research. These requirements also apply to individuals named as co-investigators. Further details about eligibility of applicants can be found in the Research Funding Guide ([www.esrc.ac.uk/rfg](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/rfg)).

## **Peer review and assessment criteria**

Proposals will be peer-reviewed by a minimum of two expert academic reviewers and one user reviewer. Peer-reviewers will be selected by the office.

Proposals will be assessed on the basis of six core criteria:

### **Originality, innovation and potential contribution to knowledge**

- Is the proposal innovative in terms of identifying problems or formulating research questions to address stated issues?
- Will the proposal lead to new understanding, insights, advice or solutions to the stated problems?
- Does the proposal offer to address shortcomings in the current state of knowledge and understanding?
- Is the proposal novel and timely?

### **Research design and methods**

- Is there a clear understanding of the issue addressed through this research?
- Is the conceptual framework of the proposed research appropriate to address the issue?
- Is there clarity and coherence in the research design between research questions, research methods and anticipated intellectual outcomes?
- Is the proposal methodologically innovative?
- Are the research questions clearly set out?



- Are the research methods clearly specified, robust and appropriate to the stated questions? Are issues of data validity and reliability appropriately addressed?
- Are plans for data linkage feasible, and will they deliver the proposed objectives?
- Do data management plans follow best practice, and adhere to ESRC data policy?
- Has appropriate considerations been given to ethics issues arising from this project?

### **Potential for capacity-building**

- Are any identified capacity-building activities set out in relation to the core intellectual agenda of the research?
- Does the proposal include wider programmes of training for the designated early career researcher, and are these appropriate to their stated career development aspirations?

### **Project management and research partnerships**

- Are the project management plans and configuration of roles and responsibilities reasonable, appropriate and credible for the proposed project?
- Are the credentials of the investigators and research organisations appropriate to deliver the project?
- Have project partners been fully involved in the design of the research, and do they have a clear and meaningful role in future activities?

### **Outputs, dissemination and potential for impact on theory, policy and practice**

- Does the project have real potential for impact on theory, policy and/or practice?
- Does the proposal demonstrate that there is effective demand for the research from policymakers and other non-academic stakeholders beyond the academic community?
- Are the stakeholders and/or potential users of research outputs properly identified, and the processes and means for engaging with them appropriate, at all stages of the research process?
- Are there clear plans to make findings available to target audiences and to maximise potential research impact?

### **Value for money**

- Is the budget appropriate and reasonable for the proposed programme of work, including all staff costs, travel, data analysis tasks, and knowledge exchange and impact activities?
- Are there any components of the project costs which appear excessive? (Estates and indirect costs should not be commented on)
- Time commitments of research staff:
  - Are staff doing the appropriate level of work? Is the amount of senior staff time on the project appropriate?
  - Is the mix of the team right?

- If consultancy costs are claimed, is this the most appropriate mechanism of staffing and are the rates reasonable?

## Successful grants

Our full terms and conditions of grants are published in the ESRC Research Funding Guide ([www.esrc.ac.uk/rfg](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/rfg)). Successful grants will be expected to engage with other investments funded under this initiative.

## Further enquiries

For questions relating to ESRC's application processes please see the research grant Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), available at [www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/funding-opportunities/research-grants/](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/funding-opportunities/research-grants/)

For SDAI specific questions please refer to the SDAI FAQs. For any other enquiries please contact [sdai@esrc.ac.uk](mailto:sdai@esrc.ac.uk).

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

- Je-S Helpdesk  
Email: [jeshelp@rcuk.ac.uk](mailto:jeshelp@rcuk.ac.uk)  
Telephone: 01793 444164

## Appendix I – Eligible ESRC-funded data resources and infrastructure

This call is open for the secondary analysis of key ESRC-funded data resources and infrastructure, either in conjunction with other datasets or on their own.

This call will only consider projects which exploit one or more of the following ESRC-funded resources. These have been listed under headings for presentational purposes only.

Please note all resources are accessible via the UK Data Service ([www.ukdataservice.ac.uk/](http://www.ukdataservice.ac.uk/)) unless stated otherwise.

### Longitudinal resources

- British Household Panel Survey
- Understanding Society
- 1958 National Child Development Survey
- British Cohort Study 1970
- Next Steps (Longitudinal Study of Young Persons in England)
- Millennium Cohort Study
- UK Census Longitudinal Studies (<http://calls.ac.uk/guides-resources/applying-to-use-the-lss/>)
- English Longitudinal Study of Ageing

### Biosocial resources

- Understanding Society Biosocial Sweep
- 1958 National Child Development Study Biosocial Sweep
- English Longitudinal Study of Ageing Genome-Wide Association Study
- Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children ([www.bristol.ac.uk/alspac/researchers/data-access/](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/alspac/researchers/data-access/))

### Big Data resources

- Administrative Data Research Network ([www.adrn.ac.uk](http://www.adrn.ac.uk))
- Business and Local Government Data Research Centre ([www.blgdataresearch.org](http://www.blgdataresearch.org))
- Consumer Data Research Centre ([www.cdrc.ac.uk](http://www.cdrc.ac.uk))
- Urban Big Data Centre ([www.ubdc.ac.uk](http://www.ubdc.ac.uk))

### Election resources

- British Election Study
- British election study ethnic minority surveys
- Scottish Election Studies
- Welsh Election Studies
- Northern Ireland Election Study
- Scottish Referendum Study
- Local Election Studies Database

### Employment resources

- Skills and Employment Survey Series
- Workplace Employment Relations Surveys

### **International comparative resources**

- European Social Survey
- Harmonised European Time Use Study 2000 (The data from the Harmonised European Time Use Study 2015 will be available from March 2016 and will offer comparative opportunities through a harmonised dataset)
- International Social Survey Programme ([www.gesis.org/en/issp/home/](http://www.gesis.org/en/issp/home/))
- Multinational Time Use Study (<http://www.timeuse.org/mtus.html>)

### **Linguistics resources**

- British National Corpus
- British Sign Language Corpus

### **Qualitative resources**

- Timescapes (<http://timescapes.researchdata.leeds.ac.uk/>)
- Poverty and Social Exclusion Qualitative Surveys
- Ritual, Community and Conflict Ethnographic Dataset on Ritual ([www.icea.ox.ac.uk/fundedprojects/ritual00/data/ethnographic-resources/](http://www.icea.ox.ac.uk/fundedprojects/ritual00/data/ethnographic-resources/))
- Access Research Knowledge Qualitative Archives on Ageism and Conflict ([www.ark.ac.uk/qual/ageism/](http://www.ark.ac.uk/qual/ageism/))

### **Other resources**

- Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK: Research Surveys 2012
- Northern Ireland Life and Times
- Kids' Life and Times
- Young Life and Times Survey