# ESPA Regional Opportunities Fund Call for Proposals

**Deadline: Friday 13th May 2016 17.00 GMT**

## Background

The ESPA Directorate is keen to help maximise the impact derived from ESPA’s research. ESPA recognises that some activities that can help get research into use can arise as unexpected opportunities which are not included in a project’s original research work plan. Other opportunities can arise through projects working together.

ESPA’s Regional Opportunities Fund (ROF) is designed to deliver the priorities described in ESPA’s newly revised [Impact Strategy](http://www.espa.ac.uk/impact). It will assist ESPA projects, groups of projects and their local stakeholders to significantly enhance the impact and research uptake of funded projects and of the ESPA programme as a whole.

The ROF scheme will provide support of up to £50,000 for research into use activities supporting research teams to move their research from the academic journal or conference into the hands of people and organisations who can put it to practical use.

## Terms of Reference

1. Applications are invited for small projects or activities which will assist ESPA projects and their local stakeholders to significantly enhance the overall impact of individual projects and the ESPA programme as a whole.
2. Applications must demonstrate links to one or more ESPA project(s), either a currently- or previously-funded project(s), and detail how the award will significantly enhance the development impact of project(s) and the wider ESPA programme.
3. There are no restrictions on who can apply for funding, but the Principal Investigator(s) of projects linked to the proposal will need to indicate their approval for the proposal by way of a letter of support. Where this is the case, the letter of support must form part of the application.
4. All activities supported by the ROF scheme will need to be additional to any which were originally envisaged in project proposals. Applications must clearly demonstrate this, and explain why these activities were not applied for and or/covered within the linked ESPA project(s).
5. The ROF scheme cannot be used to provide supplementary funding for ESPA projects to extend their research activities or complete their original work plan. Likewise, the ROF scheme cannot be used to fund capacity strengthening activities, standalone research, writing up of research results, or events and/or workshops unless there is a clear pathway to impact.
6. Applications should be developed in accordance with [ESPA’s Impact Strategy](http://www.espa.ac.uk/impact). Applicants are strongly encouraged to review the strategy before submitting a proposal.
7. Examples of the type of activities that could be considered under the ROF scheme include, but are not limited to: knowledge exchange activities; synthesis of ESPA evidence and research; activities to enhance the uptake of research among policy maker, practitioner or other non-academic audiences, including business, civil society and the public sector; and/or other activities that may enhance impact, research into use and/or communication of research.
8. Applications must demonstrate how current or new partnerships with non-ESPA institutions and researchers will be leveraged to enhance the impact of proposed activities.
9. Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact the ESPA Directorate for an informal discussion before submitting a proposal, especially if there is doubt regarding the suitability of the application for a ROF grant ([impact@espa.ac.uk](mailto:impact@espa.ac.uk)).
10. The ROF scheme will give priority to funding activities that have a thematic rather than project-based approach (e.g. addressing a topical policy issue) and will welcome activities that have the opportunity to bring together results from more than one ESPA project and those which influence/link to other national and/or regional activities. Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact the Directorate for more information on the ESPA’s emerging thematic focal areas in order to align with ESPA’s impact and communication priorities.

**Note:** ESPA will only support activities which clearly demonstrate how they will lead to development impact that will benefit the poor in low-income countries.

## Funds Available

Each grant will be awarded up to a maximum of £50,000, inclusive of VAT. Applicants should provide details of their budget using the supplied financial spreadsheet.

## Methods

PLEASE NOTE THAT APPLICATIONS WILL BE REJECTED BEFORE REVIEW IF THEY HAVE NOT USED THE FORMS PROVIDED ON THE ESPA WEBSITE.

**All applicants should note that:**

1. The ESPA Directorate will not pay for staff time on ROF activity when that person’s salary is already being paid for via an ESPA project. As this call for proposals relates to a grant to communicate research, the budget must not include a component for profit. Staff costs quoted in the budget should be calculated on the basis of salary plus employment costs (pension and social insurance). Daily rates should be calculated on the basis of a working year of 220 days.
2. Applicants may use their own methods to calculate overhead rates, but these should be realistic and should demonstrate appropriate value for money. **ESPA will not normally pay overhead rates that exceed 50%** **of** **the associated staff costs and will require strong justification for rates requested above this level.** UK academic applicants should note that overhead calculations that exceed what would be expected to be returned under the current (2013-4) [RCUK / TRAC data for Full Economic Costing](http://www.jcpsg.ac.uk/guidance/rates/1314.htm) rate (i.e. 80% of the institutional FEC rate) are likely to be assessed as failing to demonstrate appropriate value for money.
3. The contract award and all payments will be made in Pounds Sterling and no allowance can be made for exchange rate fluctuations or losses incurred during implementation of projects.

UK and EU applicants should note that:

1. Resulting contracts from this call will be administered by the ESPA Directorate. UK academic applicants should note that this means that awarded contracts will be funded at the level of 100% of actual expenditure.
2. This call for proposals relates to ***small research grants*** which will provide support to place new knowledge in the public domain consistent with the definition of research under the Frascati Manual. As such, any staff time included in applications for funding would normally be expected to be zero rated for VAT. Any applicant organisation that considers it necessary to charge VAT on staff time should note that any VAT that is chargeable should be included in the application form and that the maximum value for awards and resulting contracts will be inclusive of VAT.

## Timescales

Grants commissioned under this call will be awarded for a maximum of twelve months. Exceptionally requests for a longer period may be agreed, but should be discussed with the Directorate prior to submission. It is expected that work will start within two months of the contract being awarded.

All work associated with a ROF grant must be scheduled to complete by 30 September 2017.

## Reporting

The ESPA Directorate will require a brief completion report at the end of the project using a standard format. The final payment for the ROF grant will not be made until the report has been submitted and approved.

The lead applicant may also be required to provide additional information for the programme’s impact and communication activities which may include material for impact or evidence notes and one or more blogs for the ESPA website and newsletter.

For projects that are longer than three months, the Directorate will require a one-page progress report at the end of each quarterly period to be submitted along with the invoice for payment.

All reports and invoices should be sent to the ESPA Impact Advisor ([impact@espa.ac.uk](mailto:impact@espa.ac.uk)).

## Payment

Payments will be made on a quarterly basis in arrears aligned to the UK Public Sector Financial Year. (i.e. Q1 commences on 1 April). The final payment for the grant will only be made after the Directorate’s review of the final report for the grant.

## Application Process

Potential applicants are welcome to discuss their ideas and any issues of eligibility by contacting the ESPA Impact Advisor ([impact@espa.ac.uk](mailto:impact@espa.ac.uk)) before they prepare their proposal.

Applications must be submitted by email to the ESPA Directorate at [impact@espa.ac.uk](mailto:impact@espa.ac.uk).

This is a time-limited, competitive call. The deadline for applications is **Friday 13th May 2016**.[[1]](#footnote-2)

The Directorate will notify applicants if they have been successful by email by 27th May 2016.

Applications must be submitted in English using the [forms provided](http://www.espa.ac.uk/funding/current-calls) on the ESPA website for the Regional Opportunities Fund scheme.

Applicants are required to provide the following:

1. ***Completed Application Form***   
   (the application template provided must be used)
2. ***Completed CV***  
   (the CV template provided must be used)
3. ***Completed Financial Spreadsheet***  
   (the financial template provided must be used)
4. ***Letter of Support from PI***  
   (necessary only when the application is not submitted by the lead-PI of the associated ESPA Project)

## Evaluation of Proposals

Proposals will be evaluated using only the submitted documents. Applicants should note that any cross-references to additional documentation or evidence, apart from academic references, will not be examined as part of the review process and as such will not influence the evaluation.

### Stage 1. Eligibility check

Proposals will be checked for eligibility on the following criteria:

1. The required forms must be submitted and completed correctly. This will include checking that the correct online templates have been used and that all sections of the application form must be answered by the applicant.
2. The proposal must clearly focus on putting ESPA evidence into use to produce development impact in line with ESPA’s newly revised [Impact Strategy](http://www.espa.ac.uk/impact). Applications must be from individuals or organisations with a link to one or more ESPA project(s), either a currently- or previously-funded project(s).
3. Total budget for the project (including any VAT if appropriate) should not exceed £50,000.
4. Grants must commence within two months of the contractual start date.
5. The proposed length of grants must not exceed twelve months.

Failure to meet the eligibility criteria will lead to the proposal being rejected at this stage.

### Stage 2. Final selection

Proposals will be assessed according to the following criteria:

Potential for enhanced research uptake and development impact:

* Are the underpinning research findings sufficiently strong and novel to generate interest?
* Do the proposed activities respond appropriately to clearly identified need within a specific non-academic audience?
* Do the proposed activities have the potential to ensure the research is used by individuals or organisations who can deliver benefits to poor people in developing countries?
* Are appropriate plans included to capture and demonstrate any outcomes achieved through delivery of the proposed activities?

Project management and delivery:

* Do the proposed activities build appropriately on activities conducted within the linked ESPA grant(s)?
* Are the credentials of the project team appropriate to deliver the activities?
* Are any partnerships appropriate and credible?
* Are the requested resources reasonable to deliver the specific activities?

Proposals will be reviewed by key members of the ESPA Directorate. Individual scores from these reviewers will be aggregated to provide a consensus score and a recommended list of proposals to support. This list will be presented to ESPA’s Programme Management Unit for approval.

***Legal Information***

**All applicants should note that:**

1. The call for proposals, award process and resulting contracts will be administered by Research Into Results Ltd (RIR) acting on behalf of the ESPA Directorate and ESPA’s funders. Research Into Results[[2]](#footnote-3) is a wholly-owned subsidiary company of the University of Edinburgh.
2. The call for proposals, award process and resulting contracts will be administered under Scottish law under a contract template to be provided by Research Into Results Ltd, which may be amended subject to negotiation between RIR and the successful applicant.
3. The ESPA Directorate is granted rights to use and publicise any reports arising from all awards under the ESPA ROF scheme.
4. The ESPA Directorate may share any reports produced from these grants with ESPA’s funders (NERC, ESRC and DFID) and where appropriate store electronic copies in the funders’ own repositories. Projects will be required to inform the ESPA Directorate of the start date of their grants.
5. The ESPA Directorate will reserve the right to undertake a financial audit of one or more projects awarded under this ROF scheme.

Please note that the ESPA Regional Opportunities Fund is commissioned from the budget of the ESPA Directorate to address impact and research into use needs, and therefore Directorate members will be involved in the selection process. The call is being managed solely by the Directorate, unlike the larger ESPA grants which are managed by the ESPA Secretariat, based at NERC.

**List of Abbreviations**

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| **Abbreviation** | **Definition** |
| DFID | Department for International Development |
| ESPA | Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation Programme |
| ESRC | Economic and Social Research Council |
| EU | European Union |
| FEC | Full Economic Costing |
| NERC | Natural Environment Research Council |
| PI | Principal Investigator |
| RCUK | Research Councils United Kingdom |
| RIR | Research Into Results Ltd |
| TRAC | Transparent Approach to Costing |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| VAT | Value Added Tax |

This document has been produced by the Directorate of the Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation ([ESPA](http://www.espa.ac.uk)) Programme. ESPA is a programme funded by the Department for International Development ([DFID](http://www.dfid.gov.uk)), Economic and Social Research Council ([ESRC](http://www.esrc.ac.uk)) and Natural Environment Research Council ([NERC](http://www.nerc.ac.uk)).

The ESPA Directorate is hosted by Research Into Results Limited, a wholly-owned subsidiary company of the University of Edinburgh, responsible for the delivery of research and project management services in the area of international development.

The views expressed here are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the ESPA programme, Research into Results, The University of Edinburgh, other partners in the ESPA Directorate, NERC, ESRC or DFID.

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1. The ESPA Directorate intends to issue the next competitive Regional Opportunities Fund call in Oct / Nov 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Research Into Results Ltd (RIR) is a company registered in Scotland.   
   Number SC382100. VAT Registration Number 592 9507 00.   
   Registered Office Old College, South Bridge, Edinburgh EH8 9YL. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)