

ESPA Regional Opportunities Fund: Small Grants Scheme



Open-Ended Call for Proposals

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 is designed to enhance the impact and research uptake of funded projects and of the ESPA programme as a whole.

The Small Grants will be used to deliver the priorities described in the ESPA Impact Strategy. It will assist ESPA projects, groups of projects, and their local stakeholders, to significantly enhance the overall impact of individual projects and the ESPA programme as a whole.

The Scheme will provide support of up to £50,000, and if justified in exceptional cases, more (up to £75,000) for research into use and knowledge exchange activities supporting ESPA projects to link their research with potential users.

Terms of Reference

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.

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.

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.

All activities supported by the Scheme will need to be additional to any which were originally envisaged in project proposals, and applications must clearly demonstrate that, and explain why, these activities were not applied for and/or covered within the linked ESPA project(s).

The Scheme cannot be used to provide supplementary funding for ESPA projects to complete their original work plan. Likewise, the Scheme cannot be used to fund capacity strengthening activities, standalone research, writing up of research results, or events and/or workshops which do not have a clear and appropriate purpose.

Examples of the type of activities that could be considered under the Scheme include, but are not limited to, activities that include synthesis of ESPA evidence and research and feeding that into policy processes; impact, research into use and communication outputs/documents.

If you have an idea for a proposal and are at all unsure as to its suitability for a Grant, please contact the ESPA Directorate for an informal discussion before submitting a proposal (manager@espa.ac.uk).

The Small Grants 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 must clearly answer the following questions within the application form:

- What opportunity is it that you are responding to that will enhance impact and research uptake?
- How is this additional to the work of the linked ESPA grant(s)?
- What change will result in the work of the grant, i.e. what will the impact of the grant be?
- How will this work improve the lives of poor people in low-income countries?
- What will the outputs of this work be?
- Are other groups going to contribute to this work and, if so, how?

Applications should also adhere to the [ESPA Impact Strategy](#).

Funds Available

Each grant will be awarded up to a maximum of £50,000, inclusive of VAT. In exceptional circumstances, where clear justification is given, £75,000, inclusive of VAT, will be considered as an upper limit. Applicants should provide details of their budget using the supplied financial spreadsheet.

Note: Activities can be funded by ESPA only if they clearly demonstrate how they will lead to development impact that will benefit the poor in low-income countries.

Methods

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

The maximum value of any one award and research contract will not exceed £50,000 unless previously agreed with the ESPA Directorate.

All applicants should note that:

1. It is very unlikely that the ESPA Directorate will pay for staff already involved by an active ESPA project. Any staff costs which would be additional to those of an already active ESPA project would need to be very clearly justified in the application. 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.** 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](#) 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:

4. 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.
5. 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 normally be awarded for a maximum of twelve months. It is expected that work will start within two months of the contract being awarded. All work must associated with a grant must be scheduled to complete by 31 March 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 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 Operations Manager (Ruth Swanney, manager@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 Operations Manager (manager@espa.ac.uk) before they prepare their proposal.

Applications must be submitted by email to the ESPA Directorate at admin@espa.ac.uk.

This is an open-ended call. Applications can be submitted at any time up until the 1st of June 2016.

Applications must be submitted in English using the [forms provided on the ESPA website for the Regional Opportunities Fund Small Grants 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.
2. Applications must be from individuals or groups with a link to a previous- or currently-funded ESPA project(s).
3. All questions highlighted within the terms of reference must be answered within the application form provided by the applicant.
4. Total budget for the project (including any VAT if appropriate) should not exceed £50,000. In exceptional cases the Directorate will consider awarding grants up to a value of £75,000.
5. Grants must commence within two months of the contractual start date.
6. 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 graded according to the following criteria.

Criterion	Assessment method	Weighting
Relevance to the call , including potential development impact and fit to the ESPA programme	Main application	75 %
Value for Money	Financial spreadsheet Main application	25 %

Proposals will be reviewed by the ESPA Director, Operations Manager and Impact Officer. Individual grades from these reviewers will be used to provide a grade based on consensus of the reviewer (i.e. the numeric average will not be used).

In order to be eligible for funding, the weight average grade must exceed 70 %

Any proposal failing to meet the relevant thresholds for this stage of selection will be deemed ineligible for funding.

The decision to fund proposals will be made by the ESPA Directorate based on their grading of the proposal, the Directorate's assessment of the potential contribution of the proposed work to the programme's impact as well as availability of funds in any financial year.

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 Results¹ 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 Small Grants 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 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.

¹ 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.

List of Abbreviations

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

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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.

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