

ESPA 2013 Full Proposal Frequently Asked Questions

1. General queries

1.1 Will ESPA translate the Announcement of Opportunity (AO) and supplementary information into other languages?

No. To avoid any possible ambiguity all official written documents supporting the current AO will only be published in English.

1.2 I was unsuccessful at the outline bid stage of the ESPA 2013 call; can I submit a full proposal?

No, only Principal Investigators who have been invited to submit a full proposal by the ESPA Programme Executive Board are eligible to apply.

1.3 Which geographic regions can ESPA research take place in?

ESPA research take place in any geographic region, but the research results must generate new knowledge of international relevance that has the greatest potential to benefit the lives of poor people in low-income countries (LICs). The World Bank's list of LICs can be found in Annex 1 of the AO.

1.4 Can ESPA projects work in middle income countries?

To a limited extent, linked to a clearly justified case. Applicants should note that the majority of ESPA research should be conducted in one or more low income countries with appropriate justification. Aspects of ESPA research may be conducted in middle income countries when there is a clear justification of how this work will directly impact low income countries and why the middle income country is the best place for the research.

2. Application process

2.1 Is my organisation eligible for ESPA funding?

Eligibility criteria are outlined in Section 5, Part C of the AO. **ESPA will directly fund non-UK organisations**, if they satisfy the requirements of (1) being a legal entity, (2) being able to demonstrate an independent in-house capability to undertake and lead research and (3) the organisation meets the accountability and audit requirements of the funders.

Organisations that do not meet the requirements for direct funding may still be named on the proposal, as for example a Co-I or subcontractor to one of the consortium institutions. If you require future clarification on institutional eligibility please contact espa@nerc.ac.uk.

2.2 Are there any nationality restrictions for individual researchers?

There are no restrictions on the nationality of individual researchers, the ESPA programme is open to any researcher who can demonstrate their relevance to proposed projects, with the proviso that they must have the necessary legal status (e.g. a work permit if required) to be employed by a member of the proposed research consortium.

2.3 Can we submit our application in languages other than English?

No. The application and any supporting documents must be submitted in English. The only exception is letters of support from potential partners in the project, but these should be accompanied by a certified translation.

2.4 Are there limits to the time PI's spend on grants?

The maximum amount of time for any one investigator is 1650 hours a year (equivalent to 37.5 hours a week, 44 weeks a year). This maximum applies across all the grants that the investigator receives from the Research Councils. Technically there is no minimum time the PI can input as time spent on the project, but this time needs to be appropriate to the investigator's role and tasks within the project. Reviewers will be asked to assess whether the proposed time is appropriate for the role. See the Research Grant's Handbook for further information <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/application/researchgrants/>

2.5 Can you amend your registration to Je-S (i.e. if you have moved institution etc.)?

Yes. Once you have logged in to your Je-S account, you can review your information by viewing your 'Account Summary'. To update your institution, if you have moved, you can edit your contact details, by adding your new details. Further information is provided in the Je-S help text.

2.6 Will you be accepting more than one application from institutions/schools for this scheme?

Yes, more than one application is accepted from an organisation or department. The limit to numbers refers to individuals not institutions.

2.7 Is it a requirement to have a UK partner on a project?

No, you do not need to have a UK partner, but we would encourage collaboration between investigators from different regions. ESPA is open for participation for researchers from any country who can demonstrate how they will contribute to ESPA's research agenda. This can include researchers from developing countries outside ESPA's regions and from developed countries. ESPA's budget is approximately 66% untied and for this reason we expect that at least 33% of funding will be allocated to UK researchers and organisations.

2.8 Do UK partners and staff need to lead the project?

No, the lead PI should be selected as the individual who is best placed to provide the **leadership and management** required to deliver a successful project. They can come from any partner organisation in the proposed project. We do encourage all projects to ensure that developing country partners are given appropriate leadership roles in projects.

3. Studentships

3.1 Can research students be involved in ESPA 2013 projects?

No, project studentships (either Masters or PhD studentships) **cannot** be supported under the ESPA 2013 call.

4. Assessment process

4.1 How are reviewers selected?

Reviewers will be approached that cover the whole remit of the project proposed, and therefore will include both natural and social scientists, and any other experts as required. Applicants can nominate potential reviewers on the Je-S form. Nominated reviewers should not be from any of the institutions named on the proposal, as these will not be used.

5. Finance and budget (further FAQs regarding FEC can be found at <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/documents/fecFAQ.pdf>)

5.1 What should the project budget be?

Your requested project budget should fall between £200,000 and £500,000 Full Economic Cost. The costings should be in **pounds sterling**, and if you submit a proposal that has a budget **not** within these boundaries, then it will not be accepted.

5.2 Is the equipment threshold for single items or the total of the equipment heading?

For the total of the heading. (And remember that equipment only covers items over £10,000; smaller items should appear under other costs).

5.3 Can a contingency line be included in the budget, to allow for fluctuations in the global financial markets, given that it is the applicants responsibility to cover these costs.

A contingency for fluctuations in global financial markets is not an eligible cost to be included. Applicants should indicate the potential risks of this occurring and how they may deal with this in their project. If substantial currency fluctuations occur during the life of the project, the grant holders should discuss options and impacts with the Director.

5.4 Are UK subcontractor costs funded at 100%?

In general, no, they are funded at the standard 80%. There are two exceptions: surveys that are contracted out under European procurement rules, where costs in excess of £50k will be funded at 100%; and the cost of gene sequencing contracted out to third parties.

5.5 What is the distinction between Directly Incurred and Directly Allocated costs?

Directly Incurred costs (DI) are those costs that are explicitly identifiable as arising from the conduct of the research, are charged on the basis of the cash amount spent and are verifiable and auditable from the accounting records. Directly Allocated costs (DA) are shared costs charged on estimates, and do not represent actual costs on a project-by-project basis.

5.6 Where should I enter the indirect costs for non-UK organisations?

Indirect/overhead costs for non-UK organisations should be entered as a separate line under 'Other Directly Incurred costs' on the JeS form. It should be charged at 50% of staff related costs for developing countries, and at 20% for developed countries.

5.7 What do estates costs include?

Estates costs cover those costs related to buildings and premises, including capital (depreciation), maintenance, utilities costs, cleaning, security and safety.

5.8 What costs would fall under “Other Directly Allocated”?

Other Directly Allocated includes costs of shared resources, such as pooled staff, infrastructure technicians and charge-out rates for equipment and major research facilities and animal costs (where there are no auditable records of use).

5.9 What are Indirect Costs intended to pay for?

Indirect costs cover the costs of the Research Organisation's management and administrative services, including the personnel and finance departments, library, central computing and some departmental services; plus elements of academic research support time.

5.10 Can Research Organisations apply for pooled staff effort such as technicians or secretaries?

Yes they can, provided their costs are not already included in the estates or indirect cost rates. Pooled staff effort is usually taken to mean access to staff effort where the specific

individuals/posts work on several projects or activities. Typically they would not be completing timesheets and would be requested under Other Directly Allocated costs; although they may be requested under directly incurred if timesheets are in use.

5.11 Are there any costs that are not admissible under directly incurred?

There are some costs that should not be requested under directly incurred on the grounds that they are expected to be covered by the indirect costs of the institution. These include employment-related costs of investigators (excluding fellows), such as maternity, paternity and sick pay; redundancy costs; the costs of minor items of office consumables and any costs falling outside the period of the grant (such as proposal preparation costs and dissemination costs – although recruitment costs may be requested). Otherwise, costs may be requested under directly incurred if they meet the general requirement that they are project specific, auditable costs.

5.12 Do all costs need to be justified?

The funds requested for infrastructure technicians, estates and indirect costs do not need to be justified (although their FTE drivers do) Otherwise, the need for all the resources requested to carry out the project must be justified in the proposal. This includes all the directly incurred costs, investigator effort, use of pooled staff resources and access to any major or small research facilities and equipment.

5.13 Do non-research staff FTE contribute to the indirect and estates costs on proposals?

No. The FTE used as the multiplier for indirect and estates (and infrastructure technicians) costs is based on research staff on the project (including researchers, investigators and visiting researchers). Technicians and other research support staff, such as computer officers, project managers, engineers etc, are not regarded as research staff. The TRAC Guidance provides details. (Note that in exceptional cases individuals employed as technicians, nurses etc. can be treated by the RO as research staff, and categorised as such on the proposal form; in such cases the staff would attract an indirect and estate cost).

5.14 Why is investigator time normally directly allocated rather than directly incurred?

Directly allocated costs are charged on estimates rather than actual time/costs incurred. As Investigator time will usually be charged on estimates, rather than actuals derived from timesheets, it will usually come under DA (although Fellows should be directly incurred).

5.15 When can investigators be charged as directly incurred?

When their time spent on the grant is subject to an audit record, which means either they are contracted to work 100% on the project or timesheets are in place.

5.16 Can we include project administration staff into our organisational structure and budget? Is all the project administration meant to be co-funded by the Research Organisations, or can we build in staff into the project funding?

Yes, if you need to include a dedicated project administration post as part of your project then you can include this as 'Other' staff item in Je-S.

6. ESPA Projects

6.1 What will be the procedures for data management within the ESPA programme?

Applicants are referred to Section 3.5.4, Part C of the AO for further information. Data generated as a result of funded projects are required to provide a copy of any data

generated to the appropriate data centre (see <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/research/sites/data/> for information on NERC data centres and <http://www.esds.ac.uk/> for information on the Economics and Social Data Service). Applicants should set aside 3-5% of their project budget for data management. The Directorate will coordinate with the various data centres and provide additional guidance for funded applicants.

6.2 To what extent can the work plan be changed during the project lifetime, if one avenue of inquiry does not prove successful?

If successful awardees discover that their line of research is not going to plan, then they should discuss this as soon as possible with the Director, so that alternative options may be discussed. Awardees should not change their research plans or significantly alter their budget allocations without consultation with the Director. Applicants are strongly advised to consider such options - the likelihood of an avenue of research not being successful and possible alternatives - within their application.