

Announcement of Opportunity

Part A: Scope of ESPA-2013 Grants

Critical Deadlines:

Outline proposals to be submitted via email by **16:00 (4pm) UK Local Time (GMT/UCT), 23rd January 2013**

Full proposals to be submitted via Je-S
by **16:00 (4pm) UK Local Time (GMT+1/UCT+1), 3rd April 2013**



A research programme co-funded by DFID, NERC & ESRC and accredited by LWEC



Summary

The Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation (ESPA) research programme is funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) and Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). ESPA is an international programme which funds cutting-edge interdisciplinary research. This research will generate new primary data and knowledge to enhance global understanding of how ecosystems function, and provide services that contribute to human well-being, poverty alleviation and sustainable growth that benefits the poor.

ESPA was launched in 2007 and will run until 2017. The ESPA 2013 call has been designed to enhance the academic and development impact of the ESPA programme by filling significant gaps in the ESPA portfolio and, where possible, capturing emerging opportunities. The call provides an opportunity for the world's best researchers to add significant value to the ESPA programme by filling important research, knowledge and evidence gaps that have been identified. For information about ESPA-funded projects please see www.espa.ac.uk/projects.

This Announcement of Opportunity (AO) invites applications into one of three research themes for empirical, inter-/multi-disciplinary projects that are addressing a range of ecosystem services and associated benefits, and are linked to a multi-dimensional analysis of poverty and the ways that poor people can move out of poverty. It is a requirement of all ESPA-funded projects to deliver research excellence with impact.

Applications are invited for funding in the range of between £200,000 and £500,000 GBP Full Economic Cost (FEC). This call has been allocated a total available budget of up to £4M GBP, which may be revised subject to the discretion of the Programme Executive Board (PEB). Projects will be funded for a maximum duration of between 24 and 30 months, with an expected start date between 1 September 2013 and 1 November 2013. Projects will be eligible to delay their start from this date by up to 3 months only. All other standard NERC guidelines will apply.

Projects will be selected through a two stage process, firstly with submission of an outline bid proposal, after which a subset will be invited to submit full proposals.

Outline proposals must be submitted via email to espa@nerc.ac.uk by

16:00 GMT/UCT on 23rd January 2013

Full proposals must be submitted via Je-S

by 16:00 GMT+1/UCT+1 on 3rd April 2013

Abbreviations

AO	Announcement of Opportunity
CO-I	Co-Investigator
CV	Curriculum Vitae/Resume
DFID	Department for International Development
EIRG	Evidence and Impact Research Grant (ESPA)
ESPA	Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
FAQ	Frequently asked questions
FEC	Full Economic Cost
GBP	Great British Pound
GMT	Greenwich Mean Time
Je-S	Joint Electronic Submission System
LIC	Low-income country
LWEC	Living with Environmental Change
MIC	Middle-income country
NERC	Natural Environment Research Council
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PEB	Programme Executive Board
PFG	Programme Framework Grant (ESPA)
PI	Principal Investigator
PPD	Partnership and Project Development Grant (ESPA)
PMG	Programme Management Group
RC	Research Council
RCUK	Research Councils UK
UTC	Coordinated Universal Time

Important Terminology (Related to the Call)

Term	Definition	Reference
Developing Country Research Institutions	A national or regional research institution or an NGO with the capacity to undertake high-quality research that is operating in a low-income or a middle-income country. ESPA does not consider that offices of international agencies and research organisations or international NGOs that are located in developing countries should be considered to be developing country institutions.	
Developing Country Researcher	An individual holding the nationality of a developing country (low-income or middle-income countries) who will undertake a research role in the ESPA project.	
Low-Income Country (LIC)	As classified by the World Bank. http://data.worldbank.org/about/country-classifications LIC countries have an average annual <i>per capita</i> income of less than US\$1,005 calculated using the World Bank Atlas Method .	World Bank Lending Groups
Middle-Income Country (MIC)	As classified by the World Bank. http://data.worldbank.org/about/country-classifications . MIC countries have an average annual <i>per capita</i> income of between US\$1,006–\$3975 (lower–middle-income) or US\$3,976–\$12,275 calculated using the World Bank Atlas Method .	World Bank Lending Groups
Poverty	Poverty can be generally understood as the lack of, or inability to achieve, a socially acceptable standard of living, or the possession of insufficient resources to meet basic needs. Poverty is a contested concept and is experienced and conceived differently according to context. Researchers will be expected to adopt a multidimensional approach to poverty.	ESPA Poverty Framework
Ecosystem Services	Ecosystem services are the final point in the delivery chain from ecosystems that are used for material or non-material goods. They result from underlying biophysical processes and structures. See the Research Strategy and UK National Ecosystem Assessment.	Research Strategy
Ecosystems	The places where abiotic and biotic components of the environment come together spatially. They involve biophysical processes and structures that underpin a variety of final ecosystem services.	Research Strategy

Change Log

In addition to the Change Log for this document, the ESPA Secretariat will publish a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document to support the call available at <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/research/programmes/espas/events/ao-2013.asp> or by emailing espa@nerc.ac.uk.

All potential applicants are strongly encouraged to [register](#) to receive the ESPA Directorate's mailing list and newsletter. Any important information relating to the call during the first stage of the proposal process will be publicised the Directorate's mailing list.

Date	Section	Page	Detail

1 Scientific Scope of the Call for ESPA 2013 Grants

1.1 Objective

1.1.1 This Announcement of Opportunity (AO) invites applications into one of three research themes for empirical, inter-/multi-disciplinary projects that are addressing a range of ecosystem services and associated benefits, and are linked to a multi-dimensional analysis of poverty and the ways that poor people can move out of poverty. It is a requirement of all ESPA-funded projects to deliver research excellence with impact.

1.1.2 Projects funded under the ESPA 2013 call will enhance the academic and development impact of the ESPA programme by filling significant gaps in the ESPA portfolio and, where possible, capturing emerging opportunities. The call provides an opportunity for the world's best researchers to add significant value to the ESPA programme by filling important research, knowledge and evidence gaps that have been identified.

1.2 Overview

1.2.1 This call will fund a number of medium-sized projects (funding level of between £200K and £500K FEC) which have been designed specifically to add significant value to the ESPA programme by filling important research, knowledge and evidence gaps in the ESPA portfolio. £4 million will be available to fund projects in this call.

1.3 ESPA's Vision

1.3.1 ESPA is an international research programme providing evidence of how ecosystem services can be used sustainably to support well-being and sustainable poverty alleviation among poor people in developing countries. ESPA projects are interdisciplinary, linking the social¹ and natural sciences to address a series of focused research questions and evidence challenges. They are delivered through collaborative partnerships of the world's best researchers. *ESPA's success will be measured by the way that its research can be turned into results that benefit the poor in a sustainable manner* (see www.espa.ac.uk/vision).

1.3.2 ESPA's vision combines research excellence with development impact², with a focus on:

- generating world-class science in ESPA's key research areas (see [ESPA's Knowledge Strategy](#); and
- working with partners to ensure that ESPA's new knowledge is put into use to support significant and sustainable delivery of ecosystem services, poverty alleviation and growth (see ESPA's [Impact Strategy](#)).

¹ The term "Social Science" is considered by ESPA to include a wide range of disciplines, including economics, the social and political sciences.

² See also the Research Councils UK document "[Excellence with Impact: Framework for the Future](#)".

1.4 The ESPA 2013 Research Themes

1.4.1 There are three research themes in the ESPA 2013 call:

THEME A:

Sustainable, ecosystem-based pathways out of poverty/routes out of poverty

This theme deals with the benefits from ecosystems that affect people and communities; it specifically addresses pathways out of poverty, based on the sustainable supply and utilisation of ecosystem services.

ESPA has identified a significant gap in understanding of how sustainable benefits derived from ecosystem services can help people to move and stay out of poverty and how the political economy (e.g. political, governance and management systems and institutions), helps or prevents this from happening.

Successful research projects in this theme will address all of the following components:

1. the role of enabling conditions and mediating factors in alleviating poverty through the sustainable supply and utilisation of ecosystem services;
2. attention to poverty dynamics in terms of the pathways into and out of poverty and greater understanding of what makes / can make environmental benefits reliable in terms of quantity, quality and access; and
3. focus on specific contexts through multi/interdisciplinary analysis linking ecosystems, society and political economy.
4. Consideration of trade-offs: including those between individual ecosystem services; between ecosystem services and poverty alleviation or human well-being; those of the demands of current and future generations and between biophysical limits and desired social outcomes

Research will need to take an approach that links the natural and social sciences; applications adopting a systems-based approach are strongly encouraged

THEME B: Ecosystem services and the urban environment

Over half the world's population now live in cities. Rates of urbanisation have been rapid in recent decades and this trend is expected to increase in the future. The process of urbanisation itself impacts on ecosystems and the services they provide for the poor living both in cities and the rural environment.

The urban poor may appear to be less dependent than the rural poor on the provision of ecosystem services. However, they remain heavily affected by the presence and absence of ecosystem services (e.g. food production, clean air, clean water, hazard regulation, etc.), though these dependencies are poorly studied and understood. Negative impacts on the urban poor can include the loss of critical services through the degradation of nature (ecosystems) within the city.

The actions of people (poor and non-poor) in the urban environment also have a significant impact on ecosystems and livelihoods of poor people living and working in rural settings. Positive impacts on rural poverty may include income generation or employment through demand from cities for ecosystem services such as food and clean water and increasingly other benefits such as tourism. Potential negative effects experienced by the rural poor may result from the degradation of ecosystems

through excessive extraction to meet growing demand for products and services in cities and also through downstream impacts from cities such as pollution.

This theme recognises the many different types of urban context (e.g. formal and informal settlements, mega-cities, large and small cities and towns, city centres, suburban and peri-urban fringes).

Successful projects in this theme will address both of the following components:

1. the linkages between ecosystem services and poverty in the urban environment and/or the way that urbanisation affects ecosystems and the services they provide to the poor in urban and/or rural environments;
2. a focus on multiple ecosystem services that relate to multiple dimensions of poverty and address the causal factors involved. These causal factors will link those affecting the ecosystems that in turn affect the benefits people can derive, both inside and outside urban areas.

It may be appropriate for projects to study and document real-world examples linking ecosystem services and poverty in the urban context. Research documenting both positive examples (e.g. understanding the contexts in which systems of payments for ecosystem services can work for the poor), and barriers or negative impacts (e.g. understanding the factors associated with the risk of elite capture of the benefits derived from ecosystem services) are welcomed.

Research will need to take an approach that links the natural and social sciences; applications adopting a systems-based approach are strongly encouraged.

THEME C: Building on ESPA Success.

A number of ESPA projects funded under previous calls have produced significant results that have helped to advance global understanding on the processes that can link ecosystem services and poverty alleviation. The third theme for the ESPA-2013 call will provide an opportunity to build upon research funded under previous ESPA calls, specifically, the 2010 calls for Programme Framework Grants (PFG), Partnership and Project Development Grants (PPD).

To be eligible for funding under this theme, proposals will need to demonstrate:

1. how they will deliver significant additional results that go beyond the objectives of the original grant using the outputs and results of previous research to develop new research directions;
2. clear links to ESPA goals for excellent science and sustainable poverty alleviation as detailed in the ESPA [Knowledge Strategy](#);
3. a step change from the original research and not just continue previous research
4. which previous ESPA project(s) the proposal will build on.

Applications to this theme are not restricted to researchers who were involved in the earlier ESPA projects, but it is a requirement that applicants demonstrate how they will build upon the previously funded research, as appropriate.

Research will need to take an approach that links the natural and social sciences; applications adopting a systems-based approach are strongly encouraged

1.5 Requirements central to all applications

- 1.5.1 Projects will be required to consider the relevant range of the (multiple) dimensions of poverty and of multiple ecosystem services to ensure that the solutions are sustainable over the medium term (decades). Choices about which dimensions to consider must take account of relevant environmental, demographic, technological and societal changes.
- 1.5.2 Projects must work at relevant scales, which will be set in each context by the drivers of poverty (including relevant institutions and socio-political drivers) and ecosystem service management.
- 1.5.3 ESPA research needs to consider the use of all kinds of knowledge: local, indigenous and scientific. Applicants should consider their respective strengths, weaknesses, overlaps and contradictions when developing their proposals for ESPA-2013 projects.
- 1.5.4 The 24–30 month timescale will limit the amount of fieldwork that can be achieved, but projects should be able to accommodate excellent research that moves the focus into solutions, emphasising the links to ecosystem services that benefit people.

Applications to the ESPA 2013 call must:

- Clearly demonstrate research excellence that has a pathway to impact that will deliver benefits to poor people living in low-income countries. Have clear hypotheses and/or conceptual frameworks that are linked to ESPA's Knowledge strategy
- Include clear methodologies and rationale for the methods proposed
- Demonstrate that they are **multi- or interdisciplinary** within the research questions, methods and team structure
- Address a range of ecosystems service and associated benefits, and link these to a multi-dimensional analysis of poverty and the ways that poor people can move out of poverty
- Describe how the research responds to the research theme(s) it is addressing
- Consider natural and social systems and processes, and the links between them
- Demonstrate how their proposal responds to the ESPA Knowledge and Impact Strategies
- Include multiple dimensions of poverty and human well-being and methods to track or model trends resulting from changes to or within ecosystems (see [ESPA's Poverty Framework](#))
- Demonstrate understanding of the ecosystem processes that underpin different services and benefits in order to identify synergies and trade-offs between them (see [ESPA's Knowledge Strategy](#))
- Explain how the research will enhance global knowledge and evidence describing the ways that ecosystem services contribute to poverty reduction in low-income countries
- Make explicit links from research and its expected outcomes to poverty alleviation, economic growth that benefits the poor and enhanced resilience of delivery of ecosystem services of importance to the poor

- Demonstrate demand for the research and how it will contribute to ESPA's overall academic and development impact; this could include demand from other on-going ESPA projects.
- Document any relevant links and potential synergies with other ESPA research investments.
- Demonstrate how their research will add significant value to the existing ESPA portfolio of research.

2 Poverty Focus and Geographic Scope of this Call

2.1 Poverty focus of the research and its location

- 2.1.1 ESPA's research needs to be focused on poverty *and* have a pathway to impact that will help to reduce poverty and through this improve the lives of poor people, particularly those living in low-income countries (LICs).
- 2.1.2 ESPA considers that poverty is multidimensional, going beyond single measures of income or consumption (see [ESPA's Poverty Framework](#)), and recognises that poverty is experienced differently according to context. ESPA therefore expects researchers to adopt a multidimensional understanding of poverty, and one that is relevant to the specific research context. It is likely that a mixed methods approach will be the most appropriate for improving the understanding of the underlying determinants and dynamics of poverty.
- 2.1.3 ESPA's [Impact Strategy](#) highlights the need to identify and characterise the groups of poor people most likely to represent the intended ultimate beneficiaries of the results of ESPA research whose lives should be improved through the application of these results (of ESPA research). Proposals for ESPA funding should identify these groups *and* describe their current poverty status.

A primary requirement for funding is that ***ESPA 2013 Grants demonstrate how the results of proposed research will have a pathway to impact that can improve the lives of poor people in low-income countries***, even if some of the research is conducted in one or more middle-income countries.

2.2 Where can research be conducted?

Applicants should note that the previous requirement for ESPA research to be located in one of four specific geographic regions does not apply to this call.

- 2.2.1 The primary criterion is that ESPA's research will generate new knowledge of international relevance that has the greatest potential to benefit the lives of poor people in low-income countries (LICs). LICs are classified by the World Bank as having an average annual *per capita* income of less than US\$1,006.

Proposals will need to describe ***what their projects will do (if funded) to ensure that poor people living in low-income countries*** benefit from their research as part of their Case for Support and [Pathway to Impact](#) statement.

- 2.2.2 The World Bank's [income classifications](#) are available online. A list of countries currently classified as being low-income is provided at <http://data.worldbank.org/about/country-classifications>.
- 2.2.3 ESPA's research may also be conducted in middle-income countries (MIC), when it can be clearly demonstrated that the research will generate new knowledge of global relevance that has the potential to benefit the lives of poor people in low-income countries. Applicants will be required to demonstrate how research undertaken in MICs has the potential to reduce poverty in one or more low-income country and what will be done during the lifetime of a funded project to ensure that this happens.

- 2.2.4 Developing country researchers and developing country research institutions need to be significantly involved in ESPA 2013 Grants.

It is a requirement for the current call that there is ***at least one developing country institution significantly involved in the project.***

For the purpose of this call, the term **developing country** has been defined to include all [low-income](#) and [middle-income](#) countries. The income status of countries can be checked on the World Bank's website which lists current [income classifications](#).

It is not essential for project teams to include researchers or research institutions based in the United Kingdom or any other developed country.

- 2.2.5 There are no other restrictions on where researchers are located or their nationality. Similarly, there are no geographic restrictions on where research institutions are based, as long as they meet the administrative eligibility requirements for funding (for further information or to check your eligibility, please contact the ESPA Secretariat directly at espa@nerc.ac.uk).

ESPA actively encourages international collaboration and the active involvement of developing country researchers and institutions in the design and implementation of projects.

3 Demonstrating the Pathway to Impact

3.1 ESPA's Approach to Impact

- 3.1.1 ESPA projects are required to deliver *both* academic impact (e.g. research papers, significant new data) and a pathway to significant and sustainable development impact. When ESPA talks about its development impact, this will be measured by the way the programme's research is directly relevant to, and thus is able to demonstrate the likely contribution to the sustainable alleviation of poverty, improved health and well-being and creation of new opportunities for poor people in low-income countries to benefit from sustainable growth of the global economy.

ESPA's Impact Strategy is essential reading for all applicants for ESPA funding:

<http://www.espa.ac.uk/impact>

3.2 Academic Impact

- 3.2.1 Successful applicants will be required to demonstrate how their teams of researchers will deliver their project's academic impact. All projects are required to demonstrate their potential to produce research that can be published in high-profile international peer-reviewed academic journals. Where possible, publications should be published in open access format (see Part B, section 4.7.8).
- 3.2.2 In addition to peer-reviewed publications, it is expected that projects will also deliver academic impact through the generation of new high-quality datasets as well as new tools, approaches and methods (including models). All new data should be placed in the public domain, including where possible being deposited in one of the UK Research Council data libraries. More information is available from [ESPA's Data Policy](#), and additionally in Part C of the AO (to be published end January 2013)

3.3 Development Impact

- 3.3.1 The Pathway to Impact Statement will be a core component of the full proposals for the current call. It needs to show how development impact will be generated from the academic research. ESPA's research will help decision- and policy-makers to implement better development processes that lead to benefits for poor people, poverty reduction processes, and sustainable management of ecosystems and ecosystem services. ESPA's research will also empower poor people and communities, especially those in low-income countries, to improve their own lives and assist them to cope with a changing world.
- 3.3.2 ESPA 2013 projects will be expected to draw upon the ESPA [Theory of Change](#) document in structuring Pathways to Impact.
- 3.3.3 Effective engagement with potential users of ESPA research is seen as being an important factor contributing to the subsequent development impact pathway of all ESPA projects. This may also require projects to work with a range of knowledge intermediaries, such as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and government departments and agencies. The way that ESPA projects plan to do this will be described in their [Pathway to Impact Statement](#) as part of the full proposal.
- 3.3.4 The Pathway to Impact Statement should be used to answer ESPA's three Impact questions relating to people and partnerships:
- **Who** will use ESPA's research and new knowledge?
 - **How** will ESPA's new knowledge be used?

- **What** will projects, the ESPA Directorate and development partners need to do to ensure that ESPA's knowledge is put into use to generate significant and sustainable impact benefiting the poor?

3.3.5 The timeline for research and development impact described in the ESPA [Impact Strategy](#) highlights how development (impact) partners should be involved in the design of ESPA projects and that there should be regular interaction with them throughout the lifetime of a project.

4 Why Partnership Matters

4.1 People and Partnerships

- 4.1.1 People and partnerships are central to ESPA's research and to delivering its impact. The importance of this is illustrated both in ESPA's Impact Strategy (www.espa.ac.uk/impact) and in the related Knowledge Strategy (www.espa.ac.uk/knowledge).
- 4.1.2 The ESPA programme considers that building appropriate and effective partnerships with stakeholders and users during the design and implementation of projects is one of the most important determinants of potential success. Applicants for ESPA 2013 Grants will need to describe the nature of the partnerships that underlie the delivery of the proposed programme of research and its potential impact.
- 4.1.3 ESPA's [Impact Strategy](#) illustrates how projects will need to work with a range of potential impact partners. Researchers and development practitioners will need to work together in the co-generation of both research and impact linked to an ESPA project.

Proposals for ESPA 2013 Grants will be **assessed on whether the proposed disciplinary and institutional partnerships are likely to be adequate to ensure effective delivery of the proposed programme of work.**

4.2 Interdisciplinary Research Teams

- 4.2.1 The ESPA programme, and specifically the ESPA 2013 Grants funded under this call, will require the involvement of interdisciplinary research teams. Applicants will need to demonstrate how interdisciplinary teams will be brought together, supported and managed to deliver the integrated science programme that is relevant to the ESPA programme.

Proposals for funding under the call will **need to show how work from the different disciplines will be integrated**, both between disciplines and within the teams, and what approaches will be used to do this.

4.3 Developing Country Leadership

- 4.3.1 All research supported by the ESPA programme needs to adhere to proper ethical practices as outlined in the ESPA [Ethics Guidelines and Checklist](#). ESPA expects that the amount and balance of project leadership and resource allocation will be fair and equitable between institutions/organisations. Projects will need to demonstrate that an appropriate proportion of total expenditure and effort is allocated to developing country partners and to activities undertaken in developing countries.

Proposals for funding under the call for ESPA 2013 Grants will be required to demonstrate how [developing country researchers](#) or staff from a [developing country research institution](#) will contribute to the leadership of the project.

4.4 Working with other ESPA Projects and the ESPA Directorate

- 5 All ESPA 2013 Grants will be required to work with the ESPA Directorate as part of a wider ESPA Global Forum. Applicants should consider how working with other ESPA

projects or using results from earlier closed projects might assist in enhancing their project's or the ESPA programme's overall delivery of research excellence and potential development impact. Timeline of the ESPA Programme

The current call for ESPA's 2013 Grants will build upon six previous sets of projects since 2007. Two additional calls are currently planned by ESPA before the programme is expected to close in 2017 (Figure 1).

ESPA Programme Timeline

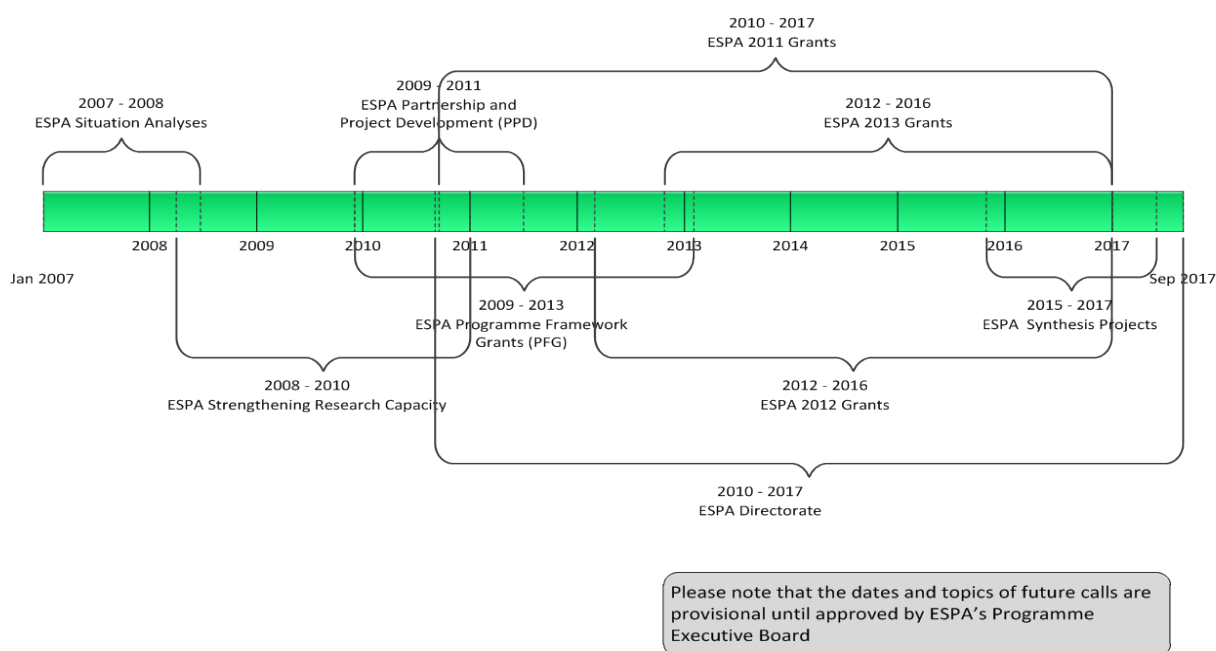


Figure 1 Timeline of past and future ESPA calls

When developing their proposals, potential applicants should consider how their research will complement other projects in the ESPA portfolio. This could be by building on existing research, or by filling critical knowledge and evidence gaps that have been identified by impact partners and potential users of research.

Information about projects that have been funded by ESPA is available from the ESPA website at: www.espa.ac.uk/projects.

Call	Period	Number of projects
ESPA Situation Analyses	2007–2008	6
ESPA Strengthening Research Capacity	2008–2010	11
ESPA Partnership and Project Development	2009–2011	28
ESPA Programme Framework Grants	2008–2013	18
ESPA 2011 Grants (Consortium Grants)	2012–2017	3
ESPA-2012 Grants	2013-2016	To be determined