Call for funding, Modern Slavery Policy and Evidence Centre COVID-19 Rapid Response

Introduction
The Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre (‘the Centre’), led by AHRC and with support from ESRC, is designed to bring research, policymakers, businesses, charities and NGOs together on a scale not seen before in the UK. It will combat and reduce modern slavery by driving real policy change in prevention, legal enforcement and supply chains, with a strong focus on victim / survivor support and recovery.

The Centre is offering this funding opportunity, to support research into the impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic on those who are vulnerable to, or victims or survivors of, modern slavery. This victim-centric focus is integral to the Centre’s activities, and all proposals funded through this call must involve end users of the research, such as policy-makers, practitioners, NGOs and survivor groups, and they must demonstrate the potential to benefit these end users through the provision of new insights and evidence-based solutions to the problem of modern slavery.

The call has been designed to enable a flexible and swift response to a complex and emerging problem. The call will be operated on a rolling basis, enabling researchers to submit a proposal at any point, which will be considered as swiftly as possible. We would encourage researchers to submit proposals as soon as possible.

Proposals for full economic costs of up to £150,000 for a period of up to 6 months may be submitted. Please note that because this is a rapid response funding call, all projects funded through this route must end by 31st March 2021. Given the evolving context and significant policy interest in real-time information, researchers will be expected to report on initial findings at the midway point.

Context
The Centre is a UKRI Strategic Priorities Fund (SPF) programme, which is designed to bring together world class research across multiple disciplines, with policy-makers, businesses, civil society and international organisations on a scale which is capable of having a real impact on tackling this global challenge. The specific objectives of this programme are to:

- transform our understanding of modern slavery;
- model and bring about a more collaborative approach to responding to modern slavery;
- establish a “network of networks”, to enable better dialogue, knowledge sharing and collaboration in the fight against modern slavery;
- make legal and policy responses to modern slavery more effective; and
- take a distinctively human rights-based approach to tackling modern slavery.

Modern slavery is a global crime, which denies people of their dignity and their basic human rights; it intersects with other vulnerabilities, such as mental health and poverty, and it can cause lasting suffering. In response, the UK Government has subscribed to an international commitment to eradicate modern slavery by 2030, enacted world-leading legislation against modern slavery, and outlines clear research priorities that will enable this goal to be met. The Centre is addressing these research priorities through a partnership approach, working with those who already play a part in eradicating slavery, to put victims and survivors at the heart of research and help them influence future policy development.
Aims of the call

Scope
The purpose of this call is to support original and innovative research, which can act swiftly to improve understanding of the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic is having on those who are vulnerable to slavery, those who are enslaved, and those who are survivors of modern slavery, as well as the organisations which support them, and services that seek to prevent, detect, and prosecute the perpetrators.

Projects may wish to address one or more of the following, noting that the list is not exhaustive and other research questions / ideas are welcome:

- the impact that the COVID-19 global pandemic, and responses to it, are having on the nature and scale of modern slavery, including the demand for, and supply of, enslaved labour, the forms and methods of trafficking and exploitation, and the enforcement of legislation;
- emerging vulnerabilities to modern slavery, caused or exacerbated by COVID-19 and the resulting changes to the labour market and international mobility, and how vulnerable individuals and communities can be protected in these changed circumstances;
- the effectiveness of support services provided for victims and survivors of modern slavery, how their ways of working have been forced to adapt during the COVID-19 pandemic response, and the impact that this is having on those whom they support;
- opportunities for international co-operation to address the health risks posed by trafficking, and to ensure that displaced communities and humanitarian settings are resilient in the face of the pandemic.

The Centre’s requirements for funding under this call

A key aim for the outputs of this call is to improve the evidence base for the impact of the global pandemic on modern slavery, so that policy-makers and practitioners can effectively direct their resources where they are most needed. Although targeted interventions, evidence and/or analysis are expected and welcomed, applications that also take a whole-systems approach are also encouraged.

In addition to the publication of academic outputs which have realised as a result of research funded through the Centre, successful projects will also be required to produce output/s which are intended for, and co-created with, end users, such as survivors, NGOs, government administrations, businesses, front-line staff, etc. It is therefore a requirement that research teams will collaborate and co-create the research projects with those they are seeking to influence from the very outset.

Finally, given the sensitive nature of this research area, which can involve working directly with, or on behalf of, victims and survivors of modern slavery and human trafficking, applicants will have to demonstrate clear plans for safeguarding, and appropriate use and sharing of data. All proposals should demonstrate that they have considered these issues, and include an ethical statement with the proposal.

It is an important criterion that the Centre produces outputs and outcomes that otherwise would not have happened without its support. All projects funded under the Centre, therefore, will have to demonstrate the following:

- **Topicality** – does the proposed project address a live and pressing issue on which there is a clear and recognised need for research / evidence?
• **Relevant and Actionable** to the Centre’s main audiences – Will it be regarded as relevant and useful by the Centre’s stakeholders: policymakers, legislators, businesses, civil society, international organisations, the media and/or the public?

• **Collaboration** – Will the project involve a team which will be drawn from across and outside the lead research organisation (RO), involving at least two non-affiliated organisations working together?

• **Outreach** – Does it engage a non-academic partner with relevant expertise/experience from the outset?

• **Additionality** – Will it be clear that the project could not have been done without facilitation by the Centre?

• **Impact** – Will the output and outcome of the project have a clear and obvious impact which will demonstrate the value of the Centre?

Further information regarding the Policy and Evidence Centre for Modern Slavery can be found on the [UKRI](https://ukri.org) and [Government](https://www.gov.uk) websites.

**Remit and eligibility**

Interdisciplinary boundary-crossing proposals are welcomed, including those that cross arts, humanities, social sciences (AHSS) and STEM. Where proposals extend beyond AHRC’s and ESRC’s remits, they should ensure that they bring the distinctive arts, humanities, or social science research expertise, concepts, ideas and/or approaches centrally into the development of relevant cross-disciplinary fields.

Unless otherwise stated, the eligibility criteria as published in section 3 of the AHRC [Research Funding Guide](https://ahrc.ukri.org/funding/research/researchfundingguide/) will apply. Note that no studentships can be funded via this call. Applicants must be of post-doctoral or equivalent standing.

The principal investigator must meet standard AHRC eligibility criteria and awards will be made to a UK research organisation eligible to receive AHRC funding. Co-Investigators and Project Partners, which can also include businesses, NGOs, charities, government agencies, etc and International co-investigators may be included. Indeed, it is expected that Project Partners will be sought from those non-academic stakeholders with a direct interest in the research/policy outputs. We recognise that cost can be a barrier to inclusion for organisations, particularly NGOs and charities; therefore, non-academic Co-Investigators and Project Partners may be funded at 100% fEC, provided that these costs are no greater than 30% of the total cost of the award.

Applicants will need also to provide assurance, in consultation with their research organisation, that relevant and proportionate due diligence checks have been completed on those partners. A risk-based approach should be undertaken, which considers the motivations and reputational risks to the outcomes of the research, the research organisation, the Centre and the AHRC. Similarly, assurances must be provided demonstrating that safeguarding, ethical, risk and safety assessments have been conducted.

**Completing an application**

Applications need to be submitted through Je-S:

[https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/JeS2WebLoginSite/Login.aspx](https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/JeS2WebLoginSite/Login.aspx)

Except where specifically noted in this call document, standard AHRC policies and guidelines for Open Call Research Grants will apply. These can be found in the Research Funding Guide:

[https://ahrc.ukri.org/funding/research/researchfundingguide/](https://ahrc.ukri.org/funding/research/researchfundingguide/)
To apply: Please select Document Type ‘AHRC Grant’, Scheme ‘Development Grants’ and Call ‘Modern Slavery COVID 19 SPF 2020’.

Applications should include a Case for Support of no more than 4 sides of A4 covering the following issues:

- **Challenge area to be addressed** – a summary of the policy or practical challenge relating to the impact of COVID-19 on modern slavery, and how this research will address the challenge.
- **Research contribution and importance** – expected ways that the research will contribute to advancing knowledge, understanding, data, etc.;
- **Policy contribution and importance** – expected ways that the outputs will produce demonstrable outcomes for the victims and survivors of modern slavery;
- **Research expertise and partnerships** – why the individuals, organisations, and/or partners involved are the most appropriate for undertaking the proposed activities; how the project will support equitable partnership and ways of working (including co-creating the research agenda with non-academic partners; capacity building and/or support for ECRs, etc);
- **Research outputs, outcomes and sustainability** – what will be generated, what will be achieved, how will the learning be embedded, and with whom.

In addition, the following attachments must be provided:

- **Short CVs/Publication Lists**, for each investigator on the grant, and named staff within collaborating organisations and project partners. CVs should be a maximum of two sides of A4. Publication lists, also a maximum of two sides of A4, should highlight both relevant academic publications, plus any materials which have been produced for a non-academic audience or relevant modern slavery stakeholders (e.g. policymakers, NGOs, charities, civil society, businesses, etc.);
- **Letters of Support**, particularly from key non-academic partners or collaborators. These should articulate the importance of the research, how the outputs will benefit victims and survivors of modern slavery and how the partners intend to make use of those outputs. Letters of Support must not exceed two sides of A4.
- **An Ethics and Data Management Plan**, up to two sides of A4, which includes a statement on data safeguarding (i.e. the proposal involves generating or working with significant new data and/or sensitive data), where relevant, and also the method/s and safeguards for working with extremely vulnerable people. Proposals submitted without a statement outlining the ethical risks and mitigating activities for the project will not be considered.

Unless otherwise stated in this call document or in additional conditions, awards made under this call will be issued in accordance with standard AHRC and UKRI grant terms and conditions as outlined in AHRC’s [Research Funding Guide](https://ahrc.ukri.org/funding/research/researchfundingguide/) and [UKRI terms and conditions](https://www.ukri.org/funding/information-for-award-holders/grant-terms-and-conditions/):

**Costs and project timescales**

The maximum funding that may be sought for proposals under this call is £150,000; this limit applies to the total (100%) full economic cost (fEC) of the project, of which AHRC will fund 80% fEC for all costs, except those for non-academic Co-Investigators and Project Partners. Separate contingency budgets should not be included in proposals.
If applications are supporting international collaborations or partners, these will be funded at 100% fEC, in line with AHRC’s standard international co-investigator policy.

Proposals can last up to 6 months, provided that they are complete by 31st March. A clear strategy for the deployment of non-academic outputs, and an indication of their utility beyond the funded period should be demonstrated, and successful applicants will be expected to work with the Modern Slavery Policy and Evidence Centre to develop a strategy for the sustainability of the non-academic output beyond the funded period and for the sustained management of any data collected or produced as a part of the research. Publication and data management plans should meet UKRI standard requirements for open access.

Applicants should seek contributions from project partners, e.g. businesses, government and third sector organisations, where appropriate. In acknowledgment of the fact that some smaller third-sector organisations do not have the capacity to co-fund research activities, costs to support partners from third sector organisations (e.g. NGOs) are eligible under this call. This includes costs for staff salaries, travel and subsistence, other direct costs and overheads. These costs will be funded at 100% fEC and should be listed as Other Directly Incurred Exceptions on the Je-S form. Total costs associated with third sector bodies’ contribution should not normally exceed 30% of the overall cost of the grant at 100% fEC; however, exceptional cases may be considered where the research impact activities require additional work by partners which fall outside their normal activities.

Where projects involve either international co-investigators, businesses, NGOs, charities, etc. or the sub-contracting of significant elements of the funding or research delivery to these organisations, it will be a condition of funding that the lead Research Organisation undertakes appropriate due diligence and financial assurance checks, considering the perceived or real risk associated with such partnerships. A further condition will be that Research Organisations ensure that those partner organisations have in place contextually appropriate procedures for addressing issues of gender, equalities, diversity and inclusion, research integrity, safeguarding, data protection, fraud prevention and compliance with the other standard terms and conditions of UKRI grants.

Capital or infrastructure expenditure (e.g. basic office, laboratory, accommodation, furniture or equipment, building/site construction, maintenance or refurbishment work, etc.) is not an eligible cost under this call although additional costs incurred by existing facilities, e.g. through archiving of project-specific research data/outputs, may be considered.

Costs for equipment purchase under £10,000 will only be considered on an exceptional basis where significant use of equipment is required primarily or solely for the proposed project activity and/or where this is more cost effective than other options, such as hiring equipment.

Funding for PhD or Masters studentships cannot be included under this call. However, involvement of students and early career researchers in research activities and/or related training or capacity building activities is permitted, and appropriate support costs (e.g. travel and subsistence) can be included within proposals.

**Assessment process and criteria**

Applications under this call will be assessed using the following criteria:

- **Fit to call**, including both the research/evidence gap and the proposal for producing policy-relevant material and impact;
• **Research contribution and importance**, the potential for the research to make a significant and original contribution to knowledge, understanding, data and/or research capabilities and to add significant value to existing research;

• **Policy contribution and importance**, the potential for the outputs to make a significant and positive impact on the victims of modern slavery and/or prevent their re-trafficking;

• **Research expertise and partnerships**, the extent to which the proposal provides a convincing case that the individuals, organisations or partners involved are appropriate for undertaking the proposed activities and that it will promote equitable partnerships and ways of working;

• **Feasibility of proposed activities and methods**, including appropriate plans for addressing data, risks, safeguarding, due diligence and gender (and where appropriate, wider) equalities, effective management arrangements and a realistic project plan;

• **Potential for significant impacts**, including a convincing plan for maximising impact and outreach, demonstration of the benefits of this research to the victims and survivors of modern slavery and an articulation of how the outputs and outcomes will lead to recovery or support;

• **Significant research outputs**, including appropriate plans for the outcomes and outputs and plans for the sustainability or legacy of the research; and

• **Value for money**.

Applications will be assessed by peer review and moderation by an assessment panel comprising academic researchers and other stakeholders, including policy-makers and practitioners. Panel meetings will be convened as required throughout the call’s duration, in order to consider proposals and deliver outcomes as swiftly as possible.

**Call timeline**
This is an open call and does not operate under fixed deadlines. You may submit a proposal at any point during the year. Please note that the assessment process for applications submitted to this call takes up to a maximum of 12 weeks (depending on the availability of our review panel). The earliest start date for a project should be no earlier than 3 months after submission to the AHRC.

**Scheme requirements and post award reporting**
The scheme requirements and post award reporting will be as per the [Research Funding Guide](https://www.ukri.org/funding/information-for-award-holders/research-outcomes/), unless otherwise stated.

Investigators will be required to submit a quarterly summary of spend, and a brief narrative summary of activities and outcomes, to the Modern Slavery Policy and Evidence Centre. The Centre will also engage with award holders, to encourage the translation of their research into policy-ready outputs, such as briefings throughout the duration of the award.

Award holders will be required to submit outputs, outcomes and impacts that arise from AHRC’s funding through the Researchfish system. Information can be added to Researchfish at any point once the award has started and award holders will be required to submit updates of this information to AHRC at one ‘submission period’ each year. Award holders will receive an email with log-in details shortly after their award has started. More details on Researchfish are available on the UKRI website here: [https://www.ukri.org/funding/information-for-award-holders/research-outcomes/](https://www.ukri.org/funding/information-for-award-holders/research-outcomes/).
Contact information

For queries about this call such as eligible activities and costs or remit of the call, please contact AHRC at enquiries@ahrc.ukri.org or telephone 01793 416 060 (Monday to Friday 08:30-16:30).

For queries on using Je-S, such as creating and submitting the application form or Je-S account creation, please contact the Je-S Helpdesk on 01793 444 164 or JeSHelp@je-s.ukri.org (Monday to Friday 08:30-17:00).