

UK-China Research-Industry Creative Partnerships: Frequently Asked Questions

Version Control

| Version | Date | Author | Primary Changes |
|---------|----------|--------|------------------------------------|
| 1.0 | 31-7-19 | AHRC | First draft |
| 2.0 | 30-8-19 | AHRC | 3.b added |
| 3.0 | 01-10-19 | AHRC | 3.c amended; 3.d and 3.e added. |
| 4.0 | 08-10-19 | AHRC | 2.f amended |

This FAQ document is intended to support the AHRC call for [UK-China Research-Industry Creative Partnerships](#) and should be read in conjunction with the Call Guidance document. It is anticipated that these FAQs will be a 'living document' that will be regularly updated in response to questions received and developments across Chinese partner organisations. Changes will be recorded in the version control table above. It is therefore recommended that applicants refer back to the document regularly during the application process.

Where the information provided below or in the Call Guidance raises further questions, applicants should contact the AHRC or UKRI China. In the first instance, questions relating specifically to matched funding requirements or Chinese partners should be directed to UKRI China at: Eva.Xie@china.ukri.org. Any other questions, including those relating to wider call details, aims and objectives, areas of thematic focus and context, should be directed to the AHRC at fic@ahrc.ukri.org or telephone: 01793 416060.

1. Focus & framing

- a) *Our theme does not fit into one of the 6 priority areas, does that mean we cannot apply?*

Yes. The 6 themes have been specifically identified due to the manner in which they build on the workshop held in November 2018, the Partnership Development Awards and subsequent discussions with Chinese partners. It is acceptable to include activity that sits across or outside of these themes where there is a clear rationale to do so, but projects must be principally framed around one single theme. Applicants are encouraged to recognise the breadth and inclusivity of the themes. For example, a project based around film could conceivably, depending on its focus, be situated within the performing arts or story-telling and animation themes.

- b) *Setting up this Partnership will be a complex process; given the limited funding and timeframe, how much are you expecting the projects to achieve?*

AHRC and the other partners are aware of the complexities involved in working across both research and industry and the UK and China. A key objective of these awards is to establish conditions for collaboration that extends beyond the funding period and it is recognised that much of the activity and resource investment – particularly during the

initial phase – will be based around the development of the Partnership and understanding the particular challenges and opportunities within the chosen theme that can enable future collaboration. Outputs and impacts must be identified, but they should be clearly defined and demonstrably achievable. Proposals should be framed around a clear focus and be realistic about what can be achieved within the constraints of the award. Applicants will be assessed on the feasibility of their project as well as their ambition and potential impact.

- c) *Why does the Chinese component of projects need to be focused on Shanghai and what does this mean in practice?*

It is necessary for the Chinese component of projects to be focused on Shanghai for two reasons – the fact that it is China’s creative industries hub and therefore provides a logical and concentrated point of focus for the programme; and because AHRC has developed significant partnerships with organisations in Shanghai who will support the programme. For the purposes of the call, ‘Shanghai’ is taken to cover the Yangtze River Delta. It is acceptable for projects to engage partners beyond Shanghai, where this adds value to the Partnership and can leverage additional support.

- d) *The Call Guidance states that activities may be refined during the course of the award, particularly in the early phases. What does this mean in practical terms and how will applications be assessed if the activities presented are subject to change?*

It is expected that proposals will be framed around a clear and compelling vision and that outputs and impacts will be clearly defined. Proposals should set-out a range of activities tailored to the thematic focus of the Partnership. Given the nature of the awards however, as well as the likelihood of ongoing discussions with partners in China and applications to Chinese agencies, it is recognised that flexibility is required within the Partnership model and that some plans may need to be adapted, or new activities added, in order to realise the overarching ambition. This is likely to be particularly important during the early stages of awards. Within this context it would be acceptable, for example, for workshops, conferences, networks or partnership development activities to be added or amended. Applicants are expected to articulate how they will build such flexibility into their plans. It should not, however, constitute a significant realignment of the overall focus and aims of the project. In cases where more fundamental changes are deemed necessary these should be referred to the AHRC for approval.

2. Contribution of Chinese Partners

- a) *You request ‘broad equivalence’ in terms of the contribution of Chinese partners. Does this mean that it is necessary to secure £500k in direct funding in China?*

No. It is recognised that there are fundamental differences between the funding systems and the HEI and creative industry sectors in the UK and China and that there must be flexibility in terms of how matched resource is secured and reported. It is anticipated that this is likely to include multiple sources of match within a single project. As far as possible, applicants should however identify and quantify the sources and proposed strategy for achieving this match and demonstrate how it broadly represents an equivalent

investment to the funding requested from the AHRC. This will be a key requirement of both the assessment and reporting process.

- b) *The Call Guidance indicates that the time of Chinese Investigators involved in a project can be included as match. Is this the case and can the time of other parties in China be included on the same basis?*

Yes. Due to the fact that Chinese researchers generally allocate time to projects by being 'released' from their institutions as part of their contractual arrangements (rather than through additional funding), it is acceptable for the time of Chinese Investigators on a Partnership to be included as part of the matched contribution. This can also apply to the time of other participants including industry representatives and administrative staff. In all cases, this time must be quantifiable and commensurate with the proposed activities. Award holders will be expected to record in a robust manner the inclusion of Chinese staff time as part of the reporting process.

- c) *The Call Guidance states that 'applicants must also be able to demonstrate the leveraging of additional resource from Chinese partners that is to be allocated specifically for the purpose of supporting this programme'. Does this mean that a matched contribution comprising only in-kind salary costs and other in-kind contributions is not sufficient?*

Yes. Given the scale of these awards and the ambition of the programme, it is expected that the Chinese component of each Partnership is also supported by a cash investment specifically allocated to the project from a Chinese source(s). A matched contribution comprising only 'in-kind' costs will not be acceptable unless an exceptional case can be made. There are a number of ways in which this additional resource can be sought (see below) and AHRC does not intend to apply a minimum level to the additional leveraged resource; the rationale for this approach should be clearly articulated in the application and will be a key assessment criterion.

- d) *What form might matched resource from Chinese Universities or Research Institutes take?*

A number of Chinese universities and research institutes have access to various strategic funding schemes set-up by the national or provincial governments to fund major R&D initiatives to support institutional strategic priorities. The Shanghai Top Discipline Scheme, for example, has a dedicated funding strand to support creative industry R&D. The allocation of funding from such schemes to support Chinese engagement with the Partnerships would be an acceptable source of match.

- e) *Why have these particular government funding sources in China been identified and is it acceptable to seek funding from other government sources or funding bodies?*

AHRC has been developing collaborations with the organisations identified in order to secure their support for the programme and create opportunities for Chinese partners to apply for funding through them. It is acceptable for applicants to seek funding from alternative / additional sources, but further information about the source in question should be provided alongside the assurances described in 3 a).

f) *When will further information on Chinese funding sources be available?*

The research funding landscape in China is complex and, in terms of funding bodies and calls focused on the creative industries, no single equivalent organisation to AHRC exists. In order to navigate this landscape, AHRC is working closely with Chinese partners and UKRI China on an ongoing basis regarding plans and schedules for forthcoming funding calls. Further information will be added to this document and communicated via other channels on this basis when it becomes available. Whilst this is subject to change, it is currently expected that the Shanghai Science and Technology Commission will announce the next call under its Fund for International Collaboration in Spring 2020 with projects to start later in the year. The call will have two strands, one of which is researcher-led and the other of which is industry-led.

Applicants are advised to note the following regarding potential Chinese funding sources:

- The Fund for Intergovernmental Collaboration from the Science and Technology Commission of Shanghai Municipality in 2020 will be announced on the following website: <http://stcsm.sh.gov.cn/>
- The Shanghai Cultural and Creative Fund will be announced on the following website in spring 2020: <http://wczi.shccio.com/>
- Eligibility requirements for Chinese applicants to the Shanghai Cultural Development Fund can be found on the following website: <http://www.shcdf.org/>; note that thematic calls will be announced on a rolling basis.

g) *What kind of private sources are acceptable as match?*

Private support for the Chinese component of Partnerships might come from a number of sources and should be tailored to the focus of the project. Generally however, this should take the form of industry match supporting engagement as a partner within a particular project and governed by a clear collaboration agreement. This could, for example, take the form of the provision of time, facilities or other assets of benefit to the project, or a cash contribution to support R&D activities. In all cases where business partners are named as a source of funding, award holders will be required to demonstrate that appropriate due diligence measures are in place. Further information on this basis will be circulated at the point of award and will be a key component of the reporting process.

h) *Is it acceptable to seek funding in China that extends beyond the UK grant period?*

Yes, but you should account for the practical implications of this and describe, for example, how it will impact the division of responsibilities and balance of activities between the two countries.

3. Eligibility and assessment

a) *How will AHRC arrive at funding decisions if the outcome of proposed applications to support the Chinese component of a Partnership is unknown at the point of submission in the UK? What happens if the application in China is ultimately unsuccessful after the project has been approved in the UK?*

It is acknowledged that in some cases – including the government routes identified in the Call Guidance – the outcome of application processes, or indeed the exact content of the

call in China, will not be known at the point of submission to the AHRC. This is understood, but where this is the case applicants must address two points in their application: 1) why – based on the further information to be made available by the AHRC in the coming weeks – you expect the application to be successful in China; and 2) your strategy for leveraging alternative sources of match in China if the proposal is unsuccessful. These will be considered at the review stage. AHRC will liaise with applicants where the latter scenario arises and it is possible that a stage-gate process will be put in place during the award to review the long-term viability of projects where Chinese match is not forthcoming on the basis outlined in the original application.

- b) *Is it possible for UK HEIs, IROs and industry partners to be involved in more than one application?*

Yes. It is acceptable for a UK HEI or IRO to be involved more than one bid. UK-based academics can be involved in more than one application where they can clearly demonstrate that they have the capacity to do so should more than one be successful. However, UK-based academics can be named as Principal Investigator on one bid only. It is also acceptable for an industry partner to be named on more than one application, but only where it can be demonstrated that there is capacity to undertake responsibilities as defined for all projects should more than one be successful, and where there is a clear commitment to their role within each separate project.

- c) *Can Chinese Investigator time be charged against the UK grant?*

Given the matched funding requirements, no, unless an exceptional case can be made.

- d) *Should named Chinese Investigators be included in the list of Investigators on the J-eS form?*

Yes, if possible, but their time should not be costed to the grant unless an exceptional case can be made. In accordance with AHRC's International Co-Investigator policy, applicants should include a Head of Department Statement (or equivalent, as appropriate) for named Chinese Co-Is. Further information on International Co-Is can be found in the [AHRC Research Funding Guide](#). Please note that International Co-Is must be registered with a J-eS account if they are to be named on the application form.

- e) *Can we include investigators from a third country in-line with AHRC's standard International Co-Investigator policy?*

Yes, where this can be justified and clearly adds value to the collaboration. As above, in accordance with AHRC's International Co-Investigator policy, applicants should include a Head of Department Statement (or equivalent, as appropriate) for named International Co-Is.

- f) *Can UK industry partners be named as Co-Investigators?*

Due to current eligibility requirements for AHRC funding, this is not possible. Given the requirement for these awards to be equal research-industry partnerships however, applicants should give careful consideration to how industry partners are embedded

within the management structures and involved in the design and implementation of the project.

- g) *How much 'additional resource' is expected from UK HEI and industry partners and what form can this take?*

AHRC does not intend to set a minimum expectation in this respect but expects to see an appropriate contribution from partners – particularly industry partners – that reflects their commitment to the programme. This is likely to include staff time but might also include access to resources, facilities and other contributions.

- h) *How should the 'commissioning fund' be used and is it mandatory to include provision for this?*

The commissioning fund is intended to provide capacity for the Partnerships to respond flexibly to new opportunities and areas of enquiry as they arise over the duration of the project. It should not be considered contingency funding and, whilst it is not necessary to provide detailed information on how the funding will be deployed, proposals should set-out a clear rationale for their approach to using this pot, describe how it will add value to the overarching aims of the project and identify the types of activity it might support. Inclusion of the commissioning fund is not mandatory.