



# Where Next?

## Scoping Future Arts & Humanities Led Research

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### II. Introduction

The AHRC is pleased to announce a new call for interdisciplinary scoping studies which will explore and develop ideas for interdisciplinary research areas which could form the basis of future research initiatives.

As a constituent part of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) has the opportunity to bid into a number of different central hypothecated funds (that is funds with specific aims or requirements such as interdisciplinarity, ODA eligibility, focus on an industrial challenge, or alignment to government areas of research interest) to support a variety of funding opportunities for its various research communities. The AHRC is seeking to build up a pool of developed ideas which could be used to inform either future bids into these hypothecated funds or taken forward through other mechanisms.

To achieve this, the AHRC is seeking to fund around three in-depth interdisciplinary scoping studies. Proposals must address at least one priority from the [AHRC Delivery Plan](#) and be interdisciplinary in nature; the research must also be clearly led from within the arts and humanities. For the purposes

of this call, 'interdisciplinary' is defined as both between arts and humanities disciplines and between one or more arts and humanities disciplines and disciplines that fall within the remit of other Research Councils. Applicants are strongly encouraged to consider how relevant expertise could be brought in from across the full spectrum of UKRI, including from STEM subjects.

These studies are expected to provide a comprehensive overview of the proposed research area through a range of mechanisms and considerations including, but not limited to: literature reviews; consideration and description of the current research landscape and potential for alignment to this; consideration and description of the timeliness of the research theme; current capability assessments; partnership and networking building activities; consideration of potential mechanisms for delivery and impact.

Applicants should note that they should not attempt to direct their proposal towards a specific hypothecated fund or other funding source but rather focus on the research area and how it touches on broad characteristics such as interdisciplinarity, international collaboration (including ODA focus), industrial challenges, government areas of research interest, or a combination of these. Applicants should also note that responsibility for taking forward any scoped research areas to build them into future bids or through other mechanisms rests with AHRC. Moreover, success in securing a scoping study does not guarantee that AHRC will look to develop the research area into a full bid or take forward through other means. Should funding be secured on themes developed through scoping studies it is expected that this would be allocated through open, competitive, peer reviewed calls; whilst those involved in scoping studies would be eligible to apply under such calls they would not have privileged access to them.

This call will open to applications from **28 January 2020**. Applications should be submitted through the Je-S system by **4pm on Thursday 2 April 2020**. Following submission, applications will need to go through their institution's internal submission process prior to reaching AHRC and applicants should leave enough time for this.

Applicants should note that this is a pilot call and demand is being managed as part of the pilot as set out in Section V. The AHRC will evaluate the call before a commitment is made to any future rounds.

### III. Context

Through UKRI the AHRC currently has access to several central hypothecated funds to support research initiatives. These funds include:

- Strategic Priorities Fund (SPF)
- Strength in Places Fund (SIPF)
- Fund for International Collaboration (FIC)
- Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund (ISCF)
- Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF)
- Newton Fund

Each of these funds spans across the remits of the Research Councils and has its own specific mission, aims and strategic focus. To date the AHRC has been successful in securing a number of new

opportunities for our research communities through these funds. These have offered targeted funding which is additional to our core responsive and strategic programmes, expanding our ability to support world leading arts and humanities research with impact. Recent examples include: the numerous international calls led by AHRC under GCRF and Newton; our support for the creative industries through the ISCF; and, our recently announced support for the development of a unified 'national collection' and for a Policy and Evidence Centre on Modern Slavery and Human Rights funded through the SPF. This call will help AHRC to continue this success in the future as well as providing a wider view of the current and future trends of arts and humanities-led, interdisciplinary research which could in turn inform the direction of AHRC's wider research strategy.

Often opportunities to bid into these hypothecated funds come with short timeframes. Thus, our ability to respond, and likelihood of success, relies on us having a pool of high quality, well developed and evidenced ideas from which we can draw. This call will help to expand the pool of ideas staff at AHRC can draw from when future iterations of current hypothecated funds, or other potential opportunities, arise.

## **IV. Aims of the Call**

### **A. Aims**

The purpose of this Call is to draw out and gain a pipeline of scoped research areas from the arts and humanities community that could be provided to and developed by the AHRC into larger bids and Calls to hypothecated programmes or through other mechanisms. By a 'scoped research area', AHRC means a scoping study, and associated partnership building and landscape review activities, which sets out to provide a comprehensive overview of the research area and its potential development and impact. Proposed areas of research should be bold and ambitious in their scope, looking to push forward high impact arts and humanities led interdisciplinary research in a particular area.

By gaining access to scoping work in these areas AHRC will be able to develop clearer picture of both state of the art research led by the arts and humanities and of areas that are ripe to be developed further through major funding opportunities as they arise. The scheme will provide successful applicants with up to £150,000 (fEC) to develop and scope the initial idea and submit a report to AHRC in a state which could then be used as the basis for future bids to hypothecated funds or taken forward through other mechanisms. It will also allow AHRC to continually understand and engage with the latest novel and innovative interdisciplinary ideas within our community which will allow our bank of ideas to be continually added to and enhanced.

The primary purpose of this Call is not to fund original research but to work on a comprehensive scoping of a research areas through engagement and discovery activities. Successful applications will take the form of scoping studies that will report findings from the idea and proposed next steps.

### **B. Scope and Objectives**

The objective of the scheme is to fund around three comprehensive scoping studies. The scope and objectives of the call are purposefully broad in order to ensure the AHRC receives applications from a wide range of research areas. However, all applicants will be required to meet the following objectives:

- Relate the bid to one or more of the areas in AHRC's current Delivery Plan
- Be clearly led from disciplines within the arts and humanities. The primary classification should be an AHRC primary classification, which can be found on [page 77 of the AHRC Research Funding Guide](#)
- Be innovative and interdisciplinary in their focus and bring together academics from different disciplines, both inside and outside the arts and humanities
- Be timely and relevant to current challenges and research agendas, explaining how these fit into the current research and policy landscape
- Highlight how the research areas cover at least one of the following broad characteristics:
  - Include potential for cross-national funding partnerships, for example through alignment with the priorities of research funders in other countries or of international research funders
  - address the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or other major global/international development challenges
  - Include a clear industrial focus and challenge
  - Include reference to clear policy interest, as indicated by government department areas of research interest statements or other related documents
- Engage with and seek the input of non-academic organisations as relevant to the area of research
- Highlight potential co-funding opportunities for the research area being scoped, where relevant

All applicants should also set out the short- and longer-term potential impact of the research area being scoped, as well as the clear outputs of the proposal. This should include, as a minimum, a scoping study report of the idea to understand its validity and to work the idea into a usable format. This should incorporate findings from any literature and landscape review, engagement activities etc. The report should be written in a form that will allow AHRC to take a decision on how the study and idea could be taken forward and what further research would be needed in the short and long term. We would expect outputs such as literature reviews to be published by applicants (e.g. via websites) and the AHRC also reserves the right to publish all or part of the scoping study report itself.

Applicants should note, that this call is not intended to support the development of specific individual research projects or centres which would then be taken forward by the scoping study applicants but rather to develop an agenda which would open up opportunities for the wider arts and humanities and inter-disciplinary research communities. Responsibility for taking forward any scoped research areas to build them into future bids or through other mechanisms rests with AHRC. Moreover, success in securing a scoping study award does not guarantee that AHRC will look to develop the research area into a full bid or take forward through other means.

## V. Eligibility

AHRC's normal institutional eligibility rules as detailed in the [Research Funding Guide](#) apply for this scheme, along with our normal eligibility rules for Principal Investigators (not Leadership Fellows eligibility rules), Co-Investigators and Research Assistants. International co-investigators are

permitted for this Call and follow the normal eligibility rules for Research Grants as detailed in the [Research Funding Guide](#).

There are no limits to the numbers of co-investigators or Research Assistants able to be named on the application. Given the nature of these awards we would encourage the involvement of early career researchers in the proposals.

All UK-based research organisations (ROs) that are eligible for Research Council funding will be eligible to lead on a maximum of **two** proposals to this call. This does not preclude ROs being included in other proposals which they are not leading (e.g. through inclusion of a Co-Investigator).

## VI. Guidance on Costs and Project Timescales

The total budget available per grant will be £150,000 FEC, including exceptions. The maximum project duration is nine months, and the length of these projects must be justified. The final scoping study report must be written and submitted to AHRC within this period.

The AHRC will give no particular steer on what the budget needs to be spent on, but applicants should include a clear justification of the balance of funding between networking, partnership building, review and other activities within the application based on the needs of the area of research identified. To give further clarity within this area eligible costs can include, but are not limited to:

- Workshops and costs related to partnership and network building
- Costs related to any international co-investigator costs where applicable
- Salary costs

Applicants may wish to include costs related to bringing applicants together and holding workshops to further refine the scope and focus of the research area and activities. Costs can also be included for digital and social media and other online methods of engagement as relevant to the project. Projects will be funded under FEC rules. The rules around international co-investigators costs as stipulated in the [Research Funding Guide](#) also apply and as such exceptional costs are permitted.

## VII. Application Process and Format

Unless otherwise stated, the application process and format as published in the AHRC Research Funding Guide will apply.

Applications should be submitted through the Je-S system at the latest by **4pm on 2 April 2020** and will need to go through the appropriate institution submission process. You should submit your proposal using the Research Councils' Joint electronic Submission (Je-S) System (<https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/>).

To prepare a proposal form in Je-S:

- log-in to your account and choose 'Documents' from the menu;
- then select 'New Document';
- 'AHRC' as the Council,
- 'Standard Proposal' as the Document Type;
- 'Development Grants' as the Scheme;
- 'Where Next? Scoping Future Arts & Humanities Led Research 2 April 2020' as the Call/Type/Mode and
- 'Create Document'.

Je-S will then create a proposal form, displaying the relevant section headings. Using the 'Help' link at the top of each section will provide guidance relevant to that section of the form.

Note that selecting 'Submit document' on your proposal form in Je-S initially submits the proposal to your host organisation's administration, not to AHRC. ***Please remember to allow sufficient time for your organisation's submission process between submitting your proposal to them and the Call closing date.***

Applications should address the aims of the Call as listed in Section 2.

The following are a list of attachments that are permitted for this Call. Unless otherwise stated please see Section 4 of the [AHRC Research Funding Guide](#) for further information about these attachments:

Attachment	Requirement and page limits (sides of A4)
Case for Support	Compulsory. No more than 4 sides A4. The Case for Support can use whatever headings and layout that are appropriate but must include a clear statement on how this application meets each objective of the scheme and particularly the priorities within the AHRC Delivery Plan with which it is aligned
Curriculum Vitae	Compulsory for the PI, each Co-I and any named researchers. (no more than 2 sides A4 each)
Publication Lists	Compulsory for the PI and each Co-I (no more than 2 sides A4 each)
Justification of Resources	Compulsory: Justify the resources required. (no more than 2 sides of A4)
Project Partner Letter of Support	Compulsory for each named project partner. (no more than 2 sides A4 each)
International Co-I Head of Dept Statement	Compulsory where an International Co-I is included in the application (no more than 2 sides A4 each)
Visual Evidence	Optional: for non-textual evidence in support of the proposal. Should not include Gantt charts of workplans. (no more than 2 sides of A4)

## VIII. Assessment Process and Criteria

The proposal will be assessed against the aims and objectives of the scheme with the following criteria taken into account:

### Quality

- the extent to which the proposal meets the specific aims of the scheme as outlined in this call document
- the significance and importance of the area of research, and of the contribution it will make to developing an area in which the AHRC can potentially develop further
- the extent to which the proposed activities will generate genuine and productive interaction across boundaries (e.g. disciplinary, conceptual, theoretical, methodological and/or international), including the potential for them to lead to advances in knowledge and understanding in the fields concerned and/or new high-quality cross-disciplinary research projects
- the level of collaboration between different organisations and interaction between participants in the proposal (creative techniques for fostering collaboration and partnership development are welcomed) and an articulation of the value that this will add to the development of research in that area
- the quality of the scoping process and activities outlined, including mechanisms of engagement and plans for production of the scoping study report

### Strategic Fit

- Fit with one or more priorities within the AHRC's Delivery Plan and articulation of how the proposed area of research will take the priority(ies) forward
- Fit with UKRI's Strategic Prospectus or wider ambitions
- Fit to the wider research landscape, indicating how current and previous investments (research, infrastructure, skills) form the basis for investment in this area.
- potential alignment with the requirements of future sources of funding (whether hypothecated funds or other opportunities)

### Potential

- The potential for the proposal to bring disciplines together around interdisciplinary research questions or challenge.
- The degree of innovation in the proposed area of research to be scoped, including how it is novel, groundbreaking and timely.
- The potential of the proposed research area being scoped to have significant long-term non-academic impact.

### People and Management

- The quality of the team assembled to deliver the scoping study, drawing on the relevant areas of expertise either within the core team or through engagement activities undertaken within the scoping study.

- Clear proposals for managing and leading the project to ensure that it delivers its expected outputs to time and quality.
- the appropriateness of the level and balance (in terms of time and seniority) of the proposed staffing on the project, and the extent to which opportunities will be made available for less experienced researchers

### Call timetable

Proposals will be assessed by an expert assessment panel. However, AHRC may introduce additional assessment processes based on demand.

Activity	Date
Call live on website	16 January 2020
Call open	28 January 2020
Deadline for submissions	2 April 2020
Checking and assessment	From 2 April 2020
Panel meeting	Late May 2020
Funding decisions to be issued	June 2020
Start date of awards	July 2020

## IX. Scheme Requirements and Post Award Reporting

Unless otherwise stated, the scheme requirements and post award reporting as stated in the AHRC Research Funding Guide will apply.

Award holders will be required to submit a written scoping study report to the AHRC and present this to AHRC's senior leadership to explain the outputs, outcomes and impacts of the work that provides advice and guidance on how AHRC could work this research into meaningful hypothecated fund bids, calls or through other mechanisms. Award holders will also be required to work closely with an assigned AHRC Investment Manager, providing regular progress reports as the scoping study develops given that funding opportunities that relate to the area of the study may emerge over the course of the award. AHRC would expect the successful award holders to attend a meeting convened by the AHRC prior to or soon after commencing the work to discuss the aims and focus of the scheme and projects further.

Applicants will also be required to add any outputs or impacts that arise from AHRC's funding into the Researchfish system. Information can be added to Researchfish at any point once the award has started but award holders will also be required to 'submit' 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](#)



### **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](mailto:enquiries@ahrc.ukri.org) or telephone: 01793 416060 (available Monday to Friday 8:30-17:00)

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 444164 or [jeshelp@je-s.ukri.org](mailto:jeshelp@je-s.ukri.org) (available Monday to Friday 08:30 – 17:00).