



Global Challenges Research Fund – RCUK Collective Fund

Growing Research Capability to Meet the Challenges Faced by Developing Countries

Deadline for Intention to Submit: 25 October 2016
Closing date for full proposals: 06 December 2016

Summary

The Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) RCUK Collective Fund invites applications for strategic programmes to grow research capability to meet the challenges faced by developing countries.

The GCRF aims to support excellent research that addresses the challenges faced by developing countries, informing evidence based solutions through:

- challenge-led disciplinary and interdisciplinary research
- strengthening capacity for research and innovation within both the UK and developing countries by supporting excellent research and researchers
- providing an agile response to emergencies where there is an urgent research need.

Supporting awards in the range of £2 - 8 million over four years this call aims to grow the research base in the UK and strengthen capacity overseas to address research challenges informed by the expressed needs of developing countries.

Applications should set out a coherent and strategic vision for programmes encompassing a range of activities including capacity and capability strengthening, partnership building and research. This activity should build on the strengths of the applicant organisation/s and be framed around up to three development challenges as informed by the UK Aid Strategy and/or the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Partnership building between UK research organisations and researchers and other partners (NGOs, governments and business) in developing countries is an essential part of this call although co-funding from partners is not mandatory.

Applications are expected at an institutional/organisational or small consortia level with individual organisations permitted to lead on no more than two applications each.

1 Background to the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF)

In 2015 the world committed to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)¹ that aspire to improve the lives of everyone on the planet, with a particular emphasis on reducing the inequality and tackling the poverty experienced by those living in developing countries. At a time of widening gaps in wealth and opportunity, where poor health, nutrition and education are experienced in complex and challenging contexts, world-leading research and innovation is more than ever needed to drive development agendas and make progress towards the SDGs, to improve the livelihoods and welfare of people living in developing countries.

UK Research Councils wish to leverage world-leading UK research for the benefit of – and in full partnership with – developing countries through a new fund under the UK's commitment to Official Development Assistance (ODA) - the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF). The GCRF has been set up to fund research which promotes the economic development and welfare of developing countries. Research funded under the GCRF is aiming to lead to beneficial impact so that it helps the largest number of people to the greatest extent in the most cost effective way.

The GCRF will significantly increase investment in research focused on the challenges faced by the world's most vulnerable populations and will have sustainable development at its heart. It will leverage and mobilise existing networks and establish new networks of global excellence and new multidisciplinary research responses to address the problems faced by developing countries. The GCRF will be delivered by individual delivery partners, with some Research Council and National Academy calls already announced, and also jointly through the GCRF RCUK Collective Fund.

The GCRF will be challenge-led and problem-focused, thereby enabling the UK research base to become more agile and responsive when addressing the key challenges enshrined in the UK Aid Strategy² and in the UN's SDGs. The challenges for the GCRF RCUK Collective Fund are still being developed but an initial set proposed by RCUK based on input from a series of town meetings and the GCRF Strategic Advisory Group³ are set out in the annex to this document 'GCRF: Research Agenda for Enabling Change'.

2 Aims of the Call

The first priority of the GCRF RCUK Collective Fund will be to grow research capacity and capability to meet the challenges faced by developing countries. It will do this by strengthening capacity in developing countries, enhancing existing collaborations between UK and researchers in developing countries as well as building new research partnerships, and increasing engagement of the UK research base with the challenges faced by developing countries.

¹ <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/>

² https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/478834/ODA_strategy_final_web_0905.pdf

³ <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/gcrf/sagtor/>

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Key features of the call are to:

- Grow people based research capacity and capability, building skills across career stages in both the UK and developing countries, to enable the very best research to address challenges faced by developing countries.
- Build stronger and lasting relationships between UK research organisations and research organisations and other partners (e.g., NGOs, governments and business) in developing countries.
- Deliver research outcomes with the potential for significant impact on the welfare and economic development of developing countries in line with Official Development Assistance (ODA) criteria.
- Increase the engagement of the UK research community with international development challenges, nurturing environments in which UK research can better address global development challenges and produce real-world outcomes in developing countries. This will include the enhancement of existing international development-focused expertise and the reorientation of UK-focused expertise towards the challenges faced by developing countries.

3 Call Scope

Challenges

Applications are invited for balanced programmes of capacity and capability strengthening, partnership building and research through a range of activity. They should be framed around up to three development challenges under one coherent vision and should reflect the strength and breadth of high quality UK research in the organisations involved. These challenges should be consonant with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and/or the UK Aid Strategy.

The research identified to address the challenges should build on existing institutional research strengths while looking to develop new partnerships as well as enhance existing ones.

Examples of thematic areas that applications may address (drawn from the GCRF Research Agenda for Enabling Change - see Annex) include:

- 1. Secure and resilient food systems supported by sustainable agriculture**
- 2. Sustainable health and well being**
- 3. Inclusive and equitable quality education**
- 4. Clean air, water and sanitation**
- 5. Renewable energy and materials**
- 6. Sustainable livelihoods supported by strong foundations and infrastructure for sustainable, inclusive economic growth and innovation**
- 7. Resilience and action on short-term environmental shocks and long-term environmental change**
- 8. Sustainable cities and communities**
- 9. Understand and effectively respond to forced displacement and multiple refugee crises**
- 10. Reduce conflict and promote peace, justice and humanitarian action**
- 11. Reduce poverty and inequality, including gender inequalities**

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Applicants are not limited to the above themes. Proposals that cut across or link together the above themes, or that engage with other dimensions of either the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and/or the UK Aid Strategy, are welcome.

Funding Available

Awards are expected to be in the range of £2 - 8 million research council contribution with the final figure dependent on the scope of the proposal and the scale of the challenge/s. It is vital that each application demonstrates good value for money.

Awards should have a four year duration starting on 01 April 2017 with the potential for future extension dependent on their progress and the availability of funding.

Programmes are expected to undertake a range of activities including a significant amount of partnership building in the inception phase. To assess initial progress funded programmes will be subject to a stage gate review after the first 12 months.

The overall budget available to support this call will be confirmed in the autumn and will be dependent on the confirmation of the collective GCRF Strategy across all Delivery Partners, BEIS deployment from the unallocated GCRF and the receipt of sufficient high quality proposals.

Co-funding from partners is not mandatory for this call but is welcome where appropriate depending on the partners' ability to contribute. Additional support from partners can take the form of in kind contributions, e.g., staff time, access to facilities, as well as cash contribution.

Essential Requirements for Programmes

1. Applications must demonstrate that they meet ODA compliance criteria (see GCRF ODA Guidance⁴) outlining which country/countries on the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) list will directly benefit, how the application is directly and primarily relevant to the development challenges of those countries, and how the outcomes will promote the economic development and welfare of a country or countries on the DAC list.
2. The GCRF is challenge-led and problem-focused. Applications should focus on up to three development challenges. The key research questions that will address these challenges should be identified including how they will contribute to the realisation of the UN SDGs and/or the UK Aid Strategy.
3. Applications should set out a programme of activities, framed around these challenges, strengthening capacity in developing countries and growing capability in the UK. Plans should include skills development of people across all research career stages with the primary aim of improving their ability to undertake research on the identified challenges. The supporting infrastructure should also be considered including professional support services, e.g., research management. Plans should be underpinned by a strong commitment to inclusion, equality and diversity.
4. Engagement with developing countries is essential. Plans to build meaningful and lasting partnerships with researchers and other partners (NGOs, governments and business) in developing countries should be outlined including how they will be involved in identifying the specific research challenges that will be addressed, co-creation of the research questions and implementation of the pathways to impact.

⁴ <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/international/gcrfodaquidance-pdf/>

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5. The GCRF aims to deliver significant impact in developing countries. Applications must outline the pathways to impact including the strategy for engaging the relevant stakeholders to ensure the potential beneficial impacts of the research are realised. Plans for monitoring and evaluation of the extent to which the lives of people in developing countries have benefited and/or are likely to benefit from the research should be outlined.

6. The GCRF will transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries and assemble the relevant knowledge and skills from across the arts, humanities, social sciences and natural sciences and engineering. Applications must outline how they will facilitate and promote collaborative and cross-disciplinary ways of working and assemble the disciplinary expertise necessary to tackle the development challenge/s in question. This should build on existing institutional research strengths where possible.

7. Programmes must have a coherent integrated vision and management plan with the ambition to build a legacy beyond the end of the award. Applications should outline how they link to existing institutional partnerships and strategies, how they will complement existing investments in the area, and how they will seek to ensure that capacity and capability is sustained and strengthened in the future.

4 How to Apply

Who can apply?

Applications are invited from UK Higher Education Institutions, research institutes and all independent research organisations (IROs) that are eligible for funding from any one research council. For more information on eligibility please go to <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/eligibilityforrcs/>.

Applications may be considered from either single organisations or small consortia. **In order to manage the demand of this call, organisations will only be eligible to lead on a maximum of two applications.**

The Principal Investigator must be employed at the lead organisation, have sufficient standing within the organisation and have demonstrable ability to lead and manage a large scale, integrated work programme.

The applicant team must encompass the appropriate mix of disciplines and expertise required to address the development challenge/s. Participation from disciplines that have not traditionally engaged with development challenges and whose research would provide substantial benefit to developing countries should be encouraged.

Co-Investigators are expected to have significant intellectual input and form part of the leadership team. Co-Investigators from overseas research organisations based in countries on the DAC list are encouraged although any funds distributed overseas will be directed through the lead (UK) institution – the proportion of funds directed overseas is at the discretion of the applicants and should be based on the best balance to achieve the programme's objectives.

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What can be applied for?

£2 - £8 million research council contribution will be available for each programme over four years allowing a range of activities to be supported. Proposed programmes should be innovative and flexible, building on the identified needs including, for example:

Capacity and Capability building funding, supporting:

- Bespoke training to develop capacity and capability at all career levels (e.g., technicians, technologists, doctoral students, postdoctoral researchers, early and mid-career researchers etc.)
- Development of professional and transferable skills as well as technical and core skills
- Hiring and retention of key staff in the UK and overseas (including research leaders in developing countries as co-investigators)

Research funding to address development challenges, supporting:

- Research staff based in the UK and overseas for collaborative research projects
- Feasibility, scoping, exploratory, proof of concept studies
- Research costs, e.g., field research costs, consumables, facility access costs etc.
- Sandpits and ideas creation events

Partnership building funding, supporting:

- Seminars and workshops to explore and identify specific areas for cooperation and to enhance the building of partnerships and collaborations
- Secondment/movement of people (including students as appropriate to their research programmes), e.g., between UK and overseas research organisations or between research organisations (UK and overseas) and Industry/3rd sector/Government

Operational funding, supporting:

- Support costs ,e.g., programme/research managers, administrative support
- Communications and public engagement
- Monitoring and impact evaluation costs

Funding for new PhD studentships is not eligible as part of this call, although funds may be used to fund research and travel costs for students supported through existing routes. Small equipment and consumables may be requested where appropriate as long as individual items are below £10,000.

Due to the nature of the programmes it is recognised that funds may need to be used flexibly to achieve the aims of the award and to respond to new opportunities. Proposals should outline how funds will be managed flexibly.

Proposals should be submitted on a full economic cost basis recognising that UK research organisation costs will be supported at 80 per cent FEC. The costs for work undertaken at an overseas organisation (on the DAC list) are admissible summarised in the following table:

Description	Research Councils Contribution (per cent)
Costs incurred for overseas Co-Investigators and any locally employed staff, e.g., per cent of actual salary based on time worked on the grant (entered as exceptions on J-eS form).	100
Costs incurred by the overseas organisation and associated with the research and training, e.g., consumables, field work etc. (entered as exceptions on J-eS form).	100

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Costs incurred by overseas investigators or staff for travel and expenses (entered as exceptions on J-eS form).	100
A contribution towards indirect and estates costs at the overseas organisation is permissible, calculated at up to 20% of the total salary costs charged to the grant for all overseas staff (entered as exceptions on J-eS form).	100

Applicants should seek contributions from project partners, e.g., business, government and third sector organisations where appropriate. In acknowledgment of the fact 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 (up to 1 year FTE), travel and subsistence, other direct costs and overheads. Costs will be funded at 100 per cent FEC and should be entered as exceptions on J-eS form. Total costs associated with third sector bodies' contribution must not exceed 30 of the overall cost of the grant at 100 per cent FEC.

Registering your Intention to Submit

In order to be eligible to submit a full proposal applicants must register their intention to submit via filling in the smart survey form on the call webpage by **16.00** on **25 October 2016**. **Late submissions will not be accepted.** The intention to submit should contain details of the leadership team, proposal title, ODA summary, summary of the research challenges and mix of disciplines, and any ethical considerations.

Guidance on writing a full application

After an intention to submit is received the PI will be contacted by the RCUK GCRF team with more detailed Je-S submission instructions and guidance. The full application should consist of:

- Single Je-S application form for each programme
- Full case for support – up to 10 sides
- Pathways to Impact – up to two sides
- Justification of resources – up to four sides (up to two UK and two international)
- ODA compliance statement – one side
- CVs – up to two sides per named applicant
- Letters of support – up to two sides per letter.

Guidance on what is required in the full proposal sections is below.

Full Case for Support

The case for support should be a maximum of **10 sides of A4** and should use the following headings:

- **Vision and Objectives**

The overall vision and objectives of the programme - including an overview of the major challenges being addressed, the strategy to grow research capacity and capability to address these challenges, and the expected outcomes of the programme.

- **Development Challenges**

Description of the challenge/s being addressed, the key research questions under those challenges and how they will contribute to the realisation of the UN SDGs and/or the UK Aid Strategy.

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- **Growing Research Capability**

Description of the plans to strengthen capacity in developing countries and grow capability in the UK including skills development across all career stages to tackle the challenges identified.

- **Leadership and Management**

Plans for the overall management of the programme including how funds will be used flexibly to achieve the programmes objectives. Track record of the applicant team including their proposed contribution to the programme and evidence they have the necessary diverse set of skills to deliver the vision and objectives.

- **Partnerships and Collaboration**

The strategy to enhance and build meaningful and lasting partnerships with researchers and other partners (business, third sector organisations, governments) in developing countries including how the programme will facilitate and promote collaborative and cross-disciplinary ways of working and assemble the disciplinary expertise necessary to tackle the development challenge/s in question.

- **Legacy and the Wider Landscape**

How the programme plans to link to existing institutional partnerships and strategies, how it will complement existing investments in the area, and how it will ensure that capacity and capability is sustained and strengthened beyond the end of the award.

Pathways to Impact

The pathways to impact should be a **maximum of two sides** and explain the programme's strategy for engagement with all relevant stakeholders to ensure the potential beneficial impacts of the research are realised. It should also include plans for monitoring and evaluation of the potential beneficial impacts of the research and the extent to which the lives of people in developing countries are likely to benefit.

ODA compliance statement

The ODA compliance statement should be a **maximum of one side** and explicitly demonstrate how the proposal meets key ODA requirements. It must answer the following three questions in order:

- 1. Which country/countries on the DAC list will directly benefit from this proposal?**
- 2. How is your proposal directly and primarily relevant to the development challenges of these countries?**
- 3. How do you expect that the outcome of your proposed activities will promote the economic development and welfare of a country or countries on the DAC list?**

CVs

CVs (**two sides per applicant**) should be provided for all named investigators.

Letters of Support

Please attach letters from all organisations involved including international partners articulating how the award aligns with the organisation's research strategy. The letter should be signed by the Pro-VC for Research or equivalent.

Statements of support are required from all project partners involved in the proposal and listed on the Je-S form. These letters from project partners should:

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- confirm their rationale for support for the programme and describe how they have been involved in the preparation of the proposal
- confirm any contribution of cash and in-kind support
- show an outline of their intended involvement during the lifetime of the programme and be dated and on headed paper, making clear the role of the signatory in the stakeholder organisation

5 Assessment Procedure

Process

Proposals submitted to this call will undergo a two-stage peer review process.

Stage 1: Proposals submitted by the deadline will be considered by a multi-disciplinary peer review panel with representation from across academia and other stakeholder groups, e.g., NGOs in the UK and internationally and assessed against the below criteria. Applicants whose proposals are successful at stage 1 will be invited to interview. Applicants will be asked to hold a date for the interview and will be informed as to whether they will be interviewed by the end of January/beginning of February 2017.

Stage 2: The lead applicant/s will be interviewed by a generalist peer review panel; details of the assessment process will be provided with the full submission guidance.

The panels will use the below criteria to assess the proposals and make a recommendation to the research councils for funding. This call aims to support a diverse portfolio of activities that cover a broad range of developing country geographies, disciplines and development challenges while ensuring high quality applications are funded. As part of this process the panel reserves the right to recommend adjustments to proposals before funding is awarded.

Assessment Criteria for Proposals

- **Vision and Objectives** – The quality of the overall vision including appropriateness of the proposed development challenges and the research approaches to address those challenges.
- **Growing Research Capability** – Quality of the plans to strengthen capacity in developing countries and grow capability in the UK including training at all levels and their appropriateness in addressing the identified development challenges.
- **Impact, ODA and Evaluation** - The potential of the research to contribute to the realisation of the UN SDGs and/or the UK Aid Strategy including potential scale and significance of impact on developing countries and the eligibility of the programme for Official Development Assistance (ODA). Appropriateness of the plans for monitoring and evaluating the progress and impact of the programme.
- **Leadership and Management** – The strength of the management plans and the ability of the PI and leadership team to deliver the proposed vision.
- **Partnerships and Collaboration**– The strength of the overall strategy for engagement with developing countries including the extent to which developing countries and stakeholders will be involved in joint framing of research questions and implementing the pathways to impact and how the programme will facilitate and promote collaborative and cross-disciplinary ways of working.
- **Legacy and wider landscape** – The appropriateness of the programme's link to existing institutional partnerships and strategies, how it will complement existing investments in the area, and how it will ensure that capacity and capability is sustained and strengthened beyond the end of the award.

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Timetable

August 2016	Call Issued
25 October 2016 (16:00)	Closing date for Intention to Submit
Early November 2016	Full J-eS guidance issued to applicants
06 December 2016 (16:00)	Closing date for receipt of full proposals
Late January / Early February 2017	Full stage assessment including interviews
Mid-February 2017	Decisions announced (formal grant offer to follow)
01 April 2017	Awards start

Contacts

If you have any questions about the call, please refer to our FAQs document in the first instance. If you have any further questions please contact:

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Change log

Name	Date	Version	Change
Robert Felstead	18/08/2016	1	N/A

Annex - GCRF: Research Agenda for Enabling Change

The GCRF aims to support excellent research that directly contributes to the development and welfare of people in developing countries. Our vision is to create new knowledge and drive innovation that helps to ensure that everyone across the globe has access to:

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- 1. Secure and resilient food systems supported by sustainable agriculture**
- 2. Sustainable health and well being**
- 3. Inclusive and equitable quality education**
- 4. Clean air, water and sanitation**
- 5. Renewable energy and materials**

Rapid population growth and increased consumption are placing a major burden on the earth's resources. These populations are increasingly shifting from rural to urban areas. Each of the five challenge areas listed above must be placed in the context of the need to create sustainable economies and societies, and the need to understand and address the local and global challenges of population growth and pressure on the earth's environment. The GCRF will also encourage research that for the longer-term builds:

- 6. Sustainable livelihoods supported by strong foundations for inclusive economic growth and innovation**
- 7. Resilience and action on short-term environmental shocks and long-term environmental change**
- 8. Sustainable cities and communities**

It is increasingly recognised that development, peace and security are indivisible. Developing an understanding of the institutions that enable the development of peaceful societies, good governance systems, and respect for human rights and the rule of law - and the means to strengthen these - is paramount. Progress against the pursuit of sustainable development goals has been particularly challenging in fragile and conflict-affected states, while multiple refugee crises are applying mounting pressure in countries of origin, transit and destination. The GCRF will therefore also support research that enables us to:

- 9. Understand and effectively respond to forced displacement and multiple refugee crises**
- 10. Reduce conflict and promote peace, justice and humanitarian action**
- 11. Reduce poverty and inequality, including gender inequalities**

The challenges facing societies and individuals across the globe are often complex, protracted and multi-faceted. The GCRF is designed to encourage multidisciplinary research that offers a holistic, whole-system view of these challenges, and generates new insights into how they could be tackled. The growing number of actors and agencies involved in responding to the needs of the world's poorest populations requires a range of stakeholders, in the developed and developing worlds, to work in partnership to tackle poverty, improve welfare, and bring an end to violence and conflict. Proposals should therefore demonstrate strong partnerships with these stakeholders. Research should be sensitive to local context and need, and be considered relevant and useful by development actors and people in low and middle income countries. Pathways to impact should be appropriate and tailored to the particular challenges being addressed.

The links between these global challenges are also vitally important. There is considerable opportunity at the interfaces between these challenges for transformative, multidisciplinary research. Proposals that focus on the intersection or "nexus" between different challenges to deepen our understanding of how they relate to each other, potential trade-offs, and cross-cutting or underlying issues that affect all of them, are particularly welcome. It should be noted that the challenges listed above are illustrative of our aspirations for the Fund, and are not intended to limit innovative proposals that address the key principles as outlined here.