

## British Academy Early Career Researcher Network Seed Fund Programme 2025/26 Scheme Guidance and FAQs

The [British Academy Early Career Researcher Network](#) (BA ECRN) invites proposals for nine-month research projects, either as joint collaborations or individual efforts. This Seed Fund programme aims to foster the development of new research initiatives and partnerships while supporting the career progression of Early Career Researchers (ECRs). The awards are specifically designed to provide ECRs, particularly those with limited experience in securing funding, an opportunity to enhance their research portfolio and gain leverage for further funding from the Academy and other sources.

We are particularly interested in supporting unique and innovative research projects that reach a diverse range of ECRs. Applicants are encouraged to propose interdisciplinary and collaborative projects, especially those that involve partnerships with non-HEI (Higher Education Institutions) organisations such as Independent Research Organisations (IROs), charities, and industry. We also welcome collaborations with independent researchers outside of HEIs.

**Call Opens:** Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> September 2025

**Call Closes:** Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> November 2025 at 5pm.

Flexi-Grant Application link will be made available on 24<sup>th</sup> September to ECRN members.

Proposals can request up to **£5,000** of funding. These small awards are intended to cover the direct costs associated with activities that promote the development of new research collaborations. For the **2025/26** programme, we anticipate awarding between **4** and **6** grants per Cluster, with the possibility of additional awards depending on available funding.

For details on previously awarded projects from the 2024/25 round, please see [here](#)

Examples of project costs may include, but are not limited to:

- Pump-priming activities (such as meetings, sandpits, away days, writing retreats) to develop new research projects, perhaps with small scale outputs that will lead to larger grant submissions;
- Research activity, including small equipment purchase, specialist services (e.g., transcription, videography, printing), venue hire, participant engagement incentives, travel and subsistence;
- Activity linking research or outcomes to external partners and interested parties such as creative industries, charities, businesses, policymakers, or government organisations; or for public and widening participation engagement activities.

We cannot fund investigator or staff salaries or overheads. Specialist consultants may be engaged but applicants should show how consultants will be selected, engaged, and paid within the funding time limits. These grants are not to be used for conference or event attendance.

These awards aim to be flexible and agile, responding to the needs of British Academy Early Career Researcher Network members and are an opportunity to develop new partnerships and explore innovative and more risky, novel concepts.

### Eligibility and Funding Details

The programme is open to:

- Members of the British Academy Early Career Researcher Network who have attended **three** British Academy Early Career Researcher Network events, online or in-person (ECRs joining in September from the new South East, East of England and Yorkshire and Humber Clusters will be exempt from this event attendance requirement).
- Both the lead applicant and co-applicant must be members of the British Academy Early Career Researcher Network and meet the minimum event requirement.

Eligible researchers must:

- **not** have received grant funding over £11,000, within the last two years, from the British Academy or elsewhere prior to the application deadline.
- produce an end of project report 3 months after the research project is complete.

Applications will be assessed by a Fellow of the British Academy and fellow ECRN members. Funds will be made available to successful applicants starting as soon as possible after award announcements (late February). **The deadline for applications is Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> November 2025, 17:00pm.**

#### Eligible and ineligible costs

Eligible Costs	Ineligible Costs
Travel and maintenance away from home	Research assistance
Event costs (meetings, conference, workshops) to advance the research.	Short-term consultancy or salary costs of expert staff
Consumables (i.e. purchase of datasets, photocopies, microfilms, equipment costs, and any other minor items that will be used up during the course of the project – Maximum <b>£500</b> )	Computer hardware, including laptops, tablets, electronic notebooks, digital cameras etc.
Specialist software (excluding commonly available office packages) and web development costs (for the duration of the award period)	Permanent resources and equipment or any elements that should properly be ascribed to departmental or university overheads (instead, making a justified case for hiring or reusing this equipment within the department, would be eligible)
Costs of interpreters in the field	The preparation of camera-ready copy, copy-editing, proof-reading, indexing, or any other editorial task
Incidental translation expenses (please see note 1)	Subventions for direct production costs (printing, binding, distribution, marketing etc.)
The costs of preparing illustrations, including photography, acquisition of images, draughtsmanship and cartography or other bespoke illustrative material; and the costs of reproduction rights for text or images. (please see note 1)	Costs of publication in electronic media or journal submission fees
Small scale participant incentives e.g. vouchers, payments made by survey providers. Please note direct cash incentives are NOT eligible.	Payment to the principal/co-researcher(s) in lieu of salary, or for personal maintenance at home
Printing costs	Speaker and Course Facilitator fees
Books and Publications – Maximum <b>£200</b>	Replacement teaching costs
Zoom, Go webinar, Skype costs	Travel/maintenance expenses for purposes such as lecture tours, or writing up results of research
	Care for children or other relatives when travelling
	Apprenticeship levy
	Institutional overheads

Note 1: The case made must be explicitly approved by the Academy.

## Programme Timeline

Stage	Dates
<b>Call Opens</b>	Wednesday 24 <sup>th</sup> of September 2025
<b>Call closes</b>	Wednesday 19 <sup>th</sup> November 2025, 17:00pm
<b>Information sessions</b> Both sessions will be recorded	Monday 8 <sup>th</sup> September 2025; 12:00-13:00 Wednesday 24 <sup>th</sup> September 2025; 13:00 – 14:00
<b>Outcome emails</b>	February 2026
<b>Project start dates</b>	From earliest 1st March 2026 and latest 31 March 2026
<b>Project end dates</b>	No later than 9 months after the project start date

The link to the online application form will be made available on 24<sup>th</sup> September to ECRN members and the programme FAQs can be found below.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)	
Question	Answer
When is the deadline for the ECRN Seed Fund call 2025/26?	The Seed Fund deadline is Wednesday 19 <sup>th</sup> November 2025, 17:00pm
Where is the application form?	The Flexi-Grant link will be posted when the call opens, on 24 <sup>th</sup> September 2025
How long are the awards?	9 months
How much can I ask for?	Up to £5,000
How many co-applicants can there be?	There may be one PI and one Co-I (2 applicants maximum)
How do you define ECRs for this scheme?	We use the definition set out by the British Academy Early Career Researcher Network, which requires that all named applicants have completed a PhD, and that they are within 15 years of completion (consideration is made for career breaks). You must be an ECRN member to be eligible for this grant.

Will I need institutional approval prior to applying for the Seed Fund?	<p>Yes, when applicants press submit on the Seed Fund application on Flexi-Grant, this gets sent to the relevant institutional approver for them to approve before the British Academy can receive the application for assessment. This process may take the research office some time, so make sure that you contact them ahead of time letting them know that you intend to submit and you will need institutional approval.</p> <p>For independent researchers, the British Academy will act as the institutional approver, so please also factor this into your submission plans.</p>
Can I apply with researchers outside of the ECRN?	To be eligible, both the PI and co-I must be members of the BA ECRN. However, you are welcome to work with any other researchers. They should be named in the narrative of your proposal alongside any other project partners you plan to work with, particularly those for whom you have made costings (i.e., consultancies, or digital/video or transcription services).
Can I apply for the Seed Fund 25/26 round if I have already received this award in one of the previous funding rounds?	No, if you have already been a successful PI on a previous Seed Fund award you are not eligible to apply again. Only those who have been awarded as a co-I in previous rounds are able to re-apply.
Do I need prior ethics approval?	You should abide by your institutional ethics policies. This may mean that you need to contact them and/or submit ethics forms for approval prior to applying for this scheme, as per your own institutional guidelines. These vary widely, and so we urge you to contact your research support office to ensure you are following the policies of your institution.
Can I apply for funds to 'top-up' or 'follow-on' from a current or recent project?	Yes, you may apply for funds to 'top-up' or 'follow-on' from a current or recent project, provided that the proposed activities clearly align with the aims of the Seed Fund and represent a distinct piece of work or development opportunity. The application should clearly demonstrate how the funding will support your career development as an early career researcher and how it builds on, rather than duplicates, previous funding.
How will funds be allocated?	HEIs and IROs are very experienced in dealing with inter-institutional finances. Should you be successful, you will be asked to complete a form nominating an administrative lead (individual and institution) for transfer of the grant award. Further arrangements regarding the transfer funds between project partners, as appropriate, can then be managed by the project lead. If you are unsure how this works, reach out to your local research office and/or finance administrator and they can support you in this.

How will independent scholars be awarded?	If an independent scholar is collaborating with a researcher in an HEI, then the easiest method would be for the HEI to act as administrator for finances (as above). This is preferred as it is much easier to manage. However, if a project is solely managed by independent researchers, then funds will be directly transferred to the awardee.
Can researchers who are not on an academic contract at an HEI (i.e. independent scholars) include costings for their time?	As stated in the guidance, costings cannot include anything that might be deemed salary due to the complexities of HMRC rules. You can, however, contract services from consultant project partners (not named researchers), and freelance artist/practitioner roles, provided they are approved through your institution's financial guidelines (approved suppliers for example).
Do I need to include a CV and references in my application?	A CV, personal statement, or reference is not required as part of the application process. ECRs will be assessed on the quality of the research proposal alone.
Can I apply to be a Seed Fund reviewer if I intend to submit an application myself?	Yes, applicants are welcome to apply to become Seed Fund reviewers. During the review process, the BA ECRN team will ensure that no applicant reviews their own submission, maintaining fairness and transparency. However, if we receive more interest than available reviewer positions, priority will be given to those who are not submitting applications, providing them with the opportunity to participate in the review process.
Can I apply for the ECRN Seed Fund alongside other applications to British Academy schemes e.g. Small Research Grants, Postdoctoral Fellowship	<p>Applying for and taking up another British Academy award while undertaking the Seed Fund is acceptable. However, there must be no duplication of funding for the same purpose. In addition, you may not hold more than one British Academy award of a comparable nature at any one time. If you are unsure or have any queries about this, please do not hesitate to contact us.</p> <p>Please note that an application cannot be accepted if there is a report outstanding on any previous research grant awarded by the Academy to the Lead Applicant or Co-applicant named in the current proposal. Failure to follow this guidance will result in your application being withdrawn from the round of competition.</p>
Can I apply individually as a lead applicant on one project, and as a co-applicant on another at the same time?	No, ECRs can only submit one application for the scheme. You cannot be both a co-applicant and a lead applicant on another project.

If I am or have previously been a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow can I still apply for the Seed Fund?	To be eligible you cannot have received funding from the BA or anywhere else over 11k, in the last two years. If you have you are not eligible at this time.
If I hold a full-time academic position can I still apply for the Seed Fund?	Yes, applicants who hold a full-time academic post are welcome to apply for a Seed Fund award.
What topics of research projects can be applied for under the Seed Fund?	Only ECRN members are able to apply for the Seed Fund, meaning that only projects that fall under the SHAPE category will be considered for funding. STEM projects are not eligible. Click here for more information on SHAPE subjects: <a href="https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/this-is-shape/">https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/this-is-shape/</a>
I am applying for a bigger grant, but I do not yet know if I have been successful. Am I still eligible to apply for the Seed Fund?	Yes, you are still eligible to apply. However, if you find out you are successful in the bigger grant you will need to contact the ECRN team to resign your Seed Fund application if the other grant duplicates your project.
Do co-applicants need to be ECRN members?	Yes, co-applicants need to be ECRN members and have attended 3 ECRN events.
Can the Seed Fund be used as additional funding for an already developing project i.e. turning your thesis into a book?	Yes, the Seed Fund award can be used to develop and build upon an existing project. However, applicants must provide a clear explanation of why the funding is needed for an existing project and outline the overall benefit and value it will bring to both the project and the individual.
Does attending online events also count towards the “3 events attended” criteria?	Yes, both online and in-person event attendance counts. You must have attended 3 ECRN events to be eligible for this fund.
I cannot remember if I have attended 3 ECRN events. How can I find this out?	Please contact the ECRN team at <a href="mailto:ecr_network@thebritishacademy.ac.uk">ecr_network@thebritishacademy.ac.uk</a> if you are not sure if you have attended 3 ECRN events.
If I have received over £11,000 in funding in the last 2 years as a co-I, am I still eligible to apply for the Seed Fund?	Yes, applicants applying as a Co-I can have received funding of over £11,000 in the last two years.
Am I eligible to apply if I have received over £11,000 in funding over the last 2 years from other	No, you are not eligible to apply for this fund if you have received funding from any source that amounts to more than £11,000 in the last 2 years.

funding bodies not the BA?	
Is having received over £11,000 in funding over the last 2 years counted from the date of award or from the date of completion?	This applies to date of completion.
Does the Seed Fund cover research undertaken abroad with international partners?	Yes, the Seed Fund can cover research undertaken abroad with international partners as long as justification is given as to why this cannot be online.
Can the Seed Fund cover costs to undertake an international field trip?	Yes, as above.
When will I find out about the outcome of my Seed Fund application?	Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application by February 2026
Where can I see examples of previously funded Seed Fund awards?	Please visit the Seed Funding page on the Early Career Researcher Network website: <a href="https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/early-career-researcher-network/early-career-researcher-network-what-we-offer/british-academy-early-career-researcher-network-seed-fund-2024-25/">https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/early-career-researcher-network/early-career-researcher-network-what-we-offer/british-academy-early-career-researcher-network-seed-fund-2024-25/</a>
Can I copy my unsuccessful Seed Fund application from last year's call?	There is no limit for the number of times that you can apply for the Seed Fund if unsuccessful. However, if you intended to apply with the exact same research proposal, this can only be done once.

We encourage all applicants in HEIs and IROs to contact their research offices to ensure any relevant internal processes are adhered to, and that they discuss the proposed activity with their line manager as appropriate.

For any questions not covered here, please get in touch at [ecr\\_network@thebritishacademy.ac.uk](mailto:ecr_network@thebritishacademy.ac.uk)