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The British Academy

Guidance for
the designing,
framing and
running of a
research funding
call with equitable
partnership
considerations

Introduction

The following guidance for the designing, framing and running of a research funding call was developed from a workshop prior to the Second Equitable Partnerships Conference in South Africa in February 2026 with further feedback and discussion from Conference participants at a dedicated session. We would like to express our thanks and gratitude for the expertise, time and insights shared.

We hope by sharing this guidance that it will help to improve awareness of the types of actions and considerations that support equitable partnerships and that they can be applied in the development of future calls. We also believe that the guidance provides a holistic understanding of how to develop a research funding call that incorporates enabling mechanisms for equitable partnerships, improving the experience and relationships between researchers, institutions and funders.

The intention therefore in drawing together our various perspectives is to (1) provide guidance and suggestions when considering equitable partnerships in research funding calls and (2) to build on our conversations to gain further feedback, awareness and debate. To help with that the guidance is developed in five sections representing different aspects of the call process with each section providing recommendations for consideration at that stage of the call process. The five sections are:

- Call Preparation
- Call Framing
- Call Research Framework
- Call Eligibility and Funding Terms
- Call Assessment



Call preparation

This section focuses on providing guidance for activities before the call is launched and what preparations to consider when doing so.

- Undertake agenda-setting activities, supporting co-design and open dialogue with relevant international researchers, funders and stakeholders as appropriate, including Low and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs).
- Provide where possible advance notice of potential funding with pre-publication of call documentation where feasible.
- If the call is between multiple funders ensure clear communication and alignment of timelines and administrative processes between the funders with agreement on respective roles and responsibilities prior to launch.
- Ensure call timelines are reasonable for the requirements of the call, considering both the duration of the call and the time of year it is open, which may be peak working or holiday time for different parts of the world.
- Consider where possible extended timelines for LMIC organisations that require pre-approval for funder recognition.
- Take into account contracting / grant set-up time, including ethical approvals, when considering call and award timelines.
- Consider the length of the call document and what is proportionate for the call, including what information can be moved to post-award.
- Where possible, offer support and advice for application development, such as through webinars, ongoing resources including related to equitable partnerships, seed funding, research management capacity strengthening and case studies of successful applicants.



Call framing

This section provides guidance on the overall framing of the call setting out its origins, destination and expectations for the research to be conducted.

- Be clear and transparent about the call design process and the origins of the call.
- State clearly the motivations of the call with clarity about its scope (and what is out of scope where possible), aims and priorities, including the thematic focus (if any) and any priority geographies.
- Provide information on the expected total funding envelope and the expected number of awards that will be made.
- Articulate the expected outcome(s) of the call and expected approaches to the research supported, including methodology. Be clear where applicable what the expectations are for what type of research might be supported and what will not be supported.
- Be clear if the call is explicitly aiming to either build on existing partnerships or is aiming to catalyse new collaborations so as to communicate clearly to potential applicants the call's purpose.
- Encourage and require evidence of co-creation from applicants where applicable, ensuring there is sufficient time in the call process for this to be realistically and properly achievable.
- Stress the centrality of equitable partnerships and the principles underpinning it to the assessment of the applications made, including consideration of this throughout the process of the research and the sustainability of the relationships and engagement.
- Encourage applicants to consciously identify which aspects of power imbalances of research collaboration they may address.
- Emphasise the importance of considering how the research will benefit and engage with local communities as appropriate.
- Provide where possible output flexibility and indicate if appropriate that there are no pre-determined outputs. Ensure any guidance is clear, including acknowledgement of different practices and expectations related to outputs in different contexts. Where specific outputs are required, wherever possible provide advance information or draft templates so applicants are clear on the requirements.
- Set out where possible links to templates / requirements for award reporting.
- Define where applicable core terms, being consistent across the call text and carefully consider them in relevant contexts.

Call research framework

This section provides suggestions on considerations for the framework through which the research is expected to be approached, including related to equitable partnerships, research methodology, data management, research ethics and research security.

- Provide clear expectations of equitable partnerships with suitable word count and space for applicants to detail how they will embed this into their proposal.
- Outline any expectations on research methodology and openness to alternative or local epistemologies and the research programme of activities specifically in relation to overall call framework.
- Detail expectations on data management, intellectual property and research ethics, considering where possible that ethical approval can be sought post-award, and encourage open communication with applicants on ethical concerns.
- Consider the context of research security provide clarity on the purpose of the questions being asked.
- Set out expectations related to risk management, including how risks are to be identified and mitigated.
- Outline expectations on ODA eligibility, where applicable, and other requirements as applicable, such as related to gender equality statements and/or action plans.



Call eligibility and funding terms

This section provides considerations for how to articulate the eligibility requirements and funding terms of the call.

- Consider eligibility criteria in respect to PhD and equivalent experience, using examples of what this could look like and how equivalent experience will be implemented as an eligibility criterion.
- Be clear what documentation is required for an application.
- Provide space for applicants to include information about their personal circumstances, which may have affected their career trajectory and progression.
- Include options for collaborators that could be industry or community-based.
- Provide clear information on the flexibility of the award in terms of time on project, portability, parental leave, research assistance and other aspects as appropriate.
- Set out the expectations related to how the funding on any award should be distributed equitably amongst the partners engaged on the project.
- Provide clear information on due diligence and reporting requirements.
- Provide clear guidance on institutional eligibility with information on criteria and timelines for approval where applicable.
- Provide clear and simple language on eligible direct and indirect costs, encouraging true costing, in addition to what extra support is available for additional needs and what it includes.
- Consider flexibility on allowable costs that take into consideration of specific resource contexts for both research and dissemination.



Call assessment

The section provides suggestions for how to communicate and undertake the assessment expectations of the call.

- Communicate assessment criteria clearly and transparently, detailing the decision-making process, including any weighting of the criteria being used, any priorities for funding if applicable, and the timeframe for decisions to be communicated.
- Consider the diversity of perspectives on selection panels and during peer review, including where appropriate from relevant contexts and potentially past award holders.
- Provide relevant guidance and briefing to assessors in order to undertake their assessment appropriately and in line with the call's stated expectations and purpose.
- Where possible, provide information to applicants if unsuccessful at the earliest opportunity.
- Where possible, aim to share general feedback to unsuccessful applicants with common areas where applications could have been stronger.
- Provide opportunities for feedback on the call process from researchers and their institutions.
- In case of delays with the offering of awards, reach out to applicants to provide updates on the status of their applications.



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