

British Academy Early Career Researcher Network Seed Fund Programme 2026/27 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 23rd September 2026

Call Closes: Wednesday 18th November 2026 at 5pm.

The Flexi-Grant link to access the online application will be circulated when the call opens. Please note, the link will only be made available to ECRN members and will not be advertised on the general British Academy Flexi-Grant page.

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 **2026/27** 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 previous rounds, please see [here](#).

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

- Pump-priming activities (such as meetings, workshops and sandpits) 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. For more information on this, please consult the eligible and ineligible cost table. 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.

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 research funding as a primary investigator of over £11,000, within the last two years, from any funding source, prior to the application deadline. Please note that funding received through fellowships counts towards this threshold.
- produce an end of project report 3 months after the research project is complete.

The review process is led by a Fellow of the British Academy, and applications will be peer reviewed by ECRN members. All applications that meet the threshold will progress to the partial randomisation stage. Funds will be made available to successful applicants starting as soon as possible after award announcements (by the end of February). The deadline for applications is **Wednesday 18th November 2026, 17:00**.

Eligible and ineligible costs

Eligible Costs	Ineligible Costs
Travel and maintenance away from home for the PI and Co-I, and for other named project collaborators where a clear justification is provided and the collaborator is essential to a specific funded activity.	Research assistance
Event costs (meetings, sandpits, workshops) to advance the research.	Travel and maintenance costs to attend conferences and other events that are not part of your seed fund project.
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 £500)	Salary costs of expert staff.
Specialist software (excluding commonly available office packages) and web development costs (for the duration of the award period)	Computer hardware, including laptops, tablets, electronic notebooks, digital cameras etc.
Costs of interpreters in the field and incidental translation expenses.	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).
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.	The preparation of camera-ready copy, copy-editing, proof-reading, indexing, or any other editorial task
Specialist consultants may be engaged to deliver a clearly defined piece of work for a fixed fee, and the application must set out what they will deliver and how they will be	Subventions for direct production costs (printing, binding, distribution, marketing etc.)

selected, engaged, and paid within the award period. This does not cover salary or wage costs, or engagements that function as staffing, for example paying someone to work on a regular or ongoing basis or to carry out general research assistance.	
Small scale participant incentives e.g. vouchers, payments made by survey providers. Please note direct cash incentives are NOT eligible.	Costs of publication in electronic media or journal submission fees
Printing costs	Payment to the principal/co-researcher(s) in lieu of salary, or for personal maintenance at home
Books and Publications – Maximum £200	Speaker and course facilitator fees, where the fee is for an appearance or for general delivery and the facilitation is not a scoped research-development task. *
Zoom or Microsoft Teams costs for independent researchers.	Replacement teaching costs
Transcription Costs (e.g. tools and software).	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

**A speaker or facilitator paid for an appearance or general delivery is not eligible. If the facilitation is itself a defined research-development task, for example designing and running a structured research workshop to generate research questions, it may be treated as specialist consultancy and assessed under the consultant criteria above.*

Programme Timeline

Stage	Dates
Call Opens	Wednesday 23rd of September 2026
Call closes	Wednesday 18th November 2026, 17:00pm
Information session The session will be recorded	Wednesday 23rd of September 2026, 12:00-1:00pm
Outcome emails	End of February 2027
Project start dates	From earliest 1st March 2027 and latest 31 March 2027
Project end dates	No later than 9 months after the project start date

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)	
Question	Answer
When is the deadline for the ECRN Seed Fund call 2026/27?	The Seed Fund deadline is Wednesday 18 th November 2026, 17:00
Where is the application form?	The Flexi-Grant link to access online application will be circulated when the call opens on 23 rd September 2026.
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)
Will I need institutional approval prior to applying for the Seed Fund?	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. For independent researchers, the British Academy will act as the institutional approver, so please also factor this into your submission plans.
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 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 26/27 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. Please note, if you are applying as an independent researcher and need ethics approval you may need to use the Independent Research Ethics Committee . They charge a £950 fee. Please include this fee in your budget so we can support this cost for you.
Can I combine funding from another scheme for this project or 'top-up' funds from a current or recent project?	No, you may not apply for funds to 'top-up' or combine from a current or recent project. Proposed activities must 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.
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	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. 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.
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?	No, you must not have received research funding as a primary investigator of over £11,000, within the last two years, from any funding source, prior to the application deadline. Please note that funding received through fellowships counts towards this threshold.
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: https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/this-is-shape/
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.
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, only PI funding counts towards the £11,000 threshold. Those 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 funding bodies not the BA?	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.
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.
Can I include the cost of social media advertising in my application?	Yes, in certain circumstances. Eligibility depends on purpose. Paid advertising used to recruit participants is treated as participant engagement and is eligible where it is clearly justified. We recognise that social media advertising can be a valuable way to recruit participants, particularly when you are seeking to reach cohorts that operate mainly in online spaces, or that are stigmatised, marginalised, or otherwise difficult to reach. General promotion of a project or its findings falls under the marketing exclusion and is not eligible. Where you wish to include recruitment advertising, please set out the platform or platforms you intend to use, the audience you are trying to reach, and the approximate spend involved, so that reviewers can assess whether the audience is genuinely difficult to reach and the amount is proportionate.
When will I find out about the outcome of my Seed Fund application?	Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application by the end of February 2027
Where can I see examples of previously funded Seed Fund awards?	Please visit the Seed Funding page on the Early Career Researcher Network website: https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/funding/schemes/british-academy-early-career-researcher-network-seed-fund/british-academy-early-career-researcher-network-seed-fund-past-awards/
Can I copy my unsuccessful Seed	There is no limit for the number of times that you can apply for the Seed Fund if unsuccessful. However, if you intended to

Fund application from last year's call?	apply with the exact same research proposal, this can only be done once.
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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