Harmonised IAA Rapid Response Call Guidance and Assessment Criteria

Call opens: 12 January 2023
Call closes: 18 October 2024
Award amount: up to £15,000 per application
Project duration: up to three months

Background

UKRI has adopted a harmonised approach to Impact Acceleration Accounts (IAA) which offers a unique opportunity to support impact creation through diverse and innovative ways, including interdisciplinary projects. This harmonised rapid response call aims to add value to existing funding and take advantage of new opportunities within the AHRC, BBSRC, ESRC, EPSRC and MRC remits. Rapid Response funding can support a wide range of activities when researchers are confronted by time-sensitive opportunities or need to test new ideas quickly.

Applications can be to either a single funding council or, where proposed projects are multidisciplinary, multiple funding councils. Applicants will be asked to identify relevant funding council(s).

This document sets out specific guidance for the harmonised IAA rapid response call. It should be read in conjunction with the University's Summary of Impact Acceleration Account Terms and Conditions.

Who can apply?

Funding is open to researchers employed by the collegiate University with project proposals within the AHRC, BBSRC, ESRC, EPSRC and MRC remits. All applicants must have department affiliation and all applications will require Head of Department signature. Applications from early career researchers (ECR) with principal investigators as co-applicants are encouraged*. Please note that previous/current UKRI funding is NOT a requirement.

*There is no standard definition of ERC. However, an ERC is generally considered as someone who is within eight years of the award of the PhD.

What activities can be funded?

Rapid response funding of £5k-£15k will be available on a rolling basis to fund short-term projects of up to three months duration. In total, £140,000 is available to support up to 31 projects between 9 January 2023 and 18 October 2024.

Funding can support multidisciplinary working within the University and/or engagement of partners, including research organisations, industry and public or third sector organisations that do not hold an IAA.

The nature of rapid response projects can vary by discipline and impact objectives. Proposals could include, for example, feasibility studies to test new ideas for potential further collaboration with external organisations which could lead to long-term partnerships, supporting innovation and enabling 'fast failure', pump-priming or the commissioning of external specialist advice and consultancy for market research, business planning, technology commercialisation or health economic modelling. In addition, the fund can support participation in time-sensitive policy workshops and select committees or channels for engaging end-users through public engagement activities such as exhibitions or work with schools.

Project holders must ensure that their project is compliant with the University's Policy on the Ethics of Research Involving Human Participants and Personal Data and that any ethical issues are identified and brought to the attention of the relevant approval or regulatory body. Where ethical approval is required this must have been granted before work begins. See the University's Research Ethics pages for further details.

Eligible costs

IAAs may be used to fund directly incurred costs such as:
- Directly incurred staff costs, in line with the call guidance
- Pooled labour, where applicable
- Travel/subsistence, in line with University policy Travel policy | Finance Division
- Materials and consumables
- Equipment/facilities access
- Equipment purchases (capped at £10,000 and must be justified against the duration of the project)
- Procurement of an external consultant e.g. for market research or business planning, to include VAT as applicable
- Workshops
- Engagement, knowledge exchange, training and culture change activities

Rapid response funding is not available to support the continuation of research, either solely within the University or with external partners.

Rapid response funding cannot be used to cover any costs relating to Intellectual Property protection including but not limited to registering, maintaining, or supporting patents or property rights.

For a complete list of eligible and ineligible costs, please refer to the IAA Terms and Conditions.

All applications must be fully costed in a draft X5 and all costs should be shown to be necessary for the project. Please liaise with your departmental finance team to obtain a draft X5 costing for your proposal (see below) and ensure that adequate time is left for this process. Please use the Funding Scheme 'UKRI (Research and Innovation); IAA – internal calls', with items fully justified in the application. **IAA proposals should not be submitted in X5 and should remain in draft form only**. The draft report downloaded from X5 should be submitted with your application and will be scrutinised by the panel as part of the assessment process. Any changes to an approved project budget will need to be cleared with the Impact and KE team.

The assessment panel may decide to part-fund any application at their discretion.

Please note that all funding must be spent by 31 March 2025.

Working with third parties

If you intend to discuss non public domain information with a third party to prepare the application, you will need a confidentiality agreement in place with the proposed third party/ies before these discussions take place. A standard University template is available for these purposes. The Research Operations Office Contracts team will support you to put this in place, but in the first instance please contact iaa@admin.cam.ac.uk for further support and advice.

A sample cover letter and basic collaboration agreement terms are available for information to help you in your pre-application submission discussions with third parties with respect to the general contract expectations/considerations for these awards. If you need any further guidance, in the first instance please contact iaa@admin.cam.ac.uk.

If your project is going to include exchange/transfer of materials/data between the University and an external party/ies this should be flagged in the application by checking the submission system checkbox "Is a contract required?". And brief details should be provided in the application form on the types of materials/data involved and which parties will be providers/recipients.

If the University has not worked with your intended collaborating partner before additional due diligence checks may be required. Further guidance is available here.

Advice for this call

Applications should focus on knowledge exchange and impact, not on research. Through the harmonised IAA, the University wants to invest in projects which can make an impact on our lives and the world we live in. Applications which read like research grant proposals re-drafted for IAA purposes are less likely to be successful than projects which clearly comprise development and impact activities directed towards knowledge exchange and impact.

The background research and planned activities should be explained in terms which can be understood by a panel that has no specialist knowledge in your technical field.

It is also important to be realistic about what will be achieved in the project and how the project will be monitored to ensure that it remains focused on the impact objectives.

Applications must give clear demonstration as to why the project is most suited to the rapid response call.

Application process

Potential applicants are encouraged to contact their departmental Knowledge KTF Facilitator (KTF) or equivalent member of staff for advice. If your department or School does not have a Knowledge Transfer Facilitator, please contact iaa@admin.cam.ac.uk with any queries.

In order to ensure the appropriate allocation of costs across funding councils, applicants are first asked to submit an expression of interest form via email to iaa@admin.cam.ac.uk. The expression of interest form is available on the call webpage: All Council Harmonised IAA Rapid Response Call 2022-2025 | Research Strategy Office (cam.ac.uk) In the expression of interest, please outline the proposed project, estimate costs and relevant research council(s).

Applicants who are invited to apply for funding after submitting an expression of interest will be emailed the full application form. At this stage of the process, application is via the online IAA Application System. Please provide:

- Outline details of the project in the IAA Application System
- A completed **Rapid Response IAA application form**, including HoD signature
- A copy of the **draft project costing from X5**
- A **letter of support** from external partner (if applicable)
- Any additional documents, such as a Gantt chart showing the intended project timeline, as appropriate

Please note the submission system only accepts PDF documents

Assessment process

Given the time-sensitive nature of rapid response projects, expressions of interest will be reviewed by a panel of cross-disciplinary impact experts in the Research Strategy Office within one week of receipt, at which point applicants will be given feedback and, where appropriate, invited to apply for funding. Full applications will be assessed by the panel within two weeks of receipt and the panel's recommendation will be sent to the relevant University IAA Discipline Lead(s) for approval. The Discipline Lead(s) will make final decisions within one week of the assessing panel's recommendation. The assessment criteria are:

Criteria	Guidance
Clarity of impact objectives	Clarity of the impact (not research) objectives and proposed impact activities, including how impact will be measured/evidenced.
Clarity of plan	Clarity and coherence of the plan to achieve impact objectives, including, management and timeframe and milestone. Where applicable, the suitability, level of engagement, and degree of support offered by the partner organisation.
Articulation of need	Clarity of description of the research base on which the project builds, the need being addressed and/or justification of why impact objectives have been identified.
Value for money	The extent to which the proposal makes the best use of resources.
Sustainability planning	The extent to which the project outlines plans for potential next stages (including further sources of funding) and/or explains how the project fits within a larger programme of work.
Time sensitivity (call-specific)	A clear statement as to why the project is time sensitive is essential for this call.
Interdisciplinarity (call-specific)	Interdisciplinarity is encouraged and applications to multiple research councils are welcomed.

Timeline

Project start dates are subject to appropriate agreements with any external partners being in place.

No-cost extensions will be available for projects that can make a strong case that additional time is needed to realise impact. All requests for extensions must be made through the IAA team.

Monitoring and reporting

All project holders will be required to complete an online survey at the end of their funded period.

PIs will be asked to work with departmental grants/finance officers to ensure that all expenditure is posted against projects within 2 weeks of the end of the project. Further financial reporting will be requested at project close.