

ESRC Impact Acceleration Account 2023-28

Responsive Mode Funding: Application Guidance Notes

Warwick has been awarded its third ESRC Impact Acceleration Account (IAA) worth £1.25m, running from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2028. The Responsive Mode funding pathways are intended to enable the conversion of established research into impact through support for new engagement activities with non-academic stakeholders, thus maximising the potential for Warwick's social science research to make a positive impact on society, the economy, and people's lives.

Please note that the IAA does not fund primary research.

Responsive Mode Funding: Available Funding Pathways

There are two pathways comprising the Responsive Mode funding support on offer: the Evolving Impact pathway, and the Rapid Response pathway. You can bid for amounts up to the value(s) detailed below.

Evolving Impact

Awards to support activities that will accelerate and maximise the real-world impact of unique Social Sciences research.

Applicants are encouraged to consider how the funding will enable them to use their research to respond to the clearly identified needs of non-academic stakeholders. Non-academic partners or stakeholders might include, but are not limited to: policymakers; businesses and social enterprises; third sector organisations; schools, teachers, their students and communities; service providers and practitioners; community groups; creative practitioners; and advocacy groups.

Maximum Funds: £25,000 (per project)

Activities Funded:

- Meetings or networking events with potential non-academic collaborators to explore possible applications of research;
- Knowledge-exchange activities designed to consolidate a relationship with a potential non-academic partner and/or increase the potential reach of impact to new non-academic stakeholders, such as:
 - Workshops/focus groups
 - Inward or outward placements, secondments, or fellowships with non-academic organisations
 - Online/social media content, e.g.: apps, training modules, podcasts
 - Performance art/exhibitions
 - Writers-in-residence
 - Films/animations
- Collaborative projects with established external partners, where impact aims and anticipated outcomes are well-defined;
- Activities to inform policy.
- Activities to strengthen research-user engagement;

- Activities to explore or test resources/interventions intended to deliver impact for target beneficiaries.

This list is not exhaustive, and other activities can be proposed provided that they would not be deemed 'ineligible' as set out in the *Eligible and Ineligible Activities* section below. If you are unsure, please contact the team for advice via ESRCImpactAccount@warwick.ac.uk.

Notes:

Applications will be expected to demonstrate confirmed commitment from a non-academic partner, along with a well-defined project plan with specific impact aims and anticipated outcomes. Unless your external collaborations and impact project plans are well-established, you are strongly advised to consider applying for smaller amounts of funding in the first instance. The team can be contacted for advice in this regard.

Rapid Response

Awards to enable Social Scientists to respond quickly to emerging opportunities to act on the impact potential of their research, or to undertake smaller-scale, short-term activities.

Maximum Funds: £5,000 (per project)

Activities Funded:

Time-sensitive activities in response to emerging societal, political, or environmental developments, or opportunities to evolve or leverage relationships with external partners. For example:

- Participation in Parliamentary Select Committee evidence hearings;
- Provision of expert advice to formal inquiries
- Opportunities to explore resources or interventions to deliver impact for target beneficiaries;
- Travel for events;
- Short-term project support
- Opportunities to network with potential collaborators or research users.

Notes:

Applicants must be able to clearly demonstrate why the proposed activity requires an expedited review process and therefore cannot be considered under the Evolving Impact pathway. If insufficient justification is given, the Panel may recommend that your application is considered at its next meeting.

Applicant Eligibility

Lead applicants to both pathways should be a University of Warwick employee with an employment contract which lasts the duration of the proposed activity for which IAA funding is being applied. The ESRC IAA is open to the Social Sciences community across the University. This includes the Faculty of Social Sciences, as well as Social Scientists based in other faculties who would normally be eligible to apply for research funding from the ESRC.

Early career researchers who have an employment contract as described above (including those, for example, in receipt of a postdoctoral fellowship), are eligible and indeed encouraged to apply for funding from the IAA.

PhD students are not eligible to apply for Responsive Mode funding, but will be able to access some of the training and development opportunities which are offered as part of the wider IAA programme.

Eligible and Ineligible Activities

The IAA can be used to fund a wide range of knowledge-exchange activities that are designed, for example, to explore or consolidate a relationship with non-academic partners; connect with potential non-academic beneficiaries of your research; or respond to opportunities to contribute to policy debate and development.

Eligible costs include:

- Researcher time;
- Consumables, travel, accommodation and subsistence;
- All other justifiable items required for the project.

Please note:

- Directly incurred project costs, including travel and subsistence, may be claimed at 100%.
- Application budgets should be fully costed, including staff time.
- Investigator and staff time can be charged to individual projects as required but should not normally exceed 10%, and all such claims must be accompanied by written approval from the Head of Department at application stage.
- Project/research assistance can be budgeted at 100%.
- For projects funding researcher time for more than 12 months, please contact Research Ops for a costing.
- If a Green Levy is incurred due to the use of air travel, this should be covered by the applicant's department.

Ineligible Activities:

- The IAA does not fund primary research and expects research to be well established at the time of application. Exceptions may be made in the case of Rapid Response applications, where the proposed activity involves an element of scoping research and the applicant is able to clearly demonstrate the impact objective(s) which underpin this work.
- Infrastructure; capital expenditure; indirect and estates costs.
- No equipment over £10,000 is permitted.
- Patent filing or similar costs related directly to registering intellectual property rights.
- Non-specific public engagement and communication/press activities; however, projects where public engagement is a critical pathway to achieving societal and/or economic impact will be considered. For public engagement activities that do not meet this definition, please see the Warwick Institute of Engagement webpages.
- Activities aimed at undergraduate or masters students; core PhD training and research; masters degrees.
- The IAA cannot be used to fund project-specific activities which should have been costed into existing grant applications, or activities that should already have been anticipated and supported through standard routes, e.g., impact activities costed as part of basic research proposals, DTPs, or Centres.
- Other costs not allowed in the ESRC/UKRI Standard Research Grant Terms and Conditions.

If a Green Levy is incurred due to the use of air travel, this should be covered by the applicant's department.

We welcome contributions towards overall project costs from external partners and other university sources.

External Partners

All applications should have at least one confirmed or prospective external, non-academic partner. A letter of support from the external partner must be submitted in conjunction with the application (see the *Application Process and Requirements* section below).

If such a letter is not yet available, or the nature of your project means that working with an external partner is not possible or appropriate, please get in touch with the team via ESRCImpactAccount@warwick.ac.uk for advice.

General advice on Collaboration Agreements

Collaboration Agreements are normally required where you will be working with an external partner who will have significant input into or ownership of the outcomes of the project. These agreements cover items such as: agreeing the responsibilities of all partners; ownership and use of outputs and intellectual property; transfer of funds; data sharing; and liabilities. Where a project involves the collection and sharing of data between project partners, a Data Sharing Agreement will be embedded within the Collaboration Agreement.

A template Collaboration Agreement is available to view [here](#). You can share this with external partners at application stage to ensure that they are aware of what they will be asked to sign should the application be successful; however, this agreement should not be signed at application stage. If your application is successful, RIS will manage the process of drawing up and signing any Collaboration Agreements required for your project. There may be variations to this template in the final agreement.

Someone who will be paid to provide a service only and will not have any ownership of the final outputs would not normally be considered a collaborator, and therefore would not normally require a Collaboration Agreement. For example, this could include: event venues; agencies and designers; or speakers at an event; where these organisations or individuals have no further contribution to the project.

The RIS team will advise on whether a Collaboration Agreement is needed after awards have been made; however, if you would like to discuss this before you apply, please do get in touch on ESRCImpactAccount@warwick.ac.uk.

Projects with an International Dimension

The University and the ESRC encourages projects that have impact on regional, national, or international levels. The necessary support to enable colleagues to engage with partners and end users from local through to global contexts will be put in place wherever possible.

If your project has an international or overseas dimension (e.g., you are partnering with an overseas organisation or the overseas offices of a UK-based organisation; you are engaging with overseas end users; or your project requires travel or activities to take place overseas), please ensure you have read the University

guidance on [International Working](#) and spoken with your Departmental Administrator to discuss any associated risks or considerations.

Aspects to consider:

- All overseas partners will be required to satisfactorily complete a UKRI mandated due diligence check.
- Will payments from the award need to be made to overseas partners?
- Will your project involve employing collaborators abroad (either based overseas or travelling abroad to conduct the work), thereby necessitating visas and employment contracts?
- A risk assessment will be required for overseas travel both for the research/activities being conducted and for the travel itself. (You are advised to visit the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website where you will find up to date travel restrictions and security advice.)
- Will your project require the transport of data to/from abroad? (Please note that transport of data requires IT approval in general, but particularly if the data is being transported abroad.)
- Overseas or international organisations may have different processes according to how funds are handled and Collaboration Agreements reached.
- Any ethics requirements.

Application Process and Requirements

How to apply:

Download and complete the application form available on the [ESRC IAA webpages](#) (the same form is used for both pathways) and submit it by email to ESRCImpactAccount@warwick.ac.uk by the deadline in order to be considered at the next Panel meeting. Call deadlines can be found [here](#). We aim to inform applicants (via email) of the Panel's decision within five working days of the Panel meeting.

If you are applying to the Rapid Response pathway, please indicate this in the email heading to ensure that it is actioned correctly. We aim to inform applicants (via email) of the decision within ten working days of the date of the confirmation of receipt email.

Head of Department Consent

All applications must be endorsed by the relevant Head of Department (HoD). Applications involving more than one department must include a declaration of support confirming that the HoDs of each co-applicant also support the application. The declaration should explain why the project/activity costs cannot be met wholly from existing individual or departmental discretionary funds. It should also explain how the activity contributes to the departmental strategy for impact and must outline the department's contribution to the activity, whether this is through funding or in-kind.

It is the lead applicant's responsibility to ensure that HoDs from all co-applicant departments have stated their support for the application. Without evidence of this, the application will not be considered.

External Partner Statement of Support

This is an essential part of the application. Your application will not be considered if this statement is not included. It must:

- Demonstrate that the external partner is a genuine partner in the activity;
- Articulate the benefits and potential impact for them of being involved in the activity;
- Set out the contribution (either as matched funding, or as a contribution in kind) to the project and any role that will be played in the delivery/management of the proposed activities, and by whom.

If the nature of your project means that working with an external partner is not possible or appropriate, please get in touch with the team via ESRCImpactAccount@warwick.ac.uk to discuss this.

Application Deadlines

The IAA Panel, which has responsibility for making Responsive Mode funding decisions, meets several times throughout the year. The meeting dates, along with the deadline for submission of applications for the respective meeting, can be found [here](#).

Applications to the Rapid Response pathway can be submitted at any time, but please indicate that you are applying via this pathway in the email heading to ensure that it is actioned correctly.

Both schemes will close to further applications once the available budget has been allocated.

Assessment Process and Criteria

Assessment Process:

Evolving Impact	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Completed application form to be submitted by email to ESRCImpactAccount@warwick.ac.uk by the submission deadline for the respective meeting of the IAA Panel (application form and submission deadlines available here). Applications which miss the deadline will be held for consideration at the next scheduled meeting. 2. In advance of the IAA Panel meeting, two members will be selected to review your application in detail, although your application will be sent to all members. 3. At the meeting, the two reviewers will present their recommendations (and justifications for these), which will then be considered by the full committee and a final decision made. 4. We aim to inform applicants (via email) of the Panel’s decision within five working days of the Panel meeting.
Rapid Response	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Completed application form to be submitted by email to: ESRCImpactAccount@warwick.ac.uk. The email subject header must indicate that the application is for the rapid response pathway. 2. We will send you an email to confirm receipt of your application. Your application will then be sent to the Chair of the IAA Panel for consideration by Chair’s Action. In reaching a decision, the Chair may seek the views of at least two members of the Panel, although the final decision remains with the Chair. 3. We aim to inform applicants (via email) of the decision within ten working days of the date of the confirmation of receipt email.

Assessment Criteria:

Applications will first be checked for eligibility (see the *Applicant Eligibility* and *Eligible and Ineligible Activities* sections above), then will be assessed against the following criteria:

1	Is there a clearly articulated 'challenge' to be addressed?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear sense of the challenge being addressed – e.g., social inequality, underrepresentation, gap in provision, operational or organisational inefficiency – and why the underpinning research can and should be brought to bear on this challenge • What are the implications of the researcher's findings for particular (non-academic) groups or end users?
2	Does the project have a clear and credible plan for achieving change for non-academic beneficiaries?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity of aims and objectives • Clear potential benefits to external partners or end users • Demonstrable engagement with external partners or end users • Clear description of potential impact arising from proposed activities • Credibility of chosen activities/pathways for facilitating the proposed impact • Potential to facilitate co-production of knowledge with external partners or end users • Consideration of ways to maximise potential impact of the research and proposed activities • Potential for the activities to become self-sustaining, and/or for agency, resilience and advocacy to be built for external partners or end users • Longevity of the proposed impact
3	Does the project link to the applicant's underpinning research?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear sense of how the proposal relates to underpinning research undertaken at Warwick • What are the 'real-world' implications of the researcher's findings and how will the proposed activities deliver upon these?
4	Will the planned evaluation measures adequately capture the impact of the project?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans for monitoring, evaluation and ongoing follow-up comprise an intrinsic part of the project activities • Appropriate evidence of change or benefit identified, and plans put in place to gather this evidence • Clear and credible sense of how potential impact will be evaluated
5	Is the project's plan to spend within the funding period clear, credible and feasible?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clear and credible outline provided as to how the project will be managed and the roles that will be played by the different contributors • Clear and specific justification of costs • Credible and feasible timelines for planning and delivering proposed activities, with adequate support in place for the researcher • Necessary external relationships in place and all partners committed to the project • Any risks mitigated with regard to international working
6	Do the project's costs and intended outcomes represent good value for money?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the costs for proposed activities and outputs justified? • Where proposed activities link to existing funded research projects, the 'added value' generated by the project must be clear and credible, and a sound explanation given as to why the activity cannot be funded from the existing project grant.
7	Will the planned activity contribute to the departmental impact environment and goals?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential contribution to a longer-term programme of activities, or for further activity or engagement • Contribution to department and faculty impact culture • Mobilisation of departmental or cross-faculty expertise • Potential to provide an Impact Case Study for the next REF • Alignment with strategic objectives of the Social Science Grand Challenge

Other things to consider when compiling your application:

- Potential for collaboration across the Social Sciences community;
- Potential to drive culture change, promote knowledge exchange, and improve related skillsets and capabilities;
- Potential for activities to achieve changes to policy and/or practice;
- Potential to leverage new funding bids;
- Potential for the creation of new products or processes;
- Potential for co-produced research.

The Post-Award Process for Successful Applications

Your confirmation email will set out: how much you have been allocated (please note that this may not be the amount for which you applied - the confirmation email will outline the reason(s) for any difference in funds); the start and end dates of the award; and the terms and conditions associated with it. It is, however, worth being aware of the below points in advance:

Terms and Conditions of Awards

Awards will be made on the basis that:

- Applicants should normally be a University academic employee, or be the holder of a personal research fellowship awarded competitively, with a contract lasting the duration of the project.
- Funds must be defrayed by the date(s) stated in the award letter.
- They are non-repayable grants (except in the case of conferences or other events which make a profit).
- Individuals and departments can demonstrate that they cannot support the project or activity from existing individual or departmental discretionary funds.
- Funds will be spent according to an agreed profile; failure to spend will result in a claw-back event. Requests to reallocate funds or/and extend projects must be made to: ESRCImpactAccount@warwick.ac.uk
- Appropriate ethical approval has been sought and granted where necessary.
- There are no significant additional space implications that cannot be accommodated within the department(s) involved.
- Any overspends exceeding £20 become the responsibility of the host department(s).
- All expenditure will be complete on or by the end of the project date.
- Project reports are submitted as required by the funding stream. End of project reports should be submitted within one month of the project end date.

Project Partners

Where required, a Collaboration Agreement must be in place with all project partners before funds are released. UKRI also requires all overseas partners to satisfactorily complete a due diligence check before funds are released. Your Research Support Manager will support these processes.

Credits

Recipients of ESRC IAA funding must ensure that the University of Warwick and the ESRC (quoting grant reference ES/X004635/1) are credited as providing the support for the activity in any outputs.

Expenditure

You will be provided with a cost code against which all eligible project expenditure should be charged. All expenditure must be incurred within the project start and end date, and must be processed within these dates or as soon as possible thereafter. Project finances will be monitored quarterly.

The University's ESRC IAA award ends on 31 March 2028, following which any funds remaining on the account will be returned to the ESRC. To ensure that this deadline is met, individual project expenditure must be processed by no later than 29 February 2028. No extensions will be granted beyond this date.

Overspend and Underspend

Any overspend of a grant must be covered by the grant holder's department, so please ensure that your HoD and your Departmental Finance Administrator are aware of this condition when you receive your award.

Any unspent funds which remain on your account after you have completed all expenditure on your project will be returned to the lead ESRC IAA account so that they can be redistributed to other projects.

Extensions

Requests to extend the period of funding beyond your project's end date must be submitted by email to the team, with a clear justification for the need for an extension. The request will be considered by the IAA Panel at its next scheduled meeting. The IAA Panel reserves the right to refuse extension requests and withdraw funds if they are unsatisfied with the progress of the project.

Reporting Requirements

Project finances will be monitored quarterly, and award holders may be required to give updates on projected spend.

On completion of the project, recipients of ESRC IAA funding are required to complete an End of Project (EoP) Report, providing accountability for the funds spent on the activity and reflecting on the non-academic impact achieved; and then again 12 months later. Projects spanning multiple years will be expected to report on milestones at the end of each year of the project to feed into ESRC annual reporting; unsatisfactory progress may mean subsequent years of the project are not funded.

The reporting requirements of the ESRC IAA are designed to be constructive and collegial, enabling feedback, peer support, the identification of common challenges, and an agile response to emerging project needs, as well as to support the wider impact ecology of the faculty. With recipients' permission, we will also draw upon EoP reporting to provide 'showcasing' material to raise the visibility of individual projects as well as of social science impact at large. Recipients of ESRC IAA funding are expected to engage fully with the reporting requirements of their award and to be reflective and detailed in their EoP reports. EoP reports that are not completed to a satisfactory level will be returned to awardees with a request for further information. The IAA Management Committee reserves the right to deny the recipient access to further ESRC IAA funding until a satisfactory EoP report is received.

The IAA Management Committee reserves the right to impose additional reporting requirements or withdraw funds if they are unsatisfied with the progress of the project.

In addition to the written EoP report, the ESRC IAA team plan to host a yearly showcasing event to celebrate impact work supported by the IAA and to provide a forum for peer support and collaboration. Award holders may be asked to give a short presentation on their project as part of this event.

My application was unsuccessful – what can I do?

Should your application for funding be unsuccessful, you will be notified via email, along with the reason(s) for this decision. An unsuccessful application does not preclude you from applying again (unless it was refused on grounds of eligibility); but any new application must fully address the IAA Panel's feedback. If you are considering a resubmission, you should seek advice from the Research Impact team before proceeding.

Get in Touch

For queries concerning applications, or about the IAA more generally, please contact the [Impact Manager for your department](#) either directly or via: ESRCImpactAccount@warwick.ac.uk.