

## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Caucus (EDICa) Flexible Fund

### Call 2: The research process

#### Overview and Process

#### Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Caucus

The Equality Diversity and Inclusion Caucus (EDICa) is funded by UKRI and the British Academy to improve equality, diversity and inclusion in the research and innovation sector, including businesses. EDICa is an interdisciplinary and diverse network of researchers and practitioners who will identify, assess, and share existing evidence on the effectiveness of current and emerging EDI practices.

The project will span 3 years, and is centred around three thematic workstreams:

**The career-life cycle:** Identifies the relationships between key career and life events and their mutual impacts, making recommendations for reducing barriers to inclusion across the career.

**The research process:** Determines how EDI can be embedded in the research and innovation process and increasing the diversity literacy of researchers.

**The organisation of work:** Identifies how work can be organised in a variety of research and innovation workplaces to create enabling workspaces.

Here are some of the ways EDICa will achieve its objectives:

- Identify gaps in existing research and subsequently share recommendations on EDI practice and policy.
- Co-design the research process with stakeholders
- Co-create research workplaces in the research and innovation ecosystem with partners, such as National Museums Scotland
- Build communities of practice to continue the work beyond the 3-year grant
- Use a £1m Flexible Fund to commission research that addresses gaps identified through the Delphi Study and through evidence reviews
- Share findings through a strategic dissemination plan, to reach as broad an audience as possible

#### Summary of the Flexible Fund

A total of £1 million (100% Full Economic Cost (fEC)) has been set aside for the Flexible Fund to enable the EDICa team to commission research which addresses the stubborn inequalities which persist across the R&I sector. These impact-oriented projects will advance knowledge on the lived experience of underrepresented researchers and will pilot and evaluate interventions to create meaningful change across the R&I systems in the UK and internationally.

The Flexible Fund will be broken down across three calls, one round per year from 2023 to 2025, with each year focusing on a different one of EDICa's three thematic streams of work:

- WS1: The career-life cycle (2023-2024 Call 1)
- WS2: The research process (2024-2025 Call 2)
- WS3: The organisation of work (2025-2026 Call 3)

The total fund of £1m (100% FEC) will be split across three years, meaning each round of funding allows approximately £317,000 (100% FEC) of projects to be supported. Whilst there is no set project size, nor minimum or maximum budget, we are keen to support a number of projects. Each application will be evaluated on its own merits but bids that equate to a significant amount of the available funding would necessarily reduce our ability to fund multiple projects. Applicants are asked to bear this in mind when costing proposals. Irrelevant of size and budget, all projects funded through Call 2 must be completed by August 2025.

We have sought at every stage to make this call equitable and accessible yet we know that we will not get every aspect right. EDICa therefore warmly welcomes constructive feedback for this call which can be provided by contacting us on [EDICaucus@hw.ac.uk](mailto:EDICaucus@hw.ac.uk).

**Area(s) of research for the 2024 Flexible Fund Call**

For our second round of projects supported through the Flexible Fund, we will again consider all proposals but will prioritise work that focuses on the research process. Figure 1 below offers one way of identifying stages in the research process relating to securing funding to support research or innovation.

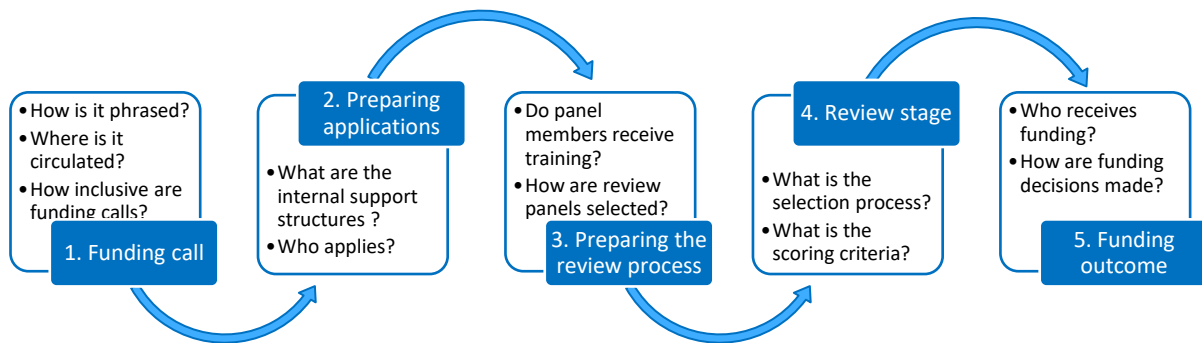


Figure 1: Stages in the Process of Securing Funding

We welcome research that explores the diversity of voices, ideas and experiences in our research and innovation ecosystem. An under-explored set of issues pertain to the processes of applying for, and evaluating, applications for research funds or the related processes of seeking publication in peer-reviewed outlets. We would particularly welcome proposals that seek to test and robustly evaluate the effectiveness of innovations or proposed changes to peer-review practices in order that we positively impact outcomes.

Some examples of settings where we would welcome research include:

- The effectiveness of guidance provided to those evaluating research bids, including research on the lived reality of enacting such guidance and evidence-based recommendations for enhancements to practice.
- Insights on the approach to evaluating proposals to guest edit a special issue of a peer-reviewed journal on an important or emerging topic.
- The quality of feedback offered to unsuccessful applicants and its effectiveness in improving future bids.
- An assessment of internal screening of institutional bids and effective practices that enhance inclusivity (e.g. in circumstances where a single bid for a large research award will be supported but multiple potential bids are internally reviewed in the first instance).
- The effectiveness of training, development and mentoring opportunities in supporting individuals at various career stages to secure either their first research award, their first significant research award as Principal Investigator (PI), etc.
- Issues of accessibility for those currently underrepresented in the pool of award holders.
- The impact of alternative assessment methods to review panels or standard application formats.

EDICa will be taking a balanced portfolio approach. This means that applications will be reviewed based on the eligibility criteria and assessment criteria, but we will also be looking for a balance of projects that respond to the issues highlighted, within the wider theme of the research process and inequalities across both research and innovation careers. A balanced portfolio also means consideration of career stages of applicants, characteristics of applicants, institutional setting and sector.

### **Key dates for the second call**

- We will have a mandatory 3-week call for expressions of interest, to help EDICa find reviewers, and not delay the timeline following the closing date for submissions. This will be a simple MS Form questionnaire asking for a 50-word project summary, 5 key words project and a project timeline. Submission of an expression of interest is a requirement before a formal proposal can be submitted as this provides the opportunity for us to offer feedback, to help shape suggestions and to avoid time and energy being invested in proposals which differ significantly from the call. Completing an expression of interest also significantly supports our efforts to recruit reviewers.
- We may use these initial outlines to offer feedback (e.g. to suggest collaborations between bidding teams where appropriate) or to establish feasibility (e.g. where access to data from a funder may be required).
- We have endeavoured to reflect the timing of school and other public holidays in the UK, as such the call and/or the timings noted below may change slightly.

Soft launch (within newsletter): **December 2023**

Call for reviewers: **15 January 2024**

Call for expressions of interest: opens **15 January 2024**, closes **2 February 2024**



Call for proposals: **1 March 2024**

Launch webinars, incl. Q&A: **5 March 2024 (3-4pm) and 12 March 2024 (4-5pm)**

Deadline for applications: **15 May 2024**

Reviews completed: **mid-June 2024**

Successful applicants notified: **early July 2024**

All applicants receive feedback: **early July 2024**

Funding awarded: **1 September 2024**

Projects completed and final reports submitted by **August 2025**

For the 2025-2026 Call 3 we will endeavour to follow a similar timeline.

### **Submission Process**

In submitting a full proposal, applicants must prepare a completed application form (see attached document)

This includes:

- Application information
- Case for support (max 1000 words)
- Details of co-design (max 500 words)
- Details of how the project engages with, or is led by, those with lived experience of marginalisation in the research and innovation space (max 500 words)
- Details of how the project engages with, or is led by, Early Career Researchers
- Details of how the project will accelerate equity across the research and innovation ecosystem (max 500 words)
- EDI plan (max 500 words)
- Timeline/Gantt chart (max 500 words)
- Research ethical considerations and data management plan (max 300 words)
- Risk management table
- References (optional)
- A full breakdown of costs
- A justification of resources (max 1 page)
- Letters of support\*

We are also requesting that applicants complete a short EDI survey. This will not be used to evaluate the proposals but will be used to monitor, evaluate and ensure internal accountability for the inclusive nature of the call and the Caucus. The information gathered will help us to make sure that future calls are balanced. For example, our analysis of the first round of flexible funding showed a lack of applications from deaf, trans and black researchers and we will seek opportunities to promote this second round of the flexible fund to those within these communities.

\*Letters of support may set out how access or other forms of financial or in-kind support will be made available to the applicants if successful. Where applicants are unable to secure letters of support at the application stage, they will be required before funding is awarded.

## Eligibility

We have used the verb ‘must’ for the first two eligibility criteria as EDICa’s goal is to advance the creation of inclusive research and innovation cultures enabling a diversity of researchers to access and thrive in careers across the research and innovation (R&I) systems. We want to understand the lived experiences of underrepresented researchers, creating the hope and the possibility of a research and innovation career for those traditionally excluded, while imagining a different research and innovation world which embeds equity. We strongly believe that co-design and proposals engaging with, or led by, those with lived experience will make this goal more realistic and achievable. Please note that there is no need for applicants to disclose any personal or sensitive information to be eligible and where applicants are deemed ineligible, feedback specifying the rationale for this will be provided.

- Proposals **must** adopt a co-design approach and include how key stakeholders/research end users will be engaged in the project.
- Proposals **must** engage with lived experience of underrepresentation in the research and innovation space. Engagement could include a Principal Investigator (PI) from an underrepresented group being supported/mentored by an established Co-Investigator (Co-I), involvement in the co-design process, a lived experience advisory board, engagement in evaluation and dissemination, etc.
- Lead applicants will need to be employed in an [institution eligible to receive UKRI funding](#) for the duration of the project
- Projects must have full ethical clearance before beginning any data collection – successful applicants will be expected to provide a copy of their ethics approval to the EDICa team
- Resubmissions that were not successful in securing funding from ESRC/UKRI in the past will not be accepted.

Projects must be completed by August 2025.

## Assessment Criteria

Applications that meet the above minimum requirements will then be evaluated based on the following differentiating criteria:

1. The degree to which proposals adopt a co-design approach and include how key stakeholders/research end users will be engaged in the project
2. The degree to which proposals address an evidence gap, specifically one relating to the exercise of academic judgement in the evaluation of research bids, peer-reviewed publication or similar across R&I careers
3. The degree to which proposals will create impact e.g. improving working lives for underrepresented people across the R&I sector
4. Applications engaging with, or led by, early career researchers or innovators\*
5. Proposals with interdisciplinary and cross-sector partnerships which reflect the range of R&I workplaces (e.g. businesses, museums, universities, trade unions), with international partners, will be particularly welcomed.

6. The quality of the EDI plan (The EDI Plan, required as part of every application, must set out how applicants will include equality, diversity and inclusion considerations in all aspects of how the project operates)
7. Robustness of the methodology
8. Value for money

EDICa reserves the right to modify the assessment criteria, for example in circumstances where the call is substantially oversubscribed and the process set out above becomes unmanageable.

\*If you are an Early Career Researcher (ECR) or Early Career Investigator (ECI) and you experience any issues with your institution to lead your project, please do reach out to EDICa and we will support you as best we can.

### Reviewing process

- EDICa will first check all applications to ensure they match the eligibility criteria (Project Manager and Workstream Lead). Those that do not match eligibility will not be considered.
  - EDICa will send any applications to funders that we are not sure match the criteria for an institution eligible to receive UKRI funding.
- All eligible applications will be reviewed by up to 3 reviewers, with a minimum of 2 reviewers
- EDICa will do an open call for reviewers, at the same time as the soft launch. EDICa will be sharing this call with the EDICa network, in the newsletter and across all communication channels (see dissemination section).
- Reviewers must have no conflict of interest with the proposals being reviewed, according to UKRI managing conflicts of interest in peer review:  
<https://www.ukri.org/councils/nerc/guidance-for-applicants/what-happens-after-you-submit-your-proposal/managing-conflicts-of-interest-in-peer-review/>
- Reviewers will score each application based on the criteria listed above (using an assessment rubric).
- EDICa will aim for reviewers to be a mixture of academics and non-academics across career stages.
- Reviewers must be experts with subject, methodological or lived experience expertise
- Logistics for peer reviews will be managed by email and confidential sharing of documents and feedback.
- All applicants will receive feedback from the reviewers, whether successful or not.

\*This will depend on the number of applications we receive and the topics they address.

### Eligible costs

- Directly incurred costs
  - Staff costs

- Travel, accommodation and subsistence
- Consumables, including equipment (under £10,000)
- Consultancy fees
- Directly allocated costs
  - Estate costs
  - Staff costs, where their time is shared between activities
- Indirect costs

Costs associated to Doctoral Researchers must not be charged to the grant. See UKRI information on eligible costs for a full breakdown: [Principles of full economic costing \(fEC\) – UKRI](#)

An additional separate £50k has been allocated for project teams requiring accessibility support. Successful projects can apply for this additional support e.g. making videos to disseminate findings with BSL and closed captions. This will be a one-page form.

### Payment of funds

Awards will be managed as standard by institutions, with payment of funds made on a quarterly basis.

### Additional Information

- Funding for the flexible fund will be made at 80% full economic cost. The Research Organisation in receipt of this devolved funding must make up the remaining 20%. Where non-academic or international organisations are the recipients of a flexible commissioning fund grant, they are eligible for funding at 100% full economic cost. However, the combined costs for applicants eligible for 100% full economic cost should not exceed 30% of the full economic cost of the grant. UKRI funding rules allow for those bidding to undertake projects to cost for their time
- The EDICa team will support potential applicants with excellent ideas but who may be struggling to access or use specific approaches, before submission of their application (e.g. offer co-design resources or facilitate access to stakeholders and collaborators). Please RSVP to our Flexible Fund Launch event, as there will be a section specifically speaking to co-design.
- All successful applicants will be asked to submit a dissemination plan for their findings. The EDICa engagement team will work with successful applicants to disseminate findings across their network
- On being awarded funding, all successful organisations will be required to sign an offer letter, including terms and conditions (link to be inserted)

### Outputs

- Flexible Fund holders will be asked to present their research during EDICa's Seminar Series: <https://edicaucus.ac.uk/edica-seminar-series>



- All successful projects will be required to produce an accessible final report at the end of their project, of no more than 10,000 words. This should include a summary of the project, the methodology used to undertake the project, research findings, recommendations, and a full cost report.
- Each project will be required to create at least one impactful, accessible output e.g. a blog article, a reflective piece, an exhibition, etc.
- All successful applicants will be required to work with the EDICa engagement team to disseminate findings across their network.
- Successful applicants will be required to meet with the EDICa team each quarter to report on project updates.

### **Dissemination Process (for the call)**

We will be reaching out to our network, and asking that they share the call for applications, and call for reviewers within their organizations and throughout their own networks. The funding call page on our website will be linked in all communications. Our dissemination list is as follows:

- EDICa network (those who have signed up to receive information from us)
- EDICa Advisory Board
- Funders
- Partners (included within the proposals)
- Caucus collaborations (mentioned in the Year 1 proposal)
- Individuals and organisations who have reached out to EDICa
- Individuals and organisations EDICa have identified as potential network members
- Social media platforms: Twitter, LinkedIn