

**ESRC TEACHING AND LEARNING PROGRAMME: FUNDING FOR
SUPPLEMENTARY USER ENGAGEMENT, COMMUNICATION AND IMPACT
ACTIVITIES**
Information for Applicants

Background to the Scheme

The engagement of users at all stages of the research process and the achievement of impacts upon policy and practice which will lead to significant enhancements in learning outcomes are key features of the Teaching and Learning Programme. The development of the Programme's Communication and Impact strategy, in consultation with Programme participants and the wider research policy and practitioner communities, has therefore been a key priority for the Programme Director's Office and Steering Committee. As a part of the development of this strategy the Steering Committee has decided to introduce an innovative mechanism whereby existing Phase I and II award-holders may **bid for supplementary funding to support new / additional / extended project user engagement, communication and impact activities.**

This scheme has been set up to facilitate Programme award holders to pursue unanticipated opportunities or new ideas that may emerge during the life of a project/ network which would enhance its communication and impact activities but which could not otherwise be funded from within the existing award cash limit. It will also enable the Programme Director and Steering Committee to play a more proactive role in encouraging, stimulating and resourcing the development of project/network communication and impact activities. In addition the scheme will provide a mechanism for pursuing important opportunities that may emerge after the Programme award has ended and / or achieving added value by extending some communication and impact activities beyond the life of the project / network.

The Programme Steering Committee has initially allocated £200,000 to support the scheme.

Strategic approach

The central aim of the additional funding is to increase the impact and influence of projects and Programme. This can be through short and medium term initiatives which use existing assets (e.g. partnerships, research reviews, conceptual and methodological developments, policy inputs, emerging findings, capacity building, interaction with a wide range of social science views) as well as longer-term impact from research findings.

Successful applications will therefore be likely to be ones that go beyond dissemination and communication to spread awareness. In essence we are looking for new activities which are:

- ***Collaborative*** and ***Iterative***, exchanging ideas with researchers, policy-makers and practitioners. The aim is to foster an environment where all can contribute and awareness / use of research evidence are routine and central to both policy and practice. A bid might therefore be to fund such a forum for a particular research area.

- x *Interactive and Constructive* because researchers are a mix of participants. We need to work with a wide range of partners, to make the whole greater than the sum of the parts. A bid might be to build a deep new partnership with a key group(s).
- x *Transformative* because we need to get the best of both basic and more applied research into improved policy and practice. This means transforming research evidence to generate practical outcomes / products perhaps funding the development of new teaching materials not in the original project, a new learner support system, etc.
- x *Customer focused and Distributed* since without demand from practice and policy communities impact will inevitably be sub-optimal. We must share ownership of the fruits of our work. Therefore, an application might be for funding to work with practitioners to re-invent and adapt projects, without perverting the evidence or conceptual framework, with a view to the maximum take-up by potential adopters.

We would welcome in particular proposals that employ *innovative approaches* and partnerships to make the best use of existing Project and Programme assets - especially those generated in collaboration with project partners. Such approaches may include:

- x methodological developments;
- x new conceptual / theoretical approaches and the practical application of these;
- x new networks of influence and communication to reach and influence research, practice and policy communities;
- x skills which can be shared and developed;
- x transformative products such as new teaching materials, learner support systems, etc., accompanied by clear plans for their practical application.
- x Innovative and interactive uses of ICT (broadly defined).

Applications based on more 'traditional' formats such as conferences and publications are not excluded, but will need to demonstrate why they are the most effective routes to influence and impact for the engagement and communication activities envisaged.

The Programme's Communication and Impact Strategy

The scheme is part of the Programme's Communication and Impact Strategy, which aims to:

- x Support the Programme's primary objective of raising the achievement of learners at all ages and stages in education, training and life-long learning;
- x Engage with teachers and trainers to ensure our research reflects their needs and is transformed and communicated effectively in discussion with them, so as to maximise its relevance, usefulness and impact;
- x Form effective partnerships with organisations, groups and individuals who can contribute to and benefit from the Programme's work;
- x Promote the Programme's contribution to the development of policy in the field of teaching and learning;
- x Foster support for the Programme from all those who share its aims.

Within the strategy 'impact' is defined as the achievement of positive action of favourable outcomes in support of a set of specified objectives, both during and following a programme of research. Impact may be at policy, conceptual, management or practical levels, or a combinations of these. However 'impact' is conceived not as a simple linear flow of research followed by transformation, dissemination of findings and adoption by practice and policy, but as a much more collaborative effort: interactive, iterative, constructive, distributed and transformative. The Programme's strategy therefore involves a much broader range of activity than 'disseminating' research in order to create and sustain processes to both deliver on its wider objectives and support the development of a favourable climate for maximum research impact. The key elements of the strategy are:

- x Working with networks of practitioners, learners and others to deliver, transform and communicate research evidence and other research (e.g. reviews, methodologies, perspectives, etc.) to the widest possible number of their peers, and to persuade practitioners to apply its recommendations to their practice;
- x Engaging with a wide range of user organisations and other stakeholders to embed the aims, approaches and findings of the Programme in the cultural context of both research and practitioner communities;
- x Contributing to (and where appropriate originating and leading) strategic debates about teaching and learning, to influence policy and practice;
- x Working with key organisations in the field to raise the profile of evidence- informed teaching and learning as a significant and effective route to lasting improvements in attainment of learners;
- x Communicating conceptual, methodological and practical approaches at both Programme and project level to research, practitioner and relevant policy communities;
- x Supporting training and other capacity-building activities which improves the ability of the teaching and learning community to undertake relevant research and transform it appropriately for a range of audiences.
- x Facilitating the learning and co-operation opportunities generated by discussion between projects within the Programme, to develop both conceptual and practical advances in transforming research into impact.

Further information on the Programme Communication Plan can be found on the Programme website at <http://www.tlrp.org>.

Key Features of the Scheme

1. This scheme has been established to support supplementary user engagement, communication and impact activities directly related to the research being undertaken by a Phase I or II project / network as part of the Programme which will contribute to the achievement of the aims of the Communication and Impact Strategy. It is intended to allow Programme award holders to take advantage of new opportunities for user engagement or impact which could not be foreseen at the time of application or to pursue new ideas which have emerged during the conduct of the research or in discussion with user / practitioner groups. It is also intended to support and facilitate the Programme Director's office in playing a pro-active role in stimulating the enhancement of project/network user engagement, communication and impact

activities. Applications may be for entirely new activities (e.g. creation of new networks of influence and communication, development of transformative products such as new teaching materials or learner support systems; innovative and interactive uses of ICT; etc.) or for the extension of existing user networks or communication / impact activities beyond the scope outlined in the original proposal to ESRC.

2. *Proposals involving innovative approaches to user engagement, communication and impact are especially encouraged.* Applicants will be expected to demonstrate that they have consulted with relevant 'user' groups (practitioners, policy-makers, managers etc) in the development of their application.

Proposals submitted in partnership / collaboration with appropriate policy / practitioner bodies / groups are also strongly encouraged. Partnerships across the nations and regions of the UK will be particularly welcomed.

Proposals involving collaboration between a number of different Teaching and Learning Programme projects / networks are also encouraged. The Programme Office will be pleased to assist with putting together such joint approaches.

3. Applications will only be accepted from research teams funded under Phases I and II of the TLRP. The principal applicant must therefore be a named researcher on a Phase I or II award. However, applications which involve collaboration with researchers, policy makers, managers or practitioners not currently involved in the Programme will be welcomed.
4. Applications may be made at any time during the life of the Programme (which currently runs to 2008) subject to the availability of funds within the Programme. Proposals may be for activities to be carried out during the lifetime of the current Phase I or II award and /or for activities at the end of the current award, including the extension of networks established as a part of the work of the project/ network. In such cases the management and support arrangements (offices, ICT, etc.) proposed will need to be clearly identified.
5. Applications under this scheme should normally be for between £10,000 and £30,000, although exceptionally applications between £5,000 and £10,000 or £30,000 and £45,000 may be considered. Normal ESRC Research Funding rules regarding the eligibility of costs will apply.
6. There is no limit on the number of different applications for different activities that project teams may submit but the total amount awarded to any single team in any one year will not exceed £45,000.
7. Applications for activities proposed in the original application to the ESRC will be considered. Applicants must clearly state in their proposal how the proposal would add value to their existing activities. They are also required to confirm that funding for this was not included within the original proposal approved for funding by the ESRC and that funding for this could not be found from within the existing award cash limit.

8. Applications for additional research activities or communication activities targeted primarily at the academic / research community are not eligible under this scheme.

Submission and Assessment of Applications

9. Applicants are advised to consult Programme Director / Assistant Programme Director about their proposal before applying. Applicants may also consult with the Critical Friends for their project before applying.
10. It is important to refer to the ESRC Research Funding Guidelines, when completing the application form. Please note that all costs must be fully detailed and justified on the form. The guidelines can be found <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/resfund.htm>
11. Applications forms plus 4 copies should be submitted on the attached application form to the Programme Manager, Mr Gary Grubb, at the ESRC and copied to the Programme Director.
12. Applications will be assessed by members of the Steering Committee in consultation with the Programme Director. It is normally hoped to notify applicants of the outcomes of their application within 8 weeks of receipt by the ESRC although a decision within this period cannot always be guaranteed.
13. Applications will be considered on their individual merits rather than in competition with each other. Criteria for assessing applications will include:
 - x Potential contribution to the achievement of the aims of the Programme's Communication and Impact Strategy and to the broader objectives of the Programme.
 - x Added value to existing Programme and project/network activities.
 - x Quality of the proposal and likely effectiveness of the proposal in terms of enhancing user engagement in the research, achieving effective communication and achieving impacts on policy or practice which will enhance learning outcomes.
 - x Extent of consultation with / involvement of user groups and/or strength of any proposed partnerships / collaborations
 - x Value for money

Additional priority may be given to proposals that involve innovative approaches to user engagement, communication or achievement and/or that might be of broader benefit to other projects/ networks under the Programme or to the Programme more generally (e.g. though producing insights into the effectiveness of alternative or innovative approaches of relevance to researchers under the Programme or activities involving collaboration between project/ network teams).

Issuing of Awards and Reporting Requirements

14. Where applications are for activities during the lifetime of the existing project or network, awards will normally take the form of an increase to the cash-limit of the existing Phase I or II award. Applicants will then be expected to report on progress /outcomes as a part of their normal annual reports and in their final report to the

ESRC; however, in some cases additional reports ('lessons learnt') may also be required.

15. Where applications extend beyond the life of the existing project or network a separate award will be issued. Where awards extend for periods over a year a short interim progress report may be required. Where a separate award is issued applicants will be required to produce a short final report of activities undertaken and outcomes of the award within three months of the end of the award; the final payment will be withheld by the ESRC pending submission of this report.
16. Applicants will be expected to collaborate fully with the Programme Director / Director's Office in the normal way and to keep the Director fully informed of progress. The Director and project's / network's Critical Friends should be invited to any major events organised as a part of the award and sent copies of any significant outputs from the award.

Further Information / Application Forms

17. If you have any queries regarding the fellowships please contact Chris Godwin (Tel: (01793) 413055, e-mail: chris.godwin@esrc.ac.uk) Angela Leonard (Tel: (01793) 413019, e-mail: Angela.Leonard@esrc.ac.uk) Gary Grubb (Tel: (01793) 413086, e-mail: Gary.Grubb@esrc.ac.uk) at the ESRC.

If you would like a copy of the form emailed to you, please contact Angela Leonard (Tel: (01793) 413019, e-mail: Angela.Leonard@esrc.ac.uk)