ESRC Impact Acceleration Account guidelines

Active Engagement Fund

About the Active Engagement Fund

What is it?
The Active Engagement Fund (AEF) provides a responsive means both of supporting events that seek to build relationships with research users and exploring potential avenues for developing impact. The fund will provide up to £2,000 for holding events, which can include seminars, workshops, closed round-table discussions, launch events for the publication of high-profile research reports, and panel discussions. The fund will also provide up to £500 to support early-stage activities, such as meeting with potential users for the first time.

How can the fund be used?
Events and Activities supported by the IAA AEF will target specific audiences from the public, commercial, and third sectors and will be held either on our campuses, in central London, or at other appropriate venues when organised jointly with external partners. The events can take place at any time during the research process and can be used at an early stage to help to identify potential users and ascertain their needs. We expect the events to be targeted at particular audiences with invitations being sent to relevant organisations and individuals. The fund will not be used to support dissemination events directed solely at the general public although, where relevant, events may be open to the public. The funding may be used to support closed-door events held under Chatham House Rules in order to allow engagement with potential users in politically or commercially sensitive fields. One possible use of the funds is tackling particular problems or exploring particular issues by holding ‘hack days’ with research users.

The funding of up to £500 to support initial activities can be used for early-stage meetings with potential research users or other similar opportunities to engage with potential beneficiaries of research. In such cases the fund would primarily be used to meet travel and subsistence costs incurred.

Aims of the fund
We envisage that this scheme will be particularly useful for building new relationships with research users, and that these relationships may be extended using the further support available through the IAA Impact Fund, as well as other externally-funded Knowledge Exchange schemes (e.g. KTP).

Selection criteria and eligibility
The IAA AEF is open to University of Essex academic staff working in areas eligible for ESRC funding. This includes staff at Essex in all three faculties who are working in relevant fields. We will also consider applications to support cross-disciplinary projects with identifiable social or economic outcomes. Staff working in ESRC-funded centres are not permitted to apply for IAA funds.

Applications to the IAA AEF can be made at any time and should be submitted to iaa@essex.ac.uk. We expect decisions to be made by the IAA team within two working weeks of the application’s submission.

Applications for funds to hold events should be made by submitting the Active Engagement Fund application form, and should follow the Application Guidance below. All applications should be fully costed, and applicants are advised to consult the IAA Guidelines and Governance document.
Applications for initial or early-stage activities (under £500) should be made through a statement of no more than 500 words on one side of A4 that addresses the following:

- What the funding will be used for (e.g. meeting a representative of an organisation for the first time, attending a policy briefing)
- What the activity aims to achieve in the short-term (e.g. finding out about an organisation’s needs / interests, presenting research findings)
- Whether there are any longer-term plans if the initial activity is successful (e.g. applying to another IAA fund, developing a proposal for external research funding)
- Costing – we would expect funding to be used largely for travel and subsistence
- Approval from your department’s Research Director, Impact Director, or Head of Department

**AEF Application guidelines (up to £2,000)**

1. Outline the purpose of the event or activity proposed. This is the most important part of the application. Consider what you are trying to achieve by holding the event and how it will help to generate impact.
2. Specify when the event will be held. Please state if there is a particular reason for holding it at this time. An exact date does not need to be given, but try to identify the month when it is likely to take place. Identify where the event will be held. Precise details do not have to be known but please give as much information as possible. If the event is being held outside the university, please explain the reasons for this.
3. Outline how you will identify relevant individuals / organisations to invite. Please consider the benefits the event will have for attendees. It is not necessary to name potential attendees, although please be as specific as possible and note if any particular invitees have already been identified or approached.
4. If the event is being organised in partnership with an external body, please specify what this partner will contribute (e.g. sharing costs or in-kind contributions such as venue, catering, expertise, visibility, etc.). There is no obligation to obtain matched funding or secure contributions from collaborators. However, any opportunities to obtain funding or in-kind contributions should be pursued.
5. Outline how you plan to disseminate relevant outcomes. Please describe any follow-up plans that you have, including plans for obtaining feedback. Where relevant, it is advised that dissemination and follow-up should make use of existing University resources and platforms, e.g. Society Central, Communications and External Relations.
6. If relevant, outline how the event contributes to a longer-term impact strategy. It is recognised that some proposals, especially those that seek to build partnerships early in the research process, may not yet have developed a detailed strategy.
7. Please list expected Outputs, Outcomes, and Impacts. The ESRC has provided a list of each as KPIs and those that are relevant have been included as an appendix.
8. Please provide an estimate of costs. The IAA team will be able to assist with questions relating to costing. Staff costs are not covered by this scheme.
9. Applications should be passed to your department’s Research Director or Impact Director (as appropriate), and Head of Department. Research Directors and Heads of Department are asked to comment on the proposal and approve the application

**Assessing applications**

The criteria against which applications will be judged by the IAA Fund Awards Panel include:

- Does the proposal have clear aims?
- Have suitable collaborators or users been identified, and is the partnership sufficiently ‘ready’ to be operationalised?
- How effectively will the target audience be reached?
- How likely is it that impact will be generated?
- What would be the likely reach and significance of this impact, and what plans are in place to record and evidence that impact?
- How appropriate are plans for post-project developments?

For more details visit [http://www.essex.ac.uk/reo/impacts/esrc-impact-acceleration.aspx](http://www.essex.ac.uk/reo/impacts/esrc-impact-acceleration.aspx)
Appendix I: ESRC IAA Key Performance Indicators

ESRC has set a number of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the overall Impact Accelerator Account programme. To assist the IAA team in meeting their reporting obligations to ESRC, our new electronic reporting framework (currently under development) allows ongoing updating of narrative and reporting metrics against the Outputs, Outcomes and Impacts identified by the ESRC (listed below).

IAA KPI 1: Outputs
- Cash and in-kind contributions from external non-academic partners
- Further collaborative projects / proposals following engagement supported by IAA funding
- Joint publications / outputs with external non-academic partners
- Number of strategic events participated in (both ways)
- Any case studies developed
- Number of new partners participating in collaborative projects / proposals
- Number of events and attendance (numbers of people participating in each event)
- Number of people completing entry / exit surveys / interviews
- Engagement with other HE institutions

KPI 2: Outcomes
- Engagement with non-academic organisations (what? with whom?)
- Increased number of researchers (from Essex, and elsewhere) participating in KE / Impact / commercialisation activity (who? what?)
- Increased income from engagement / impact activities

IAA KPI 3: Impacts
- Evidence of policy and / or practice change in external non-academic organisations
- Evidence of new business models or approaches adopted by external non-academic organisations
- Evidence of cost-savings, increased turnover / profit, jobs at the external non-academic organisation as a result of the project
- Increase in / commitment to co-produced research and / or R&D expenditure