

Engagement and Impact Fund 2025-2026

Guidance notes for applicants

What is the Engagement and Impact Fund?

The Engagement and Impact Fund is an internally managed funding scheme which aims to enhance the non-academic impact of research. This is a competitive fund to provide smaller amounts of funding, **up to £2,000 (including VAT)**, to allow researchers to respond quickly to opportunities for impact. The Fund supports activities that help to build relationships with stakeholders and research users in the private, third, or public sector to enable research impact.

How does this funding call work?

This is an open call with two tranches of funding available. The first tranche will be awarded in the Autumn Term, and the second tranche will be awarded in the Spring Term:

Tranche one (Autumn Term) - the first tranche of funding will open at 12 noon on Monday 8 September and close at 12 noon on Friday 5 December 2025, unless the allocated funding available for this tranche has been fully awarded before this date (in which case this tranche will close sooner).

Tranche two (Spring Term) - the second tranche of funding will open at 12 noon on Monday 12 January 2026 and will close once all the allocated funding available for this tranche has been awarded.

We will not accept any applications submitted between the closure of the first tranche of funding and the opening of the second tranche of funding. We will also update our [Engagement and Impact Funding page](#) to confirm once each tranche of funding has closed.

As there is a limited amount of competitive funding available per tranche, we would advise for applications to be submitted as early as possible within each term.

Who can apply?

The Fund is open to research staff employed at the University of Essex within any department/school.

Please note that only one Engagement and Impact Fund award can be funded per applicant, per academic year. We will not consider any further submissions from applicants who have already received this funding award within this academic year. If you have applied but are unsuccessful, we would accept a subsequent application for consideration.

What costs are eligible?

This funding is for **engagement and impact activities only**.

Primary research cannot be supported. Teaching buyout, attendance at academic conferences and Open Access publishing charges/costs associated with publishing a journal article are also not eligible.

Awards can cover research support staff costs for those working directly on the project and associated project costs. The funds requested should be appropriate for the grant duration and the resources required to realise the project's objectives.

If your application will include funding for staff, please contact the Impact Programmes team at impact-programmes@essex.ac.uk to ensure that staff costs are correctly calculated.

Please do not contact the REO Pre-Award team for costings.

For the Impact Programmes team to be able to accurately calculate your staff costs, we will require the following information:

- confirmation of the grade and spinal point
- start date and duration for the post
- the amount of time the staff member will work on the award

An example could be a Research Assistant on grade 7, spinal point 27, who will be working on the project for one day a week starting 01/02/2026 for one month.

If you are budgeting for any overseas travel and subsistence costs, please note that you will not be able to claim expenses for accommodation and subsistence costs which are over the maximum rates outlined by the Government. Please consult their [guidance on expenses rates for employees travelling outside the UK](#).

Account for any reverse charge VAT costs

Projects may have to pay reverse charge VAT. Any goods or services brought into the UK will be subject to VAT paid by the customer. It is called 'reverse charge' because buyers are responsible for paying VAT in domestic transactions. The reverse charge VAT is usually paid at 20% but will depend on the country in which the goods or services are purchased. The payment will be part of your project's direct costs and needs to be budgeted for.

An example of reverse charge VAT would be consultancy work undertaken overseas for an Essex academic who then writes a report based on the work. If the base cost of the work was £1,000, the project would also need to pay 20% Reverse Charge VAT into our HMRC VAT account (so in this case, 20% of £1,000 is £200). The total cost to the project would then be £1,000 plus £200 = £1,200. For more information, email tax@essex.ac.uk

How to apply

Please contact your [Research Impact Officer](#) who will advise on the application and provide you with support. You must consult with your Research Impact Officer before submitting your final application. Please allow five working days for your Research Impact Officer to review your application. Any applicants who have not consulted with their Research Impact Officer prior to submission will have their application withdrawn.

When a tranche is open*, please complete the Engagement and Impact Fund application form and submit it by email to impact-programmes@essex.ac.uk.

We suggest that applicants provide a project start date that is at least six weeks after the date your final application is submitted. This is to allow time for both the application review process to conclude and for any necessary administrative processes to be actioned to then be able to set up the award if you are successful. Please also be mindful of any University closure dates that could also cause delays.

*Please see the ‘**How does this funding call work?**’ section in this document for further information on the two tranches of funding available (one in the Autumn Term, and one in the Spring Term) and their timelines.

Assessment criteria

Applications will be reviewed by a small panel, consisting of two senior members of REO staff and the relevant Faculty Dean Research.

Applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

- Does the proposal have clear and appropriate impact aims?
- Are any collaborators and audience identified, and suitable?
- Will the projected impact generated from the project have reach and significance?
- Is the budget being requested appropriate, good value for money and well justified?

We expect decisions to be made and notification of outcomes within four weeks of an application being submitted.

Ethics review

Please consult our [Ethical Public Engagement Tool and Guidance](#) document. This tool helps researchers to determine if their activity involving engagement with members of the public incorporates research and therefore requires ethics review. This document also provides guidance on ethically undertaking public engagement activities not requiring ethics review.

Please note that if ethical approval is needed for your project, this must be granted before a cost code can be issued. Please see the University’s [guidance on obtaining ethical approval](#) for research involving human participants. You will be responsible for obtaining ethical approval for your project. Please contact reo-governance@essex.ac.uk for additional advice.

Post award processes

Successful applicants will be allocated a faculty cost code to spend their funding against. The deadline for all spend against the cost code to be completed is **30 June 2026**. This is also the date by which all proposed project activity should be completed. No spending is permitted after this date (please note that there is no facility to rollover unspent funds into the next financial year).

All recipients of this funding will be required to complete a short report at the end of their project. All engagement and impact activities and any outcomes and impact should also be documented on the RIS-Impact Module.