ESRC Impact Acceleration Account 2 - Guidance Notes

Active Engagement Fund

What is it the Active Engagement Fund?
The Active Engagement Fund provides a responsive means of supporting both: events that seek to build relationships with research users and explore potential avenues for developing impact; and early stage meetings with potential users. Up to £2,000 is available for events which could include seminars, workshops, closed round-table discussions, launch events for the publication of high-profile research reports and panel discussions. Up to £500 is available for meetings.

These guidelines are for the ACTIVE ENGAGMENT FUND only.
Up to £2,000 is available for events. Please use the Events application form.
Up to £500 is available for meetings. Please use the Meetings application form.

Aims of the fund
The events will target specific audiences from the public, commercial, and third sectors and will be held either on our campuses, in central London, or 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 early-stage activities can be used for initial 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.

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 funds available through the IAA Impact Fund, as well as other UoE Knowledge Exchange schemes (e.g. Innovation Vouchers, Enterprise Project Funds, etc.).

Selection criteria and eligibility
The fund is open to University of Essex academic staff working in areas eligible for ESRC funding (https://esrc.ukri.org/about-us/what-is-social-science/social-science-disciplines/). This includes staff in the Faculties of Science & Health, and Humanities who seek to develop projects addressing relevant topics. We will also provide funding to support cross-disciplinary projects involving staff working in areas outside of the social sciences. Staff working in ESRC-funded centres (e.g. Understanding Society), are not permitted to apply for IAA funds.

The fund is open to all UoE academic staff on ASER contracts. All successful applicants will be required to complete a report at the end of their activity to assist with the evaluation and reporting to the ESRC.

ACTIVE ENGAGMENT FUND evaluation criteria are:

- Does the proposal have clear aims?
- Is the event or travel appropriate to the aims?
- Timeliness: why is the event or travel necessary at this moment?
- How effectively will the target audience be reached?
- How likely is it that impact will be, or has the potential to be, generated?
- What would be the likely reach and significance of this impact?
- Does it include an appropriate range of contacts at suitable organisations?
- How appropriate are the follow-up plans?
**Reporting**
Each award will be subject to evaluation against these criteria. Project leads may be required to report on progress against agreed milestones during the award, but must submit a final report within a month of the end of the activity.

A project case study will be required for reporting and promotional purposes, and Research and Enterprise Office (REO) staff will be available to assist in its production.

**Timetable**
Applications can be made at any time. We expect decisions to be made and notified within 2 weeks.

**Advice for the application**
The Meetings application form requires a short narrative statement. The guidelines below specifically refer to the Events application, but similar considerations apply for Meetings.

1. Please complete all sections in as much detail as possible, eg proposed date and place of event or travel.

2. Follow-up activities (section 4) refer to follow-up related to your project/event, for example further collaboration, publications or joint activities; longer-term strategy (section 5) should consider the broader and strategic context of your project, for example impact case studies or funding applications.

3. Ensure your budget is realistic and under the relevant limit (£2,000 for events, £500 for travel). If your activity requires more than this you should contact iaa@essex.ac.uk first to see if it is worth making an application (or perhaps re-directing your application to the larger IAA Impact Fund).

4. To complete section 6 please refer to the list of ESRC Outputs, Outcomes, and Impacts at the end of this document. Do not worry if there is overlapping content between this section and other parts of the application. Please answer the questions fully.

5. You should take the risks and mitigations section seriously: it may include risks related to research, travel or which accrue only to those with whom you are collaborating. Please see the section on our website linking to relevant university policies and guidance.

6. Completed applications should be passed to your department’s Director of Impact and Head of Department, who are asked to comment on the proposal and approve the application (an electronic signature is fine).

7. All applications should be submitted via the online portal with the application form as a Word attachment (https://essex.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cTjCRpssOVsGPhr). If you experience any problems with the system please contact us.

If you have any queries please email iaa@essex.ac.uk.

**Appendix: ESRC Outputs, Outcomes and Impacts**
The ESRC has set a number of KPIs for the overall Impact Acceleration Account project and each funded project must report on various measures of Outputs, Outcomes and Impacts. Please make sure you have considered how to address each question in the planning of your activity as you will be required to report on these criteria.

- a. Numbers and type of academics & researchers involved: at Essex and at other HEIs; mix of career stages; mix of discipline.

- b. Numbers and types of external partners: numbers involved; whether new or existing; involvement of end users; whether public, private, third sector etc.

- c. Assessment of success: use of entry/exit surveys and interviews; generation of satisfaction scores; end-user reports; testimonials etc
d. Additional impact or exploitation: attribution of UoE contribution to local, national or international policy through reports, White/Green Papers, Select Committees etc; end-user reports; testimonials; contribution stories; collaborative Knowledge Exchange; commericalisation/generation of IP; technology development; evidence of practice/productivity change; development of new business models.

e. Additional benefits: academic articles and scholarly publishing; follow-on projects such as collaborative research, contract research, consultancy etc; leveraged funding, in kind, or cash from UOE internal funds or activities or other external partners; training or CPD for researchers or other external partners; anything else