ESRC Impact Acceleration Account guidelines

Impact Fund

About the Impact Fund

What is it?
The Impact Fund provides up to £15,000 to support projects that develop productive, sustainable relationships with collaborators and research users in the private, third, or public sector. The fund is a flexible means of enabling a wide range of activities and we envisage a wide range of creative proposals. Some potential uses of the fund may include, but not limited to:

- Working collaboratively to produce a proposal for a large research grant
- Co-produced small-scale research projects
- Working with practitioners to share best practice and/or provide training
- Secondments (inward or outward)
- Exploiting local networks (e.g. to develop Regional Economic Intelligence and Project Evaluation Services)
- Expanding existing provision (e.g. to develop the Law Clinic into a Business and Legal Advice Clinic)
- Sharing of data and expertise with a partner organisation

Aims of the fund
The main aim of the Impact Fund is to ensure that we foster and capture the widest range of impact opportunities and follow-on activities generated by our academics and by users of our research. The fund can be used as a means of exploiting relationships and opportunities developed through events funded by the IAA Active Engagement Fund, or alternatively it can used as seed-corn in order to generate impacts that can be further developed and exploited. Our intention is for the fund to be a flexible means to enable the building of relationships with a broad range of collaborators and research users.

Selection criteria and eligibility
Each project funded will be subject to evaluation and project leads will be required to report on progress against agreed milestones. A project case study may be required for promotional purposes and Research and Enterprise Office (REO) staff will be available to assist in its production. We expect consideration to be given to the potential impact of each project, and of its contributory role in departmental planning, including planning of Impact Case Studies for the next REF, as well as how this impact can be evidenced.

The fund 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.

The Essex IAA follows the ethical core principles of the ESRC. Applicants should demonstrate that the ethical implications of their research have been considered, particularly in relation to human participants. Projects involving the collection of data from human participants will be subject to ethical approval.

How do I apply?
The maximum amount available per project is £15,000 and all applications should be fully costed. All applications should be made using the Impact Fund application form and submitted to iaa@essex.ac.uk, and applicants are advised to consult the IAA Guidelines and Governance document.
Application deadlines
Calls will be announced for the IAA Impact Fund will be announced each year. Thanks to the award of a further year of bridging funds, the IAA will provide funding until March 2019, but please note, that projects supported at the final round will be required to commence from April 2018, and run for a maximum of 6 months. Forthcoming IAA Impact Fund call deadlines:

- Friday, 16 February 2018, 5.00pm

Application guidelines
1. Please provide an executive summary of no more than 300 words. This should give an overview of the proposed project.
2. Provide a narrative description of the project and a case for support of no more than 2 pages (Arial, 11pt). This is the most important part of the application. Consider what you are trying to achieve through the project, what the identified need is, how it will lead to impact being generated, what will be the benefits for the external partner(s) and for the university (e.g. the generation of an Impact Case Study[ies]), and how the impact will be measured. It is also advisable to explain the suitability of any potential collaborators / users, and to give an honest appraisal of the level of ‘readiness’ for the partnership to be put into action
3. (NB. Items 3-6 may be given in bullet points.) Provide details of research users or collaborators that you will engage with. It may be that an organisation will be involved in the research process, or it may be that you have identified potential beneficiaries for your extant research findings. Please outline any existing relationships you have developed with potential collaborators or users. In the case of potential collaborations we would expect contact to have been made prior to the submission of this application. Please obtain a statement of support and commitment from users or collaborators (see Item 11, below).
4. Outline the plan for the project, including realistic start and end dates. Where possible please provide details of the main milestones for the project. Projects should be completed within 12 months, but please note, that projects supported at the final round (deadline: 16 February 2018) will be required to commence from April 2018, and run for a maximum of 6 months. Project leads will be required to provide ongoing updates on progress against agreed milestones.
5. Outline the expected benefits of the project, including the potential impacts on collaborators / users, as well as any wider impacts. Please describe how you will evidence and track these impacts; this could include financial information from project partners, testimonials from partners, user questionnaires, or other forms of evidence, as appropriate.
6. Provide an estimate of costs and funds required. The IAA team will be able to assist with questions relating to costing. Staff costs may be claimed through this scheme but these must be direct costs only. Staff costs should normally be based on the academic’s position in the UoE payscale, costed at salary-only (incl. NI and pension; excluding estates and indirects). The IAA team (iaa@essex.ac.uk) can provide guidance and assistance on costings ahead of submission; and it is the responsibility of individual academic applicants to negotiate with Directors of Research / Heads of Department, as appropriate, over the destination of the funds (e.g. teaching buy-out or Research Incentive Scheme account). Research Assistants (RAs) may be costed into proposals, and since overall value-for-money of projects is an important consideration, this is encouraged. RAs should be costed at the following rates: Postgraduate RA @ £193.26 per day (incl. NI and pension); Postdoctoral RA @ £205.31 per day (incl. NI and pension). Award-holding departments will administer the spend against the allocated funds, and reports will be run by the IAA team to monitor spend. Please also list any cash or in-kind contributions that will be made by collaborators. 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.
7. Give consideration to potential post-project developments. These may include developing further collaborative research proposals, which look to exploit emerging impact, engage with additional users, or any other means of furthering the outcomes of the project.
8. Please list expected Outputs, Outcomes, and Impacts. The ESRC has provided a list of each as overall KPIs for the IAA, and those that are relevant have been included as an appendix to this document.
9. Please indicate whether your proposal includes plans for overseas travel. If so, please ensure that you consult the university’s travel advice. Please use this space to highlight any current concerns about travelling to the country(ies) you are working on. In addition, please be sure to check the Embassy website for the country(ies) you plan to visit in order to comply with any specific entry requirements, especially if you plan to conduct academic research while there.

10. As part of our compliance with ESRC’s reporting conditions around the OECD’s Overseas Development Assistance programme, we are required to report the level of ODA eligible activities supported by the university’s IAA each year. Please state whether your proposal will directly benefit country(ies) on the OECD list of recipients of Overseas Development Assistance, and if so, which country(ies), or add “N/A” in this box.

11. Please provide a statement demonstrating commitment to the project from the collaborating organisation. This is not essential for applications to the Impact Fund, but it is strongly advised that a statement is obtained where possible. The statement can be submitted as a separate document.

12. 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
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