GCRF: RCUK Collective Fund

Interdisciplinary Research Hubs to Address Intractable Challenges Faced by Developing Countries

Deadline for Outline proposals: 9 November 2017, 4pm (GMT)

Summary
The Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) is a 5-year £1.5Bn fund and a key component in the delivery of the UK Aid Strategy: tackling global challenges in the national interest. The fund aims to ensure that UK research takes a leading role in addressing the problems faced by developing countries through:
- Challenge-led disciplinary and interdisciplinary research
- Strengthening capacity for research and innovation within both the UK and developing countries
- Providing an agile response to emergencies where there is an urgent research need.

Research Councils UK invites proposals from eligible UK research organisations to establish and lead a number of challenge-led and impact-focused GCRF Interdisciplinary Research Hubs which meet the aims of Official Development Assistance. Between £8M - £20M (full economic cost) will be available for each Hub, provided over a 5 year period starting on 1st December 2018. Depending on the quality of the applications received we anticipate awarding 12-15 Hubs.

Each Hub is required to demonstrate:
- **Challenge and impact focus** – address a specific currently intractable development challenge(s) with realistic pathways with the potential to deliver a broad range of measurable impacts, and a clear plan for sustaining and further developing the work undertaken during the lifetime of the Hub.
- **Interdisciplinary research excellence** – anchored by well-integrated interdisciplinary approach which demonstrates both underpinning research excellence and the ability to think across, between and within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and that adds significant value to existing global research efforts.
- **Global partnerships** – a commitment to capacity building and a programme of research and supporting activities which is co-developed with international partners, through genuine and equitable partnerships with researchers and relevant development agencies; third sector and Civil Society Organisations; industry and other private sector organisations; policy makers.
- **Organisation and leadership** – strong research and operational leadership which incorporates robust financial and risk management, assurance, governance and effective monitoring and evaluation, and facilitates the ability to learn and adapt over the lifetime of the Hub.

1 GCRF ODA guidance: [www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/international/gcrfodaguidance-pdf/](http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/international/gcrfodaguidance-pdf/)
Assessment will be through a two-stage process. The first stage will comprise of a short Intention to Submit survey and call for outline proposals. Following this, the most competitive outline proposals will be invited to develop full proposals.

**Aims and scope of the call**

**Intractable Development Challenges**

This call focuses on transformative approaches to address currently intractable development challenges. Intractable development challenges are multidimensional and complex challenges that have proven to be resistant to change, prone to fragmented responses and which cannot be solved by a single organisation or from one sectoral or disciplinary perspective. Typically such challenges cut across a number of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and, because they are multidimensional in nature, they require:

- the capacity to think across and between as well as within the thematic areas of the various SDGs;
- a clear understanding of the way in which different disciplines can contribute to a step change in delivery against these challenges; and
- an awareness of the underlying factors and contexts (including social, political, economic, cultural, technological and historical), interdependencies, synergies, tensions and trade-offs that promote, obstruct or even reverse delivery against the SDGs, both individually and collectively.

Examples of such global development challenges might include but are certainly not restricted to:

- achieving economic growth in an environmentally sustainable way while also ensuring social cohesion and adequate access to safe food, water and services
- addressing protracted conflict and other situations of instability and violence (e.g. involuntary migration and forced displacement) in the context of food insecurity, environmental pressures and demographic change
- development of resilient infrastructure, smart services and energy production in the context of climate change, protracted conflict and social and political instability
- transforming education systems and using technological innovation to address social and gender inequality and enhance skills and life chances for women and children, recognising the challenges of demographic change and economic dislocations
- achieving food security in ways that improves nutrition and health; recognises local contexts; and makes agriculture, food production and consumption more environmentally and economically sustainable
- urban development that fosters diversity and inclusivity and employment for increasing numbers of young people whilst tackling air pollution and other environmental hazards, promoting physical/mental health, and reducing the risk of epidemics.

*This list is indicative only. We welcome proposals identifying challenges outside these examples.*

**Hub characteristics**

Each multi-institutional Hub should propose a coherent and ambitious vision, and bring together an international core strategic partnership, led by a Hub Director (the Principal

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Investigator) and strategically supported by co-director(s) who may be in the Global South or the UK, to conduct a world-leading and well-integrated programme of research. They should aim to stimulate transformative approaches and radical new thinking to address multi-dimensional and complex development challenges. This may include generation of impact through collaboration with relevant industrial sectors, civil society groups and NGOs, as well as government and other policy agencies.

Hubs must demonstrate how they will help to deliver the UK Strategy for the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF)⁴ and a step-change in research for development through:

**Challenge and impact focus**
- Challenge-led and impact-focused, generating excellent and novel research and translating this into measurable real-world outcomes.
- A clear vision and integrated plan for the translation of the proposed research into measurable international development impact.
- The potential to deliver a broad range of impacts and scalable solutions at the local, national and/or international level.
- Developing a sustainable programme that has a legacy beyond the initial investment, with potential to leverage further support from development agencies, as well as financial or in-kind contributions including from universities and the private sector.

**Interdisciplinary research excellence**
- Excellent research capacity including an appropriate range of research skills required to address the challenge(s).
- A demonstrable capacity to think across and between as well as within the thematic areas covered by the various SDGs, and a clear understanding of the way different disciplines working together contribute to the overall objectives of the Hub.
- Taking an interdisciplinary approach that assembles new knowledge and insight from across different research communities - transcending traditional disciplinary boundaries by integrating ground-breaking research with a better understanding of the social, political, economic, historical and cultural contexts.
- Commitment to build strategically on previous ODA and non-ODA investments (RCUK, DfID and other delivery partners) to improve co-ordination and ensure the whole is more than the sum of the parts.

**Global partnerships**
- An indispensable feature will be co-development with international partners and substantial, genuine and meaningful collaboration between UK and developing-country researchers, as well as relevant development agencies, Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs), Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), industry and other private sector organisations, policy makers, and other relevant local and international partners.
- An appropriate strategy for deep engagement with users, intermediaries and beneficiaries of research throughout the duration of the Hub.
- Full consideration of the relevant developing country context (e.g. languages, cultures, faiths, public engagement, legal frameworks, political and regulatory systems), ethical issues in the planning and conduct of research, and implementation of an ethical innovation and ‘do no harm’ approach.

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Organisation and leadership

- Shared values and goals within the Hub and its partnerships.
- Ensuring strong research and operational leadership, including robust financial and risk management, assurance and governance.
- Implementing appropriate and effective monitoring and evaluation frameworks.
- The ability to learn and adapt, including demonstrating the agility to respond to opportunities arising over the lifetime of the award.

Please note that not all of these characteristics will be assessed at the outline stage. Further details on the criteria used for the assessment of outline applications are included in the ‘Assessment procedure’ section.

Hubs are expected to be innovative, building on identified needs and proposing a flexible programme of activities co-developed with international partners. The paramount objective is excellence and relevance of the research. To support this, each Hub will be required to propose and justify a portfolio of cross-cutting research, knowledge exchange and innovation activities, with due recognition to the following:

- Development of novel methodologies for interdisciplinary working, knowledge exchange and innovation, including where appropriate, disciplines that haven’t traditionally been oriented towards international development challenges
- Flexible funding to support emerging research opportunities (in the UK and relevant developing countries) arising over the lifetime of the Hub, including supporting sub-projects and engaging researchers and other stakeholders outside the original core partnership
- Activities to encourage idea generation, research syntheses, commercialisation, research translation and follow-on investment
- Partnership building, networking and stakeholder engagement to align the research with the local context and knowledge systems, contribution to policy/practice and/or commercialisation
- Capacity building activities which may include bespoke training; development of professional and transferable skills; development of tools, methodologies and guidelines; and/or staff exchange
- Pathway to impact activities to maximise the short, medium and long term impacts.
- Operational funding to build professional capability to support engagement and relationship management, research coordination, facilitation of new ideas and dissemination of outputs

Successful outcomes might include technological solutions; new evidence, insights or information that informs policy and practice directly; or disruption/challenge of existing (“status quo”) approaches.

Hubs must demonstrate full commitment from all organisations involved, including a letter of commitment (within the Case for Support) from the Pro-Vice Chancellor or equivalent of the lead research organisation. We expect a substantial and dedicated contribution from all organisations involved in the proposed Hub. This should primarily focus on contributions which complement those requested from RCUK and support the delivery of the Hub. This may include, but is not limited to, contribution towards capital, infrastructure and studentships. Contributions should reflect ability to resource i.e. expectations are reduced for organisations based in lower income countries.

Research ethics

By definition, this programme is concerned with international co-operation to address issues of global importance. Underpinning the programme and all funded projects must be a strong
research ethic based on mutual respect and understanding for different cultural, ethnic, social and economic beliefs and practices. Solutions to the proposed development challenge(s) must be rooted in, and acceptable to, the institutions, communities and societies where they will operate.

Ethical issues should be interpreted broadly and may encompass areas where regulation and approval processes exist as well as areas where they do not. Applicants must ensure that the proposed research will be carried out to a high ethical standard and must clearly state how any potential ethical and health and safety issues have been considered and will be addressed, ensuring that all necessary ethical approval is in place before the research commences and all risks are minimised.

The provisions of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 must be observed. All RCUK awards are made on the absolute condition that no work which is controlled by the Act will begin until the necessary licences have been obtained. All work supported by RCUK award must comply with the principles described in "Responsibility in the use of animals in bioscience research: expectations of the major research council and charitable funding bodies". When collaborating with other laboratories, or where animal facilities are provided by third parties, researchers and the local ethics committee in the UK should satisfy themselves that welfare standards are consistent with the principles of UK legislation. Research involving the use of genetic resources must be carried out in accordance with the requirements set out in the Nagoya Protocol.

Any research undertaken outside the UK must have both UK and respective country ethical approvals.

**How to apply**

**Funding Available**

Awards are expected to be in the range of £8 - 20 million at full economic cost, with the final figure dependent on the scope of the Hub and the scale of the challenge(s). Dependent on the quality of applications received we anticipate awarding 12-15 Hubs. It is expected that the largest Hubs will address the broadest and/or most complex challenges and involve the greatest breadth of partnerships. It is vital that each proposal demonstrates that the level of investment requested is commensurate to the scale and/or complexity of the proposed development challenge(s).

Awards will be over a five year duration, starting on 1st December 2018 with the potential for future extension dependant on their progress and the availability of funding. All successful awards will be subject to a stage gate review in year 3.

All awards will be expected to adhere to RCUK Terms and Conditions. It is expected that the resources requested in a full proposal, if invited, will broadly reflect those in the outline proposal.

**Eligibility**

**Lead research organisation** – For this call, proposals can be led by either an organisation eligible to receive funding from RCUK (http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/eligibilityforces/) or by a UK Public Sector Research Establishment (PSRE). Applicants from PSREs must contact Pamela Hicks (pamela.hicks@rcuk.ac.uk) before applying. Please note: PSRE eligibility for

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5 [www.nc3rs.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Guidelines/Responsibility in the use of animals in bioscience research- expectations of the major research councils and charitable funding bodies April 2017.pdf](http://www.nc3rs.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Guidelines/Responsibility in the use of animals in bioscience research- expectations of the major research councils and charitable funding bodies April 2017.pdf)
this call does not confer eligibility for other Research Council calls.

The lead organisation will be responsible for the overall management of the Hub including control, disbursement and assurance of funds.

**Principal Investigator (PI)/Hub Director** – This individual should act as the figurehead for the Hub, providing intellectual leadership and oversight of the research and project management. The Hub Director must be employed by the lead organisation and the term of employment must extend beyond the duration of the proposed Hub.

The proposed roles and responsibilities for this individual will need to be clearly explained and justified in the proposal. The Hub Director should be able to demonstrate that they can:
- Articulate and deliver a clear vision for the proposed Hub
- Provide leadership and convene a range of UK and international researchers and organisations
- Drive advances in the relevant fields of study
- Lead innovative and creative programmes of research
- Manage large research programmes
- Broker and develop partnerships which add value to activities/programmes
- Deliver excellent impact from research

**Co-Investigators** – Co-Investigators on Hubs are expected to have significant intellectual input and form part of the leadership team. They must be based at either the lead organisation or a research partner organisation. Employees of project partners are not permitted to be co-investigators on proposals submitted to this call.

**Research partner organisations** – Both UK and international research organisations (for example higher education organisations, public laboratories, or other non-profit research intensive organisations) can be research partners and receive funds from the Hub award.

Any UK-based research intensive organisation that is currently not eligible for Research Council funding will need to apply for Independent Research Organisation (IRO) status if it is to be a ‘research partner’ on a Hubs application. For more information on how to apply for IRO status please see [http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/eligibilityforrcs/](http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/eligibilityforrcs/) or contact Pamela Hicks (pamela.hicks@rcuk.ac.uk).

In order to be eligible to receive funding as a research partner organisation, non-UK research organisations will need to register with the Research Councils. This will only be required at the full stage; invited proposals will be required to ensure all research partner organisations are registered on the Je-S system, and include a letter of support from the Pro-Vice Chancellor for research (or equivalent authority) from each organisation in the proposal. This letter should summarise the organisation’s support for the project, confirm that they are able to meet the eligibility and assurance requirements identified in the table below, and agree to provide information to the Research Councils when requested.

| Ability to deliver | • provide evidence of a strong track record of maximising the wider impact and value of its research to the benefit of local economies and society;  
|                   | • have a cohort of researchers (normally a minimum of 10) with sufficient capacity to deliver research and a demonstrated track record. This should include a significant number of publications in journals and/or monographs with key academic publishers, |
and/or other outputs that have been subject to peer review. Journal quality should take into account benchmark measures appropriate to the regional context and research disciplines;
- have a track record of staff, while employed at the organisation, leading or co-leading innovative research projects in the previous five years including, if applicable, directing postdoctoral researchers and/or research students; and
- have sufficient financial support for research at the organisational level to ensure the availability of essential infrastructure and the long-term sustainability of research activity, as evidenced by research project income across all projects totalling at least £100k pa over the previous three years.

| Governance and control | • be a higher education organisation, public laboratory, or non-profit research intensive organisation;
• have a governing board with independent representation appointed to jointly oversee the management of the whole organisation;
• have satisfactory processes for preventing, detecting, reporting and responding to allegations of fraud, bribery and corruption;
• have satisfactory processes for the effective collection, management, analysis and dissemination of data;
• have satisfactory processes in place that meet Research Integrity and Ethics requirements, including processes for dealing with allegations of misconduct;
• be subject to an independent annual audit; and
• have measures in place to prevent and mitigate conflict of interest which could affect employees or governing board members participation in decision-making. |

| Financial stability | • be permitted by their country’s Government to receive funding from foreign sources;
• have a bank account that is in its legal name; and that can be reconciled to the finance management system;
• have a basic finance management system that can be used to reconcile the bank account, to record all cash and payments ensuring that all transactions can be individually identified and provides suitable storage for supporting documentation; and
• have satisfactory procedures in place for making payments for per diem, travel advances or review of receipts and subsequent reimbursement of expenses for approved official travel. |

| Sub-contract Management | • Ensure there is a policy in place to sufficiently manage sub-contractors including provisions for ensuring their compliance with Research Council terms and conditions. |

For organisations that are registered in multiple countries the capacity of the whole organisation may be factored into meeting the eligibility criteria as long as the overall research environment meets that criteria and that the organisation works in a joined up way, i.e., not fragmented research centres in different countries.

If the proposal is successful at the final peer review stage, all international research partner organisations will be required to complete an RCUK Overseas Due Diligence Questionnaire. More details on the Due Diligence requirements will be made available in the full call documents.
**Project partners** – Participating organisations not meeting the criteria to be research partners can be project partners on the awards based on the following requirements:

- **Third sector organisations** - NGOs, charities and other non-profit civil society organisations (not meeting the minimum requirements for research partner organisations) can be included on proposals as project partners and are eligible to receive a contribution towards costs from the Hub award (see **What can be Applied For**?).
- **Government departments and business** – Overseas and UK government departments and businesses should be engaged where appropriate but are not eligible to directly receive funds on the awards.

**Sub-contracts** – Sub-contracts are eligible costs on proposals submitted to this call but should only be used for the procurement of goods and services. Sub-contracts are not permitted for research partners providing intellectual input into the project, where a research partner or project partner relationship is more appropriate.

If you are unsure where an organisation fits within the above categories, please contact the Research Councils UK GCRF team for further guidance.

**What can be applied for?**

All UK costs will be supported at 80 per cent fEC in-line with standard Research Council rules. Please note that all funds will be administered through the lead research organisation.

Small equipment and consumables may be requested where appropriate as long as individual items are below £10,000.

Capital or infrastructure expenditure is **not an eligible cost** for this call.

Fees and/or stipends associated with Masters and PhD studentships are **not eligible** under this call.

**Funding Available for research partners organisations**

GCRF Hubs are intended to support partnerships with research partner organisations within the UK and globally. The funding for research partners will depend upon the country in which they are primarily based/legally registered, with the level of financial support determined by the countries DAC list status as summarised in the following table. All staff costs must be based on basic salaries (i.e. not day rates).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Partner Organisation Location</th>
<th>Direct Costs</th>
<th>Indirect (overheads and Institutional) costs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>Current fEC policy (80% direct &amp; indirect)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developed Countries, Chile, Uruguay, Antigua and Barbuda, Seychelles</td>
<td>Up to 50% eligible costs</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAC list countries</td>
<td>Up to 100% eligible costs</td>
<td>Up to 30% of eligible direct costs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Organisations based in developed countries (i.e. countries not on the OECD DAC list) as well as Chile, Uruguay, Antigua and Barbuda and Seychelles can be research partners, but are expected to cover the majority of their own research costs. The Hub award may contribute a maximum of 50% of their eligible direct research costs, with the remainder of
the costs provided by the partner organisation or from other funding sources. These costs and contributions must be fully auditable. On the J-eS outline form these costs should be entered as ‘exceptions’ and **50% of the total cost entered on the form.**

Funding for research partner organisations in OECD DAC list countries ([www.oecd.org/dac/stats/documentupload/DAC List of ODA Recipients 2014 final.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/documentupload/DAC List of ODA Recipients 2014 final.pdf)) will include indirect costs as a contribution to institutional overheads, capacity strengthening and the research environment. Detailed guidance on which costs are eligible as direct and indirect costs can be found below.

The costs a multinational organisation can claim as a research partner pertains to the country the organisation’s headquarters are located in. For example, multilateral intergovernmental organisations such as UNESCO and the WHO are eligible to take part as research partners but are only eligible to claim up to 50% of the direct research costs as their headquarters are based in France and Switzerland respectively.

**Funding available for project partners**

Organisations that do not meet the minimum criteria to be research partners but offer valuable partnerships may be eligible to receive funds from the awards based on the following requirements:

- **Third sector organisations (e.g., NGOs, charities and other non-profit civil society organisations)** – These organisations are eligible to receive a modest contribution to their costs on the project funded by the research councils at 100% of direct costs. These costs must not exceed 1 year FTE across the whole award (e.g., 20% of one post for 5 years or 25% of one post for 4 years) in staff costs per organisation. Any non-staff costs must be reasonable; indirect costs and overheads are not allowed. The total costs associated with all third-sector project partners must not exceed 10 per cent of the total Hub award (100% FEC). All staff costs must be based on basic salaries (i.e. not day rates).

- **Government departments and business** – International and UK government departments and businesses where staff have significant intellectual input and contribute to the leadership of the proposal are not eligible to directly receive funds from the Hub award.

**Sub-contracts**

Costs for procurement of goods and services can be requested, including for businesses and government departments. Clarification from Research Councils UK should be sought at the application stage.

The costs for subcontractors are tied to the country managing the sub-contract. E.g., if a DAC list research partner organisation is managing a subcontract it will be awarded at 100%. If a UK partner is managing a subcontract it will be awarded at 80%. The most appropriate country should be chosen to manage the sub-contract based on the overall governance arrangements.

**Direct/Indirect costs for international research partners**

The rates of indirect costs that can be funded on the application by DAC-list country based research partners are up to 30% of the total direct costs incurred. These should cover those costs which would be considered as part of the cost of running an effective office or research
institution. The following costs may not be included as direct costs for this call and therefore must be included in the requested indirect costs:

- Charges for office or laboratory space.
- Electricity, heating, lighting.
- Telephone and basic communication costs (unless there is need for significant project-based activities such as phone interviews).
- Routine photocopying and printing (Large print runs such as publications or workshop papers may be charged to the grant).
- Standard Office computing, including desktop and laptop computers and associated software. Individual items of computing equipment may not be charged to a grant (High performance computing facilities which are linked to a specific research task may in some circumstances be charged to the grant – for further clarification please check with RCUK).
- Office support staff (e.g. finance staff, basic secretarial support, computing support staff). Project managers can be claimed as a direct cost on the grant.
- Continuing Professional Development for staff.

Demand management
Applicants may only submit one proposal as the Principal Investigator/Hub Director.

Research organisations and researchers are encouraged to collaborate to develop and submit the strongest possible proposals addressing specific development challenges. Within the Case for Support, outline proposals must include a letter of commitment from the Pro-Vice chancellor of research (or equivalent role) from the lead organisation. Full proposals will need to include letters of commitment from all collaborating organisations.

Please note that RCUK reserves the right to limit the number of full proposals invited from each individual institution as part of demand management, if appropriate.

Naming convention for GCRF Hubs
Each proposed Hub should be named the “GCRF X Hub”, where “X” describes the challenge area of focus in up to 5 words. This name should be comprehensible to the intelligent lay person and not contain acronyms, jargon or technical terms. Hub names should not include names of people or organisations. RCUK will approve the names of each funded Hub and any associated branding.

Intention to Submit
It is mandatory for applicants intending to submit an outline proposal to complete a short online Intention to Submit (ITS) survey by midnight British Summer Time (BST) on 29th September 2017.

This survey is intended as a guide for RCUK as to the potential number and diversity of proposals likely to be submitted to this call. This process will assist RCUK in planning and allow us to provide some feedback regarding the potential demand for this call prior to the closing date. Information provided in the ITS form will not be used in the assessment process.

Any questions about the ITS should be sent to gcrf@rcuk.ac.uk.

Submitting an outline proposal
Outline proposals must be submitted via Je-S by **16:00 Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) on 9th November 2017. Late submissions will not be accepted.**

All applicants who are to be named as the Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator on the proposal need to have a Je-S account. To submit a proposal, applicants should:

1. **Log in** to the Joint Electronic System (Je-S)
2. Select **Council**: EPSRC
3. Select **Document Type**: Outline Proposal
4. Select **Scheme**: RCUK Outline
5. Select **Call/Type/Mode**: Interdisciplinary research hubs to address intractable challenges faced by developing countries
6. Click **Create Document**

When completing the Je-S submission, in addition to the Je-S Outline Proposal, applicants should include:

- A Case for Support, using the template provided. This consists of three sections and should be converted to a single pdf document prior to uploading. Only proposals using this template will be accepted.
  
  o **Section 1. Proposal details** (total of 5 pages maximum)
  o **Section 2. ODA compliance statement** (1 page)
  o **Section 3. Organisational commitment.** Applicants should include a letter of commitment from the Pro-Vice Chancellor or equivalent of the lead organisation, including an outline of the proposed commitment from all partner organisations.
- A CV for the Principal Investigator/Hub Director. This should be no longer than 2 pages.
- No other attachments are permitted. Proposals including additional information will be rejected.

At a minimum, font size 11 in Arial or other sans serif typeface of equivalent size to Arial font size 11 must be used for the entire Case for Support and CVs.

It is anticipated that full proposals (by invitation only) will be submitted via Je-S in May 2018 (date to be confirmed). An indication of the timelines for the assessment of full proposals is included in the ‘Key dates’ section. Further details of the assessment process, additional requirements for full proposals and how to apply will be outlined in the full stage call documents.

**Assessment procedure**

**Outline assessment process**

The purpose of the assessment at the outline stage is to:

- ensure alignment to the aims of this call
- ensure alignment with ODA expectations
- facilitate a strong portfolio of proposals across a spectrum of challenges, approaches and disciplines
- provide constructive feedback to assist successful applicants with building compelling full proposals
- manage demand for the full proposal stage

Proposals submitted by the deadline will be considered by one or more multi-disciplinary international peer review panel with representation from across academia and other stakeholder groups and assessed against the below criteria. Decision will be final and will
not be open to appeal.

Applicants whose outline proposals are successful will be invited to submit a full stage proposal. Applicants will be informed as to whether their outline proposal has been successful before the end of February 2018.

**Outline stage assessment criteria**
At the outline stage the assessment will focus on the development challenge(s), proposed vision and research programme, and the team. Outline proposals will be assessed using the following criteria. Proposals that fail to adequately address these criteria will not be invited to make a full submission.

**Fit to call**
- Does the proposal identify an appropriate and significant intractable challenge(s) and demonstrate ODA compliance?
- Does the proposal take a challenge-led and multi-dimensional approach, articulating an ambitious vision and world-leading and well-integrated programme of research?
- Is it clear from the proposal why investment in a Hub is essential, and is the level of investment and activity justified by the scale and persistence of the identified challenge(s)?

**Research excellence**
- Does the proposal clearly articulate the research need and outline a novel and timely research programme?
- Does the proposal demonstrate new thinking and innovative interdisciplinary approaches?

**Research team and international partnerships**
- Does the proposed team have the appropriate knowledge, expertise and range of disciplines to deliver the proposed approach?
- Has an appropriate range of partners been identified, and are these partnerships complementary, authentic and equitable?
- To what extent have appropriate developing country partners (including researchers, practitioners and policy makers) played a leading role in challenge identification and co-design of the proposed approach?

**Likelihood of impact**
- To what extent will the proposed Hub build strategically on existing ODA and non-ODA investments (RCUK, DfID and other delivery partners) and add value to existing development partnerships and global research efforts?
- Does the proposed Hub identify realistic pathways to implementation which take into consideration the relevant in-country context and have the potential to deliver significant and measurable impacts?

**Full stage assessment criteria**
Invited full proposals will be assessed using the following criteria.

**Strategic rationale**
- Is the proposed Hub challenge-led and impact-focused, identifying a key research need?
- Is the scale of investment and activity justified by the size and persistence of the identified challenge(s)?
- Have the applicants made the strategic case for how the proposed Hub will add value in a global context?
**Research excellence**
- Is the proposed research novel, innovative and timely?
- Does the research programme offer a well-integrated and interdisciplinary approach?
- Does the proposed research meet the highest international standards and is it likely to advance the field?

**Capability and interdisciplinary research team**
- Does the proposed team have the appropriate track record, knowledge and expertise?
- Have the appropriate range of disciplines been identified and is the team well integrated?
- Does the whole team have access to appropriate preliminary data, resources, tools, and technology to undertake the proposed research?

**Capacity building and international partnerships**
- To what extent have appropriate developing country partners (including researchers, practitioners and policy makers) played a leading role in challenge identification and the design and implementation of the proposed approach?
- Does this proposal identify an appropriate range of relevant partners, and are these partnerships authentic, equitable and sustainable beyond the initial award?
- To what extent will the Hub develop new or enhanced research capacity for addressing development challenges/the SDGs in the relevant partner countries?

**Likelihood and pathways to impact**
- Does the proposed Hub identify realistic pathways with the potential to deliver a breadth of significant and measurable impacts?
- Have the applicants taken into consideration the relevant in-country context and demonstrated local appetite and capacity to implement solutions?
- Does the proposed Hub offer a sustainable programme with the potential to leverage activity, impact and financial/in-kind contributions (including from the private sector)?
- Will the partnerships, resources, capacity and capability developed through the Hub be sustained and strengthened beyond the end of the award?

**Leadership and management**
- Does the leadership team demonstrate the appropriate skills and experience to deliver the proposed vision and effectively manage the proposed Hub?
- Is there an appropriate balance of leadership and management between the partners, including an appropriate balance between developed and developing country partners?
- Does the framework demonstrate flexibility to adapt over the lifetime of the award and respond with agility to opportunities arising over the lifetime of the award?

**Organisation, governance and evaluation**
- Does the proposal describe an appropriate plan for the research and operational management of the proposed Hub (including financial and risk management, assurance and governance)?
- Does the proposal outline an appropriate framework for monitoring and evaluation, and identify a robust set of deliverables, indicators and measurables for success?

**Ethics**
- Are the proposed partnerships ethical and equitable?
- Have the applicants identified the ethical implications arising from the proposed research and provided sufficient detail of how these will be addressed?
Where appropriate, does the proposal provide sufficient details of procedures involving human subjects or vertebrate animals?

**Value for money**
- Are the requested costs appropriate and justified?
- Are there appropriate processes and controls to ensure due diligence and assurance are in place?

**Feedback**
RCUK will provide general feedback and observations to all applicants following the outline assessment panel. In addition those applicants invited to submit a full stage proposal will be provided with additional individual feedback.

**Co-ordinating and managing the portfolio**
In order to manage demand and to develop a strong portfolio of full proposals, the following may be taken into consideration by the funders, following the recommendation from the outline Panel(s):

- Level of interest across the different development challenges, approaches, disciplines, and contexts
- The added value of the Hub in the context of existing investments
- The relevant budget available
- Demand from Research Organisations

**Key dates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Call for outline proposals opens</td>
<td>14th July 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intention to Submit survey opens</td>
<td>14th July 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intention to Submit survey closes</td>
<td>29th September 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call for outline proposals closes</td>
<td>9th November 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outline proposal assessment panel</td>
<td>January 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outline proposal outcomes announced</td>
<td>January/February 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call for full proposals opens (invite only)</td>
<td>January/February 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call for full proposals closes</td>
<td>May 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full proposal sift panel</td>
<td>September 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full proposal interview panel</td>
<td>October 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full proposal outcomes announced</td>
<td>November 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful awards start</td>
<td>1st December 2018</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Contacts**

All queries about this call should be submitted to gcrf@rcuk.ac.uk

Sian Rowland  
Senior Policy Manager – Global Challenges Research Fund  
01793 444014

**Change Log**

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<th>Change</th>
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<td>Sian Rowland</td>
<td>13/09/17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>‘How to apply’ section</td>
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