



Flex Fund Round One Evaluation Report

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Summary

The purpose of this report is to evaluate the ACCESS Flex Fund Round 1. Data are analysed concerning the characteristics of submitted applications, the personal characteristics of the applicants, and their perceptions of the submission process. This data was collected using the application form and post-submission surveys.

61 proposals were submitted to the Flex Fund Round 1, of which 9 were successful (14.75% success rate). The review process included 'blind review' of applications, with successful projects meeting ACCESS' [key aims](#) around innovation, making the social sciences more visible and having an impact on today's climate and environment crisis, and which take forward ACCESS [guiding principles](#) of co-production, sustainability and equality, diversity and inclusion. Projects will share the £200,000 fund and run from September 2023 for 9 to 12 months. Projects include using social science methods to examine active storytelling to increase children's sense of agency over environmental crises; using multiple social science disciplines to explore how a rapid transformation of the global fashion and textile system from unsustainable practices to regenerative, post-growth alternatives is possible; and how thinking about a 'More-Than-Human' world can help us negotiate conflicts between environmental challenges and human priorities, to ensure sustainable futures for the planet and its inhabitants.

Findings indicate that Round 1 was successful in reaching early career researchers (ECRs). 98% of Principle Investigators and 48% of proposal teams were composed of individuals who self-identified as ECRs. Against expectation, most application teams were solely composed of academics (66%). That said, many projects were supported by non-academic partners. These organisations were most likely to be from the public sector and third sector, with relatively few from the private sector. They included organisations such as government Nature Agencies (e.g., Natural England), the Children's Environmental Agency, the Citizens Advice Bureau, British Muslim organisations, schools and community leaders. Topics of research were largely derived from the personal interests of the academic PI or their knowledge of an evidence gap. Geographically, applicants tended to be based in England, with relatively few submissions from the rest of the UK.

In terms of personal characteristics, applicants were more likely to be female, of White ethnicity and aged between 30-44 years, with a balanced distribution of age overall within project teams. Just over half of applicants reported caring responsibilities.

Perceptions of the submission process and guiding materials were strongly positive. The materials in the Call for Proposals and Webinar were rated of high quality. Applicants did not report finding it difficult to use the Guiding Principles to inform their applications.

Suggestions for improvement included: clarifying how EDI could be taken account of in proposals, providing exemplar case studies of collaborative partnership working, improving online submission (e.g. adding a save option to each page of the online application form, providing a PDF of application forms), and increasing clarity on the treatment of letters of support in submission and evaluation.

Looking ahead to Round 2, with approx. £725k available, the following issues are raised:

- To provide a pre-announcement call as early as possible to provide time for proposal preparation
- To add 'strongly encourage' statements to the Call for Proposals that welcome submissions from Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) researchers and partners, from teams that are made up of both academic and non-academic partners (including budgeting), and from all parts of the UK
- To consider mechanisms that enable or facilitate new partnerships between academics and collaborating organisations.

Although this report does not place a strong emphasis upon 'internal' aspects of Round 1 procedures, the lack of significant differences in applicant characteristics between successful vs. unsuccessful applicants indicates that assessment generally, including blind review, did not unconsciously bias people from any particular background.

Experience from the Review Panel stage suggests the value of ensuring consistency in reviewers across the stages of Round 2. Stage one (Expression of Interest) could largely mirror the process for Round 1, but with a larger review panel so that proposal reviewers were also involved as Introducers at the panel stage. A similar process of consistency between peer reviewer and proposal Introducer could be sustained at the Full proposal stage.

Sources of data

Three sources of data were drawn upon for this report – the Flex Fund application form itself, a follow-up evaluation survey sent to all Principal Investigators, and an Equal Opportunities Monitoring survey sent to all applicants.

Flex Fund application form

The Flex Fund application form included questions which can be used to understand the type and breadth of applicants to the fund. This includes whether or not applicants named on the project identify themselves as an Early Career Researcher (ECR)¹ or not, the organisation they belong to and the environmental issue/topic of the proposal. A copy of the questions included on the Flex Fund application form can be found in Appendix A.

There were 61 project applications to the Flex Fund Round One. The number of individuals per application ranged from 1 to 6, with a total of 181 applicants across all applications². As this data was available for all applications to the fund, descriptive analysis of results using this dataset provide a complete view of applicants to round one of the Flex Fund.

Flex Fund evaluation survey

Shortly after the Flex Fund closing date, a link to a short online survey was emailed to the 61 project Principal Investigators (PIs). The survey asked questions about how PIs found out about the fund, how useful they found the pre-application information, integrating the ACCESS Guiding Principles, partnership working, and any further comments about Round One. A copy of the evaluation survey questions can be found in Appendix B.

22 responses were received for the evaluation survey, which is a 36% response rate. Therefore, the descriptive analysis in this report which has used responses to this survey may not represent the thoughts and views of all applicants to the fund. However, the number of responses was deemed sufficient to be able to get some meaningful feedback on the Round One process.

Equal Opportunities Monitoring survey

To assess different dimensions of diversity amongst applicants, an Equal Opportunities Monitoring (EOM) survey was conducted. Upon receipt of a completed application, an email containing a link to the EOM survey was sent to all those people named as team members on the application forms, a total of 181 individuals. The survey included questions on participants' professional and personal

¹ For the Flex Fund Round 1, an applicant could be considered an ECR if 1) they had not previously held a research grant (as Principal Investigator) exceeding £100,000, including grants from organisations other than UKRI and/or 2) they held a precarious contract (e.g. fixed term or project-funded) that extends for the duration of the project (or had confirmation from the eligible Research Organisation stating that they will be supported for the entire duration of the grant).

² Note that any one person could be an applicant across multiple applications, so these 181 applicants may not be 181 unique individuals.

characteristics (e.g., sector of work, career stage, age, gender, ethnicity etc.). A copy of the EOM survey can be found in Appendix C.

86 responses were received (47.5% response rate) for the EOM survey; 11 of these responses were from applicants whose projects were funded, 65 responses were from applicants whose projects were not funded, and 10 responses were from applicants who did not provide a project title in the EOM survey (so it is unknown if their projects were funded or not).

Descriptive statistics based on the EOM survey are reported for the full sample of 86 respondents. Tests of difference (Pearson’s chi square) were conducted to compare the demographic characteristics of those awarded funding with those not awarded funding. To protect confidentiality, descriptive statistics of these two comparator groups are not reported publicly.

Awareness of the call

In the application form, applicants were asked how they heard about the call for proposals to the ACCESS Flex Fund Round One. Most reported hearing via word of mouth (Figure 1).

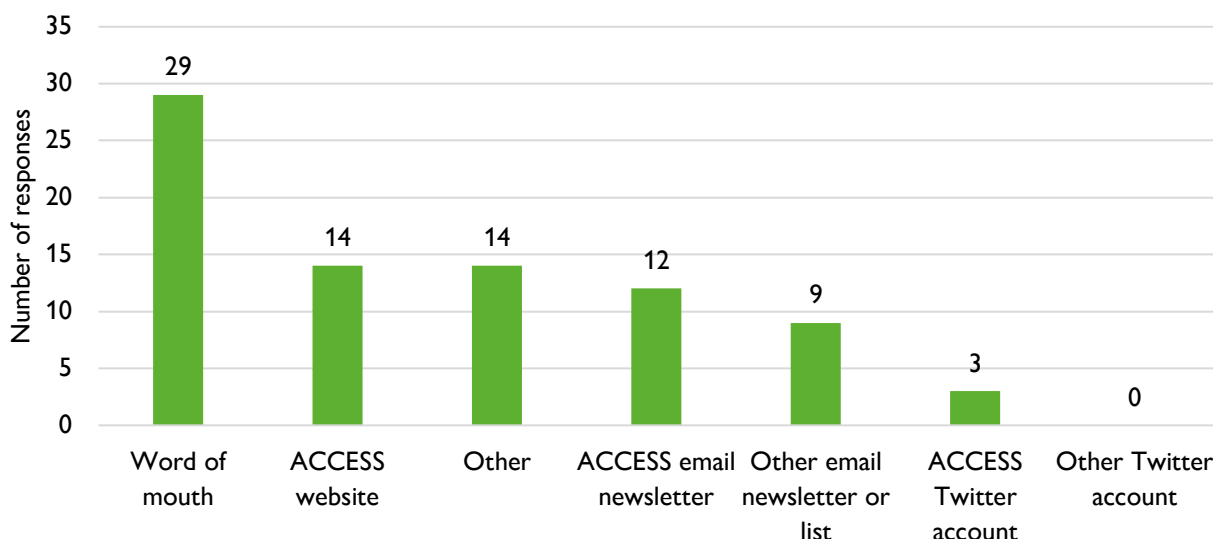


Figure 1. Responses to ‘Please tell us how you heard about the ACCESS Flex Fund’ (n = 61; respondents could select multiple answers)

About the applicants

This section reports upon the composition of the application teams (based on the application forms and evaluation survey) and the professional and personal characteristics of the applicants (based on the EOM survey). All descriptive data are reported at the level of all respondents.

Composition of application teams

As part of the evaluation survey, respondents were asked if the application involved collaborating with new partners. More than half of these 22 respondents reported their applications did involve new collaborations (Figure 2).

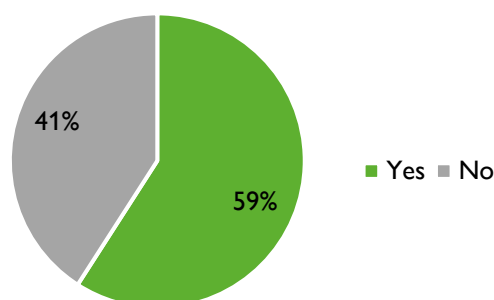


Figure 2. Responses to 'If your application involved partnership working, did your application involve any new partners that you had not worked with before?' ($n = 22$)

Drawing from the Flex Fund application forms, we can make the following assessments about the composition of the 61 application teams. Applicants were asked whether or not they identified as an ECR; 98% of Principal Investigators did and 48% of other team members did (Table 2; Figure 3). Approximately one-third ($n = 21$) of the applications involved teams drawn from across sectoral boundaries (i.e., involved academic and non-academic partners; Figure 4). Of these 21 applications, 60% involved non-academic partners from the public sector (Figure 5). Only 5% of all the applications involved an applicant from one of the Nature Agencies³ (Figure 6) and almost all had at least one partner based in England (Figure 7).

Table 2. Percentage of PIs and other applicant team members who are ECRs ($n = 181$)

Role type	Identify as an ECR?				Total Count
	Yes		No		
	Count	%	Count	%	
Principal Investigator	60	98%	1	2%	61
Other team members:	58	48%	62	52%	120
Co-Investigator	50	56%	40	44%	90
Research assistant	5	83%	1	17%	6
Other:	3	13%	21	88%	24

³ Nature Agencies defined as Defra, Daera, Environment Agency, Natural England, NatureScot, Natural Resources Wales, Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, Forest Research. Not all these agencies were represented amongst application teams.

<i>Project partner</i>	1	10%	9	90%	10
<i>Project support</i>	1	25%	3	75%	4
<i>External partner of support</i>			3	100%	3
<i>Mentor</i>			2	100%	2
<i>Consultant</i>			2	100%	2
<i>Co-organiser</i>	1	50%	1	50%	2
<i>Business Partner</i>			1	100%	1

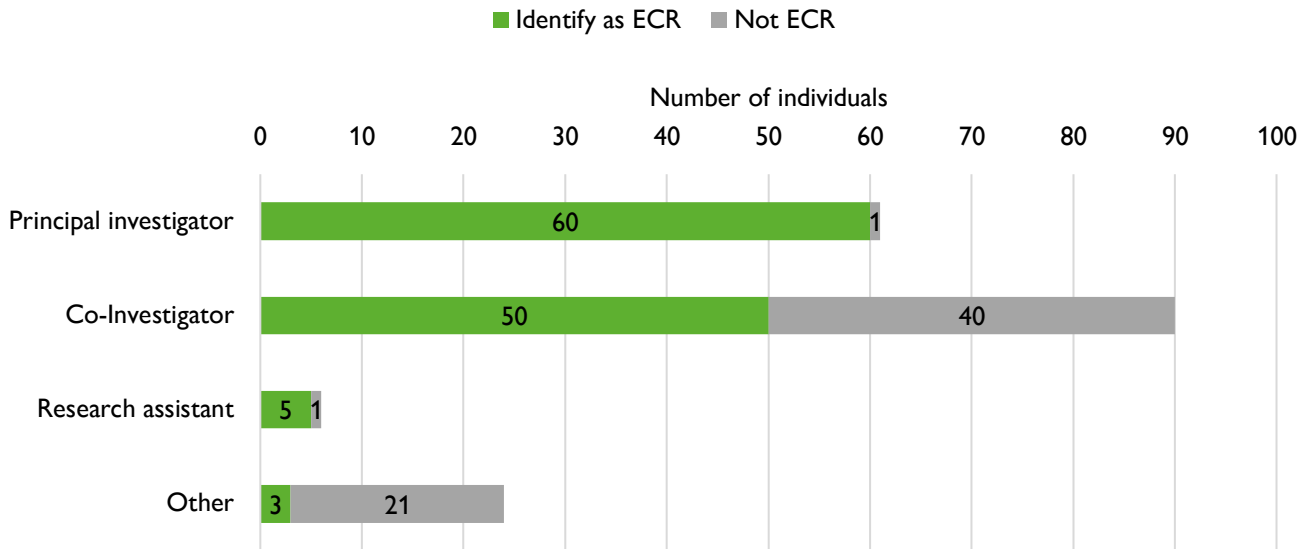


Figure 3. Number of applicant team members who are ECRs by role type (n = 181)

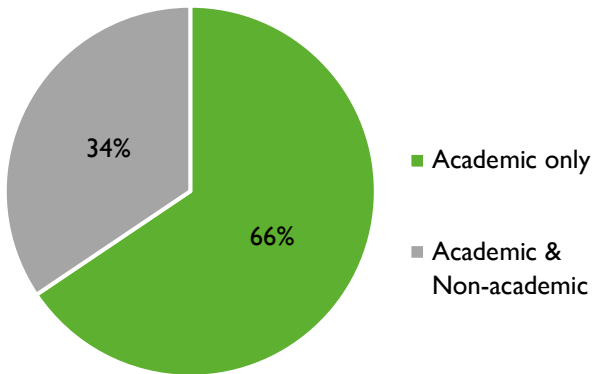


Figure 4. Percentage of applications (n = 61) from Academic/Research Institutions only vs Academic & Non-academic Partners

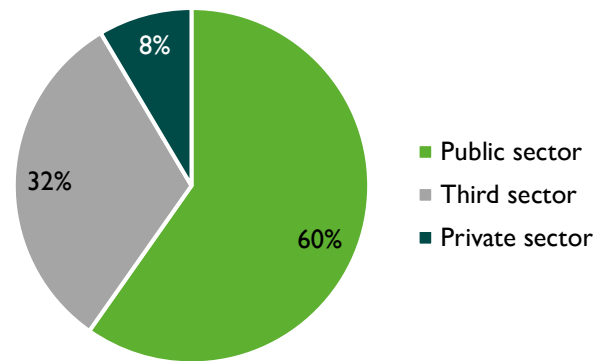


Figure 5. Percentage of non-academic partners in cross-sector applications (n = 21) by sector

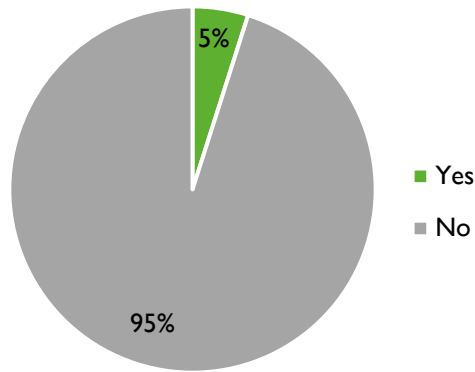


Figure 6. Percentage of applications ($n = 61$) involving one of the Nature Agencies

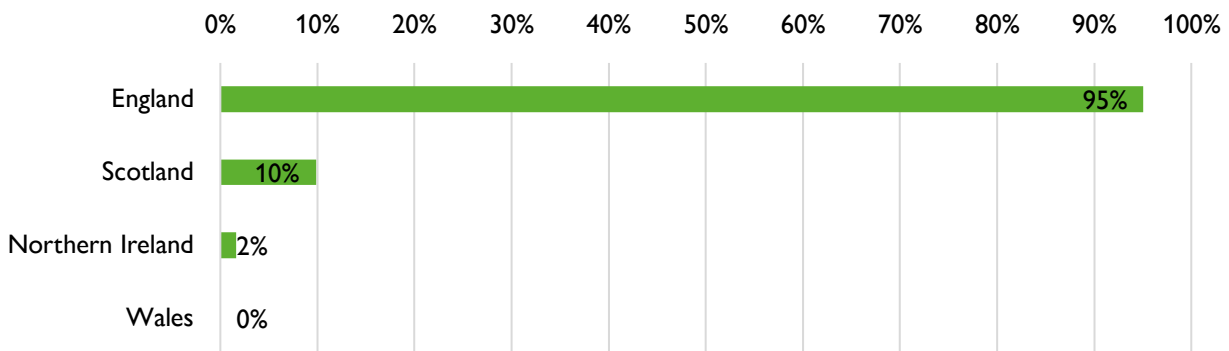


Figure 7. Percentage of applications ($n = 61$) involving partners from different parts of the UK

Professional characteristics of applicants

Most respondents to the EOM survey worked in academia ($n = 71$; Figure 8). Amongst these 71 academic respondents, most identified as being an Early Career Researcher on a research-only contract ($n = 21$), a Lecturer ($n = 14$) or Senior Lecturer ($n = 12$; Figure 9). Amongst the 15 non-academic respondents around half were classified⁴ as mid-career ($n = 7$; Figure 10). In terms of geographic spread for job location, the majority of respondents reported their role as being based in Southern England (South West England $n = 30$; South East England, $n = 10$; London, $n = 10$; Figure 11).

⁴ Coded based on open-text responses. As only two respondents were from *Government/Public Sector*, these responses were merged with the 13 respondents from *Business/Third/Multiple Sector* for this analysis.

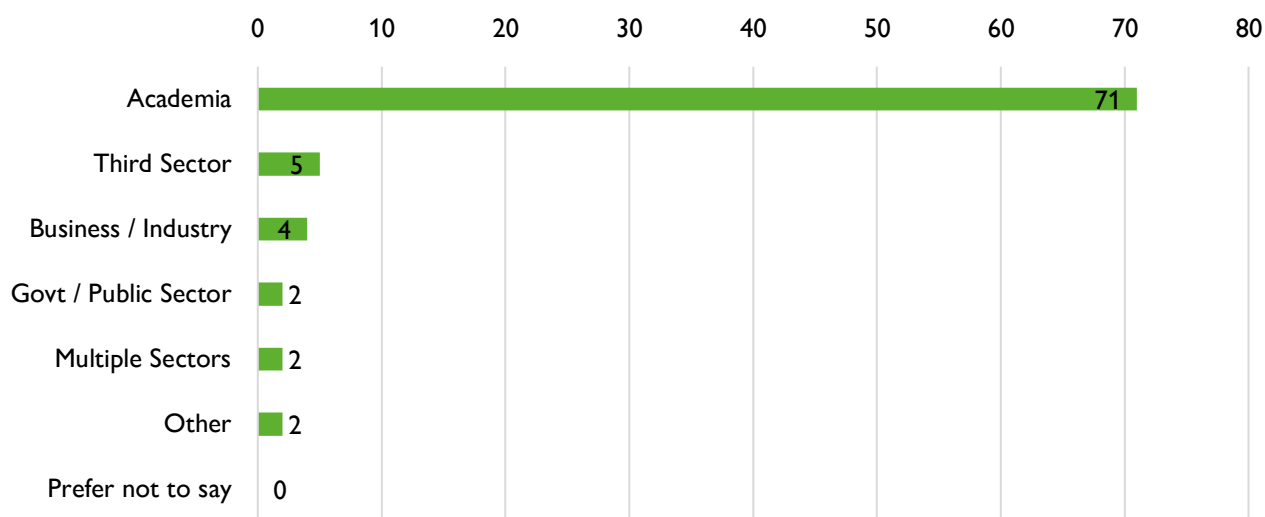


Figure 8. Number of respondents working in each sector (n = 86)

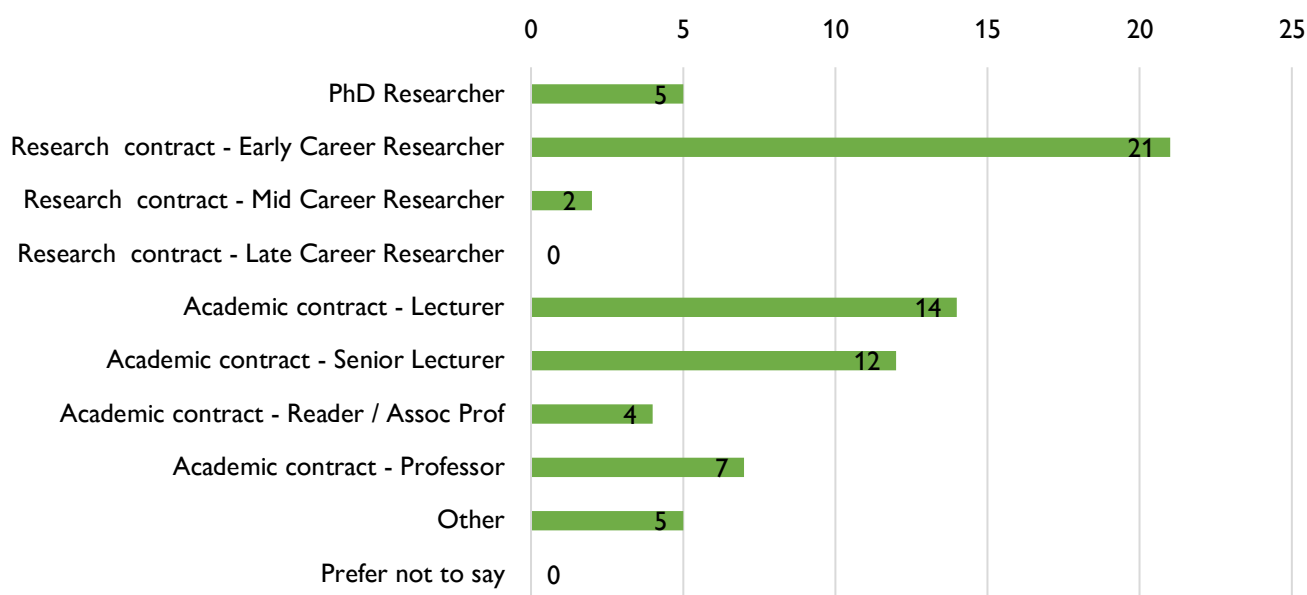


Figure 9. Number of respondents at each career stage, academia (n = 70)

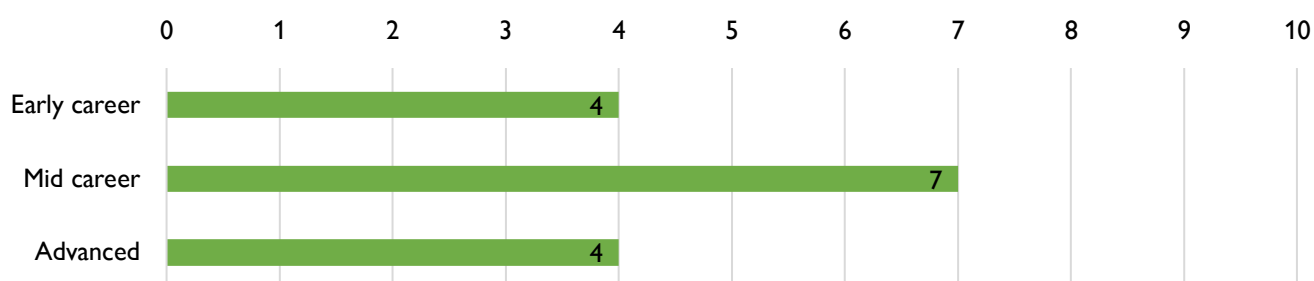


Figure 10. Number of respondents at each career stage, non-academia⁵ (n = 15)

⁵ Coded based on open-text responses.

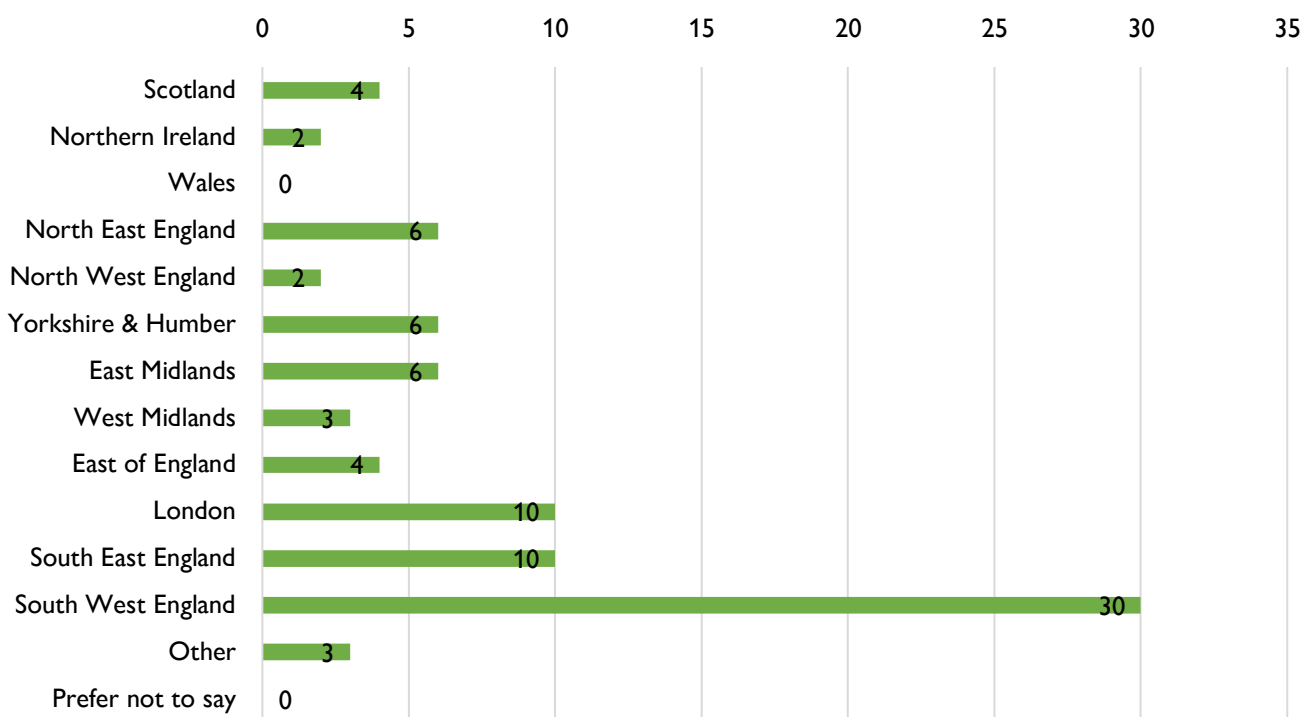


Figure 11. Location of respondents' job roles in each UK region ($n = 85$)

Based on self-described disciplinary backgrounds, 51 respondents were classified as being aligned to social science disciplines, 9 were classified as aligned with STEM disciplines, and 12 were classified as inter-disciplinary (10 respondents were classified as 'Other' and 4 respondents left this question blank⁶). The word cloud in Figure 12 shows the wide range of phrases used by respondents to self-describe their disciplinary backgrounds. Some respondents used more than one phrase to describe their discipline(s), with the most commonly used phrases being Geography ($n = 10$), Social Science ($n = 8$), Sociology ($n = 8$), and Sustainability ($n = 6$).

⁶ Coded based on open-text responses. Respondents were classified as 'inter-disciplinary' if they reported disciplinary backgrounds that crossed STEM and social science boundaries. It should be noted that some respondents in the STEM and social science categories also reported multiple disciplinary backgrounds. Most respondents classified as 'other' mentioned disciplines from the Arts & Humanities.

Table 1. Pearson's chi-square results for comparisons between 'funded and 'non-funded applicants (n = 76)

Characteristic	X ²	Degrees of Freedom	p-value
Sector of work	9.32	5	.097
Career stage – academia *	6.01	7	.54
Geographic location of job role	11.45	11	.41
Disciplinary identity **	2.08	3	.56
Age	13.67	7	.057
Gender - identity now	2.88	3	.41
Gender – identity same/different to at birth	0.91	2	.64
Ethnicity	8.84	15	.89
Sexual orientation	2.66	4	.62
Disability/impairment/health condition	0.38	2	.83
Religion/Belief	10.32	7	.17
Caring responsibilities	22.99	6	.001
Parental education	2.66	3	.45

* n = 64; ** n = 74

Personal characteristics of applicants

Of the 86 respondents to the EOM survey, 85 provided the demographic information requested. Full details of response distributions are shown in Figures 13-21 and Table 3.

Respondents' ages ranged from 16-24 (n = 3) to 55-59 (n = 3), with the most common age ranges being 35-39 (n = 22) and 30-34 (n = 18). Fifty-three respondents identified as women and 28 identified as men; most respondents identified as cis gender (n = 80). In terms of ethnicity, 60 respondents identified as White, 8 as Multiple Ethnicities, 7 as Asian, 6 as Other Ethnicities, 2 as Black, and 2 preferred not to say. Most respondents identified as heterosexual (n = 68) and most reported having no disability, impairment or health condition (n = 73). Around half the respondents reported having no religion (n = 46), and around a quarter reported being Christian (n = 22). Around 50% reported having some form of caring responsibilities (n = 43). Finally, around two-thirds of respondents reported having at least one parent or guardian who was educated to at least degree level by the time the respondent was aged 18 (n = 58).

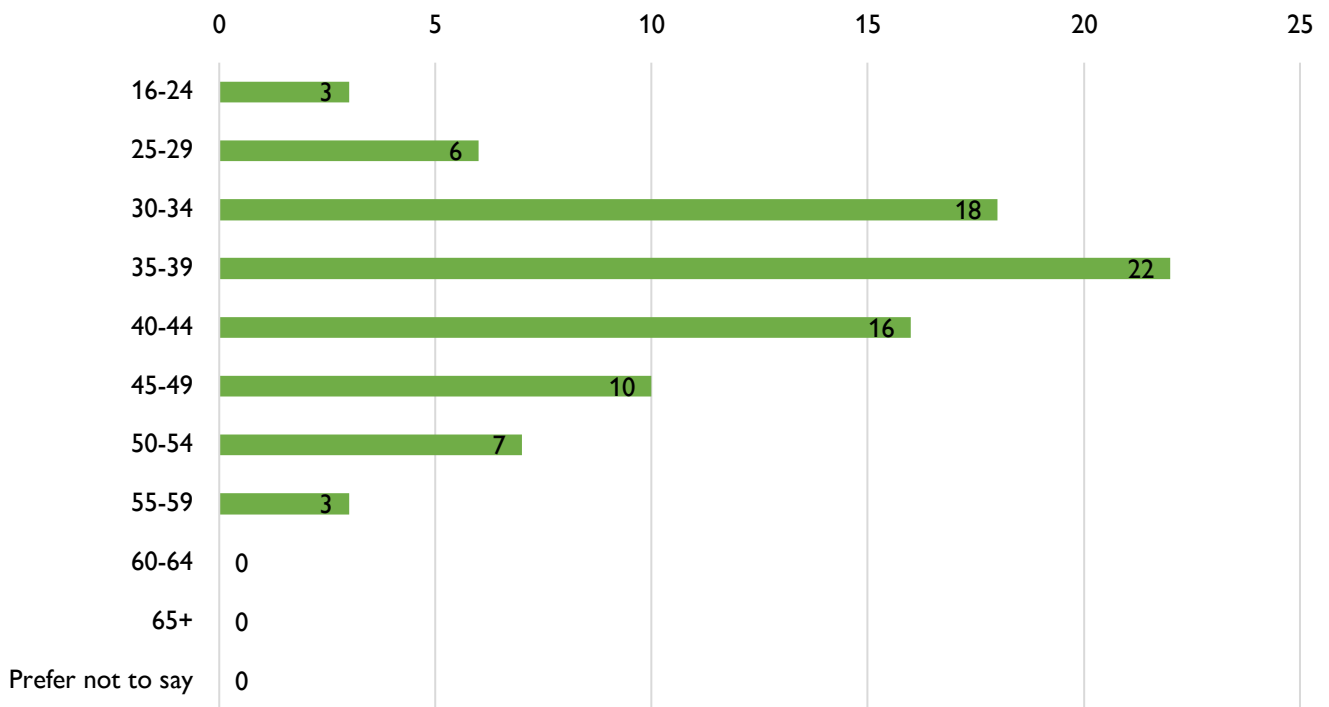


Figure 13. Responses to 'What is your age?' (n = 85)

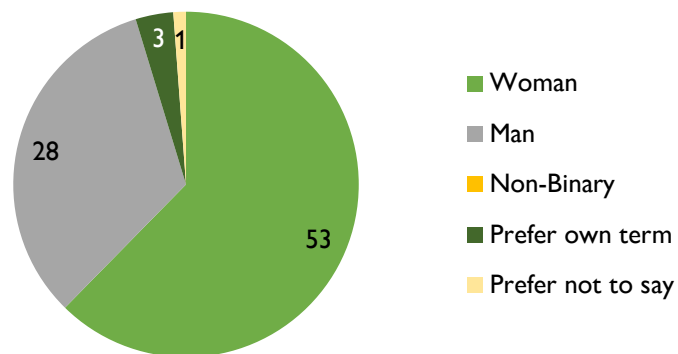


Figure 14. Responses to 'What is your gender?' (n = 85)

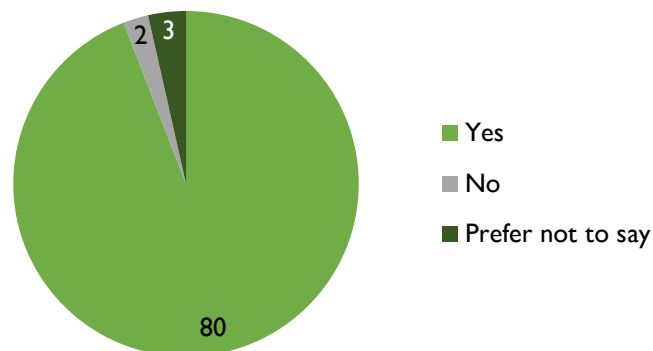


Figure 15.– Responses to 'Is your gender identity the same as the gender you were originally assigned at birth?' (n = 85)

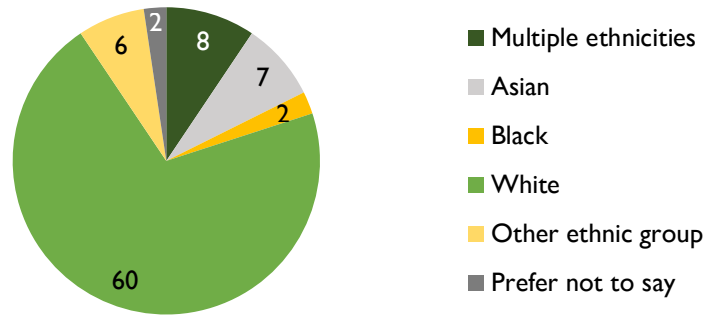


Figure 16. Responses to 'What is your ethnicity?' (n = 85)

Table 3. Responses to 'What is your ethnicity' (n = 85)⁸

Ethnicity	Frequency
Prefer Not to Say	2
Mixed/Multiple Ethnicities	
Black Caribbean and White	0
Black African and White	0
Asian and White	7
Any other mixed	1
Prefer not to say	0
Asian/Asian British	
Indian	4
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
Any other Asian	2
Prefer not to say	0
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	
African	2
Caribbean	0
Any other Black/African/Caribbean	0
Prefer not to say	0
White	
English	23
Welsh	0
Scottish	2
Northern Irish	1
British	14
Irish	2
Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0
Any other White	16
Prefer not to say	2
Other Ethnic Group	
Arab	0
Jewish	2
Any other ethnic background	4
Prefer not to say	0

⁸ Response categories for ethnicity question based on UK census.

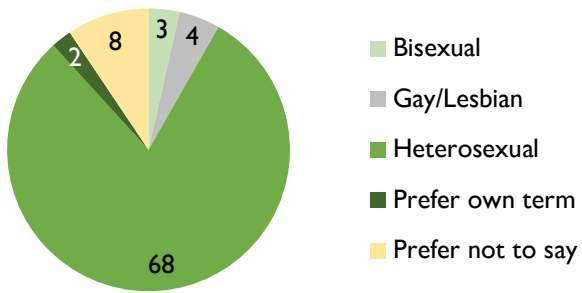


Figure 17. Responses to 'What is your sexual orientation?' (n = 85)

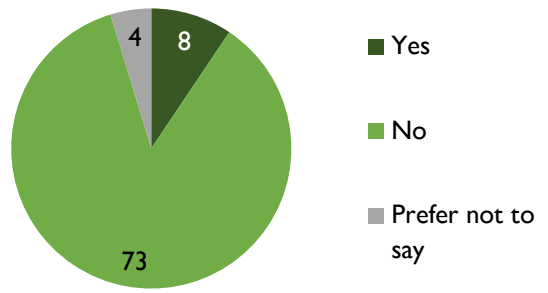


Figure 18. Responses to 'Do you consider yourself to have a disability, impairment or health condition?' (n = 85)

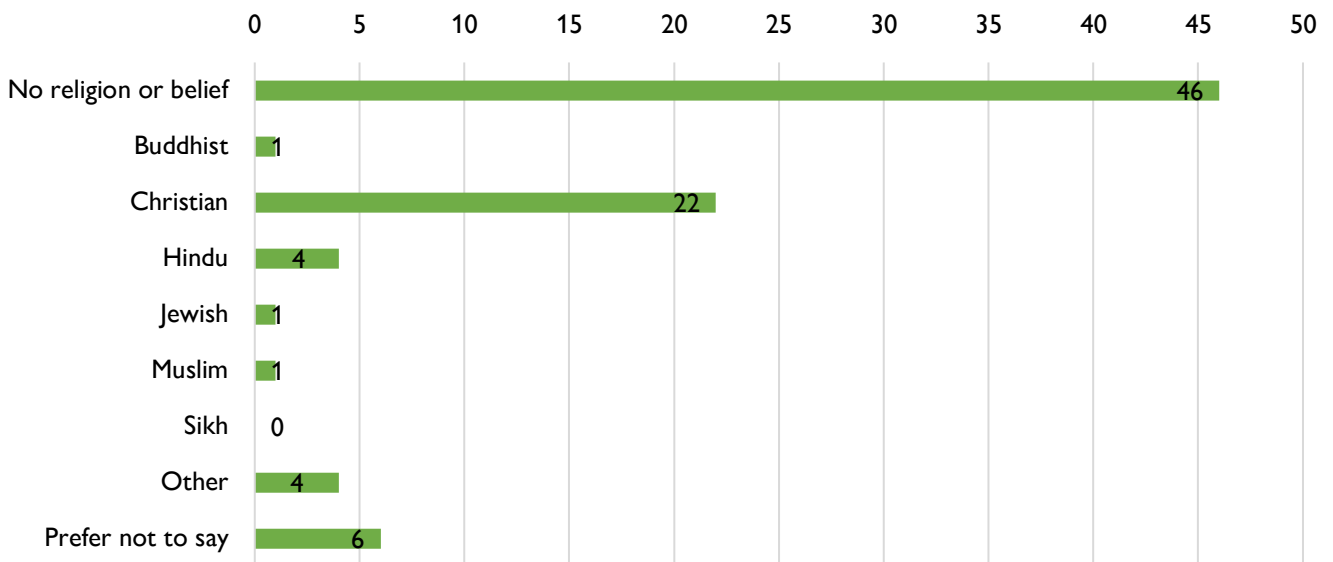


Figure 19. Responses to 'What is your religion or belief?' (n = 85)

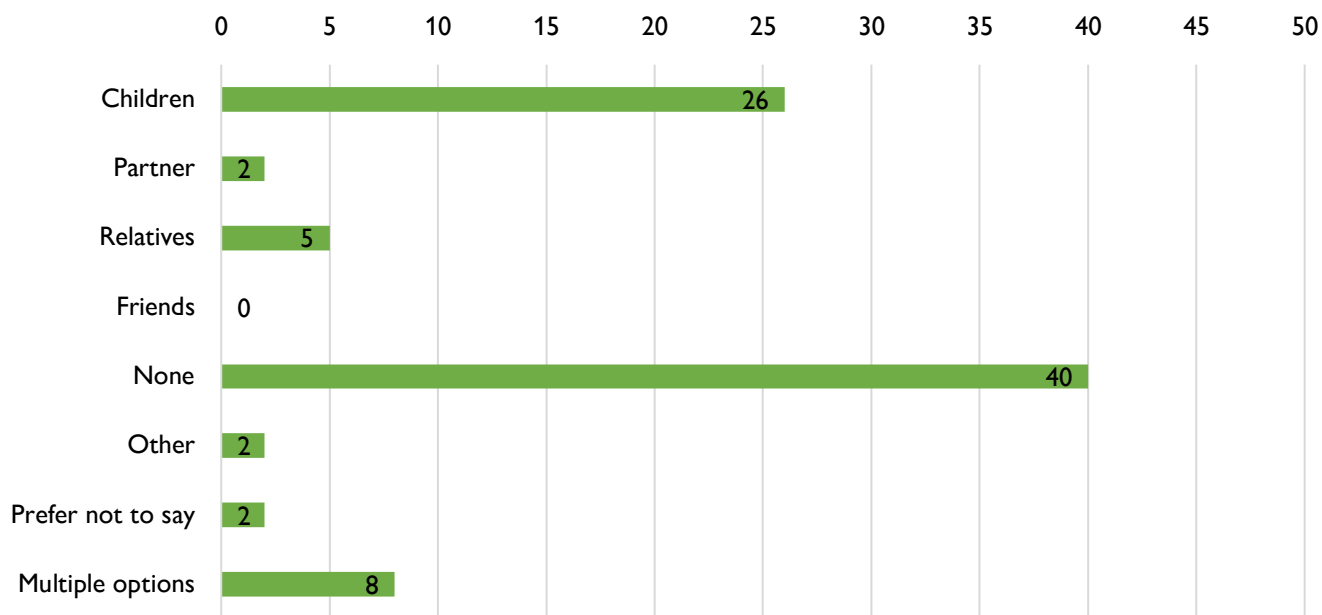


Figure 20. Responses to 'What caring responsibilities do you have?' (n = 85)⁹

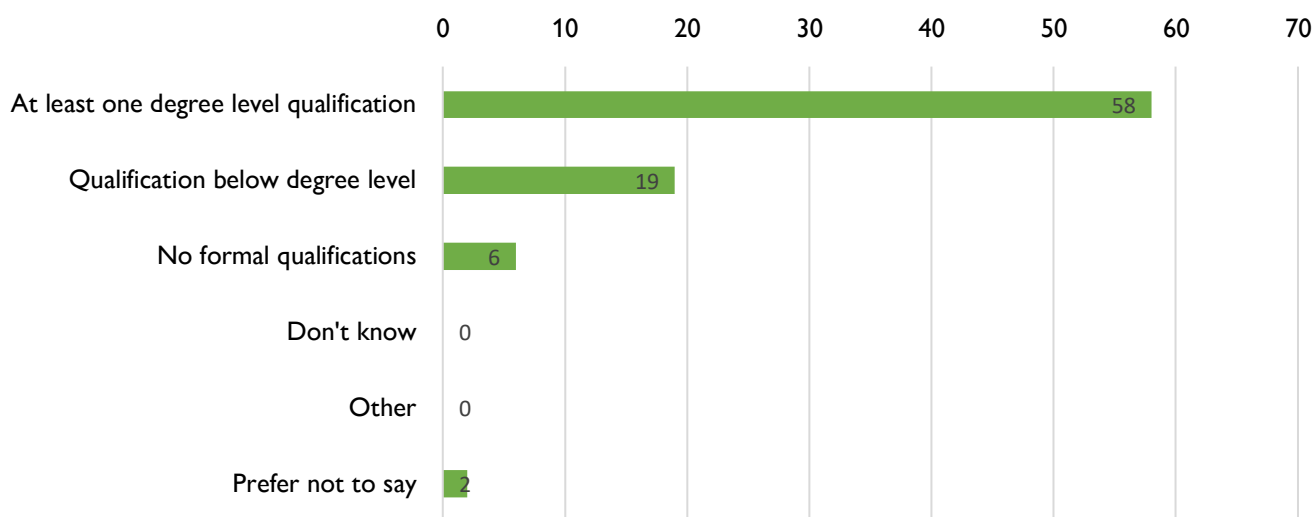


Figure 21. Responses to 'What is the highest level of qualification achieved by either of your parent(s) or guardian(s) by the time you were 18?' (n = 85)

⁹ Respondents could select more than one option – for those who did so, these responses have been recoded as 'Multiple'.

About the applications to the Flex Fund

Based on the application forms, a number of different types of outcomes were proposed across the projects. Applicants were instructed “Projects will be expected to deliver at least TWO of the following outcomes, please identify which of these apply to your project, as indicated in the statement you have provided above”. The most commonly selected outcome was ‘new ideas or frameworks’ (Figure 22).

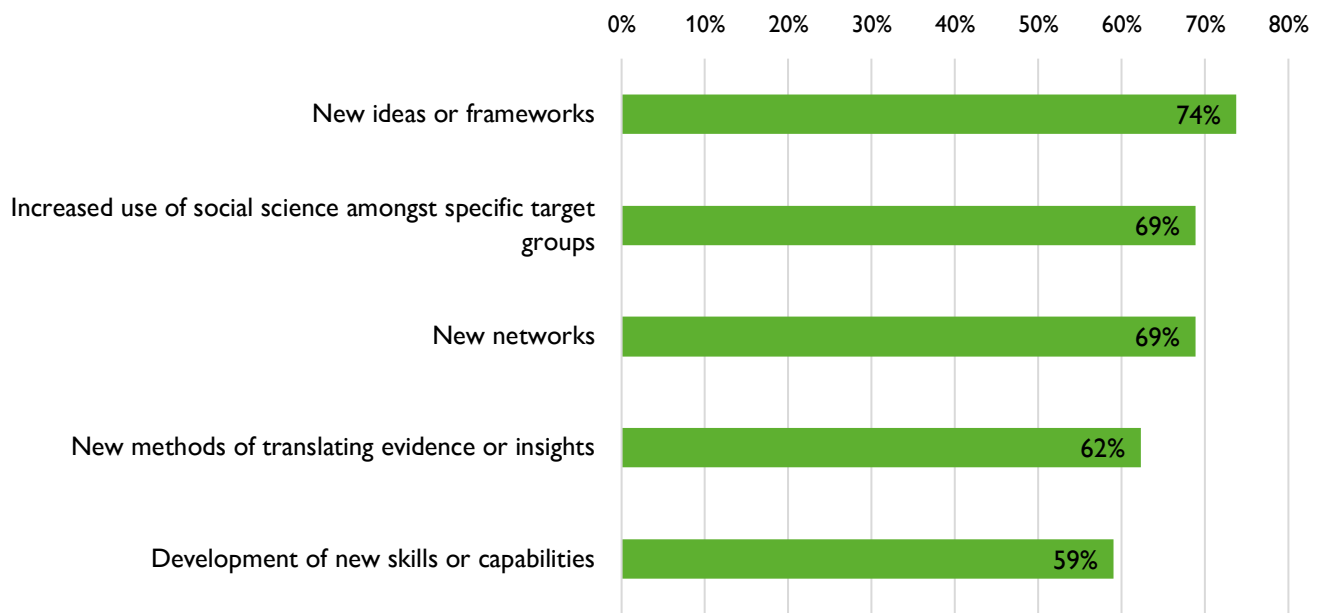


Figure 22. Potential project outcomes identified by applicants Fund’ (n = 61; respondents could select multiple answers)

In the evaluation survey, respondents were asked how they determined the topic of their application. Most reported choosing the topic based on their own research interests (Figure 23).

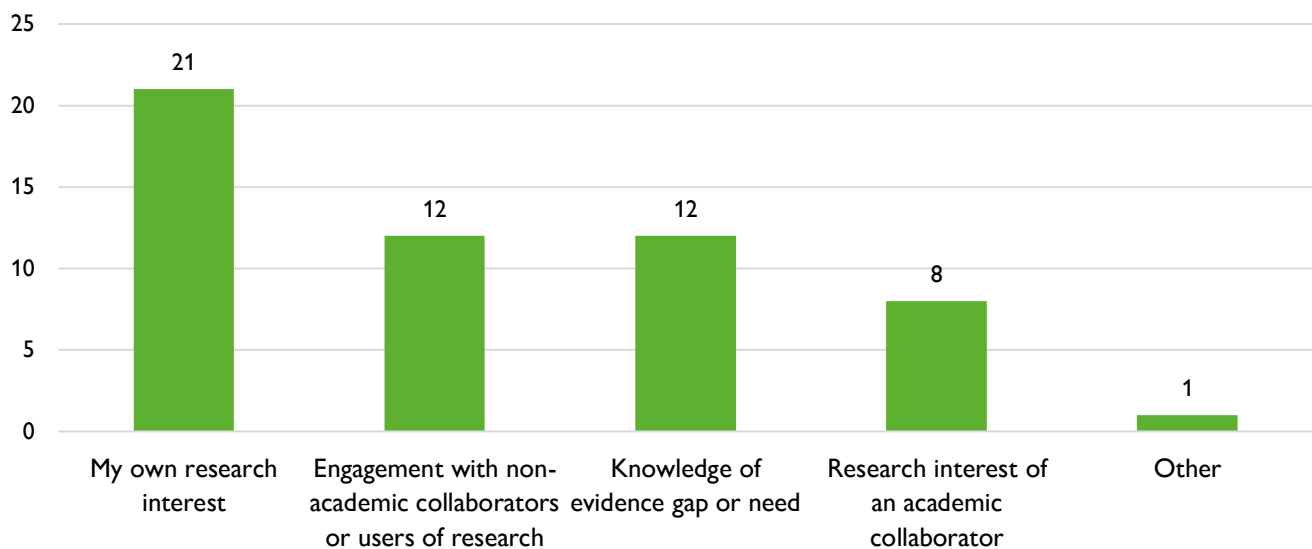


Figure 23. Responses to ‘Where did your topic of application come from?’ Potential project outcomes identified by applicants Fund’ (n = 61; respondents could select multiple answers. Other response: Collaboration with other research institutions)

About the application process

This section draws from the evaluation survey to examine respondents' views on the process of applying to Flex Fund Round 1. It also reports on responses to open-ended questions, that sought feedback for improving the process for future rounds.

Respondents were asked about the duration of the application window and their perceptions of how easy it was to integrate the ACCESS Guiding Principles¹⁰ into their proposal. All 22 respondents replied that 4 months between launching the call for proposals and the closing date was about the right length of time. The majority of respondents reported finding it 'Extremely' or 'Very' easy to integrate the Guiding Principles (Figure 24).

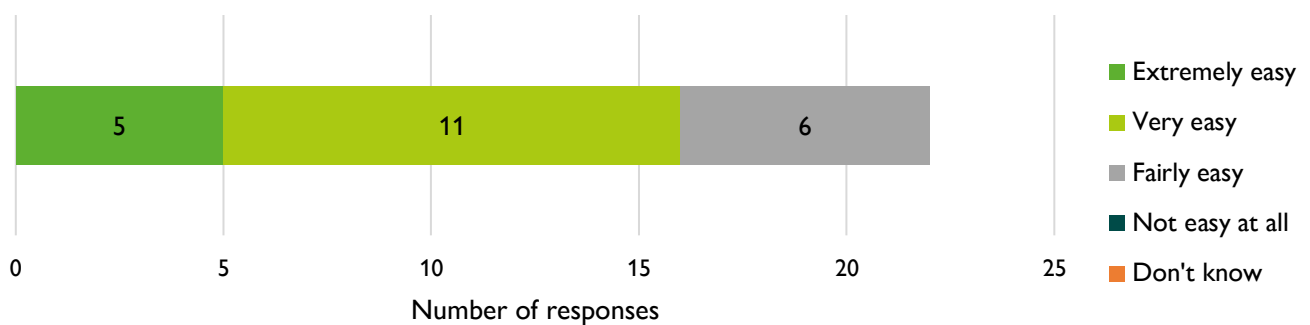


Figure 24. Responses to 'How easy did you find it to integrate the ACCESS Guiding Principles into your proposal?' (n = 22)

The Flex Fund team created three sets of materials to support the call – a launch webinar, a padlet, and the call for proposals documents themselves. The call documents were reported to be the most useful - with all respondents judging them as 'Extremely' or 'Very' useful – followed by the launch webinar (Figure 25).

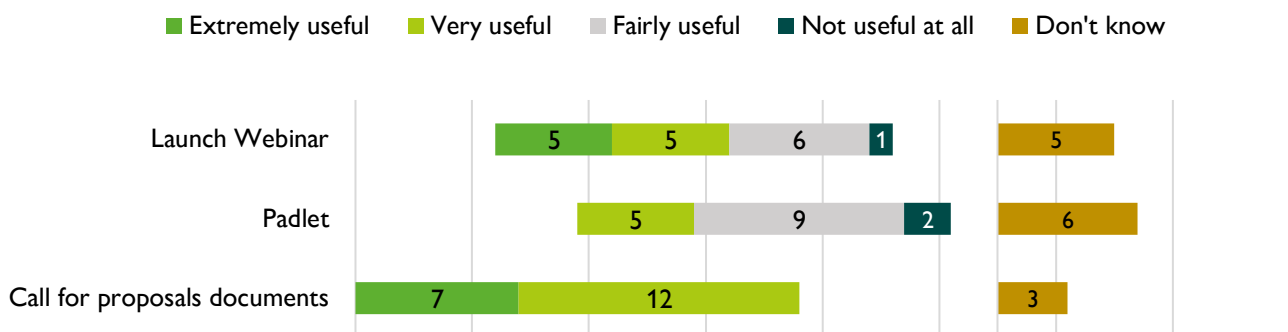


Figure 25. Responses to 'Please state how useful you found the following pre-application information' (n = 22).

¹⁰ Barr, S., Burningham, K., Golding, S. E., Guilbert, S., & Hartley, S. (2023). *ACCESS Guiding Principles V4 - March 2023*. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/10871/133207>

Suggestions for improving the application process

Respondents were asked “Do you have any ideas for improving identification and engagement with potential collaborators?”. Comments provided by 7 respondents were grouped into 3 areas (Table 4). People shared experiences of how they have successfully engaged with collaborators in the past, ideas for how to support future engagement, and potential challenges to engagement.

Respondents were also asked “Do you have any further comments about integrating the ACCESS Guiding Principles into your proposal?” and “Do you have any further comments about the ACCESS Flex Fund?”.

Responses to these questions were grouped as ‘Positive feedback’ and ‘Suggestions for improvement’ (Tables 5 and 6).

Table 4. Comments about improving identification and engagement with potential collaborators (n = 7)

Experiences of successful engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Making use of existing networks. - Peer recommendation. - Attending engagement/networking events. - Establish shared goals and vision with collaborators.
Supporting future engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Case studies of how partnership and collaboration working has looked (using previous project examples). - Run ECR/knowledge holder events/workshops/writing days to facilitate the building of relationships.
Challenges to engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Most ECRs wouldn't have had this sort of foundation, making such engagement more challenging for them. - Getting a first foot in the door in a new area/sector without any former connections.

Table 5. Comments about integrating the Guiding Principles into proposals (n = 9)

Positive feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Simple and easy to understand. - Brief. - Guiding Principles document itself really useful - it offered practical advice and support. - Examples at the bottom of the Guiding Principles document really useful. - [from junior researcher] Good opportunity to reflect on these principles and shape the research proposals around them.
Suggestions for improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase word limit. - Question should be split into two: What is activity plan? How does it integrate the Guiding Principles? - EDI the most difficult principle to evidence. - Add the Guiding Principles to the form so that it is really clear.

Table 6. Further comments about the Flex Fund (n = 11).

Positive feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inclusion/promotion of ECRs and attempt to level the playing field. - Really clear and accessible. - Ease of the application process. - Amount of information available prior to the fund application. - Helpful to have pdf of the questions since an online form was used.
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Suggestions for improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Save button on each page of the application form. - Add questions asked by applicants during the process to future FAQs. - Increase word limit for first section of application form. - More effective communication of the call. - Clearer instructions for how to submit letters of support and how peer review process will use them.
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Discussion

This evaluation report sheds light on two key aspects of the ACCESS Flex Fund Round 1: who the applicants were, and what were their perceptions of the submission process.

The data indicates that Round 1 was successful in reaching its intended audience – early career researchers. The decision to structure the Flex Fund in two rounds was therefore supported by this dataset. What remains to be seen is whether the Flex Fund offers a ‘pipeline’ to Round 1 winners in going on to submit successful large grant proposals in the future, building capacity in the longer term. *Post-Round 1 monitoring of the 9 successful proposal teams could be used to generate ‘impact data’ of this kind.*

Applicant teams were less diverse than expected, with only 34% of submissions involving partnerships with Co-Investigators from non-academic organisations. That said, most of the successful proposals were made up of teams from diverse organisations, and this could be emphasised more strongly in Round 2 call documentation. Round 1 was less successful in reaching BIPOC communities. However, what remains to be seen is whether this is largely representative of UK environmental social science. The ACCESS Leadership Team are engaging with ESRC, who hold datasets regarding ESRC applications, to establish this further. This issue clearly deserves further consideration in terms of issuing the call for Round 2, given that Round 2 will be for larger grants in which ECRs may be less favoured due to lack of experience.

Perceptions of the submission process and guiding materials were strongly positive. The materials in the Call for Proposals and Webinar were rated of high quality. Applicants did not report finding it difficult to use the Guiding Principles to inform their applications. This suggests that a replication of the approach adopted – using clearly written, accessible call documents, including an FAQ, and setting up a Webinar – is merited for Round 2.

Looking ahead to Round 2, with £725k available, the following issues are raised:

- To provide a pre-announcement call as early as possible to provide time for proposal preparation;
- To welcome proposals that originated in non-academic partner organisations;
- To add ‘strongly encourage’ statements to the Call for Proposals that welcome submissions from Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) researchers and partners, from teams that are made

- up of both academic and non-academic partners (including budgeting), from all parts of the UK, and to include ECRs in project teams;
- To consider mechanisms that enable or facilitate new partnerships between academics and collaborating organisations.

What remains to be finalised are some details of our 'ask' of Round 2 – so far we have assumed only 'larger' projects as grant awards in the 200k-250k range, presuming 3-4 awards in total. Whether we should also offer the potential for smaller awards or even fellowships, needs to be discussed as part of our preparations for Round 2.

Although this report does not place a strong emphasis upon 'internal' aspects of Round 1 procedures, the lack of significant differences in applicant characteristics between successful vs. unsuccessful applicants indicates that assessment generally, including blind review, did not unconsciously bias people from any particular background. This is a success for ACCESS, given our commitment to EDI as part of the Guiding Principles.

Experience from the Review Panel stage suggests the value of ensuring consistency in reviewers across the stages of Round 2. Stage one (Expression of Interest) could largely mirror the process for Round 1, but with a larger review panel so that proposal reviewers are also involved as Introducers at the panel stage. A similar process of consistency between peer reviewer and proposal Introducer could be sustained at the Full proposal stage.

Appendix A – Flex Fund Application Form

ACCESS Flexible Fund 2023

Preview of application form questions

PLEASE NOTE: This copy of the application form (14 pages) is for information only. Please submit your application online via the ACCESS Flex Fund application form.

Please submit your application by 17:00 GMT on 23rd June 2023.

If you have any issues with completing the application process, please contact ACCESS_admin@exeter.ac.uk for advice.

* Required

Principal Investigator

Proposals must be led by an academic based in an institution eligible to receive UKRI funding, as stated in the Call Information.

1. First Name: *

2. Last Name: *

3. Organisation: *

4. Discipline or Area of Work: *

5. Email: *

6. Do you identify as an Early Career Researcher in line with the definition for this call? *

Yes

No

7. Do you need to add any other team members, such as Co-Investigators or Research Assistants? There is space to include five more people. *

Yes

No

Other Team Members

Please add details of each team member below. On the online application form, further sections are provided for contact details of each other team member.

8. First Name: *

9. Last Name: *

10. Organisation *

11.Sector/Discipline/Area of Work: *

12. Email: *

13.Do they identify as an Early Career Researcher in line with the definition for this call? *

Yes

No

14. Please state their intended role on the project: *

Co-Investigator

Research Assistant

Other

15. Do you need to add another team member? *

Yes

No

Contacts at Submitting Institution (i.e. Institution of the Principal Investigator)

Please provide the name and email of a finance and contracting contact below. Applicants whose contract ends before the proposed research must include a confirmation letter from the eligible Research Organisation they intend to be based at, stating that they will be supported for the entire duration of the grant if it is successful, as per Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) research funding guidance:

<https://www.ukri.org/publications/esrc-research-funding-guide/>.

16.Finance Details

Full name: *

17.Email: *

18.Contracting Details:

Full name: *

19.Email: *

Part A - Project Plan

Please be aware we will be using a blind screening process as part of our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion best practice (e.g. reducing unconscious bias). We therefore request that you do not include identifying information (such as names of institutions, people, organisations, reports, publications etc.) in your answers. For example, you might tell us 'I led a report/project about x/y/z' rather than 'I led [title of report / name of research group]'.

20. Project title: *

21.Project overview

Please provide a statement outlining the following:

- What the project is.
- Its objectives.

- What environmental challenge it is addressing.
- How it is novel.
- Why the project will advance the use of social science to address climate and environment challenges.
- Where it will be conducted.
- A timescale for its execution.

Please do not exceed 500 words. *

22. Approach and ACCESS Guiding Principles

Please explain how you will conduct this project. Provide justification for each technique/approach you intend to use and how the project will follow the ACCESS Guiding Principles. Please explain how your project will ensure Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI); build in knowledge co-production; and ensure the environmental sustainability of your activities.

Please do not exceed 500 words. *

23. Impact, identifying specific project outputs and outcomes

Please provide a statement outlining the anticipated outputs of your project (e.g. workshops, reports, infographics, videos). In addition, identify the outcomes of your project and how these relate to and will arise from specific outputs.

Please do not exceed 500 words. *

24. Projects will be expected to deliver at least TWO of the following outcomes, please identify which of these apply to your project, as indicated in the statement you have provided above: *

New ideas or frameworks

New methods of translating evidence or insights

New networks

Development of new skills or capabilities

Increased use of social science amongst specific target groups

Part B - Resources

Budget Breakdown

Please provide a breakdown of the cost associated with your project. Proposals will need to show 100% of the full Economic Cost for the project. The ACCESS Flex Fund will meet 80% of the full economic costs on proposal submitted except for those costs associated with international and non-academic partners (Exceptions), which are funded at 100%. Please refer to ESRC's guidance on what costs are covered here:

<https://www.ukri.org/publications/esrc-research-funding-guide/>. If you are unsure, please contact

ACCESS_admin@exeter.ac.uk for advice.

25. DA Staff (Investigators)

Item description: *

26. DA Staff (Investigators)

Cost (£) *

27. Estates Costs (£) *

28. Indirect Costs (£) *

29. Staff (Research Assistant, Administrators)

Item description: *

30. DI Staff (Research Assistant, Administrators)

Cost (£): *

31. Travel and Subsistence

Item description: *

32. Travel and Subsistence

Cost (£): *

33. Equipment

Item description: *

34. Equipment

Cost (£): *

35. Other (Venue hire, External Speakers/ facilitators, Consultancy Fees)

Item description: *

36. Other (Venue hire, External Speakers/ facilitators, Consultancy Fees)

Cost (£): *

37. Exceptions (Eligible costs associated with international and non-academic partners)

Item description: *

38. Exceptions (Eligible costs associated with international and non-academic partners)

Cost (£): *

39. Total 100% cost of project (£): *

40. Please tell us how you heard about the ACCESS Flex Fund:

ACCESS email newsletter

Other email newsletter or list

ACCESS Twitter account

Other Twitter account

Word of mouth

ACCESS website

Other

Appendix B – Flex Fund Evaluation Survey

ACCESS Flex Fund evaluation survey

Thank you for agreeing to complete this short survey. Your answers will help us to evaluate Round 1 and to design the next phase of the Flex Fund.

Questions marked with an asterisk (*) are mandatory.

1. Where did your topic of application come from? (Tick all that apply) *

- My own research interest
- Research interest of an academic collaborator
- Engagement with non-academic collaborators or users of research
- Knowledge of evidence gap or need

2. We provided a period of 4 months between launching our call for proposals and the closing date. In your view, was this 4 month duration: *

- About the right length of time
- Too long
- Too short

3. Please state how useful you found the following pre-application information: *

	Extremely useful	Very useful	Fairly useful	Not useful at all	Don't know
Launch webinar					
Padlet					
Call for proposals documents					

4. How easy did you find it to integrate the ACCESS Guiding Principles into your proposal? *

- Extremely easy
- Very easy
- Fairly easy
- Not easy at all
- Don't know

5. Do you have any further comments about integrating the ACCESS Guiding Principles into your proposal?

Open ended question

6. If your application involved partnership working, did your application involve any new partners that you had not worked with before? *

- Yes
- No

7. Do you have any ideas for improving identification and engagement with potential collaborators? (e.g. you could provide examples of how you may have done this successfully before)

Open ended question

8. Do you have any further comments about the ACCESS Flex Fund?

Open ended question

Appendix C – Flex Fund Round 1 Equal Opportunities Monitoring Questions

ACCESS Flex Fund Round 1 - Applicant Equal Opportunities Monitoring

Thank you for applying to the ACCESS Flex Fund (Round 1). This equal opportunities monitoring survey is anonymous and should take no more than 10 minutes to complete. You can choose to answer all, some, or none of these questions. All data you provide will be stored securely and processed in the strictest confidence and in accordance with current data protection regulations.

ACCESS is committed to advancing equality, diversity and inclusion in climate and environmental social science and we recognise that many groups may be under-represented in our disciplines. We would therefore like to collect some information about your personal and professional characteristics to help us understand more about who applied to the ACCESS Flex Fund (Round 1).

Information you provide here will be kept separate from the main application to the Flex Fund and will not be used to inform any of the decision-making by the Flex Fund application review panel. The team members handling data collected in this survey are separate to the team members involved in the main application process.

By collecting this information, it will help us assess where we are as a programme and where we need to do further work to advance equality, diversity, and inclusion. The information will be used at an aggregated level to:

- Understand within ACCESS more about the demographic characteristics of people who applied to the ACCESS Flex Fund (Round 1)
- Help us assess whether the diversity of applicants to the Flex Fund changes between different calls
- Assist with our reporting of activities (i.e., we may use this data at an anonymised, aggregated level to describe sample characteristics of Flex Fund applicants in project reports for the ACCESS team and/or for our funders, who are the Economic and Social Research Council)

Q1 Please provide the name of the project for which you are a (co-)applicant to the ACCESS Flex Fund (Round 1). If you are a (co-)applicant on more than one project, please list them all here. *(This information will only be used by ACCESS after funding has been awarded to assess personal and professional characteristics at the aggregate level between all applicants to the Flex Fund and those who are awarded funding.)* _____

Q2 In what sector do you work?

- Academia
- Business / Industry
- Government / Public (local or national)

- Third Sector
- Other (please provide details)
- Multiple sectors (please provide details)
- Prefer not to say (7)

Display This Question: If Q2 = Academia

Academia - What is your career stage? (Please select the option which mostly closely matches your job grade, even if this is not your exact title)

- PhD student
- Research only contract - Early Career Researcher
- Research only contract - Mid Career Researcher
- Research only contract - Late Career Researcher
- Academic contract - Lecturer
- Academic contract - Senior Lecturer
- Academic contract - Reader / Associate Professor
- Academic contract - Professor
- Other (please provide details)
- Prefer not to say

Display This Question: If Q2 = Government / Public

Government - What is your career stage? (Please select the option which mostly closely matches your job grade, even if this is not your exact title)

- Administrative Officer / Administrative Assistant (1)
- Executive Officer (2)
- Higher Executive Officer / Senior Executive Officer (3)
- Civil Service Grades 6 and 7 (4)
- Senior Civil Service Grades 1 to 4 (5)
- Other (please provide details) (6)
- Prefer not to say (7)

Display This Question: If Q2 = Business / Industry Or = Third Sector Or = Other Or = Multiple

How would you describe your career stage?

Q3 Please describe your disciplinary background (if applicable) _____

Q4 Where is your job geographically based (if you currently/mostly work from home, where is your institution primarily located)?

- Scotland
- Northern Ireland
- Wales
- North East England
- North West England
- Yorkshire & The Humber
- East Midlands

- West Midlands
- East of England
- London
- South East England
- South West England
- Other (please provide details)
- Prefer not to say

Q5 What is your gender?

- Woman
- Man
- Non-binary
- If you prefer to use your own term, please provide details
- Prefer not to say

Q6 Is your gender identity the same as the gender you were originally assigned at birth?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Q7 What is your age?

- 16-24
- 25-29
- 30-34
- 35-39
- 40-44
- 45-49
- 50-54
- 55-59
- 60-64
- 65+
- Prefer not to say

Q8 What is your ethnicity?

Ethnic origin is not about nationality, place of birth or citizenship. It is about the group to which you perceive you belong. Please tick the appropriate box

- Mixed/multiple ethnic groups
- Asian/Asian British
- Black/African/Caribbean/Black British
- White
- Other ethnic group
- Prefer not to say

Display This Question: If Q8 = Mixed/Multiple

Mixed/multiple ethnic groups

- Black Caribbean and White
- Black African and White
- Asian and White
- Any other mixed background (please provide details)
- Prefer not to say

Display This Question: If Q8 = Asian/Asian British

Asian/Asian British

- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Chinese
- Any other Asian background (please provide details)
- Prefer not to say

Display This Question: If Q8 = Black/African/Caribbean/Black British

Black/African/Caribbean/Black British

- African
- Caribbean
- Any other Black/African/Caribbean background (please provide details)
- Prefer not to say

Display This Question: If Q8 = White

White

- English
- Welsh
- Scottish
- Northern Irish
- Irish
- British
- Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- Any other white background (please provide details)
- Prefer not to say

Display This Question: If Q15 = Other ethnic group

Other ethnic group

- Arab
- Jewish
- Any other ethnic group (please provide details)
- Prefer not to say

Q9 What is your sexual orientation?

- Bisexual

- Gay/lesbian
- Heterosexual
- If you prefer to use your own term, please provide details
- Prefer not to say

Q10 What is your religion or belief?

- No religion or belief
- Buddhist
- Christian
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Sikh
- Other religion or belief (please provide details)
- Prefer not to say

Q11 Do you consider yourself to have a disability, impairment or health condition?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Q12 What caring responsibilities do you have? Select all that apply.

- Children
- Partner
- Relatives
- Friends
- None
- Other (please provide details)
- Prefer not to say

Q13 What is the highest level of qualifications achieved by either of your parent(s) or guardian(s) by the time you were 18?

- At least one degree level qualification
- Qualification(s) below degree level
- No formal qualifications
- Don't know
- Other (please provide details)
- Prefer not to say