

CREDS Flexible Fund: Early Career Researcher Call

Call type: Single Stage Full proposals

Closing date: 17 December 2019

Funding Available:

Up to £1 million of funding (at 80% Full Economic Costs) is available for this call. The maximum for a single project is £200k (at 80% Full Economic Costs). There is a streamlined procedure for small projects of less than £20k.

How to apply:

This is a single stage process, open only to applicants who have not previously held an energy research grant exceeding £100k in size.

Assessment Process:

Full proposals will be reviewed by an independent panel.

Key Dates: Activity	Date
Guidance issued	25 July 2019
Webinar support	26 September 2019
Deadline for full bids	17 December 2019
Panel meeting	02 March 2020
Earliest start date	1 April 2020

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Summary

The UK Research and Innovation Energy Programme, primarily via EPSRC and ESRC, has funded the Centre for Research into Energy Demand Solutions (CREDS) as the hub of its energy demand research programme. Further details about CREDS can be found at creds.ac.uk

As part of the CREDS award, there is a Flexible Fund, which CREDS intend to use to fill research gaps and develop research capacity.

This call is the first use of the Flexible Fund. It seeks to develop research capacity and support innovative research. It is restricted to supporting projects led by early career researchers, i.e. people active in energy research in the UK who have not previously led a project with funding exceeding £100k. (For details of eligibility, see the relevant section below.) Projects may be of any size up to £200k (80% Full Economic Costs) and may be of any duration provide they conclude by 31st March 2023.

Background

Energy demand reduction is a UK success story, with a 15% fall in final energy consumption since 2004. Major further reductions are possible and will be needed, as part of a transformation of the energy system in a net-zero carbon society, to deliver the goals of the Paris Agreement and UK carbon budgets. Moreover, a low carbon energy system will be increasingly reliant upon inflexible and variable electricity generation, and therefore demand will need to become more flexible. In short, changes in energy demand reduction will need to go further and faster, and demand will need to become more flexible.

These challenges have far-reaching implications for technology, business models, social practices and policy. EPSRC and ESRC recognise the value and importance of continued inter-disciplinary research in this area and so the UK Research and Innovation Energy Programme has funded CREDS. This has been designed to be an inclusive centre for inter-disciplinary, whole-systems energy demand research, and a National Centre which acts as a focal point for the UK's energy demand research.

The Centre's ambition is to lead whole systems work on energy demand in the UK, collaborating with a wider community both at home and internationally. We aim to:

- deliver globally leading research on energy demand,
- secure much greater impact for energy demand research and
- champion the importance of energy demand for delivering environmental, social and economic goals.

This ambition means that we take a broad definition of 'energy demand research'. It includes research into the practices and behaviours that produce the demand for energy services, energy efficiency technologies deployed at the point of energy use, non-technical measures to reduce demand, technologies and other measures to increase the flexibility of energy demand, and measures taken to implement the use of decarbonised fuels. It includes research in the context of all energy using sectors including the built environment, transport and industry.

The research is interdisciplinary in nature, covering socio-technical and techno-economic approaches including energy demand technologies, materials, design, deployment, markets,

policy, regulation, organisational aspects, and the decisions and behaviours of institutions and other actors.

Scope

Applicants may propose support for research on any topic relevant to energy demand in the UK. 'Energy demand' should be understood to include any or all of the drivers of demand for energy services, the efficiency of delivery of those services, the temporal or spatial patterns of energy use and/or the fuels used, as well as the technical, behavioural, social, economic and/or policy issues associated with energy demand.

The proposed research may therefore potentially interact with most parts of the existing CREDS Core research programme that is described on the [CREDS website](#). Applicants are encouraged to seek and explain synergies with that programme.

Funding available

The total funding available is a maximum of £1 million (80% Full Economic Costs) with individual grants having a maximum of £200k (80% Full Economic Costs). Applicants are encouraged to propose funding at the level required for their programme of work, rather than defaulting to the maximum grant size. Value for money will be an important criterion for support.

The full budget will only be used if there are a sufficient number of high quality bids. Otherwise CREDS will consider repeating the call in 2020 and/or 2021.

Applicants must be based at a UK university or Research Organisation (see section on Eligibility). There is **no requirement** for the host institution to have an existing role in CREDS. Applications must be costed on FEC basis and funds can be requested for staff, equipment, consumables and travel. Student support is not eligible.

Projects may be of any duration, with an earliest starting date of 1st April 2020 and, normally, a latest starting date of 1st October 2020. All projects must be concluded by the end date of CREDS, which is 31st March 2023.

CREDS seeks international leadership in the field of energy demand research. Proposals including international collaboration are therefore welcome, subject to compliance with the [relevant EPSRC rules](#).

Small projects, costing less than £20K (at 80%), will be treated in a different application stream from larger projects. They require less detailed applications and can propose feasibility studies, rather than full research projects.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The long-term strength of the UK research base depends on harnessing all available talent and the Research Councils have together developed the ambitious [UK Research and Innovation Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan](#).

In line with the UK Research and Innovation Diversity Principles, CREDS has adopted an [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion \(EDI\) Plan](#). This call forms part of our EDI plan by encouraging applications from people without prior experience of project leadership. Applications are particularly encouraged from members of groups under-represented in the UK energy research community.

We expect recognition of the importance of promoting equality and diversity to be embedded in the research plans of each challenge.

We are committed to supporting the research community in the diverse ways a research career can be built. This includes career breaks, support for people with caring responsibilities, flexible working and alternative working patterns. With this in mind, we welcome applications from researchers who job share, have a part-time contract, need flexible working arrangements or those currently committed to other longer, large existing grants.

To assist potential applicants, CREDS will hold a webinar on the application process on 26th September 2019. Details will be provided on the CREDS website in advance. Subject to demand, CREDS is also considering an on-line 'mentoring circle' to allow more detailed discussion. If you would like to participate in the mentoring circle, please contact CREDS at credsadmin@ouce.ox.ac.uk.

Equipment

For information on support for equipment on research grants please see the EPSRC website. We do not expect applications to this call to request individual items of equipment over £138,000k. Smaller items of equipment (individually under £10,000) should be in the Directly Incurred – Other Costs heading.

Applicants should look to make the best use of existing equipment and facilities, including those funded under other UK Research and Innovation schemes. These should be highlighted as appropriate.

Eligibility

Eligibility of organisations to receive funding under this call is determined by UKRI funding rules, see the [EPSRC Funding Guide](#). A list of eligible organisations to apply is provided [here](#).

Applicants are ineligible if they have previously held an energy research grant (as Principal Investigator) exceeding £100k. This includes grants from organisations other than UKRI. This restriction does not apply to co-Investigators playing a minor role or named research staff.

The aim of the call is to provide project leadership opportunities for researchers who have not had that experience. Applicants will need to be employed in an eligible organisation for the duration of the project, but are not required to have an existing contract for that period. Where internal institutional rules prevent applicants eligible under the rules of this call from acting as Principal Investigator (PI), the application may nominate another person as PI and mentor to the applicant. However, project management will be expected to be undertaken by the applicant (i.e. the person eligible under the rules of this call). Funding for a different PI must constitute less than 5% of project costs.

Successful bidders will join the CREDS consortium and, if the institution is not already part of the CREDS consortium, it will be required to sign the Consortium Agreement and to participate in CREDS activities, including its reports to UKRI for a period of 5 years beyond the end of the grant. Where the applicant does not have a contract of that duration, the institution will need to put in place procedures for complying with this requirement.

How to apply

Applications should be made directly to CREDS (not via JES). They should be sent to credsadmin@ouce.ox.ac.uk

CREDS must receive your application by **16:00 on 17 December 2019**.

Guidance on writing an application

The Proposal should include the sections set out below. Different rules apply to small projects of less than £20k (at 80% FEC).

'Track record and reasons for application': Up to 1 page. This should detail the relevant expertise of the applicant and any other named members of the proposed research team. This section should also provide the reasons that an application has been made to this call, focussing on the benefits to applicant's career from a successful application.

'Description of the proposed research': Up to 4 pages (2 pages for a small project). This should set out the objectives of the research and how this fits the aims and scope of the call (see 'Assessment' below). It should include a statement of the research methods, in sufficient detail to allow reviewers to assess its quality, novelty, ambition and value for money. It should set out how the proposed research will complement the CREDS research programme and UK energy policy objectives. It should address how any major ethical issues concerning the research will be handled. Small projects may relate to the feasibility of larger projects or short studies with a very clearly defined aim. In either case, it is accepted that research methods will be different from those of larger more complex projects.

'Pathways to Impact': Up to 1 page (except for small projects where this section is not required). This should outline the activities that will help deliver potential economic and/or societal impacts, including how the proposed research will be managed to engage potential beneficiaries and increase the likelihood of impacts.

'Justification of resources': Up to 1 page (except for small projects where this section is not required). This should be a narrative description of the need for the resources requested in the project budget (see below).

'Work plan': A 1 page work plan. This should provide a Gantt chart for the project (except for small projects which may choose to use a text format).

'Partner letters of support': Where appropriate, which should detail how the partner is contributing to the project.

'Full Budget': A spreadsheet, which should provide the same information and level of detail as would be required if the project was being entered into JES. This means it should include:

- Names of the PI and other investigators (including research co-investigators)
- Directly allocated investigator costs including hours per week on the project and rate of salary band
- A list of Directly Incurred staff posts with the following information for each: start dates, period on project, % of full time, scale, increment date, starting salary and any allowances, superannuation and NI costs and total cost on grant.
- Directly incurred travel and subsistence costs
- Other Directly Incurred costs
- Any Other Directly Allocated costs
- Estates costs
- Indirect costs

Costs should be calculated with a costing and pricing methodology approved by the applicant's university, and they should be on the usual basis for UKRI projects, i.e. without indexation, showing both the 100% FEC and 80% price. Data should be entered into spreadsheet 'CREDS Flexible Fund Budget Spreadsheet Template' that accompanies this guidance and saved with a filename that includes the name of the applicant.

Submissions must conform to the restrictions used in JES, i.e. a standard 'Arial' or 'other San Serif' font of size 11 or higher, and margin size of at least 2cm.

The sections should be combined into a single PDF file, with the exception of the budget spreadsheet and an (optional) cover letter, which should both be provided separately, and which will not be sent to the review panel.

Assessment

The review panel will be asked to look for convincing evidence of how you might approach your chosen problem, the level of creativity, the potential benefits to the applicant's career and the contribution to the goals of national energy policy. The assessment of proposals will be based on the Case for Support and their alignment to the following criteria:

- Scientific quality of the proposed research including novelty, ambition and value for money (primary criterion).
- Benefits to the applicant, including the readiness of the applicant to lead a research project and the likelihood of this call being important in developing the applicant's career (secondary criterion).
- National importance, with respect to how the research contributes to the overarching challenge of moving to an energy system that is secure, affordable and sustainable (secondary criterion).
- Complementarity with the CREDS Core Research programme (tertiary criterion)

Small projects will be assessed on the same criteria, but as a distinct group, rather than in competition with larger projects. Judgements about quality and importance of feasibility proposals will relate to the possibilities for further work.

Assessment process

The information and documentation will need to conform to the information in the section above on 'Guidance of writing an application'.

Proposals will be assessed solely on the basis of the criteria set out above.

Next Steps

Full bids are required by 17 December 2019. These will be subject to independent review by a moderating panel. The proposed date for the panel is 18 February 2020 (to be confirmed). Applicants will not be interviewed. Successful applicants will be informed shortly after the panel. The start date should be between 1st April and 1st October 2020.

Grant conditions

Successful bidders will join the CREDS Consortium and will be required to sign the (already agreed) CREDS Collaboration Agreement, which imposes UKRI conditions on the consortium.

Key Dates: Activity	Date
Guidance issued	25 July 2019
Webinar support	26 September 2019
Deadline for full bids	17 December 2019
Panel meeting	02 March 2020
Earliest start date	1 April 2020

Contacts

Contacts for enquires about the Call are as follows:

Nick Eyre, Director CREDS (nick.eyre@ouce.ox.ac.uk)

Sarah Higginson, Research Knowledge Exchange Officer, CREDS
(sarah.higginson@ouce.ox.ac.uk)

Documentation check list

A cover letter, if desired.

A single PDF file of the application, sub-divided as follows:

- Up to 1 page on 'Track record',
- Up to 4 pages on 'Description of the proposed research' (2 pages for small projects),
- Up to 1 page on 'Pathways to Impact' (not for small projects),
- Up to 1 page on justification of resources (not for small projects),
- Up to 1 page on work plan,
- Partner letters of support, where appropriate.

A full budget using the spreadsheet provided.

Applications should be made directly to CREDS (not via JES). They should be sent to credsadmin@ouce.ox.ac.uk by 17 December 2019.