

RF2025

Writing a Good Fellowship Funding Application

Professors Lucy Griffiths Swansea University & Karen Broadhurst Lancaster University

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Purpose of the Webinar

- To support researchers in preparing high-quality applications for the RF2025 funding opportunity, with a focus on:
 - Understanding what ADR and reviewers are looking for
 - Structuring applications clearly and effectively
 - Demonstrating feasibility and alignment with ADR UK objectives
 - Understanding the importance of collaborative design and engagement
 - Avoiding common pitfalls in application writing

Summary of the Call

ADR UK's research fellowship scheme invites applicants to propose research and analysis to demonstrate the potential policy impact of ADR UK's **flagship datasets**.

<https://www.adruk.org/data-access/flagship-datasets/>

Applications should propose research projects which incorporate:

- Data **cleaning** and **exploration**;
- **Impact-driven policy** and *public engagement*;
- Easily digestible **publications** and academic peer-reviewed articles.

Application

- Vision (1100 words)
- Approach (2750 words)
- Applicant Capability to Deliver (1650 words)
- Career Development (1000 words)
- Host Organisation Support (1000 words)
- Resources and Cost Justification (1000 words)
- Ethics and Responsible Research (500 words)
- Feasibility Data Requirements (1000 words)
- Facilities (250 words)
- Data Management and Sharing (500 words)

Vision

Research aim(s), rationale and contribution

- Clearly set out the focus of the research, your aim (and objectives) and **why the research is important (significance) and the contribution** the project will make
- Clear research questions (and/or hypotheses) and specific reference to **selected flagship dataset(s)**
- In setting your research aims and contribution, you need to have, and to **demonstrate**, a firm grasp of the existing literature and **gaps in knowledge***
- **Policy rationale - how is this work relevant to current policy objectives? (Be familiar with Government Missions)**
- Firmly aligns with objective 1 to fund useful research

*Government Research Areas of Interest / Catalyst Agendas

Alignment with funder (ADR) priorities

- All funders set out their priorities - make sure your work is clearly aligned and be explicit about how it aligns
- This should be your starting point for any application - funders and panels will not fund research which does not meet their strategic objectives
- ADR UK wants to build expertise and capacity in the use of ADR UK flagship datasets & at the same time fund research which generates knowledge in relation to pressing policy questions

Objectives....

Four objectives to meet

Objective 1: *Useful research* - Demonstrate the potential of administrative data research for public policy impact within the timeframes

Objective 2: *Useful data* - Develop our flagship datasets as useful research resources for future users.

Objective 3: *Useful engagement* - Foster opportunities to engage with government and the public to shape the project to deliver impact and to maintain public acceptance for the use of data for research purposes.

Objective 4: *Community Building* - Actively participate in and personally contribute to new or existing communities of practice in support of your development as a research leader using administrative data

Ensuring relevance

- Can you evidence a collaborative approach to your project design- who have you consulted? Which stakeholders?
- Do you have a project board or advisory group that will help steer this project, advise on outputs, offer appropriate challenge?

Approach (Methodology)

- How I'm going to do it!
- A clear and **feasible** research plan that is consistent with ADR UK's stipulation for this call
 - 0-3 months period of 'set up and data access'; followed by 3-18 months for the substantive work of the study
- Make very clear your chosen flagship data sources and that your methodological approach enable you to address your research question(s)/ test your hypotheses.
- If using supplementary data - why (cannot be the primary focus) is this data available in the SRS or other TRE?
- The methods you propose must fit with your expertise (detail any additional training needs, but think about realistic development objectives)
- The project must be realistic in terms of the timeframe you propose
- Make sure you devote sufficient space to setting out what exactly you plan to do re data cleaning, data exploration and analysis

Feasibility Data Requirements

- Demonstrate knowledge of the datasets you plan to use - their scope, coverage, opportunities, limitations, prior studies & how you will gain access, including any access costs.
- **Speak to the data owners**, attend webinars, data insights
- Use ADR UK learning resources; use the ADR England Community Catalyst resources to understand how others have used administrative data
 - Assessment includes **feasibility** check by data owners
- Again- speak to other researchers/fellows
- Use and cite previous research [demonstrate your expertise where you have used these data before]

Applicant capability to deliver [expertise, experience and support]

- The applicant needs to have sufficient expertise and skill to do the planned research - **spell this out**
- **Strong mentorship and support an absolute necessity for those new to research using admin data**
- Evidence track record & be clear about available support [mentoring & institutional support]- applications will of course be evaluated in light of applicant's career stage
- Previous RA experience, Co-I or PI roles, publications, policy roles
- What training do you plan to access? How will you use ADR UK learning resources?
- What networks will you join? How will you connect with others to access additional learning?

Host Organisation Support & Career Development

- Research Concordat?
- Mentoring
- Wider research environment
- What are your training needs - think about the full cycle of any research project, from data access through to engagement and dissemination
- Demonstrate a pro-active approach – and awareness of ADR UK and ESRC resources

Ethics and Responsible Research



Essential actions (ethics, governance & transparency)

- Ensure you demonstrate an understanding of relevant data access and university/ organisational approvals or accreditation, prior to the start of any data collection or access (ONS researcher accreditation)
- Be very clear about data security, data management, statistical disclosure controls (TRE regulations and processes)
- Be aware of the **limits of your expertise**, seek supervision
- Document your work, share learning (objective four), remember research investment and research is for the public good

The 'Five Safes'

ADR UK operates according to the 'Five Safes' developed by the [Office for National Statistics \(ONS\)](#). The Five Safes refer to a set of established safeguards and measures to ensure data is kept safe and secure:

- **Safe Data:** Data held within [ADR UK's trusted research environments](#) is de-identified, meaning identifiable details such as names, addresses and identification numbers are removed before data is made available for any analysis.
- **Safe Person:** Any researcher accessing ADR UK data is assessed for their skills and suitability before being granted access to the data needed for their project.
- **Safe Place:** ADR UK data must be accessed in a safe and secure room [within one of our trusted research environments](#), or otherwise via an assured connection at an accredited institution or [SafePod](#).
- **Safe Project:** The research project itself is scrutinised and must be in the public interest.
- **Safe Output:** The researcher's actions whilst accessing the data are monitored using keystroke technology and all outputs are checked thoroughly, with any potentially re-identifiable outliers removed.



Engagement and Impact

- You need to demonstrate a **pro-active approach** to engagement and impact
- Best practice- a collaborative approach with key stakeholders from the outset
- Think about pathways to impact (scientific, societal and economic [or in combination])

Possible mechanisms:

- Establish a project advisory board - provides effective steer - but also can champion the research & identify pathways to impact
- Planning for influence - forthcoming policy opportunities?
- Can you take up expert roles or proactively join relevant networks?
- Demonstrate a commitment to dual publication (digestible open access, alongside traditional academic, translation for lay audiences, media)

Effective dissemination plan

ADR UK fellows are expected to produce:

- A project page on the ADR UK website;
- A Data Explained publication;
- A Data Insight publication; and
- Additional deliverables of a researcher's choice
- General advice: any dissemination plan should set out clear strategies for sharing the project's findings with relevant and diverse audiences; outline tailored communication methods, specific timelines and the use of appropriate channels to maximize impact.
- Be aware of the imperative of open access publishing, basic principles and ethos of open science and transparency

Equality, diversity and inclusion

Some examples, of how you might think about EDI across the life-cycle of a research project:

- **Inclusive Research Design:** Ensure your research questions, hypotheses, and methodologies are inclusive, considering diverse populations and perspectives.
- **Responsible Research and Innovation:** Assess potential unintended consequences and ethical dilemmas, particularly concerning vulnerable communities.
- **Inclusive Impact Activities:** Design public engagement and dissemination activities that are accessible to diverse audiences.
- **Consideration of Diverse Audiences:** Ensure that the benefits and outcomes of your research are communicated to and accessible by diverse communities.

Justification of costs

Maximum of £200,000 for the entire programme at 100% full economic cost

The following are all eligible uses of the available funds for fellowships:

- ❖ Salaries including nominated research support staff or mentorship time
- ❖ Travel and subsistence
- ❖ Project-specific engagement and events
- ❖ Public engagement
- ❖ Production of outputs
- ❖ Training

Provide clear justification of resources

Tips on presentation

- Plain English - you cannot avoid all technical terminology - but what you plan to do and why, *must* be accessible to a wide range of peer reviewers
- Sub-headings
- Signposting
- Highlighting
- Spell and grammar check
- Compliance with word count, font etc.

Summary points - reviewer criticisms to avoid

- Vague or overly ambitious aims ('initial' phase (3 months) and 'core' research phase (15 months))
- Lack of alignment with ADR UK objectives and expected outputs (Data Explained/Insights etc.)
- Unacceptable level of project risk
- Poor articulation of data use or feasibility
- Proposal lacks evidence of support, mentoring
- Ethics, responsible research and innovation
- A lack of meaningful stakeholder engagement in the research
- Proposal doesn't offer good value for money (even if within budget)
- Reviewers unconvinced about the likelihood of the project's impact due to unclear pathways to influence policy, practice, or other areas.

Further Guidance and Support

- ADR UK flagship dataset webinars
- Community Catalyst resources
- Pre-application engagement with data owners
- Trusted Research Environment information
- Peer-to-peer support for applicants
- ADR mentoring programme (optional, costed into application)
- Browse past and current projects (ADR website)
- Impact case studies
- Institutional support and capacity building



Community Catalyst: Children at Risk of Poor Outcomes



Community Catalyst: Youth Transitions