

**Joint DFID-ESRC Scheme for research on international poverty reduction**  
**Overview of Specification for First Call**  
**Call Launched 01 August 2005**  
**Deadline for applications: 12 Noon (local British time) on 01 November 2005**

## **1. Strategic Background to the Scheme**

- 1.1 The Department for International Development (DFID) and Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) announce the first call for their new joint research scheme in the area of international development. Both organisations view the alleviation of poverty as an important priority. In the case of the DFID, the International Development Act (2002) places poverty reduction in the poorest countries at the core of its mission, encapsulated at the international level through the Millennium Development Goals. For ESRC, alleviating poverty in an evolving global economy is a major trans-disciplinary research challenge.
- 1.2 Thus, the main aim of this new scheme is to fund high-quality basic research that enhances understanding, develops thinking and has the potential for real impact on the international development agenda for reducing global poverty. Recognising the multi-faceted and trans-disciplinary nature of this research agenda, applications are encouraged from across the full range of social science disciplines and beyond.
- 1.3 A budget of £13 million over four years has been earmarked for this scheme, and this is the first call for applications with others to follow in 2006. The scheme will fund individual projects costing up to £700,000 and running from one to three years. This overview outlines the key elements of the new scheme and the first call. It is essential that any researcher intending to develop an application reads carefully the full specification and the detailed guidance on completing the application form. The application form and guidance on submission will be available via the ESRC website from 15 September 2005.

## **2. Scope of Scheme**

### ***Research***

- 2.1 The main purpose of the scheme is to fund research that has an eventual and demonstrable relevance and potential impact on the international agenda for reducing poverty, as manifested in various international, regional, national and sub-national policies and agendas. Beyond this broad thrust, the scheme is non-prescriptive in terms of the research topics and types of project that will be supported. The intent is to commission the best, innovative and most appropriate research from the research community without any thematic boundaries that might inhibit intellectual creativity.
- 2.2 The key challenge for applicants is to combine the best social science research with a clear exposition of its future relevance and impact on the poverty reduction agenda. The two sponsors want innovative research proposals that will deliver new understanding, insights, advice or solutions to a wide range of academic and non-academic stakeholders.
- 2.3 Applications are sought from across the social sciences and other academic disciplines, though the primary contribution should come from the social sciences. Multi- and inter-disciplinary applications are strongly encouraged, though this is not a pre-requisite for funding. There is recognition that the problem of alleviating poverty is complex and involves a range of socio-economic factors, hence the importance of bringing the full range of social science disciplines and perspectives to bear.

### ***Research Capacity***

- 2.4 DFID and ESRC are not seeking to fund capacity-building *per se* through this scheme. However, both organisations recognise that a lack of adequate intellectual and human capital hinders the prospects of long-term sustainability in both research effort and research exploitation. Thus, issues of research capacity can be addressed explicitly within research proposals, provided capacity-related elements are both compatible with the intellectual agenda of the research proposal, and are sub-ordinate to the main intellectual focus. Further details are contained in the full specification.

### ***Engagement***

- 2.5 All applications will need an engagement strategy that explains who the various academic and non-academic stakeholders are, and how those stakeholders will interact with the project during and after completion of the research. Engagement strategies should include specific activities to ensure appropriate exploitation of research outcomes.

### ***International Dimension***

- 2.6 By definition this scheme is concerned with issues of global importance. Underpinning the scheme, however, is mutual respect and understanding for different cultural, ethnic, social and economic beliefs and practices. Solutions to poverty must be rooted in, and acceptable to, the institutions and communities they are meant to serve.
- 2.7 The geographical focus of projects should be determined by their relevance to the poverty reduction agenda of this scheme with particular, though not necessarily exclusive, emphasis on the poorest low income countries. It is essential that the research questions and geographical focus are intellectually coherent, especially where cross-cultural comparative work is concerned.

### ***3. Eligibility and how to apply***

- 3.1 The principal investigator (or any co-investigators) should be researchers based in higher education institutions, research organisations or other organisations with a credible research capacity. Researchers may be based in a UK or non-UK organisation with recognised research capacity. The key point to note is that researchers should be based in a recognised research environment conducive to high quality social science research of international standing.
- 3.2 In addition to the principal and co-applicants, other non-academic collaborators and consultants may be included in applications, for instance public, private or INGO sector experts. Doctoral studentships and visiting fellowships may also be included in research applications. In all these instances specific conditions apply.
- 3.3 Grants will be made to the institution hosting the principal investigator and will be subject to ESRC terms and conditions. In order to hold ESRC grants, institutions must be recognised as appropriate, accountable and stable organisations for the conduct of high-quality research. For most UK higher education institutions such recognition will already be in place. If an institution is not already recognised to hold ESRC awards, before a grant is offered such institutions will be asked to provide information on their governance, audit and accountability arrangements to ensure that they adequately meet the ESRC contract and monitoring regulations.
- 3.4 The full specification for the call is available on the ESRC website at [www.esrc.ac.uk](http://www.esrc.ac.uk). For further details contact the DFID-ESRC Project Unit based in ESRC, via [steve.morgan@esrc.ac.uk](mailto:steve.morgan@esrc.ac.uk) or [oliver.moss@esrc.ac.uk](mailto:oliver.moss@esrc.ac.uk)