



AHRC CREATIVE ECONOMY PROGRAMME

Research and Partnership Development call for the Next Generation of Immersive Experiences

1. Background

In November 2016, the AHRC and the creative, digital and design KTN successfully co-hosted three workshops bringing together cultural and creative industries researchers, academics, businesses, institutions and trade associations. The aim of the workshops was to test the appetite for a challenge-led research programme for the creative economy, generate ideas on challenges, and formulate a set of principles and design questions which would inform the development of the initiative/programme itself.

Immersive and interactive technologies were highlighted as a key challenge area in both our workshops and the ISCF engagement workshops. The AHRC are therefore launching this call on Immersive experiences in partnership with EPSRC. Both AHRC and EPSRC will be co-funding this call but we will also be exploring opportunities throughout the lifetime of this call to link up with ESRC and Innovate UK, and other UKRI funders.

This call represents an initial stage of investment in the next generation of immersive experiences. We are currently scoping what form further stages of investment in immersive experiences might be. The outcomes of this call will help inform these further stages. We hope to be able to provide information on future funding opportunities in this area in 2018. Success at this stage will not be a pre-requisite for funding under future calls

2. Introduction to this Call

Ubiquitous high-speed telecoms networks, extremely capable mobile devices and new generations of display technology will together enable the creation of new immersive experiences. The ability to access, visualise and overlay data in real time and the impact this has on entertainment, work and commerce will extend far beyond today's initial expressions of this technology - Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality. The future economic value of Immersive technologies and the challenge of integrating them with Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning technologies has recently been identified as a potential high priority activity through various interactions with the research and business communities. AHRC, EPSRC, Innovate UK and others have been working with the KTN to establish and work with "Immerse UK", a cross-sector network for businesses and research organisations across all parts of the UK economy that are interested in the way that augmented and virtual reality can help drive productivity, social and economic growth (<http://www.immerseuk.org/>).

But for the UK, with its world leading creative industries, the challenge is not solely - or even primarily - technological.

Immersive experiences will change every sector of the Creative Industries from Archaeology and Architecture to Museums and Live Performance to Film, Television and Computer Games. The UK currently excels in the generation, production and distribution of creative content, services and experiences. As technology enables experiences to become more immersive we must ensure that UK creative talent can tell its stories, create innovative products and services, and develop startling new experiences within this new medium. We need to preserve our current strengths and to grow the creative and commercial opportunities of the future.

Both the AHRC and EPSRC research communities are key to providing the research function for the UK's Creative Industries. As such the AHRC working closely with the EPSRC and the RCUK Digital Economy Theme, is launching this call to develop a research programme to bring together organisations within the creative economy with researchers from both the arts and humanities communities and beyond to ensure that:

- the UK's world leading Creative Industries and research sectors are in a position to understand, experiment with, and exploit immersive technologies to create new experiences ;
- the next generation of digital content and services can be conceptualised, produced and exploited within the UK Creative Economy.

This is not a technology-only research programme, nor one exploring interfaces but a programme to explore the new technology-enabled, multi-sensory, narrative, interpretative, and performance experiences that will drive future creative and commercial value. This will require interdisciplinary working between the Arts and Humanities and other disciplines from Psychology to Engineering, and inter-sector working between researchers, creative practitioners, and businesses.



3. Aims

Rather than address the entire spectrum of the Creative Economy, this call will be focused on encouraging research proposals exploring immersive experiences in three areas where the UK has world leading creative assets and technology partners. These three areas have arts and humanities research at the core of developing experiences and practices. They also represent areas in which the benefits of research offer significant cultural and economic value for the UK.

These three areas can be summarised as:

- **Memory** – how can new immersive experiences extend the access, interpretation and reach of memory-based institutions such as museum, galleries, archives and collections?
- **Place** – what new experiences can be created by the combination of immersive technology and place based services?
- **Performance** – what new creative practices are enabled by immersive technology, what new experiences can be offered to audiences and how can this transform or extend models of performance?

Co-funding for this call.

This call seeks to build partnerships which will explore the new technology-enabled narrative, interpretative, and performance experiences that will drive future creative and commercial value. Both AHRC and EPSRC research communities are key to delivering this. Accordingly this call is co-funded by AHRC and EPSRC, and each council will be contributing £940k to support this call.

Target communities

We believe the audience for this call is wide. Those already engaged in the development of application of immersive experiences extend across the Arts and Humanities, a broad sector of the social sciences, technology, engineering, and those emerging areas where these disciplines already meet.

However, we imagine this call will be of particular interest to and should stimulate collaborations between:

Arts and Humanities Researchers – Including: Performance Studies, Philosophy, Music, Architecture, Design Research, Service Design, Interactive Design, Design Informatics, Media and Arts, Film, Digital and Creative Arts, Fine Art, Archaeology, Environmental Humanities, Museum Studies, Information Studies, Digital Humanities, Heritage, those working within Independent Research Organisations

Technology and Social Science Researchers: Including: Human-Computer Interaction, Sensors and Signal processing, Cybersecurity, Telecommunications (infrastructure and services), Satellite and Space Technology, Software Engineering, Computer Graphics, Simulation and Modelling, GIS and informatics, Computer Games, Motion and Performance Capture, urban planning and smart cities, Ethnographers, Anthropologists, Geographers, Psychologists and those interested in new business models and cultural practice.

Creative Economy/ Industrial partners: Including: GIS providers, planners, publishers, software and service providers (including Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs)) aerospace, Film and TV production companies, motion and performance capture, Film studios and support services, Design Studios, Computer Games developers, Theatre companies, Live Events producers and technical providers, Retailers, Museums and Galleries, Heritage sector (including interpretation and land management), VR & AR software developers, Animations and GFX, Architects and Digital Design Companies supporting all these sectors

This is not intended to be an exhaustive list; it is merely an initial illustrative list of those communities which we believe have valuable input to make in this area. Applications which include disciplines and approaches from beyond the above are welcome. We would expect proposals to bring together members from each of the three above groups to support interdisciplinary innovation.

The AHRC would also welcome applications seeking to build teams which examine Immersive Experiences within one or more of the above themes to challenge prevailing narratives or amplify unheard voices in this space. Applications proposing teams which will deal with issues of gender, race, neurodivergence, age, sexual orientation, class, disability, or any other group within the context of the Immersive Experiences themes are welcome.



Teams looking to put forward must ensure that they have considered that they have the right people or groups with expertise, experience, or interest in the topic(s) proposed who should be invited to participate in the proposed activities. Teams must also ensure that they have considered what might be the barriers to their participation? Is there a group of people that deliberately or unintentionally excludes others for no good reason? Some people may have the capacity and desire to be heavily involved whereas others may dip in and out. Anticipating and managing the different levels of involvement is important to ensure nobody feels either pressured to contribute, or deliberately excluded.¹

4. **Objectives and Details of the Call**

AHRC and EPSRC invite proposals from interdisciplinary Research partnerships that can create new knowledge and address major challenges for the development of the next generation of immersive experiences in the areas of

- Memory
- Place
- Performance

Partnerships must be interdisciplinary and include academic researchers in disciplines appropriate to addressing the breadth of the challenges [i.e. within and beyond the Arts and Humanities] and creative economy partners who are looking to develop new products and services in these areas.

One of the primary aims of this call is to build interdisciplinary capabilities, collaborations, and partnership which will be well placed to take advantage of future opportunities for research and innovation (both from UKRI and beyond). As such we expect partnerships funded through this call to have a life beyond the end of the funding period. AHRC, EPSRC, and other UKRI partners will work with the cohort of funded projects to understand what is needed to achieve this but it is vital that partnerships funded through this call are sustainable and have a legacy beyond the funded project. We recognise the difficulty of forming and growing an interdisciplinary, multi-sector partnership in this innovative space, hence the need for a call.

We would expect the outputs from the funded projects and the wider cohort to include:

- Interdisciplinary partnerships including academic researchers in disciplines appropriate to addressing the breadth of the challenges and creative economy partners who are looking to develop new products and services in these areas
- The potential research questions within this space to have been further developed and refined
- Sufficient proof of concept(s) / prototypes / visualisations to have been developed by researchers
- Applicants will be expected to show how these prototypes
 - can contribute to the generation of new knowledge
 - will generate data relevant to the research questions
 - can lead to a scalable proposition of cultural [and/or] commercial value
- The funded partnerships to be sustainable and able to develop business cases for further funding²
- Tangible advances in creativity, insights, knowledge and understanding in the area of immersive experiences across one or more of the themes, with results of value both to the arts and humanities research and EPSRC research community, as well as to wider contexts where they can make a difference
- Work with AHRC, EPSRC, IUK and other funders to understand the complexities of funding research in the immersive experience space and potential barriers to exploitation and scaling up of research outputs. This is to ensure that the next generation of immersive content, experiences, and services can be conceptualised, produced, and exploited to the benefit of the UK Creative Economy
- Applicants must be able to attend a May 2018 showcase event to demonstrate the outputs of their research to date and the potential next steps for their partnerships

All outcomes should ensure that the UK creative economy can be a world leader in the conceptualisation, design, production and distribution of commercial and cultural immersive experiences in the future.

As listed above all projects funded must present their research in progress at a showcase event in May 2018. This will be a condition of funding and all applicants should ensure that they are able to send representatives to the

¹ Adapted from: [Community-based participatory research: A guide to ethical principles and practice](#) (NCPPE 2012)

² This could be Phase 2 of the call, any other UKRI scheme (including Innovate UK), or outside investment.



event in May 2018. We will confirm the final date within May 2018 once the successful applications have been confirmed.

5. Further Descriptions of Challenge Areas

Memory

Challenge: Memory-based organisations; museums, galleries, heritage institutions and archives (and increasingly companies) organise the world's knowledge. Yet they cannot hold everything of value and have collections and assets that far exceed their ability to display and interpret them for potential users. Only a fraction of their collections are 'on-show' at any one time, and these only in discrete locations to limited audiences; they cannot yet serve the world even at a time where the knowledge and skills of UK institutions are increasingly in demand to support the development of the sector internationally. Organisations also need to find new ways to make their collections and assets accessible both by supporting wider engagement and addressing the needs of groups who face particular barriers.

Opportunity: Immersive technology offers the opportunity for objects and artefacts (both digital and physical) to escape the constraints of physical institutions, display and storage facilities. But what new immersive experiences could be created from collections to serve new, diverse audiences both locally and globally? What new opportunities does immersive technology enable for engagement with communities in novel ways to enhance accessibility and inclusion? How can immersive technology open up innovative opportunities for communities to uncover, engage with, and experience "hidden" memories or heritages? Could objects and artefacts within new memory-lead experiences serve new functions, such as health and wellbeing? What new curatorial, interpretative, documentation, information management and visualisation practices need to be developed to allow this to happen? What new skills, expertise and technology-enabled services could flow from this research to serve the wider global market and the memory needs of international institutions, brands and companies?

Call Invitation: AHRC would welcome applications from interdisciplinary teams that can bring significant assets to bear on this problem. We would encourage applications that include digital humanities, institutional and technology partners that can a) conduct this research in the context of ongoing programmes to achieve maximum impact in the Creative Economy from the AHRC's investment and explore new business models and/or new audiences/markets built on immersive collections based experiences.

Place

Challenge: Location based services that combine Geographical Information Systems, satellite navigation and mobile computing have become major components in the growth of the digital economy. To date these services have tended to focus on utility and functionality rather than on layers of interpretation, data fusion, or narrative experience. Individual projects have looked to apply Virtual Reality techniques to historical and built environment content but with the intention of providing an enhanced visualisation of a building rather than an immersive experience in and of a place. We need richer and more compelling expressions of the ability to apply data, content and narrative to place using immersive technologies to create new layers of multi-sensory experience, interpretation and meaning within a building, a site or a landscape.

Opportunity: We believe the UK is uniquely well-positioned to lead the world in the interpretation of place through immersive technologies. Along with a strong tourism sector, we have some of the world's most iconic buildings, landscapes, heritage sites, and place based festivals and events, along with the richest assets in historical and geographical data. Emerging disciplines such as environmental humanities and heritage science, together with historians and cultural geographers can provide the insight working with creative technologists, data providers and built environment and landscape stakeholders to develop the prototypes of immersive place-based experiences that can scale across the world and translate across different languages and cultures. We should also be looking for ways to enable groups with specific needs or requirements to access and engage with places in new ways.

Call Invitation: AHRC would welcome applications from interdisciplinary teams that can bring significant expertise and assets to realise this vision at the level of a building, a locality or an entire landscape. As well as research partners from appropriate disciplines and industry partners with expertise in immersive technologies we would expect partners to include partners who can provide (or provide access to) significant landscape or built environment assets, or place specific communities.



Performance

Challenge: Whether recorded or performed live, dance, theatre, film, television and video games and other performances rely on the audiences' immersion in the experience. That sense of immersion has been supported by ever evolving narrative devices, performance techniques, participatory and co-performance methods, technical methods and presentation formats. Theatre shows which have taken creative risks by experimenting with new techniques have become global franchises. The computer games industry is heavily invested in the adoption of Virtual Reality headsets and has seen significant consumer interest. But what are the new experiences that can be generated from the application of future immersive technologies to performance and what new forms and techniques of performance will arise?

Opportunity: Recent experiments in production have started to explore the integration of performance capture and similar technologies in live performance. We believe that it is time to invest further in this area and explore the potential of immersive technologies to support new creative practice and production methods and to support research on new immersive experiences that will impact on the consumption and/or co-production both within and beyond traditional audience spaces. The UK is a world centre for performance, performance training, live event production, and increasingly for performance techniques associated with Film Production and GFX. As a world leader the UK has not just a strength in talent but an industry with proven abilities of to adopt, exploit, and export new ideas and technologies.

Call Invitation: AHRC would welcome applications from interdisciplinary teams that can bring significant expertise and assets to explore this area, either in terms of production or consumption of performance. This may include researchers in performance studies, theatre, media (interactive or not), arts, music, and dance, along with creative economy partners with expertise in immersive technologies and other relevant creative technologies such as motion and performance capture, projection or real-time data. . We would expect all collaborations to include creative practice partners who could collaborate to develop and produce prototype experiences.

6. Eligibility and Application requirements

Unless discussed in this document the eligibility, assessment, application and other requirements for applications under this scheme are as per those for the standard route of Research Grants funding (<http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/documents/guides/research-funding-guide/>). This call document identifies the areas of difference. In case of conflict between the two, this document takes precedence.

Aims – As per Sections 2 and 3 of this document “Objectives and Details of the Call”

Scheme limit, duration and level of commitment – Applications are invited for a total full economic costs of up to £75,000 and lasting between 6 and 9 months. There is no minimum level of commitment in terms of average hours committed per week, but the levels indicated by each team member should be sufficient to deliver the work outlined. The time Investigators contribute to the project needs to be fully justified and will be considered as part of the peer review process.

As per standard AHRC grants the costs of successful projects will be paid at 80% FEC unless the requested activities fall under the “Exceptions” heading which the Research Councils will fund at 100%. Please see the “Costs” section of the AHRC funding guide (<http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/documents/guides/research-funding-guide/> pgs 39-46) for more details.

Applications to this scheme are not permitted to include costs for project students.

International Co-Investigators are permitted in this scheme. Please follow the guidance in section 2.2.1 of the AHRC funding guide (<http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/documents/guides/research-funding-guide/>).

Eligibility of applicants

- All project teams must include academic researchers in disciplines appropriate to addressing the breadth of the challenges [i.e. within and beyond the Arts and Humanities] plus non-academic partners who are looking to develop new products and services in these areas. Teams must demonstrate that they have appropriate expertise, domain knowledge, user insight and credible plans for market access.



- Design researchers are welcome as either academic or creative economy partners as are IRO's with appropriate skills and/or access to audience and environments to contribute to the research, to explore concepts and to test prototypes.
- Non-academic partners
 - Non-academic partners should follow the guidance in section 3.9 of the AHRC funding guide (Project Partners and Collaborating Organisations).
 - Applications within this call are expected to be highly collaborative with creative economy partners. Research Council funding must not be used to support the day to day business of non-academic organisations or work that would be carried out regardless of the success of the application. However, the AHRC expects proposals to provide flexible means of funding activities with creative and cultural partners.
 - Depending on the proposed activities, it may therefore be appropriate to award small amounts of funding (maximum 20% of the total project costs) to Micro and Small, Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), through the RO, to support their participation in collaborative activities. AHRC expect to see such funding balanced against a reasonable contribution from the non-academic partner (financial or otherwise) to demonstrate commitment to the project.
 - Proposal should provide evidence that any non-academic costs requested represent value for money and are appropriate to the aims of the project. This justification should be made within the standard Justification of Resources document. If the justification is not sufficient or the total proposed to go to Micro and/or Small, Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) is above 20% then the proposal will be judged as unfundable. Applicants should ensure that the Justification of Resources is explicit about how much will be assigned to SMEs, the reasonable contribution (financial or otherwise) from the project partner(s) to demonstrate their commitment, and how the monies awarded in this way will support the aims of both the call and the project.
- The eligibility requirements for Primary Investigators and Co-Investigators is as per those for the standard route of Research Grants funding

Application Requirements

The application will be completed and submitted on the RCUK Je-S system. It will consist of a "proposal" and several attachments.

The proposal is the summary and top-level part of the application. It contains the financial details, project summary, impact summary, subject listings, and other information. Guidance for completing this section can be found on page 55 – 59 of the AHRC Research Funding Guide.

The remainder of the application is made up of several attachments. Each of these have specific page limits in brackets below. Over length attachments will be rejected and will cause the application to be rejected.

Attachments required for an application to this call:

- **Mandatory Attachments**
 - Case for Support (Limit of 4 sides of A4 – minimum font size 10)
 - Curriculum Vitae and Publication/Relevant Output lists for the PI and each Co-I (Limit of 3 sides of A4 for each combined CV and Publication list; please list most relevant details to the work proposed)
 - Justification of Resources (Limit of 2 sides of A4 - minimum font size 10)
 - Pathways to Impact (Limit of 2 sides of A4 - minimum font size 10)
- **Optional Attachments**
 - Visual Evidence (Limit of 2 sides of A4) (optional)
 - Technical Plan (Limit of 4 sides of A4) (only if applicable – see below)
 - International Co-Investigator Head of Dept Statement (only if applicable – see below)
 - Project Partner Letter of Support (Limit of 2 sides of A4 per letter - minimum font size 10. Only if applicable – see below)

Mandatory Attachments

Providing that none of the optional attachments are required/desired (see below) a standard application will consist of the "proposal" and the four mandatory attachments. If any of these are missing or not correctly completed then the application will be rejected.



Guidance on each of the attachments is found below:

Case for Support

Full details of this can be found in the AHRC Research Funding Guide pages 76-83. Please follow the guidance for a Research Networking Case for Support (the listed headings need not be used).

You should provide sufficient evidence and information on the work proposed to enable the panellists to reach a considered judgement as to the quality of your proposal, its significance, its feasibility and value for money.

You should make it very clear how the work proposed fits the aims of this call, especially as fit to call may be used as a shortlisting criteria should we receive a high volume of applications (see below).

You should ensure that the research proposed and outputs envisioned are clear, and also make it clear how the work proposed will both answer the research questions posed and lead to the proposed outputs.

Curriculum Vitae and Publication/Relevant Outputs

Details can be found on page 61 of the AHRC Research Funding Guide. These can be submitted as separate CV and Publication documents or as a single CV/Publication document. Please do keep these within the listed limits; list only relevant publications/outputs if you are struggling for space.

Justification of Resources

Details can be found on pages 70-71 of the AHRC Research Funding Guide. Please ensure that this is a justification of the resources requested and not simply a restatement. The assessment panel needs to understand why the requested resources are what's needed to deliver the work outlined.

This attachment will be read in conjunction with the finance sections of the "proposal"; there is no need to restate what is listed there.

A weak Justification of Resources makes it very hard for the assessment panel to assess a proposal's value for money

Pathways to Impact

Details can be found on page 71 of the AHRC Research Funding Guide. Please note that whilst a Pathways to Impact statement is a key part of an application for RCUK funding, we do recognise that this call is very much focussed on exploring the potentials of research in this space and growing partnerships to respond to future funding. With this in mind we would expect this document to cover only initial plans regarding potential pathways to impact for the work proposed; part of the work to be undertaken by funded projects will be around further developing and understanding these pathways. We expect the proposed pathways to impacts to evolve over the course of the funded award and that fully developed pathways to impact may form part of the projects' outputs. What is required at application is very much an initial plans about how the applicants are going about the development process for the pathways.

Optional Attachments

The optional attachments list above should be included in the following circumstances. If an optional attachment is required and not provided, the application will be rejected.

Visual evidence

Applications may include up to than two sides of A4 non-textual, visual evidence in support of the proposal. This attachment can be used to illustrate the proposed aims and objectives and/or research methods which cannot be conveyed easily via text. It is not permitted to include this material to supplement or replace your CV or publications list or to illustrate previous work in any way nor should it be used to circumvent the page limit for the case for support.

Technical Plan



In brief this is an attachment to show the AHRC that technical provisions within a research proposal have been adequately addressed in terms of:

- a) Delivering the planned digital output or the digital technology from a practical and methodological perspective;
- b) Doing so in a way which satisfies the AHRC's requirements for preservation and sustainability.

Generally if your project involves the development of a digital output or digital technology as an essential part of the planned research outcomes then you will need to complete a Technical Plan. You do not need to complete a Technical Plan if your only proposed digital output or technology consists of a website or blog containing information about the project (as opposed to data produced by the project).

Please see pages 61-70 of the research funding guide for full details of what must be covered in this attachment and for the circumstances in which this attachment is required.

International Co-Investigator Head of Dept. Statement

Only required if an international Co-Investigator is included on the application. Guidance can be found on page 74 of the AHRC Funding Guide.

Project Partner Letter of Support

You'll need to provide a letter of support for each non-academic collaborator who is providing a specific contribution (cash or in-kind) to the project.

If some of the cost of collaborating organisation's involvement is being charged to the project but other parts are being provided without charge, or at a heavily discounted rate then you will need to make it clear in the application which costs are being charged and which are being provided.

We would see the provision of a reasonable contribution (cash or in-kind) by the non-academic partner to demonstrate their commitment to the project.

Any Micro and Small, Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) non-academic organisation which will be receiving monies through the application should be listed as a project partner, and their reasonable contribution (cash or in-kind) to be clear from their letter of support.

Detailed guidance as to what a Project Partner Letter of Support should contain can be found on pages 74-75 of the AHRC Research Funding Guide. Key elements are that the partner identifies specifically their reasonable contribution (cash or in-kind) to the proposed work; that the letter is signed by a named contact at the organisation; dated within the 3 months prior to the application being submitted; and should be clear about the value, relevance and possible benefits of the proposed work to the partner. A broad or general letter of support which does not hit the above points and those detailed in the AHRC Research Funding Guide will not be accepted.

5. Competition Process and Timeline

We recognise that bringing together effective interdisciplinary teams is not trivial and that many calls that ask for interdisciplinary approaches do not provide the time or support to develop partnerships beyond existing relationships or even identify missing capabilities or skills.

We have therefore designed our activities in Immersive research to allow both time and support for the essential team building process.

This Research and Partnership Development call for the Next Generation of Immersive Experiences represents the first stage of this process. It is focussed on growing workable partnerships, developing proof of concept(s) / prototypes / visualisations, and gaining further understanding of the work that need to be carried out in this space.

The current timeline for this (Stage 1) call is as follows:



Date	Activity
Late June 2017	Launch call
July 2017	<p>Communication and engagement activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bristol 4th July • Glasgow 5th July • York 6th July • Manchester 7th July • Brighton 13th July • London 14th July <p>Details of these events can be found here: https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/ahrc-and-epsrc-13956090539</p>
5 th October 2017	Call closing date
w/c 16 th October	Call possible shortlisting (please see assessment process below)
w/c 23 rd October 2017	Pitch to Peer assessment meeting
w/c 13 th November 2017	Outcomes and successful projects announced
1 st December 2017	Earliest start date for projects
1 st April 2018	Latest start date for projects
June – December 2018	Projects completed
May 2018	Showcase event for funded projects

There is just under £2 million of funding available (£1,880,000 jointly contributed by AHRC and EPSRC). Projects may apply for up to £75,000 FEC. Full details of eligible costs and application requirements can be found below.

This Research and Partnership Development call for the Next Generation of Immersive Experiences (stage 1) call will be complemented by a further call which builds off the discoveries, partnerships, and research carried out in this call. We will provide further information about this call later in 2017 but the intention is for it to support longer and larger projects to drive real change in the field of immersive experiences. Success in this Research and Partnership Development call for the Next Generation of Immersive Experiences (stage 1) call will not be a requirement for funding in the further call. Applicants may choose to enter at stage 1 to receive development funding or enter directly at stage 2 with a full research team and proposal. All proposals received at both stages will be assessed on their own merits.

Our aim in supporting projects at stage 1 is both to support the emergence of new interdisciplinary partnerships and to generate a significant number of candidate propositions worthy of funding, acknowledging that it may not be possible to fund them all from this competition. However, as noted previously, we believe that the increasing focus on Immersive technologies as a stimulus to growth will likely result in additional funding mechanisms coming on stream in the near future and some of the candidate projects developed in Stage 1 of this competition may well find alternative funding (either through UKRI or others) for their future delivery.

Deadline

The call will close at 4pm on 5th October 2017. Proposals relevant to this call can be submitted at any time after the call opening in Je-S (see below but expected to be no later than the start of September 2017) and before 4pm on 5th October 2017. All awards made under the call will be expected to start by 1st December 2017 and no later than 1st April 2018.

Process

Application Process

You should submit your proposal using the Research Councils' Joint electronic Submission (Je-S) System (<https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/>). The form will be available from start of September 2017. To prepare a proposal form in Je-S:

- log-in to your account and choose 'Documents' from the menu;
- then select 'New Document';
- 'AHRC' as the Council,
- 'Standard Proposal' as the Document Type;
- 'Development Grants' as the Scheme;



- 'Research and Partnership Development call – Next Generation of Immersive Experiences 5 October 2017' as the Call/Type/Mode and
- 'Create Document'.

Je-S will then create a proposal form, displaying the relevant section headings. Using the 'Help' link at the top of each section will provide guidance relevant to that section of the form.

Note that clicking 'submit document' on your proposal form in Je-S initially submits the proposal to your host organisation's administration, not to AHRC. **Please remember to allow sufficient time for your organisation's submission process between submitting your proposal to them and the Call closing date.**

All applications submitted under this call will be sent to a specially convened assessment panel, detailed below under "Assessment Process".

All applications will be checked for eligibility within the office. Any applications which do not meet the requirements in this call document will be rejected and will not proceed.

All applications which pass the eligibility checks by the AHRC will proceed.

Assessment Process

This call will use a bespoke assessment method to reflect the bespoke nature of the call and its aims. Applications will not be sent out for peer review from our Peer Review College (PRC) and there will not be a formal written peer review or PI response process.

Eligible applications will be assessed at a "pitch to peers" meeting to be held over two days in w/c 23rd October 2017 (final dates within this week tbc.) although applicants will only need to attend on one of these days. Please note that the AHRC will not be able to pay for travel costs for those attending the "pitch to peers" meeting. It will be for the applicants to select who attends the pitch. These "pitch to peers" meetings will need the applicants to attend and pitch their application in a brief (10 min) presentation to an expert panel. This will be followed by a question and answer period.

The panel will then make an assessment of the fundable quality of all of the applications at the "pitch to peers" meeting based on the applications, the pitches, and the results of the question and answer session. Applicants will be informed of their outcomes in writing after the meeting. Letters will be sent out w/c 13th November 2017. The panel will be looking at the following when making a decision on fundable quality:

- The quality and importance of the work proposed to produce tangible advances in creativity, insights, knowledge and understanding in the area of immersive experiences across one or more of the themes, with results of value both to the arts and humanities research and EPSRC research community, as well as to wider contexts where they can make a difference.
- The composition of the interdisciplinary partnership proposed and their evidenced ability to deliver the work proposed against the aims of the indicated themes and this call more widely. Applicants must be able to show how their proposed work and outputs:
 - can contribute to the generation of new knowledge
 - will generate data relevant to the research questions
 - can lead to a scalable proposition of cultural [and/or] commercial value
- The strengths of the proposed cross-sector and interdisciplinary working methods
- The sustainability and legacy of the proposed partnership and work
- The management of the project
- The value for money of the project
- The quality of the proposed outputs, dissemination and impact of the project. This includes plans for the legacy of the partnership and proposed proof of concept(s) / prototypes / visualisations.

Clearly the format of the "pitch to peer" meeting limits the number of application teams which can attend. The hope is that all applications which pass the eligibility checks will be able to pitch at the "pitch to peer" meetings. However should the volume of applications be such that this is not workable then the AHRC will convene a shortlisting panel in mid October. This meeting (if required) will rank all eligible applications by fit to the call. It will then take forward to the "pitch to peer" meeting as many applications as possible starting with the application which most closely aligns to the aims of the call as outlined in this document and working down the list of eligible applications until we have reached the maximum number possible which we can take forward to



the “pitch to peer” meeting. Those eligible applications which are left (i.e. those which are eligible but which are a less close fit to scheme) will be informed.

Resubmission

Applications which are not taken forward to the “pitch to peer” meeting will be able to resubmit to other UKRI calls. Those that are taken forward will fall under the standard AHRC resubmission policy (i.e. applicants will not be allowed to resubmit the same, or substantively similar, proposal to the same scheme unless explicitly invited to do so in the outcome notification of the proposal.).

Outcomes

All applications which are taken to the “pitch to peer” meeting will be informed of their outcome by w/c 13th November 2017. All applications which are successful must be able to start between 1st December 2017 and 1st April 2018.

Contacts

General enquiries regarding this call should be directed to the AHRC enquiries team:

- Email: enquiries@ahrc.ac.uk
- Telephone: 01793 416060

Specific Enquiries regarding this call should be directed to Thomas Trehella:

- Email: t.trehella@ahrc.ac.uk
- Telephone: 01793 416060

The AHRC works with the UK Shared Business Services (SBS) to deliver all of our funding activities. Enquiries about Je-S registration and application process should be directed to JesHelp@rcuk.ac.uk or 01793 444164 and enquiries about submitting and completing the proposal form should be directed to grantsPostawards@ssc.rcuk.ac.uk or 01793867121.

Please note that this call document was updated in late July 2017 to correct some typos and clarify some of the information presented around Costs, studentships, and to confirm that the AHRC welcomes applications which challenge prevailing narratives or amplify unheard voices in this space. Further updates will be made to the FAQ document which will be published shortly. This call was also updated in early August 2017 to correct a typo in the table on page 9 and to clarify the Je-S application steps.