Nuffield Foundation

Strategic Fund

Guide for applicants

July 2025

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Introduction

The Nuffield Foundation's Strategic Fund is open to ambitious, cross-cutting research proposals that seek to address some of the most pressing social challenges of our time.

With £15 million currently available for strategic grants, we invite applications that are capable of confronting the scale and urgency of the economic and social, demographic, technological and climate pressures facing the UK today.

As one of the UK's leading funders of social policy research, we use our resources to generate evidence, convene debate and promote innovation to improve people's lives and strengthen social well-being.

Our Strategic Fund is one of the ways in which we generate research and innovation.

It is reserved for the funding of original, transformative ideas that have the scale and ambition to anticipate and address some of the most significant themes and developments shaping the UK public policy agenda, now and in the future. These are major grants, typically in the range of £1–3 million and are expected to last between two and five years.

Strategic Fund applications should respond to one or more of our five priority questions, and/or explore the connections between them:

- How can we build a prosperous and fair society, where people are secure and can fulfil their potential?
- How can we build an inclusive society, where people thrive and feel they belong, in the context of changing demography and ways of life?
- How can we ensure that rapid developments in science and technology work for people and society?
- How can policies to address climate change be developed in a way that promotes a prosperous, fair and inclusive society?
- How can we build and maintain the effective, accountable and trustworthy institutions that our society and democracy need?

Prospective applicants are welcome to send a one-page summary of their proposal to strategicfund@nuffieldfoundation.org to check on potential fit.

You can read more about the Foundation's strategic interests in our *Strategic Review*.

What we expect from Strategic Fund applications

Relevance and ambition

All applications to us must be relevant to at least one of the five priority questions or the connections between them. They should be directly concerned with UK issues and society. This includes work that draws on the diverse realities of place across the UK – whether at the national, regional or city level – as well as work using international comparisons to set UK policy and practice in a wider context and to illuminate promising alternative approaches.

For Strategic Fund applications we challenge potential applicants to be ambitious in their thinking. We want to see the framing of distinctive questions, and related programmes of research, which respond to our key themes. Proposals should be of a scale and scope not normally funded through our main grants rounds.

We want proposals that anticipate the future, advance scholarship and reshape how policymakers think about the areas in which they work.

We are keen to consider and enable new thinking and development of policy and practice – including the development and evaluation of interventions – that might otherwise go unsupported.

Impact

We expect all the research we fund to make a difference in the real world, but the bar is higher for the Strategic Fund.

Proposals must demonstrate a clear path to how the research and related activities might make a difference to people's lives in the UK. In particular, we envisage strategic proposals working collaboratively across research, policy and practice, and with the active involvement of the relevant parties needed to fully address stated aims and objectives.

We recognise that there are multiple routes to achieving impact and that advancements can come about because of the accumulation of evidence over time. We consider five dimensions in which our work can have impact, although we do not expect applicants to aim for or achieve every dimension:

1. Informing change to policies, systems or legislation
2. Informing practice change
3. Advancing understanding or awareness of an issue
4. Changing attitudes or perceptions
5. Providing opportunity and building capability

Credible communications and engagement plans should identify the main audiences for the research, routes to reach them, and how the outputs and dissemination approach proposed advance the impact aims identified.

Methodologies and approaches

Strategic Fund projects, while they may take many different forms, must at their core be based around impartial, objective and rigorous research.

We fund research that uses a wide range of methodologies: quantitative evidence and analysis, qualitative research, mixed methods, reviews, synthesis, data collection and intervention analysis. The key test is that the method is credible, rigorous and appropriate for the question being addressed.

Across our funded work, and particularly through the Strategic Fund, we are keen to support multidisciplinary research as well as experimental and innovative approaches. We always seek active engagement with the complexity of people's lives.

We are interested in funding more research that examines intersectional effects – recognising the ways in which people are shaped by multiple societal factors.

The Nuffield Foundation has a long track record of funding the development of evidence-based interventions that improve lives. We encourage more proposals that test new ideas and bring research and evaluation closer to real-world practice.

Expertise, experience and potential

Applications must demonstrate a wide-ranging, multidisciplinary approach to address the questions they will examine. As mentioned above, under 'Impact', this also includes working collaboratively with policy and practice.

We will consider whether the team possess the appropriate experience, expertise and potential to carry out the project as planned, and we expect proposals to set out how the capability of early career researchers, or evolving organisations, will be enhanced. We expect the team, with the support of the host institution, to demonstrate the capacity to successfully manage large, complex projects.

Applications involving more than one institution and different types of organisations are welcome.

Value for money

We expect Strategic Fund grants to be in the range £1–3 million, and last two to five years, although there is no fixed lower or upper time limit.

Value for money considerations include whether the cost is justified by the potential benefits and in line with comparable research, as well as whether resources are being used in the best way to achieve the intended outcomes.

In some circumstances we will consider co-funded projects.

What we offer

We are addressing the five priority questions as a whole organisation, bringing together our funding programmes, expert centres (the Nuffield Council on Bioethics, the Nuffield Family Justice Observatory and the Ada Lovelace Institute), convening, synthesis and other work in the right combinations to generate timely and usable evidence that can improve social well-being.

Our expert teams will work closely with Strategic Fund grant-holders, collaborating throughout the project to help maximise the impact of each grant, and to make connections with other Nuffield grants, programmes and activities, to further catalyse insight and impact.

Overview of the application process

- To help manage demand, we have a two-stage application process: *Outline applications* and *Full applications*.
- The *Outline* process offers all potential applicants the opportunity to test their ideas with the Foundation. All applications will be judged on quality, relevance and impact.
- A shortlisting decision will be made around 3 months after the deadline, inviting successful applicants to submit a *Full application*.
- For *Full applications* received for the spring round, the final decision is usually made in November.
- If Foundation staff are satisfied that your *Full application* meets the quality threshold, it will be sent for external peer review.
- Following final assessment of *Full applications*, we will decide whether to award a grant. A grant may be awarded with specific conditions applied. The start date for any project should be at least two months after the November decision point.

Application timeline

1. *Outline applications* submitted (March)
2. Successful applicants invited to submit a *Full application* / Unsuccessful applicants rejected (June)
3. *Full applications* submitted (July)
4. Peer reviewing (August)
5. Applicants respond to peer review comments (September)
6. Decisions made on *Full applications* (November / December)
7. Earliest project start (January)

Eligibility

UK context

We welcome applications from UK-based organisations.

In general, we award grants for projects directly concerned with UK issues and society – this includes comparative work between the four nations and internationally which results in lessons for policy and practice, within and across the UK.

Staffing

Principal Investigators

- All proposed projects must be led by a named Principal Investigator (PI), who is the lead applicant.
  - Where there are Co-Principal Investigators, one PI must still be named as the lead applicant. This is for administrative purposes only.
- PIs must take overall responsibility for the application and be the main point of contact with the Foundation throughout the application process and for the duration of any subsequent grant period.

- We award grants to organisations (the 'host institution') rather than individuals, and the PI must be based at the host institution.

Co-Investigators

- Individuals who will assist the PI in the management and leadership of the project may be named as Co-Investigators (Co-Is).
- Co-Is should only be named if they have a significant role in the management and implementation of the project.

Project staff

- Other project staff can be named in the application, as well as any roles that are expected to be recruited for.
- Applicants need to provide information on how project staff, particularly those at earlier career stages, will be supported and developed.

Other funders

In some circumstances we will accept applications for projects that are being considered by another funder.

- Applicants must state in their *Outline application* if they are applying or have applied for funds for their project elsewhere.
- We will judge the application on its merits but reserve the right to contact the relevant person at the other funding organisation(s) for information.

Proposals that have been unsuccessful elsewhere will only be considered if they are of high quality and central to our areas of interest. Applicants should provide details of where they have previously applied, and all feedback provided by the other funder.

Although the Foundation does not contribute to general appeals for pooled funding, in some circumstances we will consider partnership funding. Where applicants wish to propose a partnership funding model, we would expect them to argue the case for such an approach within their *Outline application*.

- Applicants should provide the name of the proposed co-funder.
- We would usually expect to contact the proposed co-funder to discuss the feasibility of co-funding prior to a funding decision being made by the Foundation.

Multiple proposals

We are only willing to consider more than one *Outline application* from the same applicant in our main grants rounds, not in our Strategic Fund rounds.

Ineligible categories

- Individuals without formal employment or other relationship with the institution hosting the grant
- Projects led by individuals unaffiliated to any particular organisation
- Projects led by schools or further education colleges
- Projects led by undergraduates or master's students
- PhD fees or projects where the main purpose is to support a PhD
- The establishment of academic posts
- Ongoing costs or the costs of 'rolling out' existing work or services
- 'Dissemination-only' projects, including campaigning work, which are not connected to our funded work
- Local charities, replacement for statutory funding, or local social services or social welfare provision
- Requests for financial help or educational fees from or on behalf of individuals

- Projects led by organisations or institutions that are not based in the UK
    - In exceptional circumstances, we might consider an application from an overseas organisation where there is no workable arrangement whereby a UK-based organisation can host the grant. In these cases, the applicant must convince us that there are adequate arrangements for dissemination, engagement and impact in the UK context.

Understanding the application process

Stage 1: Outline applications

Outline applications must be submitted via our online form. Should you have any queries regarding this please contact us via applications@nuffieldfoundation.org.

We ask applicants to indicate which of the five priority questions the project will answer; you may select more than one.

Outline applications must:

- Provide a clear, concise and compelling account of the proposal, why it is needed and the impact it is expected to achieve
- Show that the project fits within the Foundation's interests and that the approach, methodology and activities are well considered, fit for purpose and appropriately resourced (staff and costs)
- Stand alone to make a case, without any need for the reviewers to undertake further research or to follow up the bibliographic references in order to judge the application

Feedback on Outline applications

- Only a small proportion of *Outline applications* are shortlisted to proceed to a *Full application*, and we will offer constructive advice and support to those shortlisted.
- We do not provide specific feedback on unsuccessful *Outline applications* as standard.
- We do not accept resubmissions of unsuccessful *Outline applications*.

Shortlisted applications

- Our invitation will set out any comments and questions raised by the Foundation in the shortlisting process. These must be addressed in the *Full application*. The date by which applicants must submit their *Full application* will be provided in the letter.
- We may request a discussion with shortlisted applicants to help them fully consider our feedback. Shortlisted applicants may also request a discussion with Foundation staff if they want clarification on any feedback in the invitation.
- We aim to ensure that applicants have around six weeks to prepare their *Full application*.
- We generally do not allow deferrals to a later round unless there is a strong case for doing so. Unless we agree an alternative timescale with the applicant, if we do not receive a *Full application* for the next deadline, we will consider the application withdrawn.

The month during which we aim to inform all applicants of our decision is set out in the timeline above and the detailed timetable on our website. If applicants do not hear back by the end of the specified month, or have any other concerns about their *Outline application*, they should contact applications@nuffieldfoundation.org. Please make sure to include the name of the PI and the application reference number.

Stage 2: Full applications

Full applications must be submitted via our online form. The form will be shared directly with successful applicants after their *Outline application* has been reviewed by Foundation staff.

The *Full application* should:

- Be sufficiently detailed to satisfy experts of the team's knowledge and grasp of the subject and why it is important, and the appropriateness of the chosen methods, approach and activities, while at the same time being comprehensible to non-experts
- Be stand-alone and comprehensive, fully demonstrating why the project is important and that the approach will deliver a high-quality and impactful project
- Build on the *Outline application*, providing fuller information and taking into account the feedback received from the Foundation
    - It is particularly important that the *Full application* expands on the intended outcomes, and the activities applicants will undertake to deliver these.

Diversity and inclusion monitoring

As part of our commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion the Nuffield Foundation wants to ensure that our application process and grant-making activity is inclusive and supports diversity among the people who approach us for funding, and among those who are successful in gaining support. To assess this, we will be seeking to collect some basic diversity data from PIs and Co-Is immediately after an *Outline application* has been submitted.

The data will be collected via an online monitoring form which will be sent directly via email to the PIs and Co-Is named on an application. Participation in the survey is entirely voluntary, and responses are securely stored separately from other application and grant information. Responses are not available to assessors and decision makers and will in no way influence the consideration or outcome of any application.

Where an application is successful, and a grant is awarded, we will look to collect fresh data for the full project team (PI, Co-I and other project staff) at a point after the start of the project.

Data will be aggregated for the Foundation to report anonymously on the protected characteristics of our applicants and grant-holders. Personal data will be held for a period of no longer than 18 months before being permanently deleted.

Completing the Outline and Full application forms

Filling out the form

Alongside contact details and basic information such as the project start and end dates, applicants will need to confirm their project title. Project titles should be clear, descriptive and unambiguous. The title needs to reflect the importance of the project as it will be used to identify the application during the assessment process for internal and external reviewers.

The sections of the *Outline* and *Full application* forms are set out below.

Outline application **form**	***Full application*** **form**
Alternative funding sources	Project summary
Research questions	Alternative funding sources
Case for importance	Research questions
Outcomes and influence	Case for importance
Methods, approach and activities	Outcomes and influence
Research and engagement team	Methods, approach and activities
Budget	Research and engagement team
References	Expert advice and stakeholder engagement
Additional information	Quality assurance and risk management
	Legal and ethical aspects
	Archiving
	Timetable
	Budget
	References
	Additional information
	Acceptance of *Terms and conditions*

For shortlisted applications, we understand that the budget and some other aspects of the proposal may be refined between *Outline* and *Full application* stage, and indeed the feedback we provide on shortlisting may well prompt some of these changes.

Additional section guidance

Outcomes and influence

In the *Full application* applicants must fully elaborate on the intended 'Outcomes and influence' activities designed to support these. Here we are interested in how things might change in the real world as a result of the project, even if that change is long term.

- What outcomes are aimed at supporting our mission to advance people's social well-being?
- We would like to know how applicants plan to identify key audiences, their plans for influencing and engaging them, and expectations for how the research will have an impact on people's lives.
- Applicants should outline the key mechanisms they will use, such as conferences, seminars, meetings with senior policymakers, or the production of online communications or publications aimed at wider audiences. This will form the basis of the *Communications plan* for the project, should it be funded.
- We view research reports, briefing papers, other publications, seminars and other events as outputs. These may or may not lead to policy or practical change (outcomes).
- While we welcome the production of academic journal articles, these are not usually the primary outputs of the projects we fund. All projects should produce at least one report aimed at as broad an audience as possible and which is freely and publicly available.
- We recommend that applicants read the *Guide for grant-holders* as this sets out in detail our expectations.

Applicants should read Appendix A in full before completing the 'Outcome and influence' section of the *Full application*.

Methods, approach and activities

The purpose of this section is to set out the work applicants will undertake to achieve the aims and objectives, and to address the research questions. They must demonstrate that the proposed design is fit for purpose, the project is feasible and that a high-quality project will be delivered.

In the *Outline application* we need to see:

- An account of whether the approach is designed to be exploratory, to provide a robust descriptive account or to infer/understand causality (or a combination of these)
- Clarity on both the population of interest and the unit of analysis; a definition of who will be included in the study and explanation of why; an assessment of whether some important groups will be excluded, the reasons for this and the impact upon the study
- A description of the research methods proposed, whether primary research or secondary, and a rationale for why these have been proposed. Details of the approach to research synthesis/review, data collection or analysis as relevant. For each approach, applicants should provide sufficient information for the reviewer to assess its scientific rigour. For example, they may need to cover:
    - For any form of sampling – information on the proposed sampling method, planned issued and achieved sample sizes, and issues of bias to be considered
    - For quantitative analysis – an assessment of whether the sample

- sizes are big enough to test the key relationships with sufficient confidence, including subgroup analysis
- For qualitative work – how the sampling strategy will ensure an appropriate range of individuals and experiences are covered, and the approach to analysis
- For evaluations – how the 'counterfactual' will be assessed and what effect sizes will be detectable

- Discussions of the effects on the analysis of key limitations of the data, and the plans in place to recognise and address them

At *Full application* stage we expect a much fuller and more detailed account.

- This should be the most substantial and detailed part of the application, comprising a presentation of the proposed activities and how they will achieve the aims of the project.
- For research proposals, applicants must provide a comprehensive description of the methodology for both qualitative and quantitative approaches and articulate their elements with reference to the research questions. Include the planned methods of data collection and analysis and a rationale for choosing them.
- We will be looking closely at whether the methods chosen are appropriate and sufficiently rigorous to address the questions applicants are asking, and whether the project is feasible.

Applicants should read Appendix B in full before completing the 'Methods, approach and activities' section of the *Full application*.

Research and engagement team

We need to be confident that staffing for the project is appropriate and that staff have the necessary expertise to conduct the proposed project. In the *Outline application* applicants must provide the information required to make this assessment in the appropriate part of the application form.

In the *Full application*:

- In addition to information on how applicants will manage the contributions of staff working on the project, proposed project management arrangements for the grant should be set out.
- We request short CVs (one page each) that focus on the skills and experience of the individuals relevant to delivering this project.
- We are keen to develop the future pipeline of researchers in our fields of interest, through the development of all staff in the proposed team, and to encourage multidisciplinary teams that share and develop their expertise and networks.
  - Demonstrating this in the proposal will be considered favourably by the Foundation.

Expert advice and key stakeholder engagement (Full application only)

Applicants must provide details of their plans for engaging with experts and key stakeholders during the project to support the delivery of a high-quality and impactful project.

- Applicants should make sure that the costs take into account this engagement as well as delivering against the *Communications plan*.
- The *Guide for grant-holders* provides full details of our expectations.

Quality assurance and risk management (Full application only)

Applicants must provide information on their approach to quality assurance and risk management.

- Applicants should include details of how they will ensure the quality of project design, analysis and interpretation of the findings, and project outputs.
- Applicants should also identify any limitations and risks to the project, including any measures they propose to manage and mitigate them.

Legal and ethical aspects (Full application only)

The *Full application* also requests details to assure us that the legal and ethical aspects of the project, and the processing of personal data, have been fully considered.

- Where projects involve processing of personal data, we would expect applicants to complete a Data Protection Impact Assessment at the outset of the project.
- We expect an appropriate ethical clearance procedure to be in place before the project commences.

Projects that involve direct contact with participants ('primary research') are required to pass through independent ethical scrutiny.

- It is the PI's responsibility to meet this requirement, and the responsibility of the host institution to:
    - Ensure appropriate provision for scrutiny is in place
    - Accept responsibility for the ethical conduct of the research
- We expect larger research institutes and universities to have standard procedures in place for ethical scrutiny.
    - Where there are no such procedures, we are willing to consider alternative arrangements – for example an independent advisory committee convened specifically for the purpose, or use of a scrutiny committee from another institution.
    - The budget should include any costs associated with ethical or similar scrutiny.

Timetable (Full application only)

In considering the timetable, applicants should take into account the Foundation's requirement that grant-holders publish a freely available *Main public output*, which serves as a concise and accessible account of the project, drawing out key findings and recommendations. This report must be published on the host institution's website and disseminated before the end of grant date.

At *Full application* stage we require a detailed timetabled project plan.

- This should set out the various work streams across the months of the project and include when applicants would propose to deliver the various requirements of the grant, including:
    - *Progress reports*
    - *Communications plan*
    - *Main public output*
    - *End of project assessment*

Please see the *Guide for grant-holders* for full details.

Applicants may wish to submit a separate technical appendix for quantitative analysis plans or may also present this information in Gantt chart form for ease, though this will need to be submitted as part of the document uploaded in the 'Additional information' section. Please note this document should not exceed three pages.

Budget

We do not expect a detailed budget in the *Outline application*. We only need an estimated budget that indicates the split between staff time (separately for different categories of staff), overheads / estate costs and other direct costs (for example, non-staff costs for quantitative and qualitative research), and that complies with our 'Budget guidelines' (Appendix C).

At *Full application*, applicants will be asked to complete a more detailed version of the budget, under the same broad headings requested at *Outline* stage.

- This must be entered into the Excel template provided in the application form. Applicants should download the template, complete the budget in the template file and then upload the completed budget where required in the application form.
- Budgets must be completed by calendar year, not project year.
- For details of eligible costs and budgetary guidance please refer to Appendix C.

Terms and conditions (Full application only)

- Applicants should read our *Terms and conditions* before submitting their *Full application*.
- The host institution must accept these *Terms and conditions* in principle when applicants submit the *Full application*.
- Please ensure that the designated individual is informed in advance that they have been nominated as a signatory, as the Nuffield Foundation will then use the contact details provided to contact this individual with a link to a form which must be completed.
- If the application is successful, the host institution will be asked to formally accept the *Terms and conditions*.

Applicants should also read the *Guide for grant-holders*, as this sets out in detail our expectations of successful applicants.

The assessment process

We need to receive the *Full application* form, budget and institutional signature in order to begin the assessment of the application.

Reviewer comments

We will usually share the *Full application*, including budget, with a range of peer reviewers (from the research, policy and practice communities where appropriate).

If we receive a *Full application* that does not contain all the information we need, is not of sufficient quality or has not sufficiently addressed earlier feedback in the letter inviting submission of a *Full application*, we may decide to reject the application without sharing it with peer reviewers.

Peer reviewers are asked to consider the application against our assessment criteria, outlined in the 'Introduction' section of this guide.

Applicant responses

Anonymised comments will be shared with the applicant alongside questions or concerns arising from the application. They will have the opportunity to respond to each query on the application, and to address any other concerns they may think pertinent.

Please note that the comments applicants receive from the Foundation at this stage are thorough and sometimes extensive, so please ensure time is set aside to respond appropriately.

Application decision

When *Full applications* are considered by the Nuffield Foundation we may decide to:

- Offer a grant
- Request further clarification or impose specific conditions before awarding a grant
- Reject an application

Applicants are informed of the outcome as soon as possible following the decision.

Unsuccessful applicants

- If an applicant is unsuccessful, the *Rejection* letter will set out issues raised by the Nuffield Foundation.
- Unsuccessful applications may not be resubmitted unless applicants are specifically invited to do so.
- Invitations to revise and resubmit applications are rare and will usually be accompanied by specific feedback on ways in which the project may be amended.

Receiving the grant

Notice of award

- A *Notice of award* letter will be sent to successful applicants.
- A link to the *Grant acceptance* form will be sent along with the *Notice of award* letter.
- Any feedback or requirements from the Foundation will be included.
    - Occasionally, we send a *Conditional award* letter that identifies specific conditions. Satisfying these conditions is fundamental to a decision to award, and they must be signed off by the Foundation before the grant can be released.
    - In some circumstances, we may award a grant with 'gated funding', where funds are approved and awarded in stages. For example, gated funding may be decided as appropriate for projects where a second phase relies on specific outcomes from the first phase of work. It can also provide flexibility to allow for adjustments to the project based on emerging challenges or opportunities.
- In the reply to the *Notice of award* letter successful applicants must:
    - Set out any proposed amendments to the project, especially where these are required in response to conditions
    - Confirm the start and end dates, the project budget breakdown, the dates for delivering the requirements (*Progress reports*, *Communications plan* and *Main public output*) and accept the latest *Terms and conditions*
- We do not usually expect amendments to the budget at this stage, and significant budget changes will require approval.
- If there have been substantial changes to the project during the application process, we may require these to be incorporated into an updated project plan or application form so that there is a single record of what has been agreed.
- We are happy to provide advice before successful applicants send their response letter to the *Notice of award* – for example, if there is more than one option for addressing feedback, or if they anticipate timing difficulties.

Grant acceptance form

- Once any requirements or feedback points from the *Notice of award* have been addressed, the *Grant acceptance* form should be completed to:
    - Confirm acceptance of the grant and agreement of our *Terms and conditions*
    - Confirm the correct institutional signatory
    - Submit any comments regarding points in the *Notice of award* letter

Confirmation of award

- The *Confirmation of award* letter confirms the final details of the grant.
- It is usually sent out within two months of issuing the *Notice of award*.
- At this stage, it is important to read our *Guide for grant-holders*, which sets out our typical approach to managing grants including invoicing, grant outputs, acknowledging the Foundation and reporting requirements.

Please note:

- A grant is only formally confirmed once the *Confirmation of award* letter has been issued.
- Details of the grant can only be made public after the *Confirmation of award* letter has been issued.
- The Foundation cannot fund any work that takes place before the start date of the grant.
- The Foundation reserves the right to withdraw an in principle offer if it is not possible to confirm the award within six months of issuing the *Notice of award*.

Appendix A: Impact

Please read this in full before completing the 'Outcomes and influence' section of the *Full application* form.

As an engaged funder with a clear purpose to improve social well-being and people's lives, we have a responsibility to make a difference in the world. It is important that the evidence generated by a project is noticed and heard by those with the power to use it at the right time. Potential for impact will be a key consideration in funding decisions.

- Applicants should consider where a project can make a meaningful difference and where to prioritise resource and effort.
- Applicants should set out the ways in which their research will have an impact using our five dimensions of impact guidelines/framework, by identifying the main audiences for the research, and how it will produce outputs that best serve the research questions.
- Applicants should also consider impact when planning communication and engagement activities. The *Guide for grant-holders* provides full details of our expectations for the *Communications plan*.

We expect the work that we fund to make a difference across five dimensions of impact:

1. Informing change to policies, systems or legislation
2. Informing practice change
3. Improving or advancing understanding or awareness of an issue
4. Changing attitudes or perceptions
5. Providing opportunity and building capability

We do not expect applicants to aim for or achieve every dimension of impact – but we do expect some to be achieved in every project. We recognise that the context might change as a project progresses, and so expect indicators could be revised during the course of the project, should it be funded. The non-exhaustive examples below are intended as a prompt for the impact indicators that applicants should be aiming for.

Examples of how to achieve the 'Informing change to policies, systems or legislation' dimension of impact:

- Respond to policy consultations
- Sustained and tailored engagement with policymakers
- Contribute to policy-focused initiatives
- Sit on policy advisory groups
- Produce or contribute to evidence synthesis focused on a policy topic

Examples of how to achieve the 'Informing practice change' dimension of impact:

- Publish articles in practitioner-focused publications

- Present at practitioner conferences
- Engage / meet with practitioner groups

Examples of how to achieve the ‘Improving understanding or awareness of an issue’ and ‘Changing attitudes or perceptions’ dimensions of impact:

- Hold or speak at relevant events
- Join related advisory groups
- Secure media coverage
- Post on blog sites or social media
- Engage with policy and practice

Examples of how to achieve the ‘Providing opportunity and building capability’ dimension of impact:

- Host and attend events and other convening activities
- Use available resources at host organisations and the Foundation to develop communication and engagement plans and strategies
- Share learnings and best practice

Appendix B: Full application methods, approach and activities guidance

Please read this guidance in full before completing the 'Methods, approach and activities' section of the *Full application* form.

Where a project includes primary data collection, applicants must:

- Supply full details of the rationale for the sampling strategy
- Include a clear description of the population of interest, and plans to select and recruit the sample and any subgroups within it
- Supply a full account of the theoretical, technical and practical issues that have influenced the selected methodology/approach

If this involves quantitative data collection, applicants should:

- Provide information about both the issued and achieved sample sizes, along with appropriate power calculations, and how to account for expected attrition
- In cases where the project involves a survey, provide details of the approach to implementation, and demonstrate an understanding of the practical implementation challenges as well as statistical theory
- In cases where the study involves collecting data in a systematic and quantifiable way from electronic or paper records (for example, court files), state what data is held in what form, identify issues of data quality and consistency, and set out how the data will be accessed, collected and manipulated to be in a useable form for analysis

If this involves qualitative data collection, applicants should:

- Clearly set out the approach suggested for each group (for example, one-to-one in-depth interviews, focus groups, deliberation) and identify any specific tools or interviewing techniques to deploy to elicit quality data
- Set out the approach intended for the analysis and presentation of findings

For all projects that include primary quantitative or qualitative data collection, applicants should set out whether they plan to deposit the data at an appropriate archive to ensure data is available for future research. Applicants should:

- Explain what will be said to participants about how their data will be used, including any statements about anonymised data
- Explain how data will be anonymised, which data archive will be used or, if an archive is not appropriate, what other arrangements will be made to enable other researchers to access the data
- Set out the timescale for the deposit, which should be within one year of grant completion
- Explain the reasons if it is not appropriate to deposit the data for future use
- Include in the budget any costs related to preparing data for archiving

Where applicants propose secondary data analysis of existing data sources – surveys, administrative data or other sources – they should:

- Explain how the source is appropriate to address the aims and objectives of the project, how to obtain access to the data source, and what further manipulation of the data may be necessary to make it fit for purpose
- Include an analysis plan
- Use and integrate the data sources that best address their research questions (rather than focusing on only one dataset, and then using separate projects to interrogate other datasets to examine the same issue)

For reviews and synthesis, including formal meta-analysis as well as other systematic and narrative reviews, applicants should:

- Demonstrate that the approach will deliver a critical assessment of empirical research or policy/practice initiatives, draw out implications for policy and practice, or generate a new research agenda
- Demonstrate that preliminary work has been undertaken to establish there is sufficient literature to review
- Explain how relevant research would be identified (that is, which databases will be searched) and include details about how to assess the quality of studies and other inclusion criteria

Evaluations, whether process, impact or economic, will often require a mix of methods in order to address the research questions and meet the wider project objectives, and applicants should therefore apply the guidance above where relevant. In addition, applicants should provide details about:

- The underlying theory for the intervention proposed for evaluation
- How any 'counterfactual' would be assessed
- The outcome measures to be used, including their validity, reliability and how these would be collected

For pre-trial development work, there needs to be potential for the work to progress to decisive outcome trials, and interventions which are being tested must be based on strong evidence, for example about the:

- Scale and nature of the problem that the intervention seeks to address
- Causal mechanisms at the heart of any programme design
- Practicality of implementing the proposed intervention in the chosen setting
- Potential effect sizes
- Feasibility of conducting an evaluation of sufficient scale and rigour to provide convincing evidence of effectiveness

We usually expect pre-trial development work to be undertaken separately and independently from formal large-scale comparison or controlled trials to establish potential effectiveness (including cost effectiveness). Applicants should:

- Set out why any particular concept or approach – as opposed to others that may already be available or in development – warrants further development and testing

Please see Appendix D for further detail regarding our expectations for pre-trial development work.

- Estimated sample sizes and whether these would provide sufficient power to detect the expected effect size, with reference to previously observed effect sizes where relevant

Appendix C: Budget guidelines

The following points set out our approach to assessing the budget and to financial monitoring:

- Grant budgets must be set out in calendar year. We do not accept budgets set out using project year or financial year.
- Our grant funding is outside the scope of VAT, as it is not a business activity for private benefit.
  - Where applicants are contemplating working with others for substantial parts of the grant, we expect them to consider whether it is feasible to include them as co-applicants or collaborators, rather than as providers of a service which might make them liable for VAT.
  - Any VAT that is expected to be payable must be set out within the budget submitted as part of the *Full application*; budgets should be inclusive of all VAT and local taxes, where applicable.
- We fund 100% of eligible costs, not the 80% funded by Research Councils.
  - Where we make an award to a Higher Education Institution (HEI), we will meet all 'directly incurred' costs (subject to certain conditions) and most 'directly allocated' costs (except the estates costs of PIs and permanent university staff).
  - We do not fund 'indirect' costs. Guidance about these terms should be sought from university research administration staff.
- We reserve the right to hold back up to 20% of the total grant value (to a maximum of £50,000) until satisfactory completion of all grant work and outputs.
- The budget should not include 'contingency' funds. If unforeseen events arise or new activities (such as dissemination activities) are agreed, we can consider a request for a supplementary grant.
- PhD students can work on grants to undertake specific tasks, provided this is explicitly requested and justified.
  - We will fund the PhD student's time and reasonable costs.
  - We will not fund PhD fees.
  - Where the work a PhD student undertakes will contribute to their PhD, the host institution (rather than the Foundation) is responsible for ensuring appropriate progress towards the PhD is made, and for recruiting alternative staff if the project is delayed.

Budget guidelines for Outline applications

In the *Outline application*, applicants will be asked to set out their proposed budget using the broad categories below:

- Staff costs: PI time
- Staff costs: Co-I time
- Staff costs: Team member time
- Staff costs: Consultants
- Staff costs: Overheads and estate costs
- Non-staff costs: Qualitative research
- Non-staff costs: Quantitative research
- Non-staff costs: Communications and stakeholder engagement
- Non-staff costs: Equipment
- Non-staff costs: Other direct costs

The types of cost we expect to be included under each of the non-staff cost headings are outlined below:

A more detailed explanation of eligible and ineligible costs mostly relevant to the *Full application* stage is provided below.

Non-staff costs	Include direct costs relating to
Quantitative research	Survey fieldwork costs (and associated print and postage), data entry, data processing, incentives (please refer to detailed guidance if using incentives), data access/linkage fees, travel to secure data enclaves, statistical software licences, assessment materials and licences, etc.
Qualitative research	Transcription, incentives (please refer to detailed guidance if using incentives), fieldwork associated travel, accommodation and subsistence, qualitative analysis software licences, etc.
Communications and stakeholder engagement	Dissemination activities, conference and workshop expenses, advisory group activities, travel for advisory groups, etc.
Equipment	For example, recording equipment, laptops.
Other direct costs	General administrative or office expenses, recruitment of project staff, any other costs not covered elsewhere.

Budget guidelines for Full applications

Budget category	Eligible costs	Ineligible costs	Comments
Staff time (salaries and on-costs)	Salaries (for both UK and non-UK staff). National Insurance. Employer pension contributions.	Enhanced salaries resulting from promotion are not eligible.	At *Full application* stage, the budget must show: • The total amount budgeted for each named person, per calendar year. The staffing section of the *Full application* form should specify: • The proportion of time that each person will contribute to the project, entered as the full-time equivalent (FTE), where 1.0 is the equivalent to full-time. If calculating a proportion of a week please assume a 35-hour working week, and if calculating a proportion of a year assume 220 working days per year. Where the person is not known, please specify the equivalent information separately for each post to be filled. On-costs may be claimed in addition to basic salary costs and should be included within the total amount budgeted for each named person. At *Full application* stage, an estimate of cost-of-living and incremental pay increases should be included in the budget. The combined total of any increases and increments should not exceed 5% per annum. The Foundation will only meet the costs of actual increases, not estimated ones. Where an individual is expected to receive incremental pay increases, these can be incorporated into the budget. We expect the PI on the project to contribute at least half a day a week (0.1 FTE) on average over the life of the grant. There is no minimum time limit for other members of the research team; however, it is important that all named members of staff have a clearly defined role.

Budget category	Eligible costs	Ineligible costs	Comments
Consultants	Daily rates usually within range £250–£800.		We expect all research team members within the host institution to be funded via salary and on-costs as described above. We also expect to fund most staff within other organisations in this way; however, individuals from other organisations who are undertaking a limited and discrete role on a project may alternatively be written in as consultants. Example consultancy roles include the provision of statistical skills or advice, expert advice regarding data collection instruments or approach, or expert knowledge regarding policy or practice. At *Full application* stage, the number of days and daily rate should be specified in the budget. Rates higher than £800/day need detailed justification on the basis of specific skills, experience or seniority. Separate or additional overheads for consultants are not allowable since we expect these to be incorporated within the specified daily rate.
Indirect costs, estates and overheads	Estates costs for HEI staff who are not permanent staff or PIs can be met on a pro-rata basis. Overheads for non-HEIs (but we do not expect overheads to exceed 60% as a proportion of salaries).	Indirect costs for HEIs are ineligible. Estates costs for permanent staff and PIs in HEIs are ineligible.	HEI applicants will be aware that the government has established a revenue stream (the Charity Support Fund) to contribute towards the running costs of research funded by charities at universities. These funds are distributed through the quality-related (QR) element of the higher education funding councils. Grants from the Nuffield Foundation are officially recognised by HEFCE as eligible for this QR funding. Non-HEIs must specify the overhead rate as a proportion of salaries, and provide details of services included in overhead charges (accommodation, management, central services and so on).

Budget category	Eligible costs	Ineligible costs	Comments
Qualitative and quantitative research (direct, non-staff costs)	Direct fieldwork costs. Incentive payments (if justified). Travel and subsistence to undertake quantitative or qualitative research activities. Admin and office expenses incurred to undertake quantitative or qualitative research activities.	Enhanced salaries resulting from promotion are not eligible.	At *Full application* stage, applicants should provide details of the issued sample size, achieved sample size, response rate and total cost. Where fieldwork is subcontracted, please provide a specific and up-to-date quotation from the fieldwork provider and specify whether VAT is payable. At *Full application* stage, any request for incentive payments to ensure respondents' participation needs to be justified in detail, with evidence that these are necessary to the delivery of this specific project. Applicants should show that any advantages in improved participation outweigh potential risks (such as potential influence on responses and the research relationship, and impact on wider willingness to participate without incentives). We are more likely to be sympathetic to a case for incentive (or 'thank you') payments in qualitative research; or in research which includes particularly onerous demands on respondents (for example, completing a diary); and to incentives in the form of prize draws rather than direct payments.
Communications and stakeholder engagement	Advisory group activities.	Fees for advisory group members are usually ineligible; however, we will consider payment for members from third sector organisations or those bringing lived experience.	As the availability of Foundation rooms cannot be guaranteed, costing assumptions should be based on the use of external facilities. We will make any necessary adjustments later, if we do host any events or meetings. Advisory group member fees should be costed at rates standard for your institution or in line with guidance such as issued by National Institute for Health and Care Research.

Budget category	Eligible costs	Ineligible costs	Comments
Engagement (direct, non-staff costs)	Costs of events, publications and dissemination activities. Travel and subsistence for contributors to events.	Fees for open access publication in journals are not typically eligible. Travel and attendance costs at international academic conferences are not eligible, except with specific permission (unlikely prior to grant start).	We are aware of the debate about various models of open access for academic publications. However, as universities often have other funds to support open access, and as many journal articles are published after the grant end date, we will only provide funds for this under exceptional circumstances.
Equipment	Full costs for project-specific equipment for projects lasting three years or more.		Equipment for projects that last less than three years is eligible for part-funding on a pro-rata basis. For example, if the project duration is 18 months, applicants should request 50% of the actual equipment costs.
Other direct costs	E.g. direct costs for project specific staff recruitment campaigns. Other admin or office expenses that are attributable to the project.	PhD fees are not eligible. Costs relating to Continuing Professional Development are not eligible.	Applicants must provide further breakdown or justification for budget lines that exceed £5,000. Direct recruitment costs apply only to recruitment campaigns for project-specific staff (usually research assistants). These cannot be agreed retrospectively. The Foundation considers Continuing Professional Development activities to be the responsibility of the host institution.

Appendix D: Intervention development and early evaluation funding

Key criteria for development and early evaluation funding

To be considered for development and early evaluation funding, applicants should demonstrate they have:

- An intervention or approach aimed at improving outcomes in the Foundation's areas and populations of interest. The application must describe the intervention in sufficient detail to explain the nature of the intervention, its intensity for example in terms of contact hours, duration, etc., and the target population.
- A theoretical basis for why the approach is likely to have an impact, based on research literature. The Nuffield Foundation seeks to promote evidence-based policy and practice. It is therefore important that interventions have a sound theoretical basis for anticipating an impact on specified outcomes.
- A clear rationale for why it might be expected to be an improvement on existing interventions that tackle the same issue. While we are keen to generate high-quality evidence about what works, we do not want to encourage an unnecessary proliferation of interventions. Applicants should demonstrate their awareness of other interventions that seek to tackle the same issue, and explain why their intervention would be an improvement upon others already in use.
- Some prior experience delivering the approach in equivalent settings and/or with equivalent populations, or a track record of developing and/or delivering other promising approaches. Interventions will only be effective if they are acceptable to practitioners and participants and feasible to implement. Applicants will need to demonstrate their experience of working in or with relevant settings/populations to show

they understand the relevant issues and that they have the necessary skills to successfully deliver the proposed project.

- An approach that could be delivered at a reasonable cost. Since high costs are likely to constrain reach, value for money will be an important consideration.
- Appetite and potential for the approach to be delivered at scale. Since our ultimate aim is to promote interventions with strong evidence of effectiveness, it is important that applicants have aspirations for delivery at scale, or ideas for pathways for delivery at scale.
- Identified the questions to be answered in the development and early evaluation work, how this work will be undertaken and how it will contribute towards making the approach ready for future trial. Please see the following section for information about what a development and early evaluation project should seek to achieve.
- Evaluation expertise. We expect all intervention development projects to have an evaluation component and to consider how further development or scaling up might also be evaluated robustly and effectively.
    - We encourage intervention designers and developers who do not have evaluation expertise to form partnerships with organisations that do.
- Commitment to future independent evaluation of their approach via an RCT, where feasible. Since RCTs constitute the most robust form of evaluation, we would expect applicants to be committed to this approach.

Expected outcomes of an intervention development and early evaluation project

In order to pave the way towards a large-scale RCT, a development and early evaluation project will need to refine the proposed intervention and provide formative findings that will help improve future delivery. It will also need to demonstrate that the intervention or approach meets the following conditions:

Feasibility

For example:

- Is the approach acceptable to practitioners and/or the target population?
- Is the approach suitably resourced (including time)?
- Is the approach aimed at a suitable target population?
- Could settings or the target population afford to buy the intervention?
- Has feasibility been demonstrated in an appropriate context, that is, one that is applicable to equivalent settings in the UK?

Evidence of promise

- Is there evidence that this approach could impact on outcomes (that is, is the approach underpinned by evidence, does the approach change participant behaviour as predicted in the theory of change, is it likely that the observed behaviours could lead to a change in outcomes, has there been a measurable change in outcomes)?

Readiness for trial

- Is the intervention replicable (that is, is there a clearly defined intervention)?
- Is the intervention scalable (that is, could the intervention be delivered in a number of settings in its current form or is further development required)?

We do not expect all applications to address all these questions comprehensively within one project. The appropriate scope for a project will depend upon the current stage of the intervention's development.

For example, some interventions may have a strong theoretical basis for why the approach is likely to have an impact and to be an improvement upon existing interventions, but may not have been implemented in practice or subjected to any form of evaluation. Where projects are at such an early stage we would expect an application to be small scale and to focus on feasibility and early piloting.

In contrast, some interventions may be more developed, with initial evidence of promise from previous evaluation of the approach (for example, pre- and post-test assessments; a matched study; a trial conducted in another context). Where projects are at this later stage of development, applications should contain a strong evaluative component designed to ascertain whether the intervention generates a measurable change in outcomes.

An evaluation component of this kind would need to:

- Employ a robust design with an appropriate control group
- Use outcome measures that are valid, reliable and predictive of later outcomes
- Be adequately powered (that is, have sufficient scale to detect the expected effect of the intervention)

We therefore welcome applications for small-scale RCTs since they will provide good evidence of the likely intervention effect and test the practicalities associated with implementing an RCT design.

Where projects are at this later stage of development, we would also expect the evaluation component to have independence built in as far as possible, and to employ appropriate strategies to minimise the risk of bias. This might mean publishing a protocol and statistical analysis plan in advance of conducting the project, involving an independent evaluator to measure outcomes, or ensuring that the individuals measuring and comparing outcomes between intervention and comparison groups are blind to the treatment condition. In particular, all trials should be pre-registered.

Where development and early evaluation projects are able to demonstrate all of the features identified (that is, feasibility, evidence of promise and readiness for trial), we expect that they will be ready for a large-scale RCT to test efficacy (that is, whether the intervention can work under ideal / developer-led conditions in a larger number of settings).