THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

MANCHESTER 1824
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SOFTWARE SUSTAINABILITY INSTITUTE
RESEARCH SOFTWARE MAINTENANCE FUND

Research Software Maintenance Fund

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UK Research and Innovation

How the webinar will work

- This webinar is recorded
- The recording will be made available on the RSMF webpage
- The chat function is disabled
- We will provide an overview of the call, along with some FAQs
- To raise further questions, use the Q&A function
- Submitted questions will be answered during the webinar or added to the FAQ section of the RSMF website

Purpose of the fund

- £4.8m fund supported by the UKRI Digital Research Infrastructure programme, and managed by the Software Sustainability Institute
- Goals
  - Support and sustain key research software that underpins the research ecosystem
  - Help understand how to effectively provide support to reduce technical debt and grow engagement
- *Supporting and maintaining existing research software*

- Part of several initiatives to understand how to more effectively fund software, being undertaken by funders worldwide
  - Can we efficiently and effectively provide maintenance funding across a diverse range of research areas and methods
  - Amsterdam Declaration on Funding Research Software Sustainability (adore.software)

Research Software Lifecycle Stages

Idea	Prototype	Research	Supported	Product
An idea to solve a problem	Understanding the functionality	Enabling close collaborators	Used by other researchers	Used at scale

Standard research grants / Responsive mode

Programme / Platform Grants

Impact acceleration accounts

Research Software Maintenance Fund

What we are looking for

- Proposals to improve the sustainability of existing research software, particularly around reducing technical debt, improving user experience, and building community
  - Can cover technical, community, documentation, training and governance activities
- The software must be in use outside the development team's immediate collaborators, and have had a stable release
- The software must support research carried out in the UK (but can also support research and teams outside the UK)

What it will fund

- A sprint to tackle a backlog of issues on a piece of research software
- Integration of two existing pieces of research software, to improve user experience
- A refactoring of an established codebase, to reduce future maintenance and support costs
- A community event to connect with existing external users
- Production of case studies using the software
- Documentation and training to attract new contributors
- Setting up a foundation or preparing for placement with a fiscal sponsor, including development of governance structures

What it won't fund

- Development of a novel software from an idea
- Initial creation of a user community for software that was previously only used internally
- Maintenance of software which isn't principally used in research
- Teams with no existing relationship with the software
- Prototyping of new features (except where this would improve maintenance)
- Setting up the software for use in a new organisation
- Use of the software to do research (as primary purpose)

Funding available

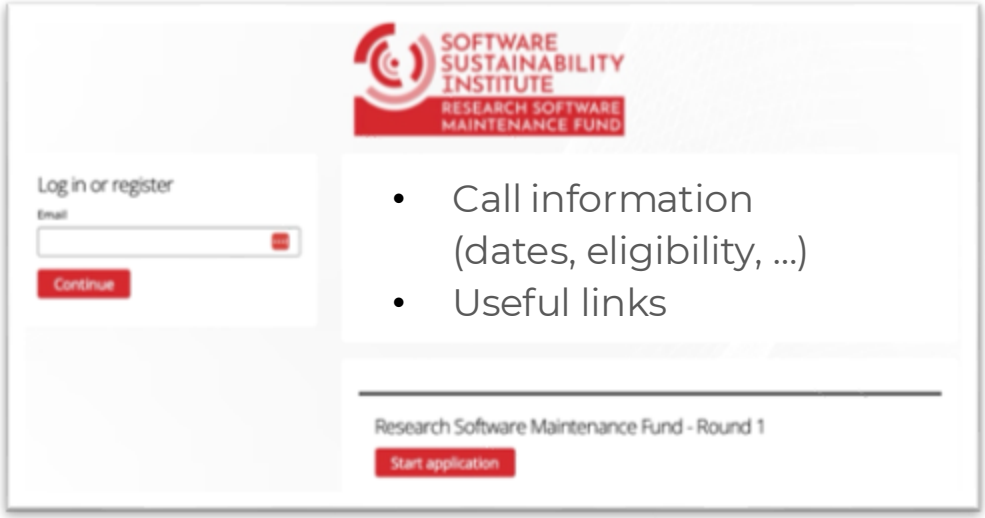
- Round 1 has a total pot of £3.4m – expecting a high number of EoIs
- Larger grants (expect to fund ~4 awards)
  - Up to £500k, maximum duration of 2 years
- Smaller grants (expect to fund ~9 awards)
  - Up to £150k, maximum duration of 1 year
- Round 2 will have a pot of £1.4m and only offer smaller grants
- UK research organisations costs funded at 80% of fEC
  - Varying rates of funding for other types of organisational partners
  - All costings should be at current prices, with no allowance for inflation. Indexation may be applied to awarded grants based on the rate at time of award.

Who can apply

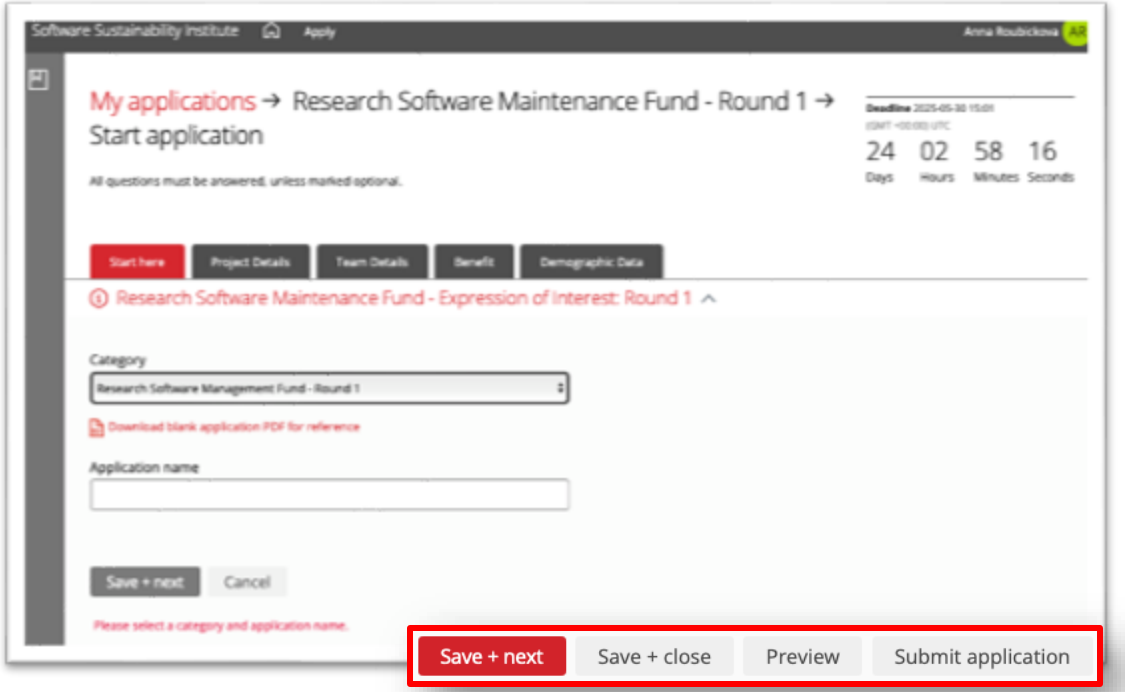
- Lead must be based at a UK research organisation eligible for UKRI funding
- Lead should be someone with a senior responsible role for the software – does not need to be an academic, researcher or existing PI / grant holder
- Co-leads can be from other organisations, including outside of UK
- For EoI, only asking for Lead and Co-Leads to be named, to help establish conflicts of interest and understand demand
- Leads / Co-Leads can be part of multiple EoIs, but we reserve the right to limit number of full applications depending on demand

How to apply

- https://digitalresearchinfrastructure.grantplatform.com/
  (email and password to register on the platform)



Starting an application



What we will ask

Project details

- Small/large award
- **Proposed work** (500 words)
- Categories of work
- **Project team** (250 words)

Team details

- All Project Leads and Co-Leads
- Name, e-mail, affiliation, country
- OPT: Connection to software, type of organisation

Benefit (250 words each)

- Benefit to UK research
- Landscape analysis
- OPT: Measure of impact

We will also ask

Demographic Data

Fully optional, not for award assessment or decisions
(strictly only monitoring and evaluation of overall fund)

- Career stage and role
- Area of work
- Gender
- Disability, Impairment, Condition or Access need

Submitting and withdrawing applications

- "Submit application" button allows you to submit the application after all the mandatory fields have been filled
- All changes to an application take (nearly) immediate effect (including submitted applications – no need to re-submit those)
- You can view, modify, copy and delete your applications from "My Applications" space up until the call's deadline

How your application will be assessed

- Two stage process
- Expression of Interest
  - Assessed internally by fund management team
  - Scope check and checklist feedback to help improve bids
  - Bids may be asked to combine, if appropriate
- Full application
  - Peer review panel of external experts, as well as opportunity for early career observers
  - Categorised into Excellent, Good, Adequate and Unsatisfactory based on criteria
  - Excellent proposals funded In rank order
  - If funding still available, Good proposals will be funded by lottery
- Application and review data may be shared with reviewers & observers, with UKRI, and with any external programme evaluator under confidentiality agreements
- The Proposal Summary and Categories of Work may be publicly published

Criteria and Sections for the Full Application

Criteria

- Impact
  - Research impact
  - Adoption of software
  - Improved maintainability
- Quality
  - Team and governance
  - Community engagement and Contributions
  - Documentation and training
- Feasibility
  - Plan of work
  - Tracking and evaluation of progress
  - Future plans for sustainability
- Value
  - Advancement of good practice
  - Meeting needs of research community
  - Integration with ecosystem
  - Increasing diversity

Sections

- Description of work, including activities, milestones and deliverables
- Key personnel and capability to deliver
- Full budget and justification of costs, including in-kind support
- Expected outcomes and evaluation strategies, including indicators
- EDIA statement

Once a project is funded

- Expect projects from Round 1 to start by 1st January 2026.
- Outputs Management Plan must be provided no later than one month after start of award
- Quarterly reporting against grantee-defined indicators via template
- Quarterly invoicing in arrears for actual costs
- Final report including achievements, outcomes, challenges and future plans
- No cost extensions allowed, but all projects must complete by 29 February 2028
- All IP remains with the project, but we encourage use of open licenses

Key Dates – Round 1

7 April 2025 | 10:00 BST	Opening Date (Expressions of Interest)
30 May 2025 | 16:00 BST	Closing Date (Expressions of Interest)
13 June 2025	Feedback on Expressions of Interest
19 June 2025	Opening Date (Full Proposals)
12 September 2025	Closing Date (Full Proposals)
17 October 2025 (tbc)	Decisions Communicated
1 January 2026	Round 1 projects expected start date
29 February 2028	Latest completion date for all project work

Frequently Asked Questions

- Can someone on a fixed term contract be a Project Lead?
- Are operational costs eligible?
- Including collaborators
  - How can freelancers / independent contractors be involved?
  - How should industry collaborators be included?
  - Can I apply for salary costs for international collaborators?
- Should I apply for a large award or a small award?

- Webpage for RSMF Round 1 has guidance, FAQs and template T&C / Grant Agreements
  - https://www.software.ac.uk/research-software-maintenance-fund/round-1
- Email: grants@software.ac.uk

Q&A

grants@software.ac.uk