Questions submitted at the RSMF Round 1 Webinar

Last updated Thursday 8th May

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Project Leads / Co-Leads and Team Composition

Q: I have a question about Project Lead eligibility. We are interested in a joint project submission in which the main developers of an open-source code are not eligible to be leads (but can be co-leads). We'd like to develop integrations between their code and other open-source systems that we use (but do not lead development of). Would that be allowed?

A: Yes, this is allowed.

Q: The call mentions the PI should be someone with senior role in the software. If the work is, for example, about developing new features for an existing software, is this appropriate for the PI to be the new feature expert, while the main software developers are an international team?

A: This will depend on the specific nature of the proposed activities, but from your description that arrangement would be fine, particularly as the main software developers are based outside of the UK. However, the proposed activities should be about improving the ongoing maintenance of the software and in general, novel features on their own would not be in scope.

Q: Could you please repeat what happens if the developers are all academics, i.e. is it expected that an RSE should do the work or is academic staff buy-out acceptable?

A: It is acceptable for academic staff to do development work. For any team member, you should demonstrate why they have the appropriate skills for the activity, and how you will ensure that good practices are being implemented.

Q: Will the presence or absence of collaborators affect the scoring of our proposal?

A: This will depend on the activities proposed—please email us with more details if you would like further feedback. In general, the criteria would be prioritising evidence that this is the appropriate team for the proposal.

Q: Can you confirm a Lead cannot be a limited company (that maintains open-source software for university partners)?

A: No, but they can be a Co-Lead.

Q: Can a Co-Lead be from UK industry?

A: Yes.

Q: I would like to know if it's possible to have Co-Is or Co-Leads who don't attract a budget/expense?

A: Yes, this is possible. You would need to provide a value on their in-kind contribution and justify why this is appropriate for the activities proposed.

Q: Are project partners allowed? If so, can letters of supports from project partners be submitted with the full application and are they rules around in-kind contributions made by project partners?

A: Project partners are allowed. Letters of support, including any in-kind contributions, can be submitted with the full application. In-kind contributions should identify the relevance and benefit to the project partner, the nature of the support that they are providing, and place a monetary value on the support.

Q: Is there a limit of how much percentage of the PI time (permanent Lecturer) can be funded? I am the PI and developer of the software, so I need to allocate a lot of my time for refactoring, etc.

A: We do not place any restrictions on the percentage of your time that you can apply for. However, please check with your organisation to see if they have any restrictions.

Q: Could the grant be used to partially pay salary? E.g. for a hybrid role of 50% RSE (paid for by this grant), 50% PDRA paid from elsewhere.

A: Yes, that is allowed.

Q: To confirm, we could have Project Lead and Project Co-lead from the same institution, then up to 6 International Project Co-Leads? Is there any restriction on international contractors (contracted by lead UK institution)?

A: Yes. For this funding opportunity, no more than 75% of the number of leads can be from business, third sector or government organisations and international partners. So, a ratio of 2:6 is okay. There is no restriction on the number of international contractors as long as you can justify why this is the right team for the activities, and the lead organisation has systems in place to pay them. We recommend that you consult your organisation's procurement team for advice.

Q: Do we need to name everyone who would go into a full bid at the EoI stage?

A: No. We are asking for the names of Lead and Co-Leads, to help us understand conflicts of interest and to understand demand. It is possible to change the leads when the full application is submitted, and that is the point where we would ask for other main members of the team to be named.

Q: Can a Co-lead be added/removed during the Full application process?

A: Yes.

Q: For business co-Leads: what evidence will be they be asked to provide to demonstrate that they 'satisfy legal requirements around fraud prevention, subsidy control, modern slavery regulations, etc' and at which stage of the application process?

A: This would be required at the award contract setup stage; however, we recommend that the lead partner investigates their organisation's rules around this when preparing the full proposal as many research organisations require due diligence to be done before submission, particularly if this is an industry partner that the research organisation has not previously partnered with. We recommend that you consult existing guidance published on these topics, which also provide information on the size and types of businesses that may be required to provide evidence, but ultimately this is the responsibility of the lead organisation to check and vouch for.

Q: If the lead applicant is on maternity leave at the date of submission of the full proposal in mid-September can a co-lead submit the proposal on their behalf?

A: Yes, a co-lead can submit a full application on behalf of the lead.

Q: Can you be a project lead as a user of software package rather than maintainer? (Considering an EOI for a software package where the maintenance team are non-UK based)

A: Users can apply, but it would be expected that work would be done with the knowledge of the software development team.

Q: Hello is this funding only limited to teams who created or are affiliated to the development of the software or users could also apply?

A: Users can apply, but it would be expected that work would be done with the knowledge of the software development team.

Q: Do Leads on the proposal have to have been a lead on the software?

A: No, someone else can be project lead.

Q: Are any guarantees needed from host institutes? Particularly around employment status of PI up to end of the grant period?

A: We do not require these, but we appreciate that research organisations may have specific internal policies for who can be a lead.

Q: Is there a size of the project team that would be considered more likely to be awarded funding? e.g., if I were the only developer but the software has lots of external users. And could this grant be used for activities to try and convert some of those users to developers?

A: We recommend choosing the size and makeup of the project team most suited to deliver the proposed activities. Activities to convert users to developers are eligible.

Q: Would an application with a UK based software user with some software development role (not a core developer) and a USA based core software developer as co-lead be accepted?

A: Yes, this would be eligible. You would still need to justify why this is the appropriate team for the proposed activities.

Q: Can co-leads be from outside the UK? Can part of the funding be used for their contributions?

A: Applicants based in non-UK organisations can be included as Project Co-Leads (International) (PcL(I)s). When a Project Lead includes a PcL(I), they must ensure that all associated costs are fully justified within the Resources and Costs Justification section of the application. International applicants cannot be Project Leads, nor are they eligible to take over the leadership of the project. More info can be found at: https://www.software.ac.uk/research-software-maintenance-fund/round-1 in the "Who can apply" section and under "international applicants"

Q: Is it possible to apply for funding to extend a PhD studentship to allow focus on software maintenance activities as part of the PhD studies?

A: No. If allowed by your organisation and the rules of the PhD, and acceptable to the student, funding can be sought to employ the student as a maintainer in parallel to their PhD studies. However, we do not believe that software maintenance activities should be a main part of PhD studies.

Q: There is this point in the FAQ: Are international organisations eligible to be lead organisations? I'd like to know more regarding the criteria for non-UK organisations to be a lead.

A: For clarification, non-UK organisations cannot be a lead on a proposal to the RSMF, only a co-lead. Certain international organisations based in the UK can be leads, this is a specific type of organisation, and these organisations are listed on the UKRI eligibility page.

Q: It is a shame this is only open to eligible UKRI. Open source is predominately maintained, made, and developed by people outside of these organisations. Can we have something which the actual open-source contributors are eligible as individuals please?

A: We would like to be able to do something that enables this. However, in the timescales we had to setup Round 1, it was not possible to create an efficient legal and financial process that would allow us to do this directly, and therefore the compromise is that individuals can be part of an RSMF Round 1 application, but must be paid through the lead. We are investigating this further and are hoping to pilot grants to individuals through different calls in the future.

What qualifies as research software

Q: Would a Jupyter notebook kernel for a niche programming language for discrete mathematics (namely, GAP) qualify as research software?

A: Yes.

Q: Is software which is used exclusively via a web portal in scope?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you consider a web application a software?

A: Yes. Web applications are considered as software.

Q: Is an infrastructure / research project server that is purpose-built that hosts and supports software development funded?

A: Possibly. A generic infrastructure, such as an instance of GitLab that hosted research projects, would not be in scope. However, funding for infrastructure that supported the maintenance of a set of related research software projects (e.g. enabling it to be built and tested against a set of different hardware platforms) would be in scope.

Q: Is a public database in scope?

A: It would depend on showing that database enabled UK research, that the proposed activities were related to the maintenance of the software that the database is built on, and that the applicants were part of the team developing the database software. It may also depend on whether the database system software was generic (e.g. MySQL) or research specific, or whether this is about maintaining a research specific extension to a generic database system.

Q: Are real-time data acquisition systems that support UKRI research infrastructure in scope?

A: Yes. The software parts of data acquisition systems are in scope.

Q: Is there a requirement for code to be open source? My colleagues have a MATLAB app; would it be eligible? My guess is that suggesting rewriting in in Python would not work, because it would be a new software. But rewriting it and making compatible with Octave might be a good idea?

A No, you can apply to the RSMF to maintain closed source software. However, we would still expect good practices around software development and community engagement to be followed, and we would require a justification of why the software being closed source benefits research and the future maintainability of the software. In this case, it may also be possible to make the app open source, even though MATLAB is commercial closed source.

Q: Is it only for open-source software?

A: No, you can apply to the RSMF to maintain closed source software. However, we would still expect good practices around software development and community engagement to be followed, and we would require a justification of why the software being closed source benefits research and the future maintainability of the software.

Q: My application will be to maintain free open-source software written as an add-on for the commercial statistical package Stata. Is the commercial nature of Stata a problem? And would translation of the software to an open-source statistical package (R) be within scope?

A: It is not a problem for the platform that your software extends to be a commercial package. Translation of the software to a difference platform can be in scope. However, you would still need to evidence all the other criteria, e.g. why this will create benefit for your users' research, how this will improve future maintainability or reduce technical debt.

Demonstrating impact

Q: Should the UK impact be research only or is education (various university courses based on it) / industrial (tech startups using it) use also seen positively?

A: Non-research related impact on education or industry will not hinder the application, but it is not the primary scope of the call. The requirement is to show the benefit to research, and this can also be at commercial organisations. However, it must clearly be enabling research, rather than just innovation. Likewise, if the university courses are about applying specific research methods using the software, this could be evidence of enabling research.

Q: Will it help or hinder an application if the software is also used widely in education as well as research? Should the educational aspect be 'ignored' for the purposes of this call?

A: It will not hinder the application, but it is not the primary scope of the call. Mentioning the use of the software as part of the wider ecosystem may be useful, if demonstrating why this is important for the future plans for the software.

Q: The university-developed research code already has significant industrial impact across several major UK companies but limited academic use (three institutions). Will this funding support increasing academic impact, and is the strong industry connection potentially disadvantageous?

A: Industry connections are not disadvantageous – the requirement is to show the benefit to research, and this can also be at commercial organisations. However, it must clearly be enabling research, rather than just innovation.

Q: How do we 'quantify' the impact of our software on UK researchers?

A: This will depend on your area and the type of impact, but it might include references to publications that use your software, but it could also be news articles or conference presentations. You can use a mix of quantitative (number of users) and qualitative (examples of use leading to impact) indicators.

Q: If the outcomes are expected to be long-term (i.e. years), how can these be measured on the timescale of the grant?

A: In the full application we will ask you to define the outcomes, as well as indicators that might help to measure progress. We do not expect all outcomes to be evident at the end of the grant, but we expect applicants to be able to propose how they would track progress towards the outcomes over time. Approaches like Theory of Change may be useful to help define these.

User community

Q: Can you clarify how established the user base for the software needs to be? E.g. if there is a software with a first stable open release, but only recently and with only a small current community, would that be in remit still?

A: Yes, as long as the current community are not all “internal” to the development team. Even if you’re community is still relatively small, it’s about showing and justifying the benefits to that community.

Q: In terms of "user community", what if outputs are widely used if not the software per se?

A: This is fine, as long as you can demonstrate that the users are “external” to the development team, and that the software is enabling research in the UK. We understand that there are software targeting niche areas of research where there may be smaller communities and fewer users.

Q: How important is it that the served research community is centred in the UK? Or is a global community that includes members in the UK equally favoured?

A: It is not required that the served research community is centred in the UK, as we understand that most research includes international collaborations. However, you will need to demonstrate how the activities will benefit research carried out in the UK.

Q: Is UK research prioritised—our open-source software (UK developed) is used by UK research groups but also is used internationally. Would international collaborators be helpful in justifying 'user community'?

A: Yes, demonstrating international users and/or developers is beneficial in justifying user community and sustainability, as long as you can show that the software is used to support UK research.

Q: In terms of demand for the software, what is the view on there being a demand for the outputs of the software, but user uptake is limited by software limits to be addressed in the proposal?

A: You should evidence the impact that the activities you propose would have on the research that is enabled by the software and how they would enable increased adoption, that could translate into improved sustainability.

Q: How do you define 'user community' vs 'used internally' exactly? For context, our software has been developed internally within our core team but is available/utilised by other teams across our organisation (university research centre, collection of large research groups). Does internally refer to our core team, or our organisation as a whole?

A: In general, internally refers your core team, including collaborators outside your organisation. The user community would refer to people who have asked to use the software. Within your organisation, if you had a previous relationship as a colleague or student in the same team, or been part of a funded project with you, this would be considered "internal" rather than "external."

Q: Could you expand a bit on what you mean by infrastructure in the FAQ where you say "Yes, large software infrastructure is in scope for the Research Software Maintenance Fund. To be eligible, you need to demonstrate that the infrastructure is used by those carrying out research in the UK, and that its main purpose is enabling research.?"

A: Here, by software infrastructure, we mean software that underpins a large proportion of research or a domain. This might include things like widely used packages e.g. NumPy, repositories e.g. Zenodo, or environments e.g. Jupyter Notebooks. These can also be domain specific.

Q: What constitutes a 'collaborator' in the parlance of the SSI? For example, if a project is quite proactive in reaching out to and iterating with users, have those users now become collaborators? I'm interested in the aspect of demonstrating significant use of the candidate software already by non-collaborators

A: A collaborator would have a more direct relationship, e.g. had a previous relationship as a colleague or student, has been part of a funded project with you. If you are just working with users to get feedback on e.g. a roadmap that is collaboration in the broad sense, but those users are still considered external to your software project team.

Q: What is the definition of "stable release" being followed for eligibility?

A: We are defining this as whether you can show that it has been published in a way that new, external users could pick up and run. Examples might include as versioned source code with build instructions and documentation through a code repository, as an executable or installer through a website, as a web portal or web service with documentation for users. The key criteria here is that it shouldn't require a member of the development team to help install it, or that it is unclear what users should be installing or running.

Scope of Activities

Q: Would this fund activities around adding new features to an existing and externally used software to increase its reach?

A: This would depend on whether you can justify why adding these new features meets the goals of the RSMF of reducing technical debt, improving user experience, or building community.

Q: On increasing diversity, would that include plans to improve accessibility for users with limited programming knowledge?

A: Yes, provided that you can justify why that would help meet the goals for the RSMF, such as reducing technical debt, improving user experience, or building community.

Q: How does only allowing "new features" "where they improve maintenance" differ from the technical example in the call doc "Developing components/plugins/integrations to improve interoperability" which are arguably a type of new feature?

A: The example of developing components/plugins/integrations to improve interoperability is specifically aimed at improving the overall health of the related ecosystem by making it easier to use the research software with other software and workflows.

Q: Can it be about prototyping of new features where it will help improve accessibility or improve the user community.

A: Possibly. You would need to justify why adding these new features meets the goals of the RSMF of reducing technical debt, improving user experience, or building community. It would also benefit your application to show that there is an existing requirement from the community rather than this being exploratory work.

Q: We have developed a software used by thousands of users. We have developed new machine learning functionality for this software that is currently not used by many users. We want to improve the machine learning software documentation and reach out to user communities to increase its use. Would SSI fund developing documentation and building community for a recently developed functionality of a software used by thousands of users?

A: Yes, this would be in scope, as the functionality itself has already been developed and has some usage.

Q: Is moving to the cloud (e.g. AWS) considered in scope?

A: Yes, as an activity. However, you would still need to evidence all the other criteria; for example, why this will create benefit for your users' research, how this will improve future maintainability or reduce technical debt.

Q: Is porting to new platforms in scope as sustainability work or out of scope as development?

A: This can be in scope if you can justify why that would help meet the goals for the RSMF, such as reducing technical debt, improving user experience, or building community.

Q: Would migrating an established piece of software into a more widely used software platform fall within the scope of this call?

A: Yes, as an activity. However, you would still need to evidence all the other criteria; for example, why this will create benefit for your users' research, how this will improve future maintainability or reduce technical debt.

Q: We are proposing a redevelopment—so a totally new code base for prototype software (that is widely used). Will you only fund improvements to software?

A: This would be a refactoring of a codebase, so it would be allowed as long as you can show that the software has a wide set of users, and that the software has been released previously (i.e. it has been published in a way that new, external users could pick up and run—this could be as an executable, as source code with build instructions, etc.)

Q: If our system is being used by external users, but it is deprecated software, can we apply to redevelop it on a more maintainable and future-proofed footing?

A: Yes, as long as it has previously had a stable release. You would need to justify why it was appropriate to redevelop the software, rather than the users migrating to a different piece of software.

Q: Regarding adoption, are you interested in new features in that regard (streamlined installation for example)?

A: Yes, provided that you can justify why that would help meet the goals for the RSMF, such as reducing technical debt, improving user experience, or building community. In this case, it would be showing that there is a clear user demand and that it would reduce the ongoing maintenance costs.

Q: How would you define "production of case studies using the software" (would be considered for funding) as opposed to "use of the software to do research" (not considered). Please could you clarify the difference between these?

A: In this case, the research being featured in the case studies would already have been done or is being funded by other means. Here, the RSMF funding would only be to produce the case studies themselves (e.g. hiring of a technical writer). You would also need to justify why this would improve the future maintainability of the software (e.g. because it encouraged contributions from new areas).

Q: I noticed you mentioned you will consider funding "production of case studies using the software", but not "use of the software to do research". Could you clarify the difference between these?

A: In this case, the research being featured in the case studies would already have been done or is being funded by other means. Here, the RSMF funding would only be to produce the case studies themselves (e.g. hiring of a technical writer). You would also need to justify why this would improve the future maintainability of the software (e.g. because it encouraged contributions from new areas).

Q: Could some fund be allocated to develop case studies by users from abroad, i.e. subcontract someone from abroad for a small task?

A: Yes, this is allowed.

Q: Can we include the cost of an associated website in the proposal?

A: Yes, if you justify how this will help improve the future maintainability of the software.

Q: In terms of integrating two pieces of software, if they are both currently funded separately but the integration work isn't part of either grant, are we able to apply for SSI funding specifically for this integration work?

A: Yes, but you will still have to justify why doing so meets the goals of the RSMF of reducing technical debt, improving user experience, or building community.

Q: If the goal of the proposal is to integrate two existing pieces of research software, and new features are required to successfully do this, does that validate those new features as fundable?

A: Yes, but you will still have to justify why doing so meets the goals of the RSMF of reducing technical debt, improving user experience, or building community.

Q: For proposed work, could we use it maintain data generated from the software? For example, could the Fund be used to support creation and maintenance of a data repository?

A: The RSMF would potentially fund the maintenance of a data repository, but not the creation.

Q: Can the grant include conference travel for them to learn about the research/liaise with stakeholders (e.g. if the grant funds early career researchers or someone who is new to the research ecosystem the software supports)?

A: Yes, but we would expect more senior members of the team to already know about the research that their software enables.

Q: Can the application include "advancement of good practice" activities not directly related to the software, e.g. software carpentry workshops for the research community?

A: Not as the main focus. The proposal should be clearly tied to maintenance of software. There may be opportunities from some of the recently awarded NetworkPlus projects that may be more suitable for training activities.

Project size, duration and award

Q: What about what you qualify as small projects (i.e. 150k in monetary value) but lasting for two years (i.e. large awards). How this will be treated?

A: You would apply as a large award, as there is no requirement to bid for the maximum funding amount. Alternatively, you could identify a subset of activities that could be carried out in 12 months.

Q: Can the small grant be over 12 months?

A: No. However, you can apply through the larger award size—there is no requirement to apply for the maximum award amount or duration.

Q: Can we apply for a "large" award but with a predicted budget in the range of a "small" award (so, ~150K over two years)?

A: Yes, there is no requirement to bid for the maximum funding amount.

Q: If more funding than £150K may be required but the project may last between 12 and 15 months, can the two-year scope be chosen or will this be deemed as insufficient?

A: We would recommend applying for the larger award but specifying the duration to be 15 months. There is no requirement to apply for the maximum award amount or duration.

Q: Is there a timeframe for the starting date and could one apply for only 6 months?

A: Projects can start from January 2026 and must be completed by February 2028, but you can choose the length of the project within that timeframe. There is some scope for smaller awards to delay their start date, but only by a few months. This is because we will be running this as a cohort for evaluation and reporting purposes.

Q: I would be interested in applying for both the small and the large award as both would be useful. Is this possible?

A: Yes, you can submit more than one EoI and for different scopes.

Q: Could a small award project start on 1st January 2027?

A: No. We would recommend that you apply for Round 2. While there is some leeway for small awards in Round 1 to negotiate a later start date, we would expect this to be a few months, not a full year.

Q: Our rough idea would be small scale, but over two years—is this possible? So would a large grant be awarded to a project that spends the funds over 2 years but doesn't request full amount (i.e. around £150k-£200k). E.g. hiring part-time RSE over two years, rather than full time over one year?

A: This is allowed. There is no requirement to apply for the maximum award amount or duration.

Q: Is there any preference for shorter grants? I.e. Can/will six-month applications be funded or are you looking for applications that fill the 1yr / 2yr grant periods?

A: You do not need to apply for the maximum grant amount or grant duration. The duration of the grant has no bearing on the likelihood of success. We expect to fund based on how well they meet the criteria, and we advise going for the duration and amount that best fits the activity.

Q: Would large grants need to use up all or most of the available funding? Or could it be a longer (>1 year) but not as expensive project?

A: There is no requirement to bid for the maximum available amount.

Q: Does quarterly invoicing in arrears apply to everything, including staff salaries?

A: Yes. We are following standard processes for research grant sub-awards. This is also similar to many UKRI grants. If this causes an issue, we may be able to reprofile the award to enable the first payment with the confirmation of the start of the project.

Q: What are the limits for the lead FEC? is it 20% FTE as in standard UKRI grants?

A: Yes. The lead UK research organisation will be funded at 80% of FEC, as in a standard UKRI grant.

Applications, Assessment and Reapplying

Q: Will full applications be through funding-service and follow their standard model of vision etc?

A: No. We are using the GoodGrants platform used by various other funders, not the UKRI Funding Service. The sections of the full application can be found in the slides presented at the webinar—they are broadly similar to a standard UKRI application.

Q: Can we save the EoI and return another time to complete?

A: Yes, you should be able to save and then finish at a later time. Please note that you must have completed the information on the first page “Start Here” and clicked save.

Q: To clarify, if you hit 'submit' on the application before the deadline, can you still make changes to the submitted application before the deadline?

A: Yes, you can make changes up until the deadline. These are automatically sent to us when you save a change to any section—you do not need to resubmit.

Q: Should the "Application name" be just the name of the software product, or something more descriptive about what work will be done on it?

A: That is up to you. We cannot give guidance here, as different people will have different opinions on this. However, it will not matter for your EoI, and for the full application you will be judged primarily on the content of the sections. You can also change the Application Name when submitting the full application.

Q: In which section would you recommend adding references?

A: This would depend on the purpose of the reference. References to the use of the software could go in the “Benefit to UK research,” whereas references to other similar software would go in the “Landscape analysis” section, and references indicating related examples of the activities being proposed might go in the “Proposed Work” section of the EoI.

Q: For the ‘Benefit’ section is there an expectation of PPIE activities?

A: This will depend on the type of research that your software supports. In general, there is no expectation that the proposed activities funded by the RSMF will need to include Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement but showing that it enables it can be used as evidence in the Benefit section.

Q: Might the Expression of Interest feedback recommend changing a "large" application to a "small" one, for full application?

A: Yes, if appropriate. In this case, it would be up to the applicant to decide whether they wanted to switch.

Q: The expression of interest application is very short. Is there information on the full application format.

A: We will provide further information to successful EoI applications in due time. Some information on the full application format is described in the webinar presentation slides.

Q: Could you say a bit more about the panel—are they software development experts or expert in the application are of the software, etc.?

A: Given the wide diversity of applications we expect to the RSMF, it will not be possible to have an expert on each particular area, method, discipline, or piece of software. The panel will have a balance of people who are software development and research software engineering practitioners and people who are experienced users of research software. Between them, the panel will also have expertise in the sub-criteria (such as community engagement, governance, sustainability) and we will aim for a panel that is representative of the disciplinary areas that the proposals come from, recognising that the more proposals come from an area, the harder it is to find an appropriate reviewer who doesn't have a conflict of interest.

Q: Could you provide a little more detail on the peer review pool—Is there truly review capacity to deal with multi-disciplinary software, or are reviewers likely to be embedded in a given set of disciplines? We've had challenges with EPSRC before in this vein, where a multidisciplinary software bid gets sent to one narrow discipline-specific peer review board that only covers a small part of the activity.,

A: Given the wide diversity of applications we expect to the RSMF, it will not be possible to have an expert on each multi-disciplinary or interdisciplinary research area. However, the panel will have a balance of people representing different research disciplines. The SSI is UKRI-funded, and maintains active relationships with all 7 research councils, and the panel will be able to consider the wider applicability of the software to multiple disciplines.

Q: Will there be any interview stage? I know other SSI grants have had these.

A: There will not be an interview stage for Round 1, as the expected number of applications and the timelines for Round 1 do not allow for it. After an evaluation of Round 1, we may consider to introducing this for Round 2.

Q: If software already meets many metrics for quality, will it score well or are you specifically scoring just work undertaken on the project to improve quality?

A: Yes, that is likely to increase its rating by reviewers, as software which is already of high quality is more likely to be able to be maintained going forward. However, this is only one of the criteria that proposals will be judged on.

Q: Is there a limit to the number of full applications someone can be lead/ co-lead on?

A: We will announce this as soon as possible after the Expressions of Interest close, as it will depend on the number that we receive.

Q: If you're unsuccessful in round 1, will you be able to apply again for round 2 or will you even automatically be considered for round 2?

A: Yes, you are allowed to reapply in Round 2, but it would need to be a small award. We haven't decided whether the unsuccessful applications that score above a threshold will be automatically considered in round 2.

Q: Can a proposal be re-submitted to round 2 if unsuccessful at round 1?

A: Yes. Note this can only work with the small awards, as larger awards are only available in Round 1.

Q: Is the filtering at the Expression of Interest (EoI) stage likely to be large, such that we have a good chance if we make it through that part, or will it be quite soft?

A: This will depend on the number of EoIs, and we are expecting a large number of submissions, but we would lean towards allowing applicants to submit if in scope. We will publish details of the number of EoIs so that applicants can make an informed decision.

Q: How will it be judged if software is already used beyond close collaborators? Papers where it has been used?

A: Applicants can provide whatever justification they think is most appropriate. Papers would certainly be an acceptable form, but it could also be news articles or conference presentations.

Q: Who is the judging/panel re EoI?

A: There is not a judging panel for the EoI stage. The scope checks and feedback are done by the RSMF programme team.

Q: It would be good to understand who the peer review college will be for this process—obviously could be a very broad range of people (academics, software experts, outside assessors).

A: As you note, the review panel will have a broad range of people, covering both experienced users of software and experts on software development and research software engineering. Between them, the panel will also have expertise in the sub-criteria (such as community engagement, governance, sustainability).

Q: Will you suggest cutting down the EoI if parts are out of scope, or unlikely/less likely to be funded?

A: Feedback will be more high level, indicating the broad areas that could be improved. It would then be up to the applicant revise the application.

Q: If I submit multiple EoIs and they all pass scoping review, can I continue to submit them all as full applications? (i.e. is there a limit to the number of full applications someone can be lead/ co-lead on?),

A: We will announce this as soon as possible after the Expressions of Interest close, as it will depend on the number that we receive.

Q: If invited to submit a full proposal, will we need to submit letters of support (e.g. from the user community)?

A: This will depend on your proposed activities. For justifying use in the community, letters of support can be used but references to published research outputs demonstrating use of the software can also be used. Where letters of support would be strongly recommended is where an activity requires the participation of that community or organisation.

Q: Can early career panel observers be considered not conflicting if they are in a different part of an organisation to the one putting in a proposal and/or were not involved in the proposal?

A: In this case, they would have a conflict, but it would not prevent them from being an observer. They would be asked to step out when proposals from their organisation were being discussed.

Other

Q: How this programme is different or similar to EPSRC's CCPs (Collaborative Computational Projects)?

A: The RSMF and the CCPs have similar goals in terms of funding research software that are used by clearly defined user communities, to help establish a stronger and more resilient ecosystem of digital research infrastructure. Traditionally, the differences would be that CCPs are focussed on longer duration grants of five years, with the expectation of maintaining key software for a well-defined community. The RSMF is designed to support shorter one-off projects that help improve the longer-term maintainability of research software.

Q: Are any compute resources (e.g. time on ARCHER2) accessible, or would a project need to source those separately if required?

A: These are allowable costs, provided that you can justify why they are necessary. However, we would not provide these directly—you would need to speak to the relevant computing infrastructure to get an estimate of the cost and availability.

Q: How is this grant programme allowed to interact with funding from other past or present sources? Could it co-exist with a grant from a different source for development of the same product?

A: Yes, this is allowed. You will need to demonstrate that you are not receiving two sources of funding for the exact same activity, but having multiple sources of funding for the software is okay.

Q: How will you consider software that has grant support from multiple sources? I am thinking of the matrix of funding that supports well established software but has funding gaps to bridge to maintain an established team. This call might fit part of such a project/software but not all.

A: You should either demonstrate the timeliness of the proposal (e.g. there is an identified gap in funding), or how the proposed activities will help the project team to better mitigate for the gaps in funding.

Q: Will you share an email to ask specific eligibility questions?

A: You can reach us at grants@software.ac.uk.