

Coast-R Network Small Grants Fund Round 1

Commissioning Brief & Applicant Guidance

Purpose:

This guidance document accompanies the Small Grants Fund Round 1 Application Form and sets out the aims, objectives, and deliverables sought from projects under Round 1 of the Small Grants Fund. Funding in this round is focussed on activities which involve Early Career Researchers based in research eligible organisations. For a full picture of the application process therefore, please read this along with the Small Grants Fund Application Form.

Section 1: Background to the Coast-R Project

The Coast-R Network is a £2.1M project, jointly funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC), and the Department for the Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

The project is funded under UK Research & Innovation (UKRI)'s 'Creating Opportunities, Improving Outcomes' (COIO) strategic theme, as part of the Resilient Coastal Communities and Seas (RECCs) programme. Led by the University of Hull, it is delivered by a partnership including the Universities of Aberystwyth, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool and Southampton, with support from other partners in central and local government, other government agencies, and the private, community and third sectors.

The RECCs programme consists of a group of 5 projects (including the Coast-R Network), all focussed upon increasing resilience to coastal change in the UK.

The Coast-R Network exists to create and enable an inclusive Community of Practice around UK coastal resilience by delivering research, knowledge exchange, events and training which support researchers, practitioners, and communities to build and share knowledge and experience.

Section 2: The Coast-R Small Grants Fund

As part of the Coast-R Network's work, we are pleased to announce Round 1 of our **Small Grants Fund**, offering grants of between £5,000 and £25,000.

This first round of the Coast-R Small Grants Fund (SGF) is open to applications **from Monday 22nd September 2025. The deadline for receipt of completed applications is 4pm on Friday 31st October.**

Round 1 will support small scale, place-based projects involving early career researchers (based in a university or other eligible UKRI-designated Research Organisation) in two-way (or multi-way) research and knowledge exchange. We encourage projects to incorporate partnership and cross-sectoral working, including active engagement with individuals and organisations with lived experience of coastal change.

Section 3: Outputs and Outcomes

All projects will be required to deliver the following outputs:

- Contribute to a Coast-R Network webinar
- Contribute a blog for our website and our quarterly newsletter
- Progress reports: Projects of up to £7500 will be expected to deliver a final report. Projects of up to £25,000 will be expected to submit brief quarterly progress reports, plus a final report.

Additional outputs (and their intended audiences) will vary in line with projects' aims and objectives. They may include:

- Toolkits and 'how to' guides
- Case studies and web resources
- Training resources which can be adopted and used by others
- Policy outputs including briefs and foresight documents
- Academic publications and/or practitioner-focused reports.

Section 4: Who can apply?

Applicants must be based at a UK university or another research organisation designated by UKRI as 'eligible organisations' to apply for this funding under this round. Please note that costs associated with Coast-R Network Project Co-Investigators are not eligible for this funding.

Organisations will be asked to co-operate with the University of Hull on its due diligence checks carried out as part of the funding contract process.

If you are not sure whether your organisation is designated by UKRI as an eligible organisation, please contact CoastR@hull.ac.uk for further advice.

Involvement of an Early Career Researcher (ECR):

Projects funded under Round 1 must actively involve an Early Career Researcher in their design and delivery, ideally with an ECR in the role of project lead or co-lead. The ECR may be supported by more senior members of staff, but their role should be fundamental to the delivery of the project.

Projects applying for Round 1 grants must allocate a minimum of 50% of the requested grant funding to costs related to the involvement of an ECR in the project. This 50% of costs may include salary payments and employer oncosts (employer pension and NI contributions) for the ECR, or delivery costs directly related to the activities of the ECR.

Applications which do not demonstrate the active involvement of an Early Career Researcher in their application will be deemed ineligible, and will not be taken forward for further assessment.

In line with UKRI's overarching definition, for the purposes of this funding round ECRs are defined as someone who is post-doctoral and developing their independent research and leadership potential, regardless of their official job title. They are typically, but not always, within 8 years of the award of their PhD or equivalent professional training (excluding career breaks). Doctoral candidates cannot be named as project leads or co-leads.

Section 5: Funding Pathways

The Coast-R Small Grant Fund offers two funding pathways.

Starter Funds of up to £7500 (minimum grant value £5,000)

Starter funds are for smaller projects and designed to be inclusive of smaller, grassroots activities. It is designed to enable ECRs, working with other organisations, to develop ideas, build their experience, and enhance the generation and exchange of learning. Please note that applications under this pathway should request a minimum of £5,000, i.e. between £5,000 and £7,500.

Larger Funds of up to £25,000

This funding pathway is designed to develop more established ideas and approaches in greater depth. We expect these larger projects to be longer in duration (9 months maximum, with a delivery end date of 31st October 2026).

Section 6: What we can fund

Only applications led by organisations of the type described at the start of Section 4 are eligible for funding under this round.

Costs must follow the ESRC's funding rules, as set out in pages 27-34 of its Funding Guide available here: [ESRC research funding guide for the UKRI Funding Service – UKRI](#).

In particular, please note that grant funding will be awarded at 80% of Full Economic Costing (FEC), with the lead organisation bearing the remaining 20% of FEC.

Examples of eligible costs include:

- Workshops, activities and events
- Travel & subsistence for workshops and events
- Costs of organising activities
- Materials & (small scale) equipment
- Community participation expenses
- Staff costs required for specific elements of running the project
- Training costs
- Directly Allocated overhead costs: Directly allocated overhead costs included on projects which do not relate to salary, employer pension and employer NI payments related to the ECR, will be funded at a maximum of **20% of total grant figure requested**.

Section 7: What we do not fund

The following are not eligible for Coast-R Grant funds:

- Organisations with a registered address outside of the UK
- Costs which are incurred prior to grant approval
- Pre-existing activity or ongoing operations
- PhD stipends or fees
- Any religious or party-political activity
- Alcohol.

Section 8: Application and submission process

Applications must be made on the standardised template form provided and submitted via email. Forms can be found on our [website](#) or requested by emailing CoastR@hull.ac.uk

Completed applications should be emailed to CoastR@hull.ac.uk no later than **4pm on Friday 31st October**.

The application form asks for:

- Information about the organisation applying for the funds
- A description of the project
- A description of how your project fits within the Coast-R Small Grants scheme's overall aims and its Priority Activity Areas
- A breakdown of the budget
- The project's key outputs and outcomes with an expected delivery timetable.

If you have any additional accessibility requirements related to the application process, please let us know and we will do our best to accommodate these.

Section 9: Assessment Process

- After initial eligibility screening, applications will be reviewed by a panel chaired by a Coast-R co-lead, and consisting of network co-leads, external partners and stakeholders, and one or more early career researchers. Panel members will score each application according to the criteria below.
- Applications which meet a scoring threshold will be considered by the panel, which will rank projects and select those recommended them for funding, subject to due diligence.
- Final funding decisions will consider the activity focus and geographical location/reach of proposals, to create a balanced portfolio across priority activity areas and UK nations.
- Conflicts of interest must be declared by panel members and where applicable, panel members will not participate in discussing or making recommendations on applications they have connections with.
- Funding decisions will be notified from the Coast-R mailbox (CoastR@hull.ac.uk). Individual application scores will be available to applicants following the decisions process, on request.

Applications submitted under this funding opportunity will be assessed on the basis of the following criteria:

1. Alignment with the Coast-R Small Grants Fund Priority Activity Areas (20%)
2. Research and knowledge exchange excellence (30%)
3. Team skills & experience, including the involvement of an Early Career Researcher (ECR) (10%)
4. Support for EDI and accessibility (10%)
5. Cross-sector participation including the involvement of relevant partners, communities or other stakeholders in design and delivery (10%)
6. A clear plan for capturing and sharing learning with relevant stakeholders (10%)
7. Feasibility within the timescale and budget (10%).

Section 10: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

The Coast-R Network is committed to promoting equal opportunities and valuing diversity, including all protected characteristics. We expect applicants to demonstrate the same commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion. For further information on how UKRI is promoting EDI, and tools for its implementation, please visit [Equality, diversity and inclusion \(EDI\) – UKRI](#)

We will prioritise projects for funding where they demonstrate collaborative and equitable ways of working with diverse teams / stakeholders.

Section 11: University of Hull Due Diligence Process & Funding Agreement Letter

The University of Hull may carry out due diligence checks on organisations whose applications have been approved for funding. Where this occurs, organisations will be required to provide information to support this process.

Examples of the type of information which may be required include organisation name & registered address, country of registration, registration number and name of registration body, legal status, affiliations, and senior contact details. Evidence to verify this information provided in the application form, and copies of your organisation's accounts, may also be required.

Funding will not be confirmed until the process has been fully and successfully completed.

Section 12: Monitoring Requirements

Applicants which are successful in receiving funding will be required to input into the monitoring requirements from our funder.

Funded projects/organisations will be required to:

- Provide evidence of the delivery of the outputs and outcomes specified in their project application
- Allow us access to visit the project and see its staff, premises and records
- (Starter Funds): Provide a final report
- (Larger Funds): Provide brief quarterly progress reports and a longer final report
- Contribute to other evaluation activities if requested.

Funded projects and their lead organisations will also be required to do the following as part of the Terms and Conditions of their Funding Agreement Letter:

- Attend a virtual project update meeting during their first 6 months of operation

- If required, host an in-person visit by members of the Coast-R Network team during their lifetime.

Section 13: Funder acknowledgement and branding

Project outputs should acknowledge funding by the Coast-R Network project and funder and be co-branded with Coast-R and funder logos. Branding guidelines will be shared with successful applicants.

Section 14: Further information and contact

If you require further information whilst completing your application form, please contact us on CoastR@hull.ac.uk.

Section 15: Timeline & Project Duration

Indicative timeline for applicants:

Application period: Monday 22nd September – Friday 31st October 2025

Scoring & decision-making period: 31st October – 19th December

Due diligence checks & contracts drawn up: 5th – 31st January

Projects Commence: Early February 2026

Practical completion of projects: 31st October 2026

Evaluation/End of project Reports: October/November 2026.

- The duration of projects (of either pathway) will vary depending upon both their scope and scale.
- **Funded projects must be delivered in full by 31st October 2026 (i.e. a maximum delivery period of 9 months).**