

Science Community Grants – FAQs

This list is not exhaustive. You may be able to find the answer to your questions in the [scheme notes](#). Please check all relevant documents before contacting the Schools Engagement Team by emailing education@royalsociety.org.

Eligibility

- 1. Q: Can I contact the Royal Society ahead of the deadline to confirm my eligibility for the scheme?**

A: The [scheme notes](#) provide guidance regarding eligibility for the scheme; however please contact the Schools Engagement Team by emailing education@royalsociety.org if you have any questions. Eligibility will be assessed based on the information provided in your Stage 1 application in Flexi-Grant, therefore, please take time to demonstrate this carefully.

- 2. Q: My institution is outside of the UK. Am I still eligible to apply?**

A: No, applicants must be based in the UK (including the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man).

- 3. Q: Am I eligible to apply if I currently have an active grant with the Royal Society; for example, a Partnership Grant or Partnership Seed Grant?**

A: Yes, you are eligible, however, you must demonstrate in your application, your capacity to complete your existing grant in full, and administer the new Science Community Grant, without impact on the quality or timeline. If successful, the start of the Science Community Grant cannot be delayed to allow other awarded grants to be completed. Where an organisation already holds an existing Partnership or Seed Grant, other teams/groups are also eligible to apply.

- 4. Q: Can more than one applicant/team from an organisation apply?**

A: Yes; however, with only 10 grants available, we expect the assessment process to be competitive. Please consider if your application would be stronger by collaborating across your organisation.

- 5. Q: Can I apply as an individual, without the support of my team/department/ faculty?**

A: No, one of the aims of the Science Community Grant is to create sustainable partnerships between organisations with clusters of schools/colleges, with unmet need, within their local area. While the grant can be driven by an individual or ideally a small team, organisational support is essential to ensure the engagement is embedded at an institutional level. For this reason, a statement of support from the head of the organisation (or department head, as appropriate) must be included as part of the application.

- 6. Q. Can my organisation apply and work with a partner organisation to deliver the project?**

A: Yes, however; one organisation will need to be the lead organisation and key contact for the project. The lead organisation will receive the funding and will need to distribute any funding required to partner organisations.

7. Q: Can I work with schools from any educational stage?

A: Yes, you can work with any students from age 5-18 years. You can also work with groups of schools from a mixture of educational stages. For example, to make up your group of 25 schools, you might choose to recruit a mixture of primary and secondary schools. Where you are working with a mixture of age groups, you may choose to develop a small-scale investigation that can be adapted to the differing needs of students. Alternatively, you might choose to develop different investigative projects for different age settings.

8. Q: Can I work with schools I already work with?

A: It depends on the type and level of engagement, but ideally you will reach out to new schools. This grant is about responding to schools and colleges with unmet need and/or low science capital. They should have little experience of long-term and sustained engagement with STEM professionals through investigative project work. This means you shouldn't include schools that you consistently work with, or have worked with previously, across multiple activities or significant projects. Schools and colleges that have undertaken a Partnership Grant or have been part of a Partnership Seed Grant must be excluded. Also, schools and colleges that are currently receiving on-going support via national STEM initiatives from other organisations are not eligible. For more detail on school/college eligibility, please see the [scheme notes](#). For any specific question of school eligibility, please email education@royalsociety.org.

9. Q: Do I need to have recruited schools to work with before submitting an application?

A: No, you do not need to have formally recruited schools before applying. As part of your application, you will need to present the rationale for the schools you are seeking to work with (i.e. who do you wish to work with, and why). If, during your scoping activities, individual or groups of schools or Multi-Academy Trusts have given an informal indication that they would like to participate, you could share this as part of your application, although this is not compulsory. The eligibility for inclusion of schools is that they must have unmet STEM need and low science capital, particularly in relation to long-term and sustained engagement with STEM professionals through investigative project work. Therefore, you shouldn't include schools that you consistently work with, or have worked with previously, across multiple activities or significant projects.

10. Q: A school I would like to work with has class sizes of less than 30. Can I still work with this school?

A: Yes, although please try to involve as many students as possible within each school. Applicants should try to work with whole classes to avoid activities being selective (i.e. students sign-up to take part) or being conducted as extracurricular activities involving only a small number of students. Where class sizes within a school are small, please consider if investigations could be extended to work across multiple classes, or could involve other students from across the school for at least some of the activities.

11. Q: What do you mean by the term STEM professional?

A: STEM professionals are the individuals who will visit schools and colleges during the small-scale investigations, and share their skills and expertise, as part of this grant. STEM professionals should be actively working in a STEM-related role in areas such as academia or industry, ideally with direct experience of research. They must be above graduate level (or have

similar industrial experience). Postgraduate students and postdoctoral early-career researchers interested in school/college engagement should also be considered by the organisation. Undergraduate students should not be used unless they are accompanied by a STEM professional who meets the criteria. The eligibility for those who can act as a STEM professional on a project is the same as that required for the full [Partnership Grant scheme](#). This is to allow STEM professionals to continue working with their grant schools/colleges on a full Partnership Grant at the end of the Science Community Grant period, if they are able to do so. For more information on STEM professional eligibility, please refer to the [scheme notes](#).

12. Q: How often are STEM professionals expected to visit schools?

A: STEM professionals should undertake at least 2–3 in-person visits to the school/college over the course of the small-scale investigation. Additional visits can be in-person or via remote working tools such as Teams or Zoom, as appropriate to the project. Funding can be used to support travel costs to ensure STEM professionals are not out-of-pocket, up to a value of £300 per school, per year. We support applications that wish to engage with schools/colleges in rural/hard-to-reach locations, so where additional funding (over the £300 per year specified) would be required to support these schools/colleges, this should be explained fully in the application.

13. Q: Is there a maximum or minimum number of STEM professionals that need to be recruited?

A: No, each school must be paired with at least one STEM professional, and schools should receive 2-3 in-person STEM professional visits over the course of their small-scale investigation. You should therefore recruit the number of STEM professionals needed to support this. Each STEM professional can visit multiple schools if they have the capacity to do so, and each school can receive visits from multiple STEM professionals, if applicable. The 2-3 in-person visits can be shared across more than one STEM professional. Where a STEM professional is inexperienced with working with schools or lacks confidence, you may choose to pair STEM professionals to visit schools in pairs/small groups or with an outreach professional, if available.

14. Q: Can the theme of the small-scale investigation be in any area of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics)?

A: Yes, the investigation can be in any area of science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and wider STEM subjects such as computing, geography, etc.

15. Q: Can I decide what small-scale investigation(s) we will deliver in schools/colleges after applying?

A: No, small-scale investigations must be clearly outlined in the application.

16. Q: Can small-scale investigations be undertaken as a club or after-school activity?

A: Ideally, investigations will align directly with the STEM curriculum so that they can be delivered within curriculum time. They must last a minimum of half a term (approximately 6 weeks) and be easily repeatable so that they can be carried out by multiple cohorts within a school. Small-scale investigations should involve as many students as possible, but at least 30 students as a minimum, wherever possible.

17. Q: Can the small-scale investigation be a series of workshops, each with a different theme?

A: No, the experiments within the investigation should be linked. For example, the students could have an overarching investigation question and undertake a series of different experiments to answer that question.

18. Do all of the schools recruited have to undertake the same small-scale investigation?

A: No, you can design several investigations which will be undertaken by your schools. This may work particularly well if you have recruited schools across different educational stages or are working with groups within your organisation who have different expertise.

19. Does the same investigation need to be repeated every year?

A: No, you can repeat the same investigation within schools each year or you may choose to work with schools on a new investigation each year. Ideally, you will work with different students and teachers within each school to maximise the reach and impact.

20. Q: Do I need to get ethics approval for my small-scale investigation?

A: Please use your judgement, and, where appropriate, consult your organisation and seek ethics approval. If the small-scale investigation includes components that rely on conducting experiments involving humans or animals, you will need to show in your application that you have thought about the ethics of the investigative project and how any ethical and safeguarding considerations will be dealt with.

21. Q: Can I design an investigation where the students themselves are the test subjects; for example, measuring their own health and well-being?

A: For safeguarding reasons, investigations of this nature should not be undertaken as part of this grant.

22. Can the investigation proposed be solely based on book or internet research?

A: No, while part of the investigation could involve students doing their own book or internet research, a significant part of the investigation should have a practical aspect and provide opportunities for students to develop practical STEM-based skills. For example, for mathematical or computing projects, this could involve modelling, developing simulations or coding.

23. Can I propose a careers-based activity instead of a small-scale investigation?

A: No, while we acknowledge the importance of careers education, one of the aims of this grant is to support practical-based learning within schools; however, we support organisations and STEM professionals sharing careers information as part of their interaction with schools.

24. Q: How many continuing professional development (CPD) events are expected for teachers and STEM professionals per year of the grant?

A: All of the schools and STEM professional participating should be invited to appropriate planned CPD events but there is no maximum number of CPD events expected per year. The content and delivery can be flexible around the needs of the stakeholders; please detail in your application what you intend to offer.

25. Q: Can CPD sessions be run virtually, or do they have to be in-person?

A: CPD sessions can be run using the delivery method that is most appropriate to your participants. Funding can be used to support teachers and STEM professionals to attend in-person CPD events, through reimbursement of expenses and cover costs for teachers.

26. Q: When will schools learn about the Partnership Grants scheme and be encouraged to apply?

A: We will support you to make schools aware of the opportunities for funding through the Partnership Grants scheme throughout the grant period. We would like to encourage them to apply for their own funding through Partnership Grants in Year 3 of the grant.

Application Process

27. Q: I have never used Flexi-Grant® before. Where can I get help?

A: The Royal Society uses the grants management system, Flexi-Grant® to administer the pre and post award stages of its grant giving work. You will need to create an account before you can start an application, which you can do on the Royal Society [Flexi-Grant® homepage](#). You can find more information about Flexi-Grant® here: [The Royal Society online Grants Management System – Flexi-Grant® | Royal Society](#). If you have any other questions related to completing your application, please contact the Schools Engagement team (education@royalsociety.org).

28. Q: Where can I see a copy of the Stage 1 and Stage 2 application forms before I start an application?

A: Blank PDF copies of the application forms can be found on the grants page. Full details of what should be included can be found in the [scheme notes](#).

29. Q: Do I need to get approval from my organisation before applying?

A: Yes, you will need to invite the head of your organisation (or department head, as appropriate) to submit a statement of support as part of the application. This must be completed before the application can be submitted. It is highly recommended that you contact your head of organisation as early as possible.

30. Q: I have completed all the sections, and the application is at 100% but I cannot see a button to submit my application.

A: All participants on the participants tab must appear as 'complete' in green before the submit button appears. If a participant appears in orange as 'incomplete' they need to login and select 'Save & Submit' on the application form page or 'Submit your contribution' on the summary page – otherwise you will not be able to submit your application.

31. Q: Does the application form have word limits?

A: No, there are no word limits within the application; however, please write as succinctly as possible.

Review and assessment

32. Q: Who reviews the Stage 1 applications?

A: Stage 1 applications will be reviewed by the Schools Engagement team who will undertake a simple eligibility check based on the information included. Please ensure you read the eligibility criteria carefully. Eligible applicants will be invited to complete the full Stage 2 application. Completed sections from the Stage 1 application will transfer automatically to the Stage 2 application.

33. Q: Who reviews the Stage 2 applications?

A: The Royal Society uses Selection Committees (also known as Panels) to assess all grant applications and to make recommendations on funding. Panels are chaired by a Fellow of the Royal Society and membership comprises members with expertise and experience appropriate to the scheme. Each application will be assessed by at least two members of the [Partnership Grants Allocating Panel](#), who will score the application against the criteria listed in the [scheme notes](#).

34. Q: How soon can I expect to hear the outcome of my application?

A: All applicants will be notified of the review outcome within three months of the application deadline. Successful applicants will be given a conditional offer of funding, dependent on an offer letter and agreement to the terms and conditions of the grant award.

35. Q: Who will make the decision on my application?

A: The Royal Society Schools Engagement team will initially check all applications against the published eligibility criteria before they are submitted for assessment. The Royal Society uses selection committees (also known as Panels) to assess all grant applications and to make recommendations on funding. Panels are chaired by a Fellow of the Royal Society, and membership comprises members with expertise and experience appropriate to the scheme. Each application will be assessed by at least two members of the [Partnership Grants Allocating Panel](#).

36. Q: What criteria will my application be assessed on?

A: The assessment criteria are described in the [scheme notes](#).

37. Q: Can I ask for feedback on my draft application?

A: Yes, if you would like feedback from the Schools Engagement Team on your draft application, please contact education@royalsociety.org; however, please note, we are only able to give feedback on your application compared to the requirements in the [scheme notes](#). Please note, our panel is completely independent; therefore, we are unable to give an indication of how likely it is that an application will be approved.

Funding

38. Q: How is the grant payable?

A: The grant is a maximum of £105,000 over three years with the following payment schedule: £45,000 on receipt of the grant in year one, £35,000 in year two and £25,000 in year three (on acceptance of an interim report). £10,000 of the grant will be retained in year three and paid

upon acceptance of the final impact report. Funding in years two and three will be dependent on receipt of the interim report by the Schools Engagement Team.

39. Q: Can I transfer unspent funds from years one and two?

A: Yes, with approval from the Schools Engagement Team.

40. Q: Can I use grant funding to hire a new member of staff?

A: Funding cannot be used to support overheads and direct staffing costs, such as pension contributions, benefits etc.; however, it can be used to support time needed for grant administration and coordination. For example, the funding could be used to pay for a proportion of a person's time to work on the grant e.g. X days per month at a rate of £X/day.

41. Q: Can I use the funding to pay STEM professionals to undertake visits in schools?

A: No. You cannot use this funding to make an honorarium payment to STEM professionals; however, if you secure match funding to pay STEM professionals to undertake school visits, this is acceptable, as long as it is clearly stated in your application. You can pay expenses to STEM professionals to cover their travel costs from the grant budget. You can also pay them for time spent preparing resources or delivering CPD to teachers or other STEM professionals, if appropriate.

42. Q: What is the maximum cost allowed against administrative support for the project?

A: There is no maximum cost allowed against administrative support for the project. While reviewing your planned budget as part of the assessment process, the panel will be looking to make sure that your allocation of funds makes sense for the project you intend to deliver. To give an example, if the small-scale investigation requires specialist equipment, the purchase of this equipment should be included in the budget so that it can be supplied to schools.

43. Q: Can the funding be used to pay external organisations/consultants, for example, to undertake evaluation or for CPD resources or delivery?

A: Yes; however, please detail in your application why an external organisation or consultant offers the best value for money.

44. Q: Do I need to keep and document all receipts for expenditure?

A: No, however; accurate reporting of spend against the grant budget will be expected as part of monitoring calls, interim reports, and the final impact report. The Royal Society reserves the right to request a financial statement from the award holder at any time during the grant.

45. Q: Can I make changes to the budget once the grant is underway?

A: Yes, we understand that changes may be required; however, any significant changes to the budget will need to be discussed with and agreed by the Royal Society Schools Engagement Team in advance before the changes are put in place.

46. Q: Where can I find more information on the funding arrangements?

A: The conditions of award (on the grant website) and, if awarded, the letter of offer will outline the specific funding arrangements between the Royal Society and the award holder for the grant.