

**REGIONAL STUDIES ASSOCIATION (RSA)
RSA EARLY CAREER RESEARCH GRANT
SCHEME (EC)**

HANDBOOK 2025

Contents

I.	The award in brief	2
II.	Submission process and assessment criteria	2
III.	Reporting.....	5
IV.	Financial guidelines	6
V.	Recognition / Intellectual property / Knowledge transfer.....	7
VI.	Ethics, misconduct and liabilities	8
VII.	FAQ	8
VIII.	Application Queries	9

I. The award in brief

This award is open to single applicants in their early career (five years' maximum between the date showing on the certificate and the application deadline). Applicants must be based within an eligible higher education institution (HEI) and must be a current, early career member of the Regional Studies Association and remain a member throughout the duration of the grant and reporting period. The RSA Early Career Awards are provided to support a discrete piece of regional studies and/or regional science research. The value of the award is up to £10,000 (c. \$13,300; c. €11,800). The award has a maximum time span of 18 months and reporting conditions apply. Only one award will be made to any successful applicant.

The allocation of monies in each round will be determined by the quality of applications. There will normally be up to three grants available in each round. The Association may choose to release further funds in any round.

The full Terms and Conditions governing awards will be provided to successful applicants as part of the formal grant offer and will be based on the general terms and conditions set out below.

II. Submission process and assessment criteria

A two stages application process is used for the RSA Early Career Grant. In the first round, applicants submit an expression of interest. Shortlisted applicants from this first round will then be asked to submit a full proposal.

The estimated process for the 2025 round is detailed below and the deadlines are as follows:

Application round	Closing Date	Recommendation of the Research Committee to the RSA Board or Executive Group and final decision	Applicants normally informed about the outcome
2025 ROUND			
First round EXPRESSION OF INTEREST	12th May 2025	n/a	September 2025
Final round FULL APPLICATION	October 2025	November 2025	November 2025

First selection round: Expression of Interest

The Expression of Interest will require you to complete the online application. If you are eligible for the Early Career RSA grant scheme, you will find the online application form in RSA Lounge (<https://lounge.regionalstudies.org/>), under Community, Grants.

- Title of the research project
- Timings of the research
- Summary - details of research and the advances it is hoped to make – word limit 500
- Brief overview of costs and budget

The Expression of Interest should be submitted via RSA Lounge, Community, Grants by 12th May 2025.

If you have any questions or need any help with the submission form, please send us an email to ecgrant@regionalstudies.org

Final selection round: Full Application

Successful applicants from the first selection round will be invited to submit a full application.

The following documents will need to be provided as part of the final application:

- Completed application form
 - Research proposal and dissemination plan (max 1,500 words)
 - Detailed budget
- A summarised CV listing a maximum of 5 relevant publications
- Supporting letter from your Higher Education Institution (HEI)
- Confirmation of early career status (a copy of your PhD certificate)

For the final round, applications must be made on the official application form, which will be enabled to successful applicants in RSA Lounge. Any questions or additional documentation should be submitted by email to ecgrant@regionalstudies.org.

A detailed budget will need to be submitted as part of the application form. The budget will form part of the research contract and applicants should expect to spend the money in accordance with what has been set out and should contact the Association if spending patterns are expected to vary by more than 20% as spending outside this parameter may not be reimbursed.

Final applications will be reviewed and assessed by the Research Committee and funding recommendations will be made to the RSA Board for decision.

The research is normally expected to commence from December 2025 at the earliest.

A successful applicant will receive an award letter, which will act as a contract between the Association and the grant holder. The research is expected to start within 6 months of the start date stated in the application form at the latest or the grant will be invalidated and the award reallocated. The award letter and any subsequent agreement will need to be signed by both the grant applicant and the higher education institution (HEI).

Assessment criteria

Incomplete applications or applications arriving after the closing date will not be considered. All applications should demonstrate that RSA funds are sought for a clearly defined, discrete piece of research in the field of regional studies and/or regional science, which will have an identifiable outcome on completion.

Applications will be assessed on the basis of (i) quality (ii) the deliverability of the proposed project and (iii) the capacity of the early-career researcher to develop as a leader in the field.

The decision will be taken by the RSA Board based on the recommendation of the Association's Research Committee. The Committee will reach its decision based on refereeing by panel members; additional referees will be sought where the subject area demands this. No feedback will be provided and correspondence will not be entered into. We regret that as a micro-research funder, and a registered charity relying in large part on the volunteer labour of our members who are mostly academics, the Association is not able to offer feedback on applications.

Expectations and obligations

The grant holder will be expected to play an RSA ambassadorial role for the duration of the grant – this may include speaking about the grant scheme at RSA events, writing short pieces for e-Zine *Regions*, the RSA Blog, RSA website, Facebook or Twitter and by making other nonspecific contributions to the profile of the Association.

General grant conditions and eligibility requirements

- A. Early career researchers – “Researchers who have been awarded a PhD within five years (or eight years, in case of documented significant career interruption for: maternity or parental leave; career’s responsibility; illness; National Service; or non-research employment) of the closing date for that particular round of the scheme are eligible to apply. No additional time allowance will be made for part-time employment. PhD award date is taken to mean the date of the award by the University – usually the date on the PhD certificate a copy of which will be required.”
- B. For the purposes of clarity, this scheme is only available to post-doctoral researchers who have received their certificate on the date of Expression of Interest deadline at the latest.
- C. The EC Grant Scheme is provided to support a discrete piece of regional studies and/or regional science research. The value of the award is up to £10,000 (for your information: c. \$13,300; c. €11,800). All grant sums are quoted and paid in British Pounds Sterling. The award has a maximum time span of 18 months and reporting conditions apply.
- D. Applicants must be members of the Association and remain in membership throughout the period of the grant and reporting period. Recipients of this grant must be an individual member of the Regional Studies Association in any membership band - A, B, C or D at the time of application and remain a member until the end of the reporting period and acceptance of the end of award report whichever is the latest.
- E. Applications from corporate membership are not eligible. For clarity, corporate members may not apply for this award either as organisations and nor may individuals as representatives of corporate members.
- F. Grants will only be allocated to single researchers. Co-authored or team applications are not eligible.
- G. Members in any territorial band may apply for grant funding.
- H. Grants will normally only be awarded to higher education institutions (HEI) or recognized research institutions as grant holders will be subject to the research rules and ethics of their employing institutions. Applicants must be based within an eligible HEI. RSA will allow applications from early career researchers on temporary contracts with a recognised HEI provided that evidence is supplied showing that the contract covers as a minimum, the period of research and reporting period as defined in the application.
- I. The grant will be administered through the HEI which will normally be an institution with degree awarding powers or a national research institute. The grant holders will be subject to the research rules and ethics of their employing institutions.
- J. Only one Early Career grant is possible per member.
- K. No co-funding is possible.
- L. Only one reapplication is allowed. Where referees’ comments have been given to the applicant, these should be addressed in any re-application. Candidates may only reapply if they are still eligible as early career researchers. Note there is no obligation on the Association to give feedback on applications and discussion will not be entered into.
- M. Members will only receive one award across the three individual RSA research grant schemes (Early Career Grant scheme, MeRSA Research Grant and FeRSA Research Grant scheme) in order to maximize access to Association funding. For clarity – if you have already received an Early Career Research Grant you are not eligible to apply for the MeRSA or FeRSA Grant Schemes.

- N. If a similar research application has been submitted or is about to be submitted to any other organisation(s), full details should be provided in the application form. If both are successful, the applicant will have to decide if she/he wishes to accept the RSA Early Career Scheme and turn down the other offer.
- O. The project must be solely funded by the Association, but applicants may think of using this funding as leverage for further funding for future projects. The grant must be used to fund a discreet project which could for example be a pilot study.
- P. The Association's grant funding will be acknowledged in all reports, presentations, and publications.
- Q. Career interruptions of less than one month will not be considered. The following types of interruption will be considered:
 - a. career responsibility;
 - b. disruption due to international relocation for research employment not exceeding 3 months per international relocation;
 - c. illness;
 - d. maternity or parental leave; and/or
 - e. unemployment, or non-research employment for a total of one year.

Non-Eligibility

You may not apply for this grant if:

- You are a PhD student. This scheme is only available to post-doctoral researchers who have received their certificate.
- You are not active RSA member.
- You have already been awarded an Early Career, FeRSA or MeRSA Research Grants.
- Corporate members of the RSA are not eligible to apply for this funding.

RSA Members should note that they are not permitted to hold more than one consecutive RSA research award at a time. For clarity, members holding a Research Network Grant, Policy Expo or Travel grant may not apply for the EC until their existing award has expired and all reporting requirements have been satisfactorily delivered and accepted by the Association. Members are only permitted to have only one of the RSA Individual Research Grants (Early Career, MeRSA, FeRSA). For example, if you have held an Early Career grant you are ineligible for the MeRSA and FeRSA grants. For clarity, after successful submission of all deliveries for the Early Career, MeRSA or FeRSA award, a member may apply for the Policy Expo, Research Network, Travel Grant or Conference Bursaries.

This is in the interest of enabling access to the Association's limited resources to as many members as possible and thus to support a multiplicity of scholars and their different approaches and topics of interest and is consistent with the Association's pluralist approach to regional studies.

III. Reporting

Three reports are required to comply with the grant scheme:

1. **One short midterm activity narrative report** within 9 months of beginning the research
2. **The end of award report (narrative and financial)** within six weeks of completing the research. The end of award report will include both a narrative and financial section. The financial report is expected to be completed by the HEI.
3. **An impact report** to capture impacts within 12 months of completing the research.

Please note, that if the grant holder will not fulfil all requirements, the RSA reserves the right to do not refund any claims.

In addition to the grant sum, the RSA will cover one Article Publishing Charge (APC) to publish an article in the RSA's Open Access journal *Regional Studies*, *Regional Science* that will include acknowledgement of the grant and therefore, the RSA Research Committee will be looking at the publishable potential of the research proposal when assessing the application.

Any other relevant updates, in the form of brief reports, news items, pictures, pieces for the RSA Blog, RSA website, Facebook or Twitter, and the members' magazine – Regions are strongly encouraged. Information provided in any submitted report may be used in part (extract) or entirety to promote the research within Association publications and to the members and wider community but in all cases this will be in consultation with the grant holder.

Reports should be submitted using the appropriate form which can be downloaded from the Association's website: <https://www.regionalstudies.org/funding/early-career-grant-scheme/>

IV. Financial guidelines

This grant can also be used to conduct a piece of research that would lead to a larger grant application, or to explore niche and development areas that are not yet ready for a larger application.

Eligible Costs

Funds may be spent to cover the direct expenses incurred in planning, conducting, and developing the research, including but not limited to:

- Project planning and development costs (cost of travel nationally and overseas) Travel and subsistence for the researcher
- Up to a non-negotiable maximum of £2,500 teaching or research buy-out.
- Up to a non-negotiable maximum of £5,000 for research assistance.
- Up to £1,000 of the Early Career Grant may be used towards attending an RSA Conference (travel, subsistence and conference fees at the applicable country band fee) to present a paper and/or run a workshop that will include acknowledgment of the grant.
- Consumables – purchase of datasets, photocopies, microfilms etc and any minor items that will be used during the course of the project.
- Costs of interpreters in the field and transcription costs of interviews.
- Costs of preparing camera ready copy, copy-editing, proof reading, indexing where this is not borne by the publisher.
- Cost of setting up the research website.
- Costs of deposit of digital material in a suitably accessible repository may be considered.
- Cost of reproduction rights will be considered provided that there is a contract for publication in place.

Ineligible Costs

Applicants registered with special needs may consult the Association about possible exceptions.

Ineligible costs are:

- Institutional overheads
- Payment to the principal researcher in lieu of salary or for personal maintenance at home
- Equipment including but not limited to computing, printing, cameras, telephones of any type, recording equipment etc
- Software – of any description
- Subventions for direct production costs (printing, binding, distribution, marketing etc)
- Books
- Childcare
- Insurance
- RSA Membership Fee

Claims

The Regional Studies Association is a learned society and a registered charity. The funding for the Early Career Scheme has been generated by the Association. Grant holders and their institutions are expected not only to comply with the terms of the scheme but also with the spirit of the scheme. If

you and/or your HEI are not certain if an expense is eligible or not, please consult the Association prior to financial commitment. Expenses deemed as ineligible will not be covered.

Claims may only be submitted for items listed in the application unless prior permission from the Association is granted for virement of monies to new headings.

A detailed budget was submitted as part of the application form. The budget is a part of the research contract and applicants should expect to spend the money in accordance with what was set out and spending outside this parameter may not be reimbursed. Any budget changes should be communicated to the RSA in advance and are subject to approval. Please note, that if the grant holder does not fulfil all the requirements, the RSA reserves the right not to refund claims.

Please note that if a grant holder does not claim any refund within 6 months of his/her end of award report, claims will not be reimbursed by the RSA.

Payment Schedule

A first payment of £5,000 (or its equivalent in dollars or euros) or half of the total grant to be awarded, will be paid at the commencement of the grant with any remainder of the grant up to a maximum of £5,000 to be invoiced by the HEI. The final payment will be made only on acceptance of the end of award report by Research Committee. In case the Research Committee finds the report unsatisfactory, resubmission will be requested and funds will be withheld until the report is acceptable.

If the applicant's HEI is outside the UK it should be noted that the grant is awarded in Great British Pound Sterling (GBP) and that the exchange rate risk must be assured by the HEI. Transfers will be made in GBP sterling at the prevailing exchange rate. Where transfers are made by bank transfer, the costs will be borne by the HEI.

V. Recognition / Intellectual property / Knowledge transfer

The support of the Regional Studies Association should be acknowledged when the research results are presented. Copies of any publications should be given to the Association. The receipt of the grant should be acknowledged in all publications. Where possible and appropriate the Association expects, that datasets arising from the research will be deposited in a public repository and that the whereabouts of the dataset will be made known.

The Association wishes to have the opportunity to support all its researchers and therefore if any events or promotions are to be organised as a part of the research, the RSA should be alerted so that they may assist with marketing.

The RSA requires the right to access all unpublished papers, records, data or collections resulting from the work carried out under an RSA Early Career Grant scheme, some of which may be required for Annual Reports and Board Meetings. For clarity, this clause is intended to ensure that the RSA can maximise exposure of published outcomes from RSA funded research and reference it within RSA reports, websites, blogs etc. It is not intended to require the sharing of information collected under conditions of anonymity and confidentiality. Grant awardees with concerns in this should contact the office for further explanation. The RSA may, at any time, require detailed information on the results of work funded through the scheme for use in reports and financial audits.

Knowledge Transfer

The RSA recognises and encourages knowledge transfer and actively supports partnership and other schemes that enable this. Recipients of the EC Grant Scheme are encouraged to ensure that the outcomes of this research investment are used to the benefit of the regional studies and/or

regional science community and should inform the Association where research materials are deposited.

VI. Ethics, misconduct and liabilities

The RSA accepts no responsibility for the views or opinions expressed by the grant holder. It is the responsibility of the HEI to ensure that the research is organised and undertaken within a framework of best practice that recognises the various factors, including rigour, respect and responsibility, that may influence or impact on a research project. Grant holders will be required to comply with their HEI's ethics code and this will be referenced in the document signed off by the HEI.

It is the responsibility of the HEI to ensure that all necessary permissions are obtained before the application is sent to the Association and that the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the research are clear.

The grant holder and the HEI are responsible for any matters arising out of the process of a grant holder's research, the institution holding the grant or from the results of the research.

The grant holder and the HEI are responsible for any human resources related, health and safety issue (the HEI health and safety regulations will apply). The Regional Studies Association accepts no responsibility for issues directly or indirectly resulting from the funded research, the grant holder or other organisations and individuals involved.

GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation)

It is the HEI's responsibility to ensure that the research complies with the all correct GDPR, the Data Protection Act and PECR (Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations).

VII. FAQ

1. Are virements between headings allowed?

A 20% virement is allowed between headings without prior permission except in the case of teaching/research buy-out which is capped at £2,500 and research assistance which is capped at £5,000.

2. Can members hold more than one RSA grant/award at a time?

No. Members should note that they are not permitted to hold more than one consecutive RSA research award at a time. For clarity, members holding a Research Network Grant, Policy Expo or an RSA Individual Research Grant (Early Career, FeRSA or Travel grant) may not apply for the MeRSA until their existing award has expired and all reporting requirements have been satisfactorily delivered and accepted by the Association.

Members are only permitted to have one individual grant. For example, if you have held an Early Career grant you are ineligible for the MeRSA and FeRSA grants.

For clarity, after successful submission of all deliveries for the Early Career, MeRSA or FeRSA award, a member may apply for the Policy Expo, Research Network, Travel Grant or Conference Bursaries.

3. Can the researcher take a period of time out of work during the grant period?

This is at the discretion of the Chair of the RSA Research Committee and RSA Chief Executive and would not normally exceed six months but may in exceptional circumstances extend to one year.

4. What is the latest that a grant holder can delay the start of their project?

Six months maximum – not negotiable. After this period the money is reclaimed by the Association.

5. Can part-time researchers apply for the Early Career Grant?

Part time researchers can apply but the research project must still be completed within 18 months.

6. Can researchers apply for funding for a project which has already started?

No, retrospective funding is not allowed.

7. What about insurance, health and safety, and liabilities while the researcher is working?

Please consult the section on ethics, misconduct and liabilities.

8. Is the Early Career Grant portable?

Yes, provided that there is a common agreement between the grant holder, the original and the new host institution, and only with advance written permission from the Association.

9. Is a change of scientific theme, methodology, scientific strategy and/or objectives allowed during the grant?

Any significant changes in the direction of the project will require written permission from the Association.

VIII. Application Queries

Any queries should be addressed to ecgrant@regionalstudies.org or by telephoning +44 (0)1273 698 017.