

**REGIONAL STUDIES ASSOCIATION
Research Network Grant Scheme (RN)
2026**

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I. Introduction

Founded in 1965, the Regional Studies Association (RSA) is a leading global learned society in regional studies and regional science. Through our international membership, we provide an authoritative voice, leadership and network for academics, students, practitioners and policy makers. Our main activities are the publication of our journals *Regional Studies*; *Spatial Economic Analysis*; *Territory, Politics, Governance*; *Regional Studies*, *Regional Science*; *Area Development and Policy*; and *Finance & Space*, *Regions and the RSA Blog*; our international conference and meeting programme, our Grant Schemes (Start-Up Grants, Early Career Grants, Membership Research Grants, Fellowship Research Grants, Travel Grants and Policy Expo) and our Research Network Scheme.

In 1985, the RSA Board agreed to introduce Research Networks (formerly referred to as Working Groups) to the Association's activity portfolio. A list of current and previous Research Networks is available at <https://www.regionalstudies.org/funding/research-network-grant-scheme/>. In 2025, the Association introduced an increased Research Network funding scheme up to £11,000, which was part of the 60th Anniversary celebration of the Association.

This handbook combines the Regional Studies Association's various policies, procedures, and documents relating to RSA Research Networks. The full Terms and Conditions governing the grant will be provided to successful applicants as part of the formal grant offer and based on the general terms and conditions below.

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

II. Creating a Research Network

RSA Research Networks are formed by RSA members interested in meeting to examine an issue that responds to the priorities of the Association and of interest and concern to members of the Association and non-members. The problem does not necessarily need a direct policy focus, but the examination would typically lead to policy-related conclusions.

In considering whether to apply for a new Research Network, reviewing the areas already covered by current RSA Research Networks is necessary. If there is no existing or closely related Research Network, then you will need to complete the application form available at <https://www.regionalstudies.org/funding/research-network-grant-scheme/> and send it to the RSA office via email researchnetwork@regionalstudies.org.

Proposals will be selected using the following criteria:

- Topic of interest to the RSA and its members.
- Commitment to maximise participation.
- Commitment to promote the RSA through dissemination, reporting of findings and recruiting new members.
- Financial viability.

The Research Network should last for a maximum duration of three years.

III. Research themes

Research Networks need to respond to the priorities of the Association. The RSA Strategy 2026-30 highlights the Association's priorities, which are to:

- Champion high-quality regional research

- Strengthen regional research and knowledge networks
- Grow and diversify the regional studies community
- Contribute to a just and sustainable future

IV. The RSA's expectations from Research Networks' organisers

- The title of the Research Network should be "*The Regional Studies Association Research Network on...*", be prominently displayed on all related materials and listed first if there is more than one funding source.
- The Research Network should last for a maximum duration of three years.
- To immediately inform the RSA office about any changes or updates in the organisation of events, program or budget.
- To acknowledge the financial support of the RSA in any promotion and publicity material for events.
- To provide the Association with suitable materials to launch the Research Network, including information on the events and activities for the Association's website and make appropriate links from group members' websites to the Association's relevant web pages.
- To publicly acknowledge the support of the RSA, introduce the Association, and mention its aims and objectives during research network events
- All presentations related to the network-funded project must use the official Research Network and RSA logos, which the office can provide.
- To promote the events organised for RSA members and non-members by issuing an open call for attendance.
- Provide plenty of notice of events and activities to the RSA office to allow time for the Network web pages to be updated and include the call in the monthly eBulletin.
- To provide dissemination plans for the research findings via publication in professional journals, academic journals, books, journal special issues and trade press where relevant and to carry out this dissemination.
- All post-event or activity publications should acknowledge support from the Association in a prominent manner.
- Following each event, provide detailed participants' names and email information to the RSA office for inclusion in the RSA ebulletin mailing list, provided that this does not contravene local data protection regulations.
- To provide the full programme of each event, including the list of papers presented.
- To provide detailed accounts, receipts, and invoices to the Association's office to reimburse funds via the claim form.
- To ensure that the Research Network operates within the overall policy and legal framework set by the RSA Board, including sound financial management.
- To inform all delegates of the rules of claims and reimbursement before the event.
- To encourage presentations from early career and student members of the Association.
- Because the Research Networks are part of the RSA's overall charitable activity, the Association's name and the phrase 'The Regional Studies Association is a registered charity (No. 1084165) and a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (No. 4116288).' should appear on all correspondence and publicity material that is sent to or may be read by a third party (for example on a letter to venues regarding room hire), whether in hard copy or electronic form. If you omit this information, you are breaching legislation and may be

liable for the legal consequences. A legal disclaimer must cover any web-based communications (for example, if you have a website).

V. Management and membership of Research Networks

This award is open to RSA members in any membership band - A, B, C or D at the time of application. Each organiser listed in the application must be a current member of the RSA at the time of the application and throughout the duration of the Research Network. Claims will not be reimbursed if an organiser's membership lapses during the Research Network.

The Research Network must be organised and managed by RSA members. All organisers must be and remain members of the Association throughout the entire duration of the Research Network. They should come from **different countries** and can be from any membership category. The Association will consider research networks proposed by students and early career researchers and those in the other membership categories.

RSA Members should note that they cannot hold more than one consecutive RSA research award. For clarity, members holding a Research Network Grant, Policy Expo or Travel grant may not apply for the MeRSA, FeRSA or Early Career grant until their existing award has expired and all reporting requirements have been satisfactorily delivered and accepted by the Association. For clarity, after successfully submitting 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. It is consistent with the Association's pluralist approach to regional studies.

VI. Financial guidelines

Grant awarded

The maximum funding for the Research Network is:

- **£11,000 for newly established networks.**
- **£8,250 for renewing networks.**

If the costs of events exceed the awarded sum, the organisers will be responsible for covering the extra costs. Where a Research Network is to be co-funded, the applicants should indicate the level or expected level of co-funding, details of the co-funder, and any specific conditions on their award of support.

The RSA Research Network grant is never intended to allow the organisers to make a surplus from an event, and to do so would not be in the spirit of the scheme. The Association will consider applications in which a nominal entry fee may be charged to attendees, but prefers that RSA members are not charged or, if unavoidable, are charged at a lower rate than non-RSA members.

The RSA will not reimburse invoices exceeding £11,000 as agreed in the Award Letter, expenses that occurred by non-RSA members (at the time of the expense and of the claim) or invoices that do not follow the guidelines listed below. The RSA will keep any unused monies from the sum awarded. When budgeting, please think of all possible expenditures.

Eligible costs

The Research Network organisers may not claim their travel and accommodation expenses as this is not in the spirit of the scheme. Funds may be spent to cover the direct costs incurred

in organising events. Monies awarded under the Research Network scheme can be paid only in the following ways:

1. Meeting costs

- Grants can cover the costs of meetings' refreshments such as tea/coffee/biscuits, sandwich/buffet lunches, and a modest evening dinner for participants. The award can cover alcohol to accompany one event dinner organised by the Research Network's organisers. It will not cover bar bills of individuals and additional alcohol consumption apart from that dinner.
- Where it is impossible to avoid such charges, monies may be used to hire meeting facilities. The Association expects these to be made available free of charge by universities.
- The monies may be used to hire audio-visual equipment where these charges cannot be avoided.
- The monies may help with field trip costs such as coach hire.
- The monies may be used to cover modest charges for copying meeting materials, such as handouts and purchasing badges.

2. Plenary speakers

From within the Research Network, a maximum of £4,000 may be used for travel and accommodation expenses of plenary speakers. **Only those who are individual members of the RSA at the time of the event can be reimbursed.**

3. Provision of travel and accommodation bursaries to the following categories of RSA members who attend the meeting as delegates

- any student member of the RSA
- any early career member of the RSA
- any associate (retired) member of the RSA
- any member based in a Band B, C or D country

Only RSA members can be reimbursed. For clarity, only student and early career members based in a Band A country and all membership categories in Bands B, C and D may claim expenses through the Research Network scheme; members in any other category of Band A are not eligible. Any claim for expenses made by a corporate member (Bands B, C and D only) should note that their expenses can only be refunded to the organisation holding the corporate membership.

All organisers are strongly advised to set a maximum ceiling for each participant awarded a bursary – this avoids financial shocks from unexpectedly large claims. Usually, travel and accommodation bursary claims would not exceed £400.00. The RSA will only reimburse economy class transport (train, plane, bus, underground and ferry), petrol costs met, and single rate accommodation. Claims for subsistence will not be met (i.e. you cannot claim for food or drink).

Organisers should inform all their delegates that bursaries apply only to participants who are RSA members at the time of the event. *Please note that claimants' membership status will be checked before reimbursement.*

As part of this grant, up to £1,000 can be spent on travel and accommodation bursaries for special sessions at RSA conferences.

4. Administrative support

The Research Network grant allows organisers some administrative support (a maximum of £1,500) but does not allow staff employment.

Payment schedule and reimbursement Procedure

The Research Networks' organisers will nominate a person when applying for the award, who will be responsible for all the claims throughout the Research Network. The organisers are expected to send the names of all participants awarded a travel and accommodation bursary to the RSA office. Participants who the organisers have agreed to receive a bursary will need to forward their signed claim forms and original receipts to the person who will correspond with the RSA office for all claims.

The Regional Studies Association holds the funds, and reimbursements are made via the claim form or invoices supported by original receipts. It is important that invoices are made out to the Regional Studies Association and that you send them to the RSA office for direct payment. The Association undertakes to make prompt reimbursements.

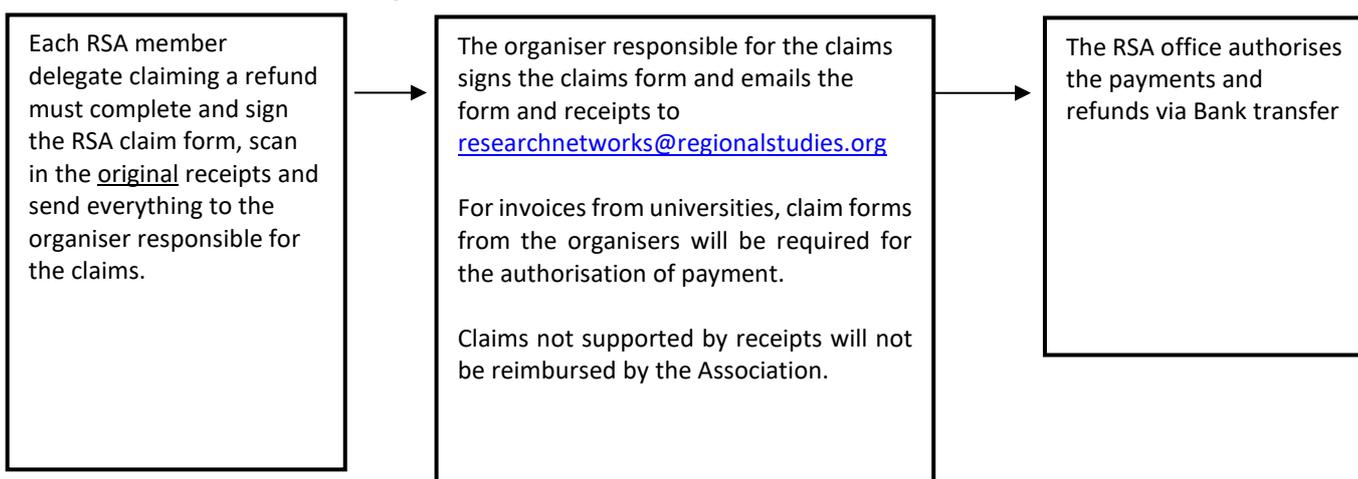
The organisers of the funded events are directly responsible for the claims and any delay in reimbursing expenses due to mismanagement of claims. The Association can only provide reimbursement once the claim forms (with attached original receipts) have been signed and sent to the office for processing by the organisers.

The RSA will reimburse the Research Network for production by the Research Network of evidence that all grant conditions have been fulfilled. This may include (but is not limited to) the output of event report forms, photographs and delegates' lists of events, evidence of dissemination of RSA marketing materials and presentations during the event. Please consult the guidelines for more information.

The last £2,000 of the Research Network grant will be retained until receipt and acceptance of the final report.

At the end of the Research Network, all unspent monies revert to the Regional Studies Association.

Research Network claims procedure.



Please note that delegates are not to claim refunds directly from the RSA office, and the Research Networks organisers must sign each claim. Refunds will be made only if all the organisers are members of the Association and once the office has received the event report and supporting materials.

Please note that if a Research Network does not claim a refund within 6 months of its last event, the RSA will not reimburse the claim.

VII. Research Networks' activities, outputs and dissemination of findings

Research Networks are expected to last three years, but longer-lasting applications will be considered on merit. Grant holders may reapply for further funding for the renewed network. Continuation applications should demonstrate progression of the themes for discussion and a more exhaustive trawl for participants. Research Networks may only hold one award at a time.

Inactive Research Networks waste the RSA's and the organisers' resources and reflect poorly on the Association. The Board has, therefore, decided that, as a matter of policy, any Research Network that does not accept, sign, and return the Award Letter within 6 months of being sent to the organisers will be deemed obsolete.

Research Networks are expected to start their work promptly following the award, and failure to do so may result in the award being closed. Furthermore, if the Research Network does not provide its final report, the final payment for monies spent will be retained, and steps may be taken to recover other funds expended. Of course, this would be a last resort, and the Association hopes it will not face such difficulties.

Outputs and dissemination of findings:

- One introductory report on the new Research Network submitted to *Regions* (more details here: <https://regions.regionalstudies.org/>) after the Award letter has been sent; other trade journals and magazines on the Association and other websites, and via appropriate emailing distribution lists;
- To organise at least four Research Network (online or in-person) events. Please note that the RSA office can support online events, including IT support, a webpage, registration page, international marketing support, and a Zoom license. If this is of interest to you, please get in touch with Samantha Wannop (samantha.wannop@regionalstudies.org).
- To organise at least two Special Sessions held at one or two RSA conference(s). Please check the RSA website <https://www.regionalstudies.org/conferences-events/> for the call for special sessions.
- Event reports (including good-quality photos) for each Research Network event need to be submitted to the RSA within 3 months after each event. A template for such reports is available at <https://www.regionalstudies.org/funding/research-network-grant-scheme/>. These reports will be published on the RSA website and in the *Regions* eZine.
- To submit a paper to *Regional Studies*, *Regional Science (RSRS)*. The RSA will cover the Article Processing Charge (APC) for a paper in RSRS on top of the grant. For more details on RSRS, go to <https://www.regionalstudies.org/publication/regional-studies-regional-science/>
- Additional plans, e.g., for a journal special issue or edited book, are strongly encouraged, even if aspirational and should be clearly explained.
- Additional relevant updates are strongly encouraged, such as brief reports, news items, pictures, and pieces for the RSA website, RSA Blog, or LinkedIn.
- To provide a final report at the end of the Research Network (within 6 months after the final event) of up to 750 words that summarises the Research Network and its activities.
- Any publications that flow from the research of the Research Network should acknowledge the financial support of the Regional Studies Association.

The RSA office team will support Research Network organisers in advertising their events and activities to the broader membership and disseminating information following meetings. Award holders may always seek advice from the Office but have no direct call on the staff team's time beyond this (i.e., the office staff will not be able to book rooms, arrange catering, book flights, staff the registration desk, or otherwise support the activities of Research Networks).

VIII. Application procedure and renewal process

To apply, log into RSA Lounge and click on Community, Grants. If you are eligible to apply, you will see a link to the Research Network application form. application form will be available at <https://www.regionalstudies.org/funding/research-network-grant-scheme/> and will require the following information:

- Propose New Network
- Research Network Title
- List the Organisers (Add Organisers by Email or Membership Number) *Please note all organisers need to be an active RSA member for the system to recognise them.*
- Summary about your Research Network (150 words)
- Select the RSA Research Theme(s) that links to your Research Network
- Research Network Start and End dates
- Costs and Budget breakdown
- Agree the Terms and Conditions.

Following a Save, a second section will open:

- Network Event Details (up to 6 including 2 Special Sessions at RSA Conferences – these remain editable following a successful application). (Include Event Name, Event Date, Special Session? Event Location (country), Event details)
- Proposed speakers (Include Name, Institution, Role, Themes, Country)
- Proposed Marketing of Activities
- Proposed Dissemination of Outcomes
- Total Funding Amount Requested
- Final Submission

Timing for applications

All completed applications are considered first by the Research Committee, which may take references on the proposals and will make a recommendation on funding to the Board of Trustees. The Board may delegate to the Research Committee or to one or more Trustees, plus the Chief Executive, any more detailed negotiations and final decision if it deems appropriate.

For renewals, an application form will need to be filled in, and details of how the renewal proposal aims to develop the findings of the original or previous Research Network will be sought by the Research Committee and the Board. Proposals are considered by the Association’s Board, which meets regularly during the year. Renewal applications must be received in line with the application deadlines stated on the RSA website at www.regionalstudies.org/funding/research-network-grant-scheme

The estimated timings for the 2026/27 round are as follows:

Application closing date	Applicants are usually informed about the outcome
27 th October 2026, 23:59 BST	January the following year

IX. 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. 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. At any time, the RSA may 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 partnerships and other schemes that enable this.

GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation)

The HEI are responsible for ensuring that the research complies with all correct GDPR, the Data Protection Act and PECR (Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations).

X. Ethics, misconduct and liabilities

Research Network organisers should ensure that the appropriate insurance is in place with their institution.

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 must comply with their HEI's ethics code, which 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 from the process of a grant holder's research, the institution holding the grant, or the research results.

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

XI. FAQ

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

No. Members should note that they cannot 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 successfully submitting 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.

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

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

3. 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.

4. Can part-time researchers apply for the Research Network Grant?

Part-time researchers can apply, but the project must still be completed within 3 years.

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

No, retrospective funding is not allowed.

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

Please consult the section on ethics, misconduct and liabilities.

7. Is the Research Network Grant portable?

Yes, provided 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.

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

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

XII. Application Queries

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

Regional Studies Association,
Sussex Innovation Centre, Falmer Brighton BN1 9SB|United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0)1273 698 017
Email: office@regionalstudies.org
www.regionalstudies.org

Reg. Charity No. 1084165 – Reg. in England and Wales No. 411628

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