

Start-Up Grant Scheme Handbook

Introduction

The Regional Studies Association (RSA) is dedicated to supporting regional and urban research efforts globally and to disseminating research evidence. As part of these commitments and in celebration of its 60th anniversary year, the RSA has launched the Start-Up Grant Scheme to build research capacity in emerging economies and the Global South. These grants are available to regional and urban researchers in RSA membership Bands C and D.

This grant aims to fund various research-related activities, including:

- Accessing data or literature
- Conducting fieldwork (e.g., travel expenses or research assistance)
- Research-related publication costs (excluding APC fees) or direct production costs (e.g., printing, binding, distribution)

The scheme also supports pilot studies that could contribute to larger research projects. Pilot studies may address any topic, including conceptual, methodological or empirical research, or policy impacts with relevance to regions or cities.

Eligibility criteria

1. Membership type:

- Open to all individual RSA members: individual, early career, student, and emeritus memberships.
- Corporate members are not eligible to apply, whether as organisations or individuals representing corporate members.

2. Location:

- Applicants **must** live and work in Band C or D countries.

- Researchers from Band C or D countries are not eligible if they live or work in Band A or B countries.
3. Membership status:
- Applicants must be active RSA members at the time of application and must remain members until the grant report and any associated deliverables have been accepted.
4. Grant holder status:
- Available only to those not currently in receipt of another RSA grant
5. Institutional affiliation:
- Applicants must be employed by a recognised research institute¹ willing to manage finances, oversee research ethics, and provide appropriate insurance.
 - The RSA cannot give grants directly to individuals. The grant must be managed through the applicant's institution.
6. The RSA will consider match-funded applications, as long as there are appropriate acknowledgements and agreed-upon intellectual property (IP) arrangements between the researcher and the other funders.
-

The award in brief

- Grant value: Up to £1,000.
 - Research period: Must be completed within 9 months.
 - Reporting requirements: Reports must be submitted within one year from the date of the award letter.
 - Forthcoming deadline: see website for details.
-

Assessment criteria

1. Alignment with the aims of the grant scheme

Reviewers will assess the extent to which the proposal supports regional and/or urban research in Band C and/or D countries. The use of the grant award to support relevant research-related activity (accessing literature or data, conducting fieldwork, research-related publication costs, or research assistance) will be taken into account. For pilot

¹ This grant may be available to applicants within research institutes with HEI-equivalent status or with equivalent ethical research practices and professional indemnity in place. The RSA reserves the right to refuse an application from any institution.

studies, any topic, conceptual, methodological, empirical research, or policy impacts, relating to regions or cities will be assessed.

2. Credibility of the project

The aims, timeline and use of grant funding will be assessed, to judge whether the project is coherent, achievable and worthwhile.

3. Financial justification

The Research Committee will judge whether the funding is required in order for the research activities to take place; the extent to which the grant funding will be used well; the extent to which the funding might assist with a larger or future project, whether externally funded or not.

Application process

How to apply:

Applications must be submitted online via the RSA Lounge. Eligible applicants will have the following fields pre-populated:

- Applicant's name, title, surname
- RSA membership number
- Contact details (postal address, telephone number, email)
- Information on any previous RSA grants (e.g., Early Career Grant, Fellowship Research Grant, etc.)
- Higher Education Institution (HEI) or research institution affiliation: Job Title, Position

Applicants should be prepared to enter the following:

- Title of the research project
- Aims and justification for the research (max 500 words)
- Timings for the research
- Research budget and details of further funding (if any)

You may be asked separately for a copy of your CV and your Institutional Head of Department contact details.

Decision process:

- Incomplete or late applications will not be considered.
- Applications will be reviewed by the RSA Research Committee, which will make the final decision on all applications.
- The RSA Board will be notified of all successful applications
- No individual feedback on applications will normally be provided.

Award letter and payment:

- Successful applicants will receive an award letter acting as a contract between the RSA, the grant holder, and their HEI/research institution.
 - Both the grant holder and the HEI/research institution must sign the award letter and related agreements.
-

Reporting requirements:

1. End of award report
 - Due within one year of completing the project
 - The report should include both a narrative and a financial section.
 - The financial section must be signed by the HEI.
 2. An article for the RSA Blog including relevant photos, graphs, or figures.
 3. The RSA grant should be acknowledged in any reports, presentations, or publications related to the project.
-

Ineligible costs:

The following costs are not eligible:

- Institutional overheads
- Payment to the principal researcher for personal maintenance or salary replacement
- Childcare expenses
- Insurance
- Conference fees
- RSA membership fee

Note: Applicants with special needs may contact the Association to discuss potential exceptions to the ineligible costs.

Claims and payment:

- The RSA is a registered charity, and funding for this grant comes from the Association and its members.
- Grant holders and their institutions must comply with both the terms and the aims of the scheme.
- If uncertain about the eligibility of an expense, applicants or their affiliated institution should consult the RSA before making any financial commitments. Ineligible expenses will not be reimbursed.

Payment process:

- The grant is for up to £1000. Up to 50% of this (£500) can be paid in advance of the project start. The remaining £500 will be paid upon acceptance of the end-of-award report.
- If the report is unsatisfactory, payment will be withheld until a satisfactory report is submitted.
- The grant will be paid in British Pounds Sterling (GBP). The HEI is responsible for managing exchange rate risks and will bear the costs of bank transfer fees.

Budget:

- A budget must be submitted with the application. The grant must be spent according to the approved budget.
- Spending outside the approved budget may not be reimbursed. Any budget changes must be communicated to the RSA in advance and approved.

Ethics, misconduct, and liabilities:

- Applicants must be affiliated to an eligible HEI or research institution.
- Grants are typically awarded to higher education institutions (HEIs) or recognised research institutions, so that grant holders are subject to the research and ethics rules of their employing institutions.
- Grant holders must adhere to the research and ethics rules set by their affiliated institution.

- It is the responsibility of the affiliated institution to ensure that the research is conducted within a framework of best practices, which include factors like rigor, respect, and responsibility.
- The applicant must ensure that all necessary permissions are obtained before the application is submitted to the RSA and that the roles and responsibilities of everyone involved in the research are clearly defined.
- Both the grant holder and the HEI are responsible for any issues arising from the research process, the institution holding the grant, or the outcomes of the research.
- The HEI or research institute is responsible for handling any human resources-related health and safety issues, following the institution's health and safety regulations.
- The HEI is responsible for protecting the personal data of anyone involved in the research or as subjects of the research.
- The RSA accepts no responsibility for:
 - the views or opinions expressed by the grant holder or through the research outputs
 - any issues that arise directly or indirectly from the funded research, including any issues involving the grant holder, other organisations, or individuals involved.

This handbook is designed to guide applicants through the RSA Start-Up Grant Scheme and ensure that all processes are followed for a successful application and grant management.