

**REGIONAL STUDIES ASSOCIATION (RSA)
FELLOWSHIP RESEARCH GRANT SCHEME**

FeRSA HANDBOOK 2026

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I. The award in brief

In 2015, the RSA Board introduced the ***RSA Fellowship Research Grant Scheme (FeRSA)*** to the Association's activity portfolio to support the research of established researchers and long-term RSA members.

This award is open to Fellows of the RSA only. RSA Fellows have been continuous members for at least 5 years and have also been defined as "active members". This means that they have contributed to the life of the Association through serving on the Board or committees, have spoken at conferences, have applied for grants and other forms of funding, etc.

Please email the membership team at membership@regionalstudies.org to check your eligibility for this membership category. The office team is not empowered to award this membership but may provide advice. 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.

Through the FeRSA Grant Scheme, the Association seeks to enable its members to undertake a piece of regional research and to contribute to regional understanding. All applicants must set out their dissemination plans through academic networks (e.g. conferences and publishing) and policy and practice communities. The value of the award is up to £8,250 (or its equivalent in dollars or euros, c. \$10,000; c. €8,900). 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 quality of applications will determine the allocation of monies in each round. There will typically be one grant available in each round. The Association may choose to release further funds in any round.

Prioritised research themes

The FeRSA Grant responds to the aims of the Association. The RSA Strategy highlights the Association's strategic priorities.

Our strategic priorities 2026-30 are to:

1. Champion high-quality regional research
2. Strengthen regional research and knowledge networks
3. Grow and diversify the regional studies community
4. Contribute to a just and sustainable future

In line with many other funders, the RSA Board operates several schemes. In some of these, it allows applicants to apply freely; in others, it requires them to contribute to the research priorities of the Association. Applicants for the FeRSA Grant should indicate how their application adds to research and understanding on the following prioritised themes:

1. Global geopolitics, infrastructure and security
2. Crises, external shocks and resilience
3. North-South relations and southern urbanism
4. Varieties of capitalism and the role of the state
5. Informal economies, urbanisation and development
6. Digitalisation, AI, Industry 4.0
7. Global production networks, value/supply chains and trade
8. Entrepreneurship, technology and innovation
9. Agglomeration, industrial districts, clusters and networks

10. Finance, knowledge and skills
11. Territorial politics, policy and governance
12. Regionalism, identity politics and citizenship
13. Governance, planning and place leadership
14. Planning, design and the built environment
15. Settlements, land and housing
16. Climate change adaptation, energy and sustainable transitions
17. Food, water and poverty
18. Inequalities, cohesion and spatial justice
19. Demography, migration and work
20. Health, well-being and creativity

There may be additional themes not listed here. These can be included in the application.

II. Submission process and assessment criteria

The RSA Fellowship Grant operates a two-stage application and assessment process. In the first round, applicants submit an expression of interest. Shortlisted applicants from this first round will then be asked to complete a final proposal.

The estimated process for the 2026 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 are usually informed about the outcome
2025 ROUND			
First selection round EXPRESSION OF INTEREST	3rd March 2026	n/a	June 2026
Final selection round	September 2026	November 2026	November 2026

First Selection Round: Expression of Interest

The Expression of Interest should include the following:

- Applicant information details:
 - Title, name, surname
 - RSA membership number
 - Postal address, telephone number and email for correspondence
 - Name of Higher Education Institution (HEI), Job title, Position
 - Details on previously awarded RSA Grants (Early Career, Membership Research and/or Fellowship Research Grant, Research Network, Policy Expo)
- 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
- 1-3 page CV

The Expression of Interest should be submitted via the form on the website <https://www.regionalstudies.org/funding/fellowship-research-grant-scheme/> by 3 March 2026. If you have any questions or need any help with the submission form, please send us an email to fersa@regionalstudies.org

Non-shortlisted applicants may reapply only once with the same proposal.

Final Selection Round: Full Application

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

- Summary of Aims (200 words)
- Why this Research is Important (200 words)
- Research Methods (200 words)
- Who might benefit (200 words)
- Contribution to Career (200 words)
- Statement of Support (200 words)
- Potential intellectual property (200 words)
- Full Research Proposal (2000 words)
- Enter your institutional Head of Department (First Name, Family Name, Email)
- Enter Cost and Budget details (200 words – this is a more detailed breakdown of the original costs/budget)

You have prefilled the Title, Summary and Costs/Budget fields in your initial application, and these will not be editable.

If you have a table for your budget, this may be better uploaded as a PDF document, along with your CV and List of Publications (3-6 pages long). For the final round, applications must be made on the online application form, accessible via the RSA Lounge, Community, and Grants. If you have problems uploading, queries, or technical issues, please email fersa@regionalstudies.org.

A detailed budget must 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 according to what has been set out. They should contact the Association if spending patterns are expected to vary by more than 20% because spending outside this parameter may not be reimbursed.

The Research Committee will review and assess final applications, and funding recommendations will be made to the RSA Board and/or Executive Group for a decision.

The research is usually expected to commence from December 2026 at the earliest.

A successful applicant will receive an award letter 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 grant applicant and the higher education institution (HEI) must sign the award letter and any subsequent agreement.

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 regional studies and/or regional science, which will have an identifiable outcome on completion.

Applications will be assessed based on (i) quality and (ii) the deliverability of the proposed project.

The RSA Board will make the decision based on the recommendations of the Association's Research Committee. The Committee will reach its decisions 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 during the duration of the grant – this may include speaking about the grant scheme at RSA events, writing short pieces for our *Regions* eZine, the RSA Blog, the RSA website, or LinkedIn and making other nonspecific contributions to the profile of the Association.

General Grant Conditions, Terms and Eligibility Requirements

- A.** This award is open to Fellows of the RSA only. RSA Fellows are individuals who have been continuous members for a minimum of 5 years and have also been defined as “active members”. This means they have contributed to the life of the Association by serving on the Board or committees, speaking at conferences, applying for grants and other forms of funding, etc.
- B.** The FeRSA supports a discrete piece of regional studies and/or regional science research. The value of the award is up to £8,250 (or its equivalent in dollars or euros, for your information, c. c. \$10,900; c. €9,400). 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.
- C.** Applicants must be members of the Association and remain in membership throughout the grant and reporting period. Recipients of this grant must be members of the Regional Studies Association at the time of application and remain members until the end of the reporting period and acceptance of the end-of-award report, whichever is the latest.
- D.** Members may change the membership type during the grant, except that Corporate members are not eligible for funding. For clarity, corporate members may not apply for this award as organisations or individuals representing corporate members.
- E.** Members in any territorial band may apply for grant funding.
- F.** The FeRSA Grant will only be allocated to a single researcher. Co-authored or team applications are not eligible.
- G.** Grants will generally be awarded to higher education institutions (HEI) or recognised research institutions, as grant holders will be subject to their employing institutions' research rules and ethics. Applicants must be based within an eligible HEI. The RSA will allow applications from researchers on temporary contracts with a recognised HEI, provided that evidence is supplied showing that the agreement covers, as a minimum, the research and reporting periods as defined in the application.
- H.** The grant will be administered through the HEI, typically an institution with degree-awarding powers or a national research institute. The grant holders will be subject to the research rules, data protection regulations, and ethical guidelines of the institutions they work for.
- I.** 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) to maximise 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. Only one FeRSA Grant is possible per member.

- J. No co-funding is possible.
- K. The Association must solely fund the project, but applicants may think of using this funding as leverage for further funding for future projects. The grant must fund a discrete project, such as a pilot study.
- L. Only one reapplication is allowed. Where referees' comments have been given to the applicant, these should be addressed in any re-application. Note that the Association is not obligated to provide application feedback, and discussion will not be entered.
- M. If a similar research application has been submitted or is about to be forwarded to any other organisation(s), complete details should be provided in the application form. If both are successful, the applicant must decide whether to accept the FeRSA Research Grant and reject the other offer.
- N. The Association's grant funding will be acknowledged in all reports, presentations, and publications.
- O. Career interruptions of less than one month will not be considered. The following types of disruption 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 postdoctoral researcher supported by a senior investigator's funding.
- You do not hold Fellowship (FeRSA) status on your RSA membership at the time of application.
- You are not an 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 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 FeRSA until their existing award has expired and all reporting requirements have been satisfactorily delivered and accepted by the Association. Members can only have 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 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 to enable 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 also consistent with the Association's pluralist approach to regional studies.

III. Reporting

The following reports are required to comply with the FeRSA Research Grant scheme:

1. **A short news article** published in *Regions* eZine or the RSA Blog with appropriate photographs, graphs or figures.
2. **An end-of-award report, including a financial report**, within three months of finishing the project. The end-of-award report will include both a narrative and an economic section. The HEI is expected to complete the financial report.
3. **An impact and outcomes report**, twelve months after the award's end date.

Please note that if the grant holder does not fulfil all requirements, the RSA reserves the right not to 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*. This charge will include acknowledgement of the grant, and therefore, the RSA Research Committee will consider the research proposal's publishable potential when assessing the application.

Additional relevant updates, such as brief reports, research summaries for the website, news items, pictures, and pieces for the RSA website or LinkedIn, are strongly encouraged.

Information provided in any submitted report may be used in part (extract) or in its entirety to promote the research project within the Association's publications. However, this will be in consultation with the grant holder.

Information provided in any submitted report may be used in part (extract) or in its entirety to promote the research project within the Association's publications. However, 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 at <https://www.regionalstudies.org/funding/fellowship-research-grant-scheme/>

IV. Financial guidelines

This grant can also be used to conduct 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 and accommodation nationally and overseas, and subsistence for the researcher)
- Teaching or research buy-out up to £1,875
- Research assistance up to £3,750
- 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, proofreading, and indexing, where the publisher does not bear these costs
- 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
- Up to £1,000 of the FeRSA 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 acknowledgement of the grant.

Ineligible costs

Applicants registered with special needs may consult the Association about possible exceptions. Ineligible costs are:

- Institutional overheads
- Payment to the principal researcher instead 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 Association has generated the funding for the FeRSA Research Grant Scheme. Grant holders and their institutions are expected to comply not only with the terms of the scheme but also with the scheme's spirit. If you and/or your HEI are unsure if an expense is eligible, please consult the Association before making a financial commitment. Expenses deemed ineligible will not be covered.

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

Please note that if a grant holder does not claim a refund within 6 months of the end of the award report, the RSA will not reimburse the claim.

A detailed budget was submitted as part of the application form. The budget is part of the research contract, and applicants should expect to spend the money according to what was set out. 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.

Payment schedule

A first payment of £4,125 (or its equivalent in dollars or euros) will be paid at the commencement of the grant, with any remainder up to a maximum of £8,250 to be invoiced by the HEI. The final payment will be made only upon the Research Committee's acceptance of the end-of-award report. If 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 British Pounds Sterling (GBP) and that the HEI must ensure the exchange rate risk. Transfers will be made in GBP sterling at the prevailing exchange rate. The HEI will bear the costs where transfers are made by bank transfer.

V. Recognition / Intellectual property / Knowledge transfer

The support of the Regional Studies Association should be acknowledged normally 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.

In addition to the formal end-of-award report, the RSA may require short contributions that may be published in any one or more of our membership publications—Regions and/or on the RSA website, blog, Twitter, LinkedIn, or Facebook or through other channels, as appropriate and agreed with the grant holder.

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.

Knowledge Transfer

The RSA recognises and encourages knowledge transfer and actively supports partnerships and other schemes that enable this. Recipients of the RSA Fellowship Research Grant scheme are encouraged to ensure that the outcomes of research investment benefit the regional studies and/or regional science international 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 of 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 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 holder 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.

GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation)

The HEI are responsible for ensuring that the research complies with all the 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.

2. 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 FeRSA 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.

3. 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 RSA Chief Executive and would not usually exceed six months, but may extend to one year in exceptional circumstances.

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 RSA Fellowship Research Grant?

Part-time researchers can apply, but the project must 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, safety, and liabilities while the researcher is working?

Please consult the section on ethics, misconduct and liabilities.

8. Is the RSA Fellowship Research 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, strategy, and/or objectives allowed during the grant?

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

VIII. Application queries

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