

Knowledge and Policy Exchange Grant (KPEG) Handbook

Introduction

The Regional Studies Association (RSA) is dedicated to supporting regional and urban research efforts globally, disseminating research evidence and connecting research to policy and practice.

As part of these commitments the RSA has launched the Knowledge and Policy Exchange Grant Scheme to support knowledge and policy exchange opportunity.

The KPEG is a pilot small-grants scheme supporting short-duration, grassroots collaboration between RSA members affiliated to academic institutions for projects that benefit non-academic organisations.

These grants are available to RSA regional and urban researchers globally.

The award in brief

- Maximum Grant value: Up to £2,500.
- The full value of the fund in 2026 is £15,000, split into two allocations of £7,500
- Approximately 6 projects are expected to be funded (depending on award size)
- Applications: First round applications open on the 1st of April 2026, and the second round of applications opens on the 1st of July 2026. In subsequent years the first round will open earlier on the 1st of February.
- Project period: Projects should run between 3 and 12 months and must be completed within 12 months of receipt of the grant.
- Decisions: Applications are received and assessed in order of receipt with notification of the decision made one month + 5 to 15 days after receipt.

- **Process:** The RSA Office (Head of Partnerships and Engagement with oversight from the CEO) conducts initial eligibility screening prior to passing applications to the Chair of the Policy Committee who makes the awarding decision.
- Grants are awarded on a rolling basis against a set criteria until the respective fund allocation is exhausted. Unsuccessful applications will not be carried forward and will need to be re-submitted at the next opportunity.
- **Reporting requirements:** A case study is required one month after completion deadline of the project (a maximum of 13 months after receipt of the award)

Eligibility criteria

1. Membership type:

- The KPEG is open to Individual and Early Career members of the RSA who are affiliated to a Higher Education Institution.
- Corporate members are not eligible to apply, whether as organisations or individuals representing corporate members.
- Non-academic corporate members such as NGOs, charities, think tanks, and policy bodies may participate as the non-academic beneficiary organisation but cannot apply as lead applicants.

2. Location:

- There are no locational restrictions.

3. Membership status:

- Grant applicants must be active RSA members at the time of application and must remain members until the grant deliverables have been completed and accepted.

4. Grant holder status:

- Available only to RSA members not currently in receipt of another RSA grant.

5. Institutional affiliation:

- Grant applicants must be affiliated to a recognised Higher Education Institute; funds will be paid to that institution for further project distribution. To be clear: The RSA cannot give grants directly to individuals and the grant must be managed according to the financial regulations of the applicant's institution; likewise, all activity related to the funded project must be carried out in accordance with that HEI's relevant policies

and procedures and be covered by the institution's insurance and liability policies.

Assessment criteria

1. Alignment with the aims of the grant scheme

Applications will be reviewed according to the extent to which the project delivers practical and impactful knowledge and policy exchange for the benefits the non-academic project partner (the beneficiary).

2. Viability of the project

Applications and project viability will be assessed in respect of:

- Relevance to Regional Studies Association priorities and alignment with the mission of the Regional Studies Association.
- The applicant's subject expertise is relevant to the project, and the project is oriented towards knowledge / policy exchange with a non-academic partner.
- Overall coherence and achievability within the timeframe.
- Inclusivity of subject area, geography, and candidate background.
- Potential for progression beyond KPEG funding (with other funders).

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 of any previous RSA grants awarded (e.g., Early Career Grant, Fellowship Research Grant, etc.)
- Higher Education Institution, Job Title, Position

Applicants should be prepared to enter the following:

- Title of the research project
- Name and contact details of applicant's Head of Department / Unit

- Details of the Beneficiary organisation including
 - Organisation name
 - Organisation legal status (LTD/Charity/NGO/etc)
 - Organisation website URL
 - Name of contact person at the organisation
 - Contact's position / job title / their organisational email address
 - Location of organisation (city/region/country)
 - A statement from beneficiary confirming collaboration

- Summary of the knowledge exchange activity to be supported by the grant (max 200 words)
- The main value-added outcomes and how will these be captured and evidenced (max 200 words)
- Statement of support from the key contact in the beneficiary organisation: (max 100 words)
- Itemised budget requested
- Timings for the project (start and end dates)

Grant applicants may be asked for a copy of their CV.

Decision process:

- Incomplete applications will not be considered.
- Applications will be screened by the RSA's Head of Partnerships and Engagement with oversight provided by the RSA's CEO. Awarding decision will be made by the Chair of the RSA Policy Committee. The Chair's decision is final.
- 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 and their Head of Department/Unit will receive by email an award letter that forms the contract between the RSA, the grant holder, and their HEI. Recipients must acknowledge receipt and acceptance of the award by email, with their Head of Department/Unit cc'd, within 10 working days to release funding.
- Details of the grant holder's HEI bank account and payment instruction will be required

Reporting requirements:

The RSA grant should be acknowledged in any reports, presentations, communications or publications related to the project.

Due within one month of the end of the project:

- End of award case study, using the required template provided, to include:
 - A short summary of the project's aims
 - A short description of the project itself
 - An account of the outcomes and impact made
 - Relevant feedback / comment from the beneficiary organisation and, if possible / relevant
 - Information of any continuation plans or further funding
 - Press or social media coverage
 - A partner testimonial (including permission to use logo and quotes)
 - An article for the RSA Blog including relevant photos, graphs, or figures is encouraged
- Note: the case study should be written using the supplied template to communicate the project and the outcome to a general audience. It is not to be written as an academic report and must avoid the use of overly academic and technical language.

Ineligible costs:

The following costs are not eligible:

- Institutional overheads
- Payment to the principal researcher for personal maintenance or salary replacement or to pay for a research assistant
- 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 are expected to adhere to the spirit and aims of the grant and must comply with the terms.
- 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:

- Grant funds are paid to / reimbursed via the awardee's institution.
- Fifty percent of the grant will be paid at the start of the project with the remaining fifty percent paid on successful completion of the project marked by the submission and acceptance of the case study and receipt of the expenditure claim form.
- All expenditure to be reported via the expenditure form against receipts.
- If the case study is unsatisfactory, payment will be withheld until a satisfactory case study is submitted (see 'reporting requirements' above).
- 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.
- The final payment of the grant formally closes the project. This will be acknowledged by email to the awardee and to their Head of Department / Unit.

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.
- Grant holders are subject to the research and ethics rules of their employing HEI.
- It is the responsibility of the affiliated HEI to ensure that the project 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 project are clearly defined and agreed.
- Both the grant holder and the HEI are responsible for any issues arising from the project process, the institution holding the grant, or the outcomes of the project.
- The HEI is responsible for handling any human resources-related health and safety issues, in accordance with the institution's health and safety regulations.
- The HEI is responsible for protecting the personal data of anyone involved in the project or as subjects of the project.
- The RSA accepts no responsibility for:
 - the views or opinions expressed by the grant holder or through the project outputs
 - any issues that arise directly or indirectly from the funded project, including any issues involving the grant holder, other organisations, or individuals involved.

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