

Knowledge and Policy Exchange Grant

KPEG Handbook

Regional Studies Association Pilot Scheme 2026

This handbook covers eligibility, the application process, assessment criteria, funding rules, and reporting requirements for the KPEG pilot scheme.

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.

The Knowledge and Policy Exchange Grant (KPEG) is a pilot small-grant scheme supporting short-duration, grassroots collaboration between RSA members at academic institutions and non-academic organisations. It aims to provide targeted resources for rapid engagement projects lasting 3–12 months that deliver direct, practical benefit to a non-academic beneficiary.

KPEG is available to RSA regional and urban researchers globally.

The award in brief

Maximum award	Total fund (2026)	Per round	Projects expected
£2,500	£15,000	£7,500	~6

Application rounds

Round 1 (2026)	Opens 1 May 2026
Round 2 (2026)	Opens 1 October 2026
Subsequent years	Round 1 opens 1 February; Round 2 opens 1 July

Project & decision timeline

Project duration	3–12 months. Must be completed within 12 months of receiving the grant.
Decision notification	Approximately 1 month + 5–15 days after receipt of application.
Payment	50% at project start; 50% on successful completion (case study accepted + expenditure claim received).

Assessment process

Order of assessment	Applications are assessed in order of receipt (date and time stamped) until the fund for that round is exhausted.
Who decides	The RSA Head of Partnerships & Engagement (with CEO oversight) screens eligibility. The Chair of the RSA Policy Committee makes the final awarding decision – this is final.
Unsuccessful applications	Not carried forward. Must be resubmitted at the next round.
Board notification	The RSA Board is notified of all successful applications.
Feedback	Individual feedback on applications is not normally provided.

Reporting requirement

Case study due	Within one month of the project completion deadline – maximum 13 months after receipt of the award.
Acknowledgement	RSA funding must be acknowledged in all project reports, presentations, communications, and publications.

Eligibility

To be eligible to apply, all of the following criteria must be met:

Membership type

- Open to RSA Individual and Early Career members affiliated with a Higher Education Institution (HEI).
- Corporate members are not eligible to apply, either as organisations or as individuals representing corporate members.

Non-academic organisations (NGOs, charities, think tanks, policy bodies) may participate as the beneficiary partner, but cannot be the lead applicant.

Membership status

- Applicants must hold active RSA membership at the time of application.
- Membership must be maintained until all grant deliverables are completed and accepted.

Grant holder status

- Only available to RSA members not currently in receipt of another RSA grant.

Institutional affiliation

- Applicants must be affiliated to a recognised Higher Education Institution.
- Grant funds are paid to the applicant's institution – the RSA cannot pay grants directly to individuals.
- The grant must be managed in accordance with the financial regulations of the applicant's HEI.
- All project activity must comply with the HEI's relevant policies, procedures, insurance, and liability coverage.

Assessment criteria

Applications are assessed against two main criteria:

1. Alignment with grant aims

The primary consideration is the extent to which the project delivers practical, impactful knowledge and policy exchange for the direct benefit of the non-academic partner organisation.

2. Project viability

Applications are also assessed on:

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

Application process

How to apply – step by step

1. **Read:** Read the KPEG Handbook in full.
2. **Agree:** Agree on the project scope and objectives with your non-academic beneficiary organisation.
3. **Sign off:** Download the KPEG Project Application Sign Off from the KPEG webpage, obtain signatures from your Head of Department/Unit and the beneficiary organisation's named contact, and save as a PDF.
4. **Membership number:** Retrieve your RSA membership number by logging into RSA Lounge and navigating to My Details.
5. **Apply:** Complete the online application form at www.regionalstudies.org/kpeg-application/
6. **Upload:** Upload the signed Project Application Sign Off PDF to the form.
7. **Submit:** Submit the form. Applications are time-stamped on receipt.

Incomplete applications will not be considered. Grant applicants may be asked to provide a copy of their CV.

Required application fields

About the applicant

- RSA membership number (from RSA Lounge > My Details)
- First and family name
- Institutional email address (not a personal address)
- Higher Education Institution name
- HEI Department / Unit
- HEI Region / City
- HEI Country

About the beneficiary organisation

- Name of the organisation
- Legal status (e.g. Ltd, NGO, Charity)
- Organisation website URL
- Name, job title, and email of the project sponsor at the organisation
- Location (city, region, country)

Project details

Project summary	Up to 1,200 words
Benefits for the partner organisation	Up to 1,300 words
Outcomes and how they will be evidenced	Up to 200 words
Organisation statement of support	Up to 800 words
Proposed case study format	Up to 1,300 words
Communication channels	How progress/outcomes will be disseminated
Itemised budget	In GBP – see Budget section

A signed statement from the beneficiary organisation confirming collaboration is required. The template is a downloadable PDF available from the KPEG webpage.

Budget and eligible costs

Budget rules

- 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 before spending.
- If uncertain about the eligibility of any expense, contact the RSA before making a financial commitment.

Ineligible costs

The following costs cannot be claimed under KPEG:

- ✗ Institutional overheads
- ✗ Salary replacement or payment for personal maintenance
- ✗ Payment for a research assistant
- ✗ Childcare expenses
- ✗ Insurance
- ✗ Conference fees
- ✗ RSA membership fees

Applicants with special needs may contact the RSA to discuss potential exceptions to the ineligible costs list.

Award letter and payment

Award letter

- Successful applicants and their Head of Department/Unit receive an award letter by email. This letter forms the contract between the RSA, the grant holder, and their HEI.
- Recipients must acknowledge receipt and acceptance by email (cc'ing their Head of Department/Unit) within 10 working days to release funding.
- Bank account details and payment instructions for the HEI will be required.

Payment process

First payment (50%)	Paid at the start of the project, upon acceptance of the award letter.
Final payment (50%)	Paid on successful project completion, marked by acceptance of the case study and receipt of the expenditure claim form.
Expenditure reporting	All expenditure must be reported via the Expenditure Claim Form, against receipts.
Withheld payment	If the case study is unsatisfactory, final payment is withheld until a satisfactory version is submitted.
Currency	All payments are in British Pounds Sterling (GBP). The HEI bears exchange rate risks and bank transfer fees.
Project closure	The final payment formally closes the project, acknowledged by email to the awardee and their Head of Department/Unit.

The RSA is a registered charity. Funding comes from the Association and its members. Grant holders and their institutions must adhere to the spirit and aims of the grant and comply with its terms.

Reporting requirements

Within one month of project completion (maximum 13 months after receipt of award), submit the following:

End-of-award case study

Using the supplied template, write a case study for a general audience (not an academic report – avoid technical or academic language). It must include:

- A short summary of the project's aims
- A short description of the project itself
- An account of the outcomes and impact achieved
- Feedback or comment from the beneficiary organisation

Where possible and relevant, also include:

- Continuation plans or further funding secured
- Press or social media coverage
- Partner organisation testimonials (with permission to use logo and quotes)

RSA Blog article

An article for the RSA Blog – including relevant photos, graphs, or figures – is strongly encouraged alongside the case study.

Acknowledgement

RSA funding must be acknowledged in all reports, presentations, communications, and publications arising from the project.

Ethics, conduct, and liabilities

Grant holder and HEI responsibilities

- Grant holders are subject to the research and ethics rules of their employing HEI.
- The affiliated HEI is responsible for ensuring the project is conducted within a framework of best practice – including rigour, respect, and responsibility.
- All necessary permissions must be obtained before the application is submitted. Roles and responsibilities of all project participants must be clearly defined and agreed.
- Both the grant holder and the HEI are responsible for any issues arising from the project process or its outcomes.
- The HEI is responsible for health and safety matters relating to human resources, in accordance with its own regulations.
- The HEI is responsible for protecting the personal data of everyone involved in or affected by the project.

RSA disclaimer

The RSA accepts no responsibility for:

- Views or opinions expressed by the grant holder or through project outputs.
- Any issues arising directly or indirectly from the funded project, including issues involving the grant holder, partner organisations, or other individuals.