

## Flexible fund FAQs

### 1. What is MACC Hub flexible funds?

The Maximising UK Adaptation to Climate Change (MACC) Hub (hereinafter the Hub) responds to the urgent need for a comprehensive, transdisciplinary framework to strengthen the UK's resilience to cascading climate impacts. Co-funded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), the Hub aims to address critical gaps in adaptation planning, implementation, and capacity-building. In June 2025, the MACC Hub launched a call for proposals to fund additional research projects through its £550K Flexible Fund, aimed at complementing and strengthening its existing objectives.

### 2. What is the aim of the Flexible Fund?

The Flexible Fund will advance Hub's overall objectives by:

Generating information on what works in terms of climate adaptation through "learning by doing" on transformational adaptation (through a £550K flexible project fund).

The MACC Hub is working directly with Defra on this objective. The Call for Applications for the Flexible Fund will be allocated competitively to small, place-based projects, advancing scalable or replicable transformational adaptation solutions. Projects will:

- Be grounded in community engagement
- Involve practical implementation or scaling of adaptation actions
- Centre on vulnerable groups most at risk from climate change

### 3. How large is the Flexible Fund?

The full economic cost (FEC) of the project can be up to £55,000. We expect to fund 10 to 12 projects, with a duration of 6–12 months.

It should be noted that, in accordance with UKRI's funding regulations, funding will be awarded at 80% FEC for HEIs and 100% FEC for non-HEIs.

There is no cap on funds available to non-HEI co-leads. However, non-HEI organisations must account for **at least** 30% of the total amount requested, inclusive of VAT.

#### **4. Who is eligible to be part of the application teams?**

This MACC Hub funding call is seeking applications from collaborative partnerships between academic and non-academic institutions across the UK.

The project lead must be at a UK institution which is [eligible to receive UKRI funding](#) (higher education providers, research institutes, NHS bodies, public sector research establishments, etc please refer to the link above).

Lead applicants must:

- have an employment contract which ends no earlier than the proposed timeframe of the submitted proposal
- not be a MACC Hub collaborator, member of the MACC Programme Advisory Group or the MACC Hub Advisory Group, or associated with any of the MACC programme research projects
- be able to demonstrate the capacity to disburse funds to non-academic partners and other relevant organisations in a timely and accountable manner

The project lead should ensure that the co-leads, particularly those from non-academic institutions, are able to make a significant and equitable contribution to the development of the proposal and be actively involved in delivering the project.

#### **5. How is 'Early Career Researcher' defined for the Flexible Fund?**

There is no standard definition of an Early Career Researcher (ECR) used throughout academic and non-academic communities. The one we are using for this call is the following: an ECR is an individual employed to conduct research activities on a precarious contract (e.g. fixed term or project-funded), or someone who has not previously held a research grant

(as Principal Investigator) exceeding £100,000. This includes grants from organisations other than UKRI. This restriction does not apply to Co-Investigators playing a supporting role in a project or to named research staff.

For public sector non-academic organisations, a Research Officer or Senior Research Officer, as defined by the [Government's Social Researcher Technical Framework](#) could be considered as the equivalent to an ECR.

## **6. Is the Flexible Fund mainly aimed at people working in universities?**

No. We encourage applications from collaborative teams that bridge disciplinary and sectoral boundaries. We strongly welcome regionally diverse applications that involve collaborations between individuals and organisations from diverse disciplines and sectors: academia (natural sciences, engineering and physical sciences, arts and humanities, social sciences), the public sector, NGOs and charities, and business. While applications **must be led by an eligible Research Organisation, we will look to fund projects that involve a diverse cohort of people across** different roles, organisations and career paths, and sectors.

To read about the call in detail, please click [here](#).

## **7. Letters of Support**

We will not accept any Letters of Support from partner organisations under this call. Instead, use the Application Form (to be uploaded on the website) to indicate which non-academic organisations (if any) you are collaborating with and how you are using a co-production approach to work with those partners. In addition, use the Justification of Resources section of the application form to explain how this has been costed up with sufficient resources to deliver genuine knowledge co-production.

## **8. Can applications involve international partners?**

No. The focus of the MACC Hub and the Flexible Fund is on UK projects and communities. It is worth noting that you can have collaborators across Ireland.

## **9. Will feedback be provided to applicants?**

Yes, all applicants will receive the reviewers' comments on their submission. Reviewers have been advised that their comments will be shared with applicants, and they should provide constructive, professional feedback accordingly. This approach ensures transparency while maintaining a supportive evaluation process.

## **10. What obligations will be expected of successful applicants?**

Successful applicants will be required to contribute to the monitoring and evaluation processes of the MACC Hub by providing short update reports, which will feed into UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) reporting frameworks.

In addition, successful projects will be expected to work with MACC Hub researchers to capture shared learning across the MACC programme on effective pathways to transformational adaptation. The MACC Hub will provide online briefings on ways to get involved, as well as ongoing guidance and support to help capture, synthesise and share learning about how the projects are involving communities in transformational change.

Further, successful applicants will be invited to share progress and initial findings in MACC Hub internal meetings, in the MACC webinar series and at the national annual conference. There will also be opportunities to report progress to the MACC Programme Advisory Group.

## **11. Can I apply for the funding if my organisation is involved in the MACC Hub, but I am not?**

Individuals or teams who are directly involved in the MACC Hub project are not eligible to apply for this funding. However, other members of the same organisation who are not directly involved in the MACC Hub may still apply, provided their proposed work is independent of the existing MACC Hub partnership activities.

**12: How are overheads calculated for third sector partners?**

Partners must work within their funding ceiling (set by the MACC Hub or their lead partner). Overheads are calculated as: Direct staff costs (hourly rate × hours or FTE) × 1.2.

This means the 20% overheads are inclusive of the total allocation.

**13: What is the FEC rate for non-HEI leads, those eligible for UKRI funding?**

- If paired with an HEI partner, they may choose the route that works best for them (80% or 100% FEC), depending on the type of organisation they are.
- If acting as the HEI equivalent i.e. UKRI funding eligible (leading the proposal), they should cost at 80% FEC to align with UKRI rules, enabling them to include another non-HEI partner.

**Note:** Flexibility is permitted where eligible.

**14. Can non-academic partners (e.g., community groups) receive more than 30% of the funding?**

Yes! While non-academic co-leads must account for at least 30% of the total budget (inclusive of VAT), there is no upper limit on their share. The exact split should be agreed with the lead partner.

**15. Are local authorities or government bodies eligible as co-leads?**

Yes. Local authorities, councils, and other public bodies can be co-leads, but the lead applicant must be a UKRI-eligible institution (e.g., a university or research institute. See the full list [here](#)).

**16. Can SMEs or tech providers partner on projects?**

Absolutely. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) or technology providers are welcome as partners, provided the project is led by a UKRI-funding eligible institution.

**17. Can projects scale up existing adaptation approaches to new locations?**

Yes! The fund encourages scaling proven solutions (e.g., community engagement models) to new geographic or political contexts, as long as the project demonstrates transformational adaptation and addresses gaps not covered by existing MACC Hub projects.

### **18. Are AI-focused projects eligible? What TRL is preferred?**

Technical projects (e.g., AI tools) are eligible if they:

- Focus on real-world, place-based implementation.
- Engage communities/non-academic partners.
- Drive decision-making or long-term change.

No specific Technology Readiness Level (TRL) is mandated, but proposals must align with the fund's action-research goals.

### **19. How can marginalised communities directly benefit from funding?**

The fund prioritises projects co-created with underserved groups. While research institutions must lead applications, co-leadership with community-based organisations is strongly encouraged to ensure equitable power-sharing and direct benefits.

### **20. Can projects duplicate existing MACC Hub work (e.g., nature-based solutions)?**

Projects on similar topics (e.g., nature-based solutions) are welcome if they address new gaps or contexts. Exact replication of existing MACC projects won't be funded.

### **21. Are occupational health/climate risk assessments eligible?**

Yes, if they align with the fund's goals (e.g., advancing practical adaptation for vulnerable workers).

### **22. How are Local Authorities' project/staff costs calculated?**

Local Authorities can claim costs at 100% Full Economic Cost (FEC). Overheads are calculated as direct staff costs × 1.2.

**23. Can academic partners submit multiple proposals with different non-academic co-leads**

Yes, as long as each proposal is distinct and led by a UKRI-eligible institution.

**24. Is there funding to link MACC Hub members for follow-on proposals?**

This call focuses on standalone projects, but the Hub may facilitate networking opportunities separately.

**25. How is equitable funding distribution ensured?**

Assessment criteria priorities:

- Transparent budgeting for community partners.
- Power-sharing with marginalised groups.
- Direct benefits to vulnerable communities.