



Arts and
Humanities
Research Council



RICHeS

RESEARCH
INFRASTRUCTURE FOR
CONSERVATION AND
HERITAGE SCIENCE

hsds

Heritage Science
Data Service

Heritage Science Data Service Grants

Frequently Asked Questions

Introduction

Below is a list of Frequently Asked Questions and their answers. This is offered as an accompaniment to the Guides for Applicants which can be downloaded from the website. Please also read the Guides for Applicants as they provide further details.

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Version Control

The latest changes made to this guide will be recorded here. Please ensure you have the latest version of the Frequently Asked Questions.

Version	Date	Changes
1.0	20.05.26	-

Contact Details

If you have any questions relating to the Heritage Science Data Service Grants Programme after reading these Frequently Asked Questions, please contact the Programme Administrator, Lydia Mayfield.

Heritage Science Data Service, The Guildhall, York, YO1 6GA

Email: applications@hsds.ac.uk

About the Fund

- **What is Heritage Science?**

Heritage Science acts as a bridge between science/technology and the cultural heritage sector, using scientific tools and techniques to learn about heritage, protect it for the future, and share more engaging stories.

- **What types of datasets are eligible?**

Examples of eligible datasets include radiocarbon dates, human osteological or archaeobotanical databases, thin sections, paint samples, X-ray scans, geophysical surveys, marine surveys, drone footage, 3D models and many more. **This is not an exhaustive list.** If you are unsure about the eligibility of your dataset, please get in touch.

- **What are the geographic and chronological remits for eligible datasets?**

The primary geographical remit is the UK. However, datasets from outside the UK are welcome if they have a meaningful association to the UK (e.g. from

UK-based researchers). Data from all periods of human history are welcome.

Available Funding and Duration

- **How much funding is available?**

For theme 1: Generate Datasets, grants are available for between £500 and £25,000.

For theme 2: Develop a Virtual Research Environment, grants are available for up to £15,000.

We welcome projects both small and large.

- **How many projects will be funded under each of the streams?**

There is no set number. We have £500,000 for this round. We are expecting more applications to generate datasets 1 but there is no set ratio as to how many we will award under each theme. It will depend on the split of applications we receive. Success rates in Round 1 were 64% for datasets and 50% for Virtual Research Environments.

- **When can projects start?**

The earliest start date is 1 April 2027, and projects must commence no later than 1 August 2027.

- **What is the maximum project duration?**

The maximum project duration is 12 months.

Applicant Eligibility

- **Who is eligible to apply for this funding?**

Applications are welcomed from a broad range of UK-based organisations, including:

- Galleries, libraries, museums, and archives
- Academic organizations and educational establishments
- Registered charitable bodies and social enterprises

- Commercial companies or freelance specialists working in collaboration with eligible partner organizations
- **Are there any restrictions on who can apply?**
Applicants must be based in the UK, and all funded work must be undertaken in the UK. Individuals who are involved in delivering the Heritage Science Data Service (including Co-Investigators and staff whose salary is paid by the HSDS grant) cannot apply.
- **Can current RICHeS funding holders apply?**
Yes, current RICHeS funding holders can apply. However, please note that these grants are not intended to incrementally extend projects which have already received funding.

Key Dates

- **What are the key dates for this call?**
 - Call opens: **8 June 2026**
 - Deadline for applications: **5pm GMT, 30 September 2026**
 - Communication of results: We aim to notify all successful applicants by **31 January 2027**
 - Earliest indicative project start date: **1 April 2027** (projects must commence no later than 1 August 2027)

Costs

- **What costs are eligible for this funding?**
Eligible costs include staff salary costs (for all staff, including Main/Co-Applicants), reasonable essential travel and subsistence costs, necessary consumables or equipment and essential estates and indirect costs. Costs for external services or specialists (e.g. subcontracting) are eligible for theme 1 (generate datasets).
- **How should applications be costed?**
For organisations operating under the Full Economic Cost (FEC) model, please

use FEC to submit your budget. HSDS will fund 100% of the FEC.

For other organisations, essential overheads such as estate and indirect costs are eligible.

- **Under theme 1 (generate datasets), should costs for data deposition with HSDS and the development of tailored features by HSDS be included in the budget?**

Costs for data deposition with HSDS and for the development of tailored features like search interfaces are provided free of charge to successful applicants and should not be included in the budget.

- **Under theme 2 (Virtual Research Environments), should costs for Hartree Centre staff time be included in the budget?**

Costs for Hartree Centre staff time will be paid separately by HSDS and should not be included in the budget.

- **What costs are ineligible?**

Student fees (e.g., PhD, DBA, EdD, LLD, etc.) are not eligible.

Theme 1: Generate Datasets

- **What is the purpose of the Generate Datasets scheme?**

These grants are intended to help applicants organise and preserve digital heritage science and conservation data that is at risk and make it more widely available.

- **What can I apply for funding to do under the Generate Datasets scheme?**

This funding can be used to organise, preserve, and make your heritage science data more widely available through the Heritage Science Data Service. At the end of the project you'll send us your data and we'll build a bespoke archive for you and make it freely available and discoverable globally under an agreed open licence.

- **Can the funding be used to digitise paper records?**

Projects seeking only to digitise paper records cannot be supported. However,

you may include some digitisation, for example if you are joining up existing paper and digital resources.

- **What types of data can be deposited?**

We are able to accession just about any data that can be created in a Heritage Science context including, but not limited to, 3D data, GIS, and imaging datasets.

- **What if my data is sensitive?**

The HSDS follows the guidance provided by the Archaeology Data Service for [managing sensitive data](#).

Theme 2: Develop Virtual Research Environments

- **What is the purpose of the Develop Virtual Research Environments scheme?**

The grants are offered to fund the development of Virtual Research Environments (VREs). The successful applicants will work with the software engineering team at the Science and Technology Facility Council's Hartree Centre to develop a bespoke VRE to solve an identified challenge.

- **What is a Virtual Research Environment (VRE)?**

A VRE is a secure, custom-built online platform that serves as a central digital workbench for researchers and teams. It provides high power computing accessed through a browser, combining highly capable processing power, accelerated desktop graphics, and massive data storage, enabling work that typically cannot be done on a local computer. VREs can be single use and/or collaborative, making complex research more efficient.

- **What can I apply for funding to do?**

VREs can be used to create software applications, process workflows in a fraction of the time it would take a human, and run software that requires a high-end computer. Tell us about the challenge you face and your ideas for how a VRE could help to solve them. Successful applicants will then work with the software engineering team at the Science and Technology Facility

Council's Hartree Centre to develop a bespoke VRE. No technical knowledge is required – the Hartree team will provide all the expertise needed

- **Can this funding be used to explore the use of Machine Learning or Artificial Intelligence for enhanced metadata creation?**

Yes, this is an eligible activity.

- **What is this funding intended to cover?**

This funding is primarily intended to cover the cost of staff time and travel expenses, where necessary.

Licensing

- **What are the licensing requirements for the data?**

The HSDS is an open access archive. Our preferred licence is Creative Commons [CC-BY](#). An alternative, [CC-BY-NC](#) (non-commercial use only), can also be offered. We will ask you to confirm, by signing an agreement, that you either own the copyright or have the copyright holder's permission to make the data available with us.

- **What happens after the data is archived with HSDS?**

HSDS will build a bespoke archive for your data, making it freely available and discoverable globally under an agreed open licence. HSDS will also handle format changes to ensure long-term access and will provide information on how many times your data has been viewed and downloaded.

Reporting

- **What are the reporting requirements?**

You must complete and submit a short report within 30 days of the grant end date.

- **Do datasets have to be deposited with the HSDS?**

You will be asked to deposit the resulting dataset, or any dataset arising from

the VRE, with HSDS or one of its [approved alternative repositories](#) before the project end date.

Application Process

- **How do I submit my application?**

You must submit your proposal via the online submission system. Only applications submitted through the online system, by the deadline, will be accepted. Please visit our [HSDS Grants Call Information web-page](#) to access the submission system.

- **How should each section of the application form be completed?**

There are full step-by-step guides to completing the application form in the Guides for Applicants.

- **Can I include images in my application?**

You may upload up to three images to help the review panel to visualise your application. Providing images is not mandatory and your application will not be penalised if you do not provide any.

Wherever possible we ask that you grant HSDS permission to use the images provided, with appropriate credit, in any publicity material if your application is awarded.

- **How will applications be assessed?**

Eligible applications are assessed and graded by an expert panel against three evaluation criteria:

- **Excellence & Impact** (40% weighting)
- **Feasibility** (40% weighting)
- **Value for money** (20% weighting)

For further details regarding the criteria, please see the application guidance documents.

- **What is the assessment process for theme 2: Develop Virtual Research Environments?**

Theme 2: Develop Virtual Research Environments is a two-stage process.

Stage 1: Applications which meet the eligibility criteria set out in the guidance will be assessed by an expert panel against the evaluation criteria, and each will be graded and ranked alongside other applications after which the panel will make a shortlisting recommendation.

Stage 2: Shortlisted applicants will be contacted by the Hartree team to undertake a feasibility assessment. On completion of the feasibility assessment, the Hartree team will recommend which shortlisted proposals should be considered for funding. The expert review panel will make the final funding decision.

- **Can I use generative AI in my application?**

You are expected to be transparent about any use of generative AI tools in the development of your application. This must be declared in the application form but will **not** affect the assessment process.

- **Who can I contact about questions which are not covered in the FAQs?**

Please contact the Programme Administrator, Lydia Mayfield, at applications@hsds.ac.uk.