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RICHeS

RESEARCH
INFRASTRUCTURE FOR
CONSERVATION AND
HERITAGE SCIENCE

hsds

Heritage Science
Data Service

Heritage Science Data Service Cascading Grants

Generate Datasets – Enable or Enhance Access to Heritage Science and Conservation Resources

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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 Guide for Applicants.

Version	Date	Changes
1.0	21.5.26	-

Contact details

If you have any questions relating to this guidance or the Heritage Science Data Service Cascading Grants Programme, please contact the Programme Administrator, Lydia Mayfield.

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

Email: applications@hsds.ac.uk

Alternatively, please see our Frequently Asked Questions on the call information page.

Section 1: About the Funding

What is Heritage Science?

Heritage Science provides a bridge between science and technology and the wider cultural heritage sector. It's the practice of using scientific tools and techniques to learn more about our heritage, protect it for future generations and share more informative and engaging stories with our audiences.

Examples of heritage science and conservation datasets might 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.

What is the Heritage Science Data Service?

The [Heritage Science Data Service](#) (HSDS) is funded by the [Arts and Humanities Research Council](#) (AHRC), part of [United Kingdom Research and Innovation](#) (UKRI). Through AHRC's [Research Infrastructure for Conservation and Heritage Science](#) (RICHeS) programme, HSDS has been entrusted to provide a secure archive to preserve and share heritage science and conservation data.

The HSDS is managed by the Archaeology Data Service (ADS), based at the University of York, where we have 30 years' experience managing and preserving data and making it available for re-use.

What can I apply for funding to do?

Do you have digital data stored on old hard drives or local computers? Is your data at risk of being lost? Would you like to organise and preserve it and make it more widely available but lack the time or expertise to do the work? If so, these grants are for you.

Tell us what digital data you have and why it's important. Tell us how we can help you to make a difference by securing the data for years to come and making it more widely available. What benefits might this bring to your organisation or to your users or audiences?

Successful applicants will receive up to £25,000 to organise their data and get it ready to be sent to HSDS. Our team of experts will be available throughout the project to provide help and advice on how to organise your data, including how to name your files and what associated information you should provide, such as the type of data, description and the name of the data owner.

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. Where needed, we'll work with you to create a tailored search interface, including custom features such as interactive maps, data filtering tools or image and 3D viewers. The richer your data, the more we can do and we are open to your ideas on how the archive should look and are happy to explore how we can bring your vision to life.

Once your data is archived with us, you don't need to worry about it any more. We'll ensure that as formats for digital data change, your data can still be accessed and used. We'll also show you how many times your data has been viewed and downloaded.

Making your data available in this way can bring many benefits from ensuring its long-term preservation to making the data open and searchable, facilitating sharing and helping to promote sector-wide knowledge and best practice.

Can I use this funding to digitise data currently in paper format?

You may include some digitising in your project, for example where you'd like to join up existing paper and digital resources, but projects seeking only to digitise paper records can't be supported.

What types of datasets are eligible for funding?

Geographic remit: Our primary geographical remit is the UK but you're welcome to propose datasets from outside the UK where there is a meaningful association to the UK (e.g. from UK-based researchers working outside the UK).

Chronological remit: We don't define a chronological range and welcome data from all periods of human history, from earliest hominids to the recent past.

File formats: We're pretty sure we can handle any file formats you have, but if your file format is particularly rare or old, please get in touch before you apply to check we can work with your data (applications@hsds.ac.uk).

Where can I find out about past projects that have been funded?

For more information on the types of projects eligible for funding, please visit our website to explore the [previous grants awarded under this scheme](#).

Important - HSDS is also offering funding to develop Virtual Research Environments (VREs). If you are applying to develop a VRE, please see our separate Guide for Applicants available from the call information web-page.

Information for existing RICHeS Facility and Collection grant holders

The AHRC has already invested heavily in heritage science facilities and collections through the RICHeS programme so while existing RICHeS grant

holders may apply for funding, please note that the intention of this fund is to broaden the breadth and depth of the HSDS Data Catalogue. We aim to do this particularly by adding datasets relating to under-represented areas, or from those sectors that have previously had less access to funding. As such, applications which incrementally extend existing RICHES-funded projects are unlikely to be successful.

Licensing requirements

The HSDS is an open access archive and our intention is to share data as openly as possible and as closed as necessary. Creative Commons [CC-BY](#) is our preferred licence option which enables your data to be re-used in most circumstances, provided attribution is given to the original data creator. If this doesn't work for you, we can offer alternative licences, such as [CC-BY-NC](#), which restricts data usage to only non-commercial ventures.

We'll discuss all of this with you before your data is released and we'll ask you to confirm your choice by signing an agreement confirming that you either own the copyright to the data or have the copyright holder's permission to make them available with us. You can find out more about our [Deposit Agreement](#) on our website but please get in touch if you have any questions (applications@hsds.ac.uk).

Available funding

Grants are available for **between £500 and £25,000** and we welcome projects both small and large.

For organisations operating under the Full Economic Cost model (usually Higher Education Institutions), 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. Please see further details below.

Duration of funding

Funding is available for projects of up to a maximum duration of 12 months.

Who can apply?

We welcome applications from a broad range of organisations. Eligible organisations include, but are not limited to:

- Galleries, libraries, museums and archives
- Academic organisations and educational establishments (such as schools, colleges, and universities)
- Registered charitable bodies and social enterprises
- Commercial companies or freelance specialists working in collaboration with eligible partner organisations

All applicants must be based in the UK, and all funded work must be undertaken in the UK. Please note: Individuals who are involved in delivering the Heritage Science Data Service **cannot apply** for grants under this programme. This includes Co-Investigators at partner organisations and any staff whose salary is paid by the HSDS grant.

There are no other restrictions on who may act as Main or Co-Applicant provided they have the support of the submitting organisation.

If you have any questions about your eligibility, please contact us at applications@hsds.ac.uk.

Key dates for this call

Call opens: **8 June 2026**

Deadline for applications: **5pm GMT, 30 September 2026**

Communication of results to Main Applicants: We aim to notify successful applicants by **31 January 2027**

Earliest indicative project start date: **1 April 2027** (projects must commence no later than 1 August 2027)

Eligible costs

The following costs are eligible:

- Staff salary costs for all staff involved in delivering the project (e.g. Project Main Applicant, Project Co-Applicant(s), archival, technical or other specialist staff necessary to complete the work). It is anticipated that this cost category will comprise the majority of the requested budget. These may be costs to buy-out the time of existing staff or to recruit and appoint new staff for the duration of the project.
- Reasonable essential and sustainable travel and subsistence costs necessary to deliver the project.
- Costs for necessary consumables or equipment.
- Costs related to external services or specialists as necessary (e.g. subcontracting)
- Essential estates and indirects.

Budgets **do not** need to include costs for data deposition with the HSDS, or for the development of tailored features such as search interfaces and interactive maps where needed. These services will be provided free of charge to successful applicants.

Ineligible costs

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

How applications will be assessed

Applications received by the published deadline will be checked for eligibility by the HSDS team. Applicants whose submissions are rejected at this stage will be notified by email.

Applications meeting the eligibility criteria set out in this 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 funding recommendation.

Our panel of experts has been carefully chosen to ensure diverse representation, including non-academic reviewers and we provide clear guidance to members of the panel in advance of assessment being carried out. As part of this, we take steps to manage conflicts of interest. Members of the panel with an actual or perceived conflict of interest are instructed to declare the potential conflict of interest. In considering whether a conflict of interest exists, we ask panellists to adhere to the [UKRI Declaration of Interest Policy](#).

Panellists are not permitted to use generative AI tools in their assessment as using these tools can potentially compromise the confidentiality of the ideas that applicants have entrusted to HSDS to safeguard.

Evaluation criteria

The following are the criteria our panel of reviewers will use to evaluate proposals.

Excellence & Impact Weighting: 40%	The project's expected contribution to the advancement, understanding, preservation, and management of tangible heritage. In particular, reviewers will be looking for evidence that the proposed project:
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Is timely, given current trends and context. ● Enables re-use by meeting the evidenced needs of clearly identified user groups. ● Will have a measurable impact beyond the immediate team. ● Will enhance and complement the existing landscape and does not duplicate existing datasets. ● Will enable high quality and important research. ● Will meet the strategic aims of the RICHeS programme.
<p>Feasibility Weighting: 40%</p>	<p>Reviewers will be looking for concrete plans that the resulting dataset can be delivered to the HSDS in the project timescale. In particular, reviewers will be looking for the following evidence that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The proposal reflects a team with appropriate knowledge and expertise to deliver the project. ● There are no copyright restrictions that would prevent sharing of the data under an appropriate licence. ● Any staff recruitment is clearly identified and the timescale for recruitment is adequate. ● Involvement of other contributors (e.g. community engagement) is well-planned and feasible in the proposed timescale.
<p>Value for money Weighting: 20%</p>	<p>Reviewers will be looking for evidence that the project represents good value for money. In particular, reviewers will be looking for evidence that the proposed budget and justification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provides a breakdown of staff time, explaining how much time will be dedicated by each member of staff involved in the project. ● Explains what each member of staff contributes to the project (e.g. project oversight, data cataloguing etc). ● Where travel and subsistence costs are requested,

	<p>explains clearly who will travel, where they will go, how they will travel, how long for and why the trip is essential to the project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Explains clearly what equipment is necessary, why this cannot be provided from other sources and what will happen to the equipment after the grant end date.● Explains clearly the role of subcontractors and how they will be selected.
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Notification of outcomes and arrangements for successful awards

We will notify the Main Applicant with the outcome of their application by email. Successful awardees will receive a grant agreement, which will set out the terms and conditions of the funding. Grant agreements must be fully signed before the grant can commence.

Reporting requirements

All projects will be required to deposit the resulting dataset with HSDS or one of its [approved alternative repositories](#) before the project end date and we'll ask you to complete a short report and submit it to us within 30 days of the grant end date.

Privacy notice

For further information on how we collect, manage and safeguard personal information as part of this grant scheme, please see our [Privacy Policy](#).

Section 2: How to apply

Applications must be submitted via our submission system. The proposal must be submitted in English and the application form must be completed in full with all required information provided in the relevant sections. The proposal must be submitted before the specified call deadline. Late applications cannot be considered.

To begin your application, please visit our [HSDS Cascading Grants Call Information web-page](#) to access the submission system.

You can navigate away from your application at any point and return to it later. We have also provided a Word version of the application form should you wish to prepare your application offline but please note that **only applications submitted via our online submission system will be accepted**. If you submit broadly the same application multiple times, we will consider only the latest version submitted.

Use of generative AI

In line with current sector good practice, applicants and applications are expected to be transparent where they have used generative AI tools in the development of an application. You will be asked to declare this in your application form but please note that this information will not affect the assessment process.

How to complete the online application

This section provides a step-by-step guide to the application form, telling you what reviewers will be looking for from each section.

Equality, diversity and inclusion monitoring

As part of your application you will be asked to provide answers to a number of equality, diversity and monitoring questions. We are asking for this information because to do so is a condition of our funding. In every instance there is an opportunity to select 'prefer not to say'. Please be assured that these data are for monitoring purposes only and will be treated as strictly confidential. They will not be used in any way that allows individuals to be identified and will not be linked to funding applications nor will they be seen by anyone involved in the review processes, funding decision-making, or by any other third parties. All personal information will be stored in a Google Drive that is accessible only to core members of the HSDS and saved in one of Google's globally spread data centres as agreed with the University of York contract undertaken with Google. You can request that your information be removed from our database at any time. If you have any questions please contact us by emailing the team at help@hsds.ac.uk.

Applicant details

Here we ask you to tell us the name of the Main and up to two Co-Applicants. The Main Applicant and Co-Applicant(s) may be from the same organisation or from different organisations. See above for "Who can apply?"

Main Applicant: Please complete the application form with the requested information (title, first name, surname, organisation name and department, where relevant, job title and email address). The Main Applicant takes overall responsibility for the project and will be the person with whom HSDS will communicate.

Co-Applicant(s): You may add up to two Co-Applicants. Co-Applicants share the responsibility to deliver the project.

Basic project details

Project title: Please provide a short project title. The title does not need to be snappy and does not require an acronym. It should just reflect the project's purpose.

Project start date: Please tell us the proposed start date for your project. This must be no earlier than 1 April 2027 and no later than 1 August 2027. Please bear in mind any time you might need between receiving notification of your award and starting the project to complete any additional tasks, such as signing the grant agreement or recruiting temporary staff.

Project end date: Please tell us the proposed end date for your project. This must be no later than 12 months after the proposed start date and cannot be later than 31 July 2028.

Project summary: Please provide a brief summary of the proposed project, suitable for a lay audience. Project summaries are most helpful when they describe the challenge the project addresses, the aims and objectives and the potential applications and benefits.

Please note that if your application is successful, the project summary, or an edited version thereof, will be published on the HSDS website and may be used by HSDS in other promotional contexts.

Max 1,650 characters.

Full project description

What would you like funding to do? Please use this section to tell us what you plan to do if the funding is awarded. What is the dataset that you would like support to deposit with the HSDS? Who owns the dataset? All datasets deposited with the HSDS will need to be made available under an open

licence so it's important that you tell us if there are any restrictions on sharing the dataset.

You should also tell us what work will be required to prepare the dataset for deposition with the HSDS, and who will do the work? Tell us how long each piece of work will take and provide a brief timeline of the project.

If you will involve any other team members apart from the Main Applicant and any Co-Applicant(s) identified above, please tell us who they are and what they will do.

Max 6,500 characters including any necessary references but please note that references are not essential or expected.

Excellence and impact: Please tell us *why* this project is important. Why should it be funded? Why is now the right time for this project? The reviewers will look for evidence of the following so feel free to use these as sub-headings:

- **Timeliness:** How is the project timely, given current trends and context?
- **Meeting the needs of users:** Who will want to use the dataset? How will it help users and what evidence is there to demonstrate the need?
- **Impact:** How will this work have a measurable impact beyond the immediate team?
- **Enhancing and complementing the existing landscape:** How does this dataset fit in the wider landscape? Reviewers will look for evidence that this dataset doesn't duplicate existing services so tell us if there is already something similar and explain how this dataset differs or complements existing resources.
- **Re-use:** How might this dataset support future high quality work/research or inform future heritage management or curatorial strategies?

- **Supporting the aims of the RICHeS programme:** Our funding is provided by the [RICHeS programme](#) so it's important that you tell us how your proposed project fits into the aims and objectives of this investment.

Max. 4,500 characters.

Visual supplementary material: If you wish, you may upload up to three images to help the review panel to visualise your application, for example, images of relevant artefacts, buildings etc.

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. Space is provided in the application form for you to confirm whether or not permission is granted and to provide relevant credit information.

Providing images is not mandatory and your application will not be penalised if you do not provide any.

Ethics

This section should explain any ethical or responsible research implications or issues relating to the proposed work. If you're unsure of any potential implications, please just tell us and if your project is successful we'll work with you to ensure anything relevant is considered.

Max. 2,500 characters.

The budget

Funding requested: Please tell us what you will need to deliver your proposed work and how much it will cost.

If you are requesting **costs for staff time**, you should say whose time this covers, how much of their time you are asking to pay for and what they will do as part of the project (e.g. project management, data provision etc).

E.g. £X,XXX is requested to pay for 2 hours per week of project Main Applicant to undertake overall project management, supervise all team members and ensure the dataset is uploaded to HSDS by the end of the project.

If you are requesting **travel costs**, please tell us who is travelling, where they are going and how they will travel (e.g. train, bus), for how long and why the travel is essential for the project.

E.g. £XXX is requested to pay for 2 day-return rail tickets from York to Leeds for the project Main Applicant and Co-Applicant to visit the organisation's satellite office. This is essential to meet with key personnel who will create the associated metadata in readiness for data deposition.

If you are requesting **other costs**, please tell us what these are for and why they are essential for the project.

You do not need to justify the inclusion of estates or indirect costs provided these are calculated in accordance with your normal organisational policy.

Max. 2,500 characters.

Will any organisation provide additional in-kind or cash contributions?

Please tell us if any other organisation will provide any in-kind or cash contributions to help you to deliver your project. This might include, for example, help you might receive from volunteers, or any cost-sharing to be provided by your own organisation.

Please explain the in-kind or cash contributions from other sources: If any other organisation will provide any in-kind or cash contributions to help to

deliver your project, please tell us how much will be provided, whether this is in-kind or cash, or a combination, and which organisations will provide these additional contributions.

Funding table

Please provide the totals you are requesting from HSDS for each of the budget lines provided. Please ensure that these match the costs you have included above. Please do not include any in kind contributions or funding you will receive from other sources, **only include the budget you are requesting from HSDS**. The budget lines we ask you to use are:

Project Applicant/Co-Applicant costs: all costs for the salaries of the Main Applicant and any Co-Applicant(s). These should reflect the real cost to the organisation of paying those salaries, including any organisational on-costs, such as employer's pension and National Insurance contributions.

Other staff costs: all costs for the salaries of any other team members who will work on the project, excluding the Main Applicant and any Co-Applicant(s). These should reflect the real cost to the organisation of paying those salaries, including any organisational on-costs, such as employer's pension and National Insurance contributions.

Travel costs: all costs associated with travel and subsistence, e.g. rail fares and costs of lunches/drinks necessary to be purchased if the member of staff is away from the office for an extended period.

Other costs: all other costs necessary to the successful completion of the project, e.g. necessary subcontracting.

Estates costs: may include building and premises costs, basic services and utilities and equipment maintenance not already included under other cost headings.

Indirect costs: include non-specific costs charged across all projects based on estimates that are not otherwise included under other cost headings. They may include the costs of the organisation's administration such as personnel, finance, or IT services.

Generative AI

In line with current sector good practice, applicants and applications are expected to be transparent where they have used generative AI tools in the development of an application. Answers to this question will not affect the assessment process.

Submitting your application

Once you have completed your form in our online submission system you will be able to submit your application. Once submitted, you will have an opportunity to download a copy of your completed application for your records.

You will receive an email acknowledgement of your submission. If you do not receive an email acknowledgement, your application may not have been received so please contact us at applications@hsds.ac.uk to check.

Help applying

If you have any questions about your application or require any further assistance, please don't hesitate to contact us at applications@hsds.ac.uk.