

hsds Heritage Science Data Service

Arts and Humanities Research Council

Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

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.

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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	28.10.26	Document created
2.0	11.11.26	Content added

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 Manager, Kristy-Lee Seaton.

Heritage Science Data Service, The Guildhall, York, YO1 6GA
Email: ai-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.

- **How many projects are HSDS looking to fund?**
  Estimated 12 awards of £40,000 (projects costed at £50,000 at 100% FEC)

Available funding and duration

- **How much funding is available?**
  Estimated 12 awards of £40,000 (projects costed at £50,000 at 100% FEC)

- **When can projects start?**
  The earliest start date is 4 January, 2027. Given that the project must be completed by 30 April, 2027 it is advisable to start as close as possible to this date.

- **What is the maximum project duration?**
  The project must be finished by 30 April, 2027.

Eligibility

- **Who is eligible to apply for this funding?**
  We welcome applications from a broad range of organisations. Eligible organisation include, but are not limited to:
    - Academic organisations and educational establishments (such as schools, colleges, and universities)
    - UKRI Independent Research Organisations (IROs)
    - Galleries, libraries, museums and archives
    - 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. There are no other restrictions on who may act as Main or Co-Applicant provided they have the support of the submitting organisation

- **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. The discipline for this grant is cultural heritage and heritage science.

Key Dates

- **What are the key dates for this call?**
    - Call opens: **2 November, 2026**
    - Deadline for applications: **5pm GMT, 4 December, 2026**
    - **Applicants must be available to discuss technical feasibility between 7 December and 16 December 2026**
    - Communication of results: We aim to notify all successful applicants by **18 December, 2028**
    - Earliest indicative project start date: **4 January, 2027**
    - Projects must be completed no later than 30 April, 2027

Costs

- **What costs are eligible for this funding?**
    - 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.
    - Essential estates and indirects.

- **What the budget does not need to include?**
  Budgets do not need to include costs for STFC Hartree Centre or ADS / HSDS staff time as this will be covered separately.

  Please note, this does not cover Hartree Centre software engineering / AI specialists time - projects will need to bring their own technical staff to support their own projects.

- **What costs are ineligible?**
  Student fees (e.g., PhD, DBA, EdD, LLD, etc.) are not eligible.

- **What can I apply for funding to do?**
  There are many potential advantages to the managed application of AI to the UK's archaeology and heritage science datasets, from creating predictive models of site location to the identification of artefacts. This funding call invites your ideas for how AI could be applied to archaeology or heritage science data. In proposing ideas, we will not constrain the range of AI approaches, which could range from traditional Named Entity Recognition (NER) to Large Language Model (LLM) refining and customisation, to image recognition and small model training. Nor will we constrain the scope of research questions, working across terrestrial and marine archaeology, cultural heritage management, conservation and management of buildings and landscapes, ancient DNA, digital twins, past environmental modelling and predictive modelling of site location amongst other areas.

- **What is this funding intended to cover?**
  Funding is available to cover 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); reasonable essential and sustainable travel and subsistence costs necessary to deliver the project; essential estates and indirect costs; and data deposition costs. Costs for STFC Hartree Centre are included, but note that this does not cover Software Engineering/AI Specialists time. We anticipate that staff costs will comprise the majority of the requested budget.

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 the Building AI Capability and Datasets Fund submission link to apply.

- **How should each section of the application form be completed?**
  We ask you to write a project summary where you need to provide a brief description about your project that could be understood by a lay person. Please describe the problem your project addresses, any aims and objectives you have, and describe the potential applications and benefits of your project. If your project is awarded we will include this summary on our website and in our publicity so please keep that in mind when you write them.

  You can also download an example application form to help you prepare, and see the evaluation criteria (page 9) in the Guide for Applicants. Also, there is a step-by-step guide in the Guide for Applicants (page 14).

- **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 Guide for Applicants documents.

- **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 Project Manager, Kristy-Lee Seaton, or the Programme Administrator, Anett Mladoniczki at ai-applications@hsds.ac.uk.

Further information

- **Will the scheme be running yearly?**
  Unfortunately not. Due to EPSRC funding this is likely to be a one-off opportunity.

- **Is the creation of AI ready datasets eligible as a cost, e.g. digitisation of handwritten documents?**
  That would be eligible if it was a relatively small proportion of the overall costs. The funding is not aimed at digitisation, however.
- **Is the use of existing databases from the catalogues somehow "preferred" over other databases (to be later linked/included as mentioned)?**
  No. There is no preference or requirement to use databases listed, provided that the datasets are publicly accessible. However, the ADS and HSDS datasets have been highlighted as potentially useful resources, as they are openly licensed and offer a rich source of data for developing AI tools. If you do not already have another dataset in mind, they may be a good starting point.

- **Is it essential that at least some HSDS data is used within a project, or could a project be limited to, say, a publicly accessible museum dataset?**
  No, it is not essential to use ADS or HSDS data. Projects may use other datasets, provided they are publicly accessible and relevant to the research question. For example, a project could focus entirely on a publicly accessible museum dataset. However, private datasets that cannot be made publicly accessible would fall outside the scope of the project.

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?**
  We'll also ask you to deposit with ADS or HSDS or one of our approved alternative repositories before the project end date:
  - Any existing dataset which you use in your research and which is not already hosted in a trusted digital repository;
  - Any derived dataset arising from the research.
  - Any dataset deposited with ADS or HSDS will be shared under an agreed open licence (see below).

Licencing

- The ADS and HSDS are open access archives and our intention is to share data openly wherever possible, but access can be restricted where 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 Agreements on the ADS or HSDS website but please get in touch if you have any questions (ai-applications@hsds.ac.uk).
  - ADS Deposit Agreement
  - HSDS Deposit Agreement

Privacy Notice

For further information on how we collect, manage and safeguard personal information as part of this grant scheme, please see HSDS's Privacy Policy.