ESRC Open call for research and innovation ideas to address research priorities relevant to the Department for Economy (DfE) Northern Ireland economic policy

Expression of interest: Research priorities and Northern Ireland Business data

Opportunity status:	Open
Funders:	Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), UK Research and Innovation
Co-partners:	Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA)
Funding type:	Grant
Maximum award:	£65,000
Publication date:	NA
Opening date:	6 May 2022
Closing date:	16 June 2022

We are accepting applications for six-month research awards to look at research priorities relevant to the Department for Economy (DfE) Northern Ireland economic policy.

The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), on behalf of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), working in partnership with the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) is pleased to announce a new funding initiative for research awards to undertake research relevant to the Department for Economy (DfE) Northern Ireland economic policy under Administrative Data Research UK (ADR UK). NISRA has created the Business Data for Research (BDR) to utilise NISRA de-identified trade and economic data for monitoring, evaluation and research purposes, exploiting data linkage both longitudinally and cross-source. BDR includes two surveys, from 2014 to 2020, as well as the Earning and Employee Study (EES) 2011. The EES utilizes NISRA de-identified earnings data, geographic and demographic variables and can be used to evaluate pay.

Research using BDR must meet a development need or challenge and aim to support research priorities of the Department for Economy (DfE) NI economic policy, specifically the DfE's 10X Economy - An Economic Vision For A Decade Of Innovation. NISRA de-identified trade and business data has been routinely used for some time by DfE statisticians in support of monitoring, evaluation and research conducted by the department. Business and trade data are of importance to a range of policy and research areas including:
- Economic recovery including the DfE's Economic Recovery Action Plan;
- EU Exit and the NI Protocol (the BDR database has already been utilised in support of the DfE Brexit Analytical Workplan);
- The impact of Covid-19 on the Northern Ireland economy (see modelled results for Q2 2020);
- Northern Ireland International Trade in Services (see Northern Ireland International Trade in Services - New Perspectives (November 2018);
- Northern Ireland exports (see ESRI: Export Participation and Performance of Firms on the Island of Ireland (September 2018)); and

- Providing an evidence base for DfE 10X Economy: Economic Vision, Skills Strategy and Trade & Investment documents (see DfE's 10x Research Programme).

This is the first time NISRA are making this data available in the ADR UK and in addition to the research requirements, successful applicants will be required to attend three meetings with NISRA to provide feedback that will be used to improve user access for future researchers. You can apply for up to £65k for up to 6 months. decisions will be made mid-August.

What data is available?

BDR is currently available on a restricted basis for analysis by government researchers, and NISRA would like to widen its use and make it available to ADR UK researchers. You can read a summary of the de-identified business surveys on the NISRA website. The release of data to researchers is for three main datasets:

- The Northern Ireland Annual Business Inquiry (NIABI) 2014-2020 collects both financial and employment information from businesses and other establishments and covers around 66% of the economy. This includes the production, construction, distribution and service industries in Northern Ireland, but mostly excludes public sector activity.

  The NIABI provides a number of high-level indicators of economic activity, such as the total value of sales and work completed by businesses (turnover); the value of the purchase of goods, materials and services; and total employment costs. The contribution of different industries to the overall value of economic activity can be assessed, and because estimates of employment are collected at the same time, it is also possible to measure value added and costs per head. This allows better comparison between different sized industrial sectors.

  The NIABI is designed to provide the best estimates for Northern Ireland, as well as providing information that is used at a later stage to inform UK National and Regional Accounts estimates. In 2011, questions relating to the value of trade were added to the NIABI questionnaire, and as such the NIABI also includes data used to produce a number of trade-related measures within the Broad Economy Sales and Exports Statistics (BESES). BESES is a National Statistics annual measure of local businesses' sales to and purchases from markets outside Northern Ireland.

- Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) 2014-2020: The BRES collects employee job figures by gender and working pattern from public and private sector businesses in Northern Ireland. The data is collected at local unit level (individual business sites) which allows for disaggregation of the employee job counts by Northern Ireland geographies. The business description is collected, which allows disaggregation of the employee job counts by industry.

  The BRES collects information at a local unit level that is used to update the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR). The data collected includes contact details including email address and business address, business operational status and business activity. The business register information obtained from the NI BRES is processed within the Economic Labour Market and Statistics Branch (ELMSB) within NISRA. This

data is used to update the NI element of the IDBR which is used as a sampling frame for business surveys.

- **Earnings and Employees Study (EES) 2011**: The Earnings and Employees Study (EES) 2011 links together variables from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) 2011 with variables from the Census of Population and Housing 2011, and Capital Value data from the Land and Property Services. The dataset takes the form of one pre-linked table.

  The ASHE is a UK-wide survey that provides data on hourly, weekly and annual earnings by gender, work patterns, industry and occupation, including public versus private sector pay comparisons. The sample used comprises approximately 1% of all employees in NI who were covered by Pay As You Earn (PAYE) schemes, and the EES contains 5,770 distinct ASHE records which have been linked to Census records.

  The Census of Population and Housing collects information every 10 years about people and households in Northern Ireland. It is used by central and local government, health authorities and many other organisations to plan and provide future services. It is hoped that research involving the EES data will help to inform the development and monitoring of public policy and provide an evidence base for decision making. There are a number of potential EES research themes. These include, but are not limited to, factors influencing variation in median pay, graduates and the workplace, disparity in pay and migration, public versus private jobs, and geography and pay.

Who can apply?

You are eligible to apply if you:
- meet standard ESRC eligibility criteria
- are based at a research organisation that has a recognised research capacity and is permitted to hold grants from UKRI.

The legal gateway for making data available to researchers is through the Digital Economy Act. As such, the following conditions will also apply:
- Researchers will be required to hold accredited researcher status under the Digital Economy Act (2018). Details on obtaining accreditation are outlined on the UK Statistics Authority website;
- Successful applicants' projects must be approved at the UK Statistics Authority Research Accreditation Panel (RAP); and
- The data will be made available through the Office for National Statistics Secure Research Service (ONS SRS). If planning to use an organisation's Safe Room, A**ssured Organisational Connectivity to the ONS SRS,** must be in place prior to applying.

What we are looking for?

We are looking to fund projects which use BDR to address research priorities covering areas within DfE's 10X Economy - An Economic Vision For A Decade Of Innovation.
The de-identified datasets are being made available to a small number of research teams through this call to:

- Enable beta testing of the BDR in advance of making the dataset available to wider researchers
- Provide feedback on the quality of documentation created by NISRA such as the metadata, synthetic data and other resources; and
- Inform the future development of the BDR including identifying a programme of making future data available to all ADR UK researchers and increasing the volume of data from BDR that researchers can access.

NISRA are requesting that successful applicants complete a Data Insight report and a Data Explained report during the project. This will cover outcomes from the researcher, data access, documentation, data quality issues and future research areas. Templates will be issued to the successful applicants.

Projects we will not fund

We cannot fund projects using data available outside BDR. Other data cannot be linked to BDR at this stage. We will not consider projects that could be funded through existing UKRI funding schemes and calls.

How to apply

You need to submit the application initial form via Je-S by 4pm on 16 June 2022. When applying select:

- council: ESRC

- document type: Outline

- scheme: Outline proposal

- call/type/mode: ADR UK NISRA Business Data for Research outlines 2022

The completed BDR brief application form and CVs are the only required attachments. The BDR brief application form should be uploaded as attachment type case for support.

Your proposal must draw on relevant business research literature, concepts or approaches and include significant research expertise within the remit of business research.

You will need to show how your research provides impact for the DfE's 10X Economy - An Economic Vision For A Decade Of Innovation throughout the application. You should especially highlight this within Section 1 of the form.

You can also find advice on completing your application in the Je-S Guidance. If you need further help, you can contact the Je-S help desk on 01793 444164 or by emailing **jeshelp@je-s.ukri.org**.

The scheme will close to applications on 16 June 2022 at 16:00.

Expression of interests

We will assess your research proposal using the following criteria:
- fit to call
- scientific merit
- research expertise and partnerships
- feasibility of proposed activities/methods
- extent to which the proposal includes appropriate plans for significant research outputs and outcomes
- value for money
- Your application will be considered through an accelerated peer-review process.

Once you have submitted your application, we will aim to complete the review process and provide you with a decision within six working weeks.

If we consider your expression of interest to be eligible, you will be invited to submit a full **Joint Electronic Submission system (Je-S)** application in order to receive funding.

Full applications (if successful)

If your initial application to this call is successful, you will be required to submit a full application using the joint electronic submission (Je-S) system for us to administer the funding. We anticipate we will only require a more detailed budget breakdown and justification at this next stage. Additional project information may be requested by the funding panel.

You can also find advice on completing your application in the **Je-S handbook**. If you need further help, you can contact the Je-S help desk on 01793 444164 or by emailing **jeshelp@je-s.ukri.org**.

Contact details

For more information on the call, contact hub@adruk.org.
For help using Je-S, call the help desk on 01793 444164 or email **jeshelp@je-s.ukri.org**.
For further information on the data, contact rsu@nisra.gov.uk.

Additional information

Supporting documents
- Funding call announcement
- Je- S guidance

- BDR variable list