

SGSSS Impact Competition Applicant Guidance 2024

This guidance provides an introduction to the SGSSS Impact Competition, materials to support an application, and information about eligibility and timelines. There is also information about the prize money.

If you have any questions about the contents of this document, please contact Victoria McQuillan, SGSSS Research Partnerships and Impact Manager, on team@sgsss.ac.uk.

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Useful links

Impact Competition webpage including previous winners: [Impact Competition – Scottish Graduate School of Social Science \(sgsss.ac.uk\)](https://sgsss.ac.uk/impact-competition)

Enter the Impact Competition 2024 here:
https://apply.sgsss.ac.uk/prog/sgsss_impact_competition

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1. Overview

1.1 Competition aims

The SGSSS Impact Competition aims to champion a culture of creating meaningful impact across the SGSSS student community and the wider public.

The competition gives all Social Science PhD students across Scotland an opportunity to:

- 1 Reflect on how their research can make a meaningful difference beyond their own research field.
- 2 Inspire further impact, through follow-on funding for winning projects.

1.2 Defining ‘impact’

SGSSS defines impact using the terms of the ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council), as the [“demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy.”](#)

For the purposes of the SGSSS Impact Competition, ‘impact’ can include:

- An **effect on, change or benefit to society and the economy**. This includes a positive change on the activity, awareness, behaviour, capacity, opportunity, performance, policy, practice, process or understanding of key beneficiaries.
- The **positive academic contribution** that excellent research can make to the understanding and advancement of scientific method or theory across disciplines.

For instance, applicants could submit an application based on their PhD research, an internship, an OIV (Overseas Institutional Visit), or a special project such as a cross-institutional collaboration.

Beneficiaries can be:

- A non-academic audience, community, constituency, organisation or individuals.
- An academic audience, community, or consortium.
- Based locally, regionally, or internationally. Although researchers must be registered at a Scottish University to be eligible for this competition, their impact can take place anywhere in the UK and overseas.

1.3 Pathways to impact

We expect applicants for this competition to be at distinct stages on their pathway to impact, and the process is designed to provide you with an opportunity to reflect on

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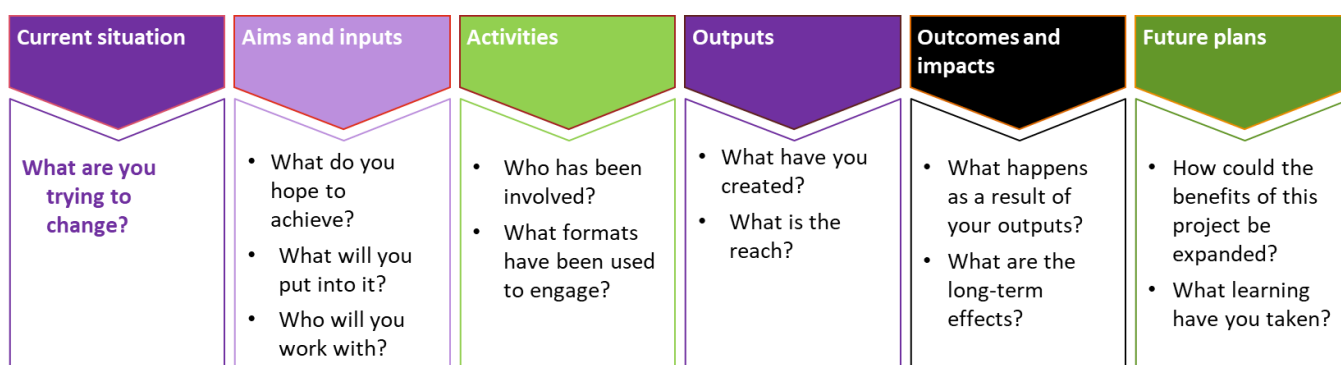
what you are planning to achieve, what you have achieved so far, and what you could do next with some follow-on funding.

To reflect on where you are in your impact journey and participate in this competition, you can start by identifying:

1. The outputs that have been realised (or that you are planning to realise in the next years of your PhD).
2. The outcomes that have been achieved (or that you are planning to realise in the next years of your PhD).
3. The impact that has already been realised (or has the potential to be realised in the future).

Additionally, if you do not have one already, you may wish to draw up a logic model for your project. For instance, the model in Figure 1, originally designed as a planning tool, can be useful for evaluation as well.

Figure 1: Pathways to Impact diagram



Logic model adapted from the National Centre for Co-Ordinating Public Engagement: https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/evaluating_your_public_engagement_work.pdf

NB The key caveat to using a logic model to plan/evaluate impact is that it can suggest the process is linear. It is also worth considering that, in a truly collaborative project, engagement with stakeholders (those you are seeking to benefit or persuade, for example) may be embedded all the way through and can change the shape of the project.

1.4 Measuring impact

Ideally, applications would include a combination of various kinds of evidence to demonstrate the well-rounded and continuing impacts of the project. You can include evidence of impact that you had planned, and also evidence of unanticipated

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impacts that arose as you went through the project for example, positive feedback from stakeholders that you had not initially planned to engage.

SGSSS accepts the following evidence as part of the Impact Competition:

- Quantitative evidence
- Qualitative evidence
- Information about short-term, medium-term and long-term impacts
- Information about impacts that have been achieved, or that are yet to be realised

For advice on quantitative measures for impact, we would recommend RAND Europe's [Guidance for standardising quantitative indicators of impact within REF case studies](#) (2018). Commissioned by HEFCE, this document provides an overview of some standard measures for quantifying impact, based on the 2014 REF case study submissions. A graphic summarising some of their top tips is below in Figure 2.

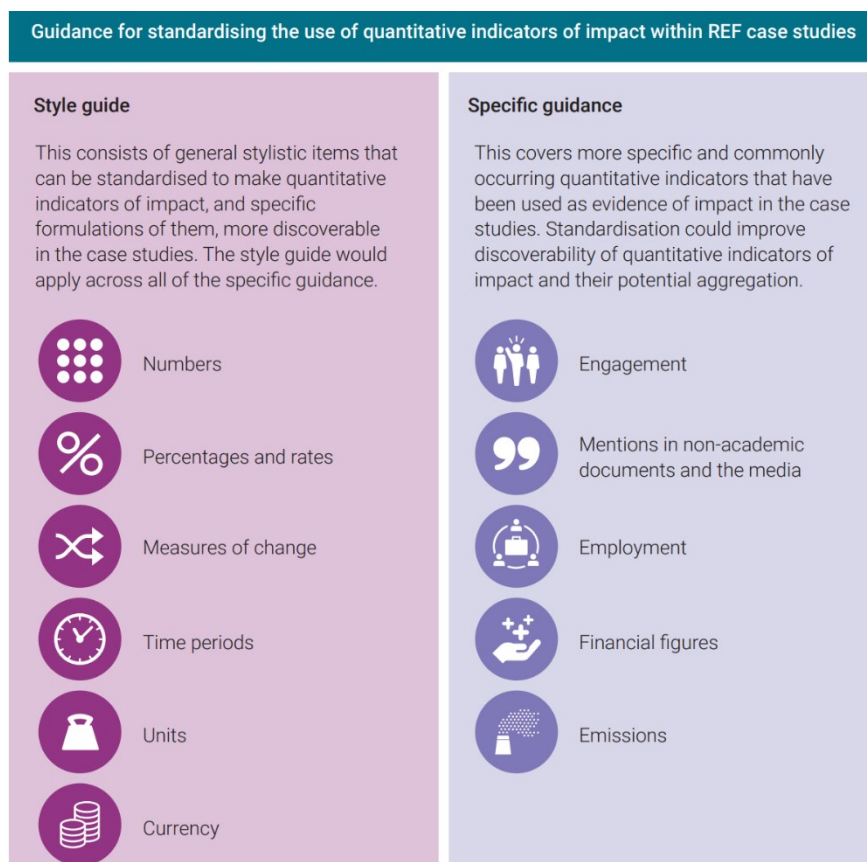


Figure 2:
Guidance for
quantitative
indicators of
impact.

Sarah Parks,
Becky Ioppolo,
Martin Stepanek
and Salil
Gunashekar,
Guidance for
standardising
quantitative
indicators of
impact within REF
case studies,
Cambridge: Rand
Europe, 2018

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2. The application process

2.1 Eligibility

The SGSSS Impact Competition is open to all PhD social science students registered at a Scottish University: applicants do not have to be ESRC funded.

We understand that, depending on where you are at with your PhD, you will be at a different stage of your journey to create impact. To allow for this there are two categories for the SGSSS Impact Competition:

1. **Planned Impact:** applications are open for any student in their first year of PhD study (or part-time equivalent). *Please note: students in their second or third year are not eligible to submit under the Planned Impact category.*
2. **Achieved Impact:** applications are open for any student in their second or third year of PhD study (or part-time equivalent).

2.2 Assessment process

There are two rounds of assessment for the Impact Competition. **Applicants need to be able to commit to participate in both stages of the competition** when they complete the initial application form.

Round One: Panel review

- Applicants submit an application via [SGSSS Apply](#) by Wednesday 3rd April 2024. The questions you will be asked can be found in Section 4.
- Submissions will be reviewed by a panel of collaboration and impact leaders within universities, non-academic organisations that work closely with academics on research projects, and early career academics that are leading innovative impact projects.
- Up to three candidates will be shortlisted for each of the two categories “Planned Impact” or “Achieved Impact”.

Round Two: Public vote

- Applicants that are shortlisted in round one will progress to round two.
- In round two applicants will be **invited to produce a poster and short video** to present their submission. These resources should be aimed at a non-academic audience. Candidates will be provided with resources and guidance to support them in producing the poster effectively.
- The posters and videos will be put to an online public vote for one week in May. The winner in each category will be determined by the number of votes received.

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The winners of each category will be announced at the annual SGSSS Collaboration and Impact Showcase on Wednesday 22nd May 2024 at the V&A Dundee. All shortlisted candidates will be invited to attend the Collaboration and Impact Showcase to exhibit a hard copy of their poster (printing and expenses covered by SGSSS) and discuss their work with fellow guests.

2.3 Assessment criteria

The table below details the specific assessment criteria for each category.

	CATEGORY 1 Planned Impact	CATEGORY 2 Achieved Impact
Focus on	✓ Planned and expected impact that is intended to develop in the next years of the PhD	✓ Achieved and ongoing impact
Scale and significance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ What outputs are planned and what are the likely benefits for different stakeholders? ✓ Are these outputs feasible given current plans? Would they be supported by follow-on funding? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ What were the outputs of the project, and how far-reaching are the benefits for different stakeholders? ✓ What are the opportunities to expand the existing benefits for key stakeholders through the follow-on funding?
Relationship between researcher and impact	✓ How clear are the potential links between the research planned or underway and the stated potential impact?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ How clear are the links between the underpinning research and the impact? ✓ What opportunities are there for future research and impact as a result of this work?
Clarify and concision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ How clearly are the planned outputs, outcomes and impacts of the project articulated? ✓ What consideration has been given to the evidence that will be needed to justify and monitor impact? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ How clearly are the outputs, outcomes and impacts of the project articulated? ✓ How effectively is qualitative and/or quantitative evidence used to explain the outputs, outcomes and impacts of the project?

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2.4 Application timeline

Key Events	Date
Deadline for applications	Wednesday 3 rd April 2024
Review panel considers applications and chooses shortlist	3 rd - 24 th April 2024
Shortlisted applicants notified and invited to create poster and video	By 24 th April
Deadline for shortlisted applicants to submit poster and video	8 th May 2024
Public vote on shortlisted applications	10 th – 20 th May 2024
Winners announced at Collaboration and Impact Showcase	22 nd May 2024

3. Follow-on funding

3.1 Prizes for candidates

This competition aims to inspire future impact and help students further along their pathway to impact through follow-on funding.

There is £1000 prize funding in total available for the Impact Competition, split across the two categories. The respective winners of the “planned impact” and “achieved impact” categories win £500 each.

3.2 Using prize money as follow on funding

The prize money will be paid by the SGSSS to the winning researchers.

The prize money can be spent at the winner’s discretion, but suggestions for use of this money are included as part of the competition application. Past winners have used the money to support follow-on impact such as:

- Further dissemination of impact based on the project that has taken place.
- A follow-on project that built on the findings and impact of the original project, to develop clear benefits for stakeholders.
- Activities related to furthering the researcher’s impact pathway

The follow-on funding will be paid by SGSSS following the competition.

Each winner will be asked to share any further impact work achieved following award of this prize via a short report to SGSSS.

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3.3 Full details of all previous winners are available [online](#).

Examples of former winners:



[Jenn Glinski was the winner of the 2020 Impact Competition, for a three-month internship which enabled the Royal Bank of Scotland to transform their approach to supporting customers facing economic abuse in their relationship.](#) Jenn used her follow-on funding to attend and lead a workshop at an international conference, raising awareness about these issues and methodological

approaches to tackling them.



[Oliver Hamlet was a runner-up in the 2020 Impact Competition and awarded £500 follow-on funding.](#) Oliver used his funding to further disseminate the impact of his project, developing resources that were posted to air crews internationally. His project was reported in regional media and in specialised news outlets such as Air Med and Rescue Magazine.

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4. Application questions for reference

The application form for the applicable category of the competition should be completed on [SGSSS Apply](#). You can save and return to drafts of the application on Apply. However, as we understand that some prospective candidates will prefer to draft their application out with the online system, we have included the questions below for your reference.

4.1 Application questions for “Planned Impact”

Please write a short summary of the impact you intend to develop in the next years of your PhD (up to 100 words). *Please refer to the definition of impact in the Impact Competition Guidance.*

Please write a description of your research (up to 500 words). *This description should outline what your research topic is, and how your research underpins the impact you intend to develop.*

Please write a fuller description of your planned impact (up to 750 words). *Creating impact is a journey and we acknowledge that students will be at different stages on that journey. Consider here your pathway to impact and how you can articulate your potential impacts at this stage. There is more guidance on this in the Impact Competition Guidance. If relevant, you can use up to 5 sources to support this statement, which should be referenced as part of the word count.*

How would you use the prize money to further the impact from your research? (up to 500 words) *Winning applicants will receive £500. Please outline how you could use this as follow-on funding.*

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4.2 Application questions for “Achieved Impact”

Please write a short summary of the impact you have developed so far in your PhD (up to 100 words). *Please consider the definition of impact in the Impact Competition Guidance.*

Please write a description of your research (up to 500 words). *This description should outline what your research topic is, and how your research underpins the impact you have developed.*

Please write a description of your impact (up to 750 words). *Creating impact is a journey and we acknowledge that students will be at different stages on that journey. Consider here your pathway to impact, and how you can articulate developed and potential impacts at this stage. There is more information about this in the Impact Competition Guidance. If relevant, you can use up to 5 sources to support this statement, which should be referenced as part of the word count.*

How would you use the prize money to further the impact from your research? (up to 500 words) *Winning applicants will receive £500. Please outline how you could use this as follow-on funding*