

[Mauritania: call for proposals to enhance COVID-19 response](#)

The UK Foreign Secretary has announced the launch of the FCO's COVID-19 Enabling Fund as one of the elements of the UK's global response to COVID-19 challenges. The British Embassy Nouakchott invites proposals from civil society and the private sector, within Mauritania for projects in support of Mauritania's response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Budget and timeframe

The British Embassy Nouakchott has allocated up to £50,000 from this Fund, which can be awarded to one or multiple projects. The term of the grant agreement is expected to be up to seven (7) months. Projects should commence in September 2020 and must end no later than 31 March 2021. There may be a possibility of an extension but this should not be assumed and will depend on the execution of the project this financial year and on the availability of funding for the next financial year. The deadline for submitting proposals is 17h30 GMT on 25 August 2020.

To complement the Government of Mauritania's multi-sectoral response plan, project proposals should focus on the following areas:

1. Local economic impact of COVID-19

Intended outcomes include:

- helping local businesses, particularly SMEs, in surviving the effects of COVID-19 and recovering after the crisis
- assisting the private sector in adapting to the post COVID-19 world and being better prepared for future crises

2. Food security

Intended outcomes include:

- increased diversification of local food production through enabling new sustainable projects and businesses
- improved access to food through helping producers conserve for longer periods or expand the geographical range of their supply chain
- increased access to food through helping producers improve their production processes and permanently reduce their prices

3. Public health infrastructure

Intended outcomes include:

- increased local Mauritanian capacity to produce, supply or obtain necessary health products and equipment

- enhanced quality, safety, performance and monitoring & evaluation of the local health system
- assisting the Ministry of Health's response to the COVID-19 crisis

Notes

We welcome proposals for work in all regions of Mauritania, and regional pilots which could be scaled up later to become nationwide. Successful projects should have sustainable outcomes and should clearly identify the change that will result. They may also build on projects by other organisations, complementing their efforts. However, in this case bids should make clear how they complement existing activities supported by other donors.

The maximum indicative funding for a single project is £50,000 but proposals for lower levels of support are also welcome. Funding may be sought to complement co-funding from other partners or self-funding contributions. Our funding is for the UK financial year 2020-21 only (projects must be implemented and all payments made by 15 March 2021). Where appropriate, bidders are encouraged to describe how their project could be further scaled-up if additional funding becomes available in future.

Administrative costs (office rent, bookkeeper rates, utilities, communications, stationery, bank charges etc) must not exceed 10% of the total project budget.

The British Embassy Nouakchott reserves the right to carry out due diligence of potential grantees, including seeking references, as part of the selection process.

Bidding is competitive and only selected projects will receive funding. The Embassy reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids without incurring any obligation to inform the affected applicant(s) of the grounds of such acceptance or rejection. The Embassy will however endeavour to provide feedback on all unsuccessful bids to assist bidding organisations with future proposals.

Bidding process

Bidders should fill in the standard [Project Proposal Form above £10k](#) (ODT, 34.7KB) if the project requires more than £10,000 in funding; if not they should fill in the standard [Project Proposal Form up to £10k](#) (ODT, 29.7KB). Both should include a breakdown of project costs in the [Activity Based Budget Template](#) (ODS, 10.2KB) where all costs should be indicative, in GBP (not Mauritanian Ouguiya). We will not consider proposals submitted in other formats.

Successful implementers must be able to receive project funding in a national MRU bank account. We aim to evaluate proposals by early September and expect approved projects to commence by the end of September.

Evaluation criteria

Successful bids must demonstrate strong strategic relevance to the programme's priority areas and have a clear focus on delivering change and sustainable impacts.

Proposals will be evaluated against the following criteria:

1. Fit to programme objectives – the extent to which the project can contribute to the outcomes identified above.
2. Quality of project – how well defined and relevant the outcome is and how outputs will deliver this change.
3. Value for money – the value of the expected project outcomes and clear justification for the level of funding requested.
4. Previous experience – evidence of the bidding team's understanding of the project's area and ability to manage and deliver a successful project.
5. Gender-sensitive approach – partners should identify the gender implications of the theme they are addressing.

Proposals should be sent to the Programme Manager at the British Embassy Nouakchott at Khdeija.SidiBoubacar@fco.gov.uk by 17h30 GMT on 25 August 2020. Bidding organisations are welcome to contact the Programme Manager for further guidance. In the subject line, please indicate the area you are bidding for and the name of the bidder.

For further information on UK's presence in Mauritania, follow the British Ambassador to Mauritania on [Twitter](#) or follow the British Embassy Nouakchott on [Facebook](#).

[Marking the Centenary of Northern Ireland](#)

The Secretary of State, Rt Hon Brandon Lewis MP, has welcomed the Prime Minister's announcement of plans to establish a Centenary Forum, and a Centenary Historical Advisory Panel as part of the Government's plans to mark 100 years since the creation of Northern Ireland, and the formation of the United Kingdom as we know it today.

The centenary is an opportunity to celebrate the people, places and products of Northern Ireland, which has such rich sporting, cultural, entrepreneurial and academic talent. It is an occasion to promote Northern Ireland as an attractive place to visit, invest and do business – a place where our young people choose to stay and use their talent to build.

As part of the New Decade, New Approach deal, the UK Government committed to working alongside the NI Executive to mark the centenary of Northern Ireland in 2021 – today’s announcement is an important step towards realising this commitment, and delivering national recognition and international awareness of this important anniversary.

Speaking earlier today, the Secretary of State, the Rt Hon Brandon Lewis MP, said,

I am delighted that the Prime Minister is in Northern Ireland today, and has announced the first stage of our plans to mark this centenary. This is a fantastic opportunity for people right across the UK to celebrate Northern Ireland and its integral place within our Union. We will use the centenary next year to promote it on the world stage, celebrating its people, culture, traditions and enterprise and its vital contribution to the United Kingdom.

The establishment of a Centenary Forum and Centenary Historical Advisory Panel will offer us the opportunity to work with a broad spectrum of people, including those from across the political parties, business, tourism and the voluntary and community sectors, to deliver an ambitious and exciting programme of events to mark this significant national anniversary for the UK.

Following formal acceptance of invitations to join the Centenary Forum and Historical Advisory Panel, it is expected that these groups will have their first meetings later this month. Further details on the centenary programme plans will be available in the autumn.

[Clearing the myths on student finance](#)

If there’s a chance you may be picking up a place on a higher education course through Clearing this year, it’s time to get the facts on how to sort your student finance too.

On results day, you may have ended up with unexpected grades and during this busy time, you might hear some myths around applying for, or changing your application, for student finance.

We want to make sure that you have the right information and support that you need to help you get your student finance sorted should you take a place on a course through Clearing. Our mythbuster will give you the facts that you need to get your student finance organised as easily as possible.

Myth: If I get a place through Clearing it's too late to apply for student finance.

BUSTED: No, but if you haven't applied for student finance yet, you need to apply right away. It can take up to six weeks to process your application. You might not get all of your money in time for the start of your course, but Student Finance England (SFE) will try to make sure you have at least some money as close to the start of your course as possible.

Myth: If I've already applied for student finance and my course changes through Clearing, I don't have to do anything.

BUSTED: If you have already applied for student finance but want to change your course, university or college you need to update your course details to make sure that you receive your student finance at the start of term.

The easiest way to update course details is to log into your online account and choose 'Change your application': www.gov.uk/student-finance

Myth: I need to send my Passport and a signed terms and conditions to receive my student finance.

BUSTED: If you have an in-date UK Passport you can provide your Passport details on your online application form which will be automatically checked with the Government Identity and Passport Service. When your application has been processed you can even accept the terms and conditions using a digital e-Signature.

Myth: It takes ages to apply for student finance because my parents or partner need to send paper forms and evidence.

BUSTED: If your parents or partner are providing financial information to support your application, they can do this online and we'll verify their information with HMRC. If you are asked to send some additional paperwork to support your application this can be uploaded from your account using the new digital evidence upload service.

Myth: There's no information available on student finance and Clearing.

BUSTED: There's a range of helpful tools and guidance on SFE's student finance zone [Clearing page](#)

You can also access the SFE Youtube [Clearing playlist](#)

You can take part in our [Facebook](#) Live Q&A on Tuesday 18 August at 1pm where SFE's expert advisors will be on hand to answer your questions.

Don't forget you can also contact SFE Monday to Friday from 9am-5pm and Saturday from 9am-4pm:

New £25million contracts support nuclear decommissioning

The Direct Research Portfolio (DRP) contracts will be shared by a series of consortia involving established nuclear companies, global cross-sector corporations, UK universities, national laboratories, plus small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

The 3 new contracts will run for 4 years, replacing the previous DRPs awarded in 2016, and follow a 6-month procurement process. The 12 successful consortia, 6 of which are led by SMEs, involve over 60 organisations in total.

NDA Research Manager, Yvonne Morris, said:

We were very pleased with the high quality of the submissions and it was good to see so many new organisations, as well as those established in the nuclear sector, taking part in the process and forming successful consortia.

The diverse range of organisations involved in the frameworks will help ensure a breadth and depth of coverage over the NDA's decommissioning mission.

The NDA's DRP forms a key part of its strategic research programme and provides direct funding for research that delivers innovation across multiple sites, develops technical expertise and informs strategy.

The contracts cover three areas:

The new DRP contracts support the [NDA's University Research Strategy](#) and is aligned to four of the [NDA's strategic themes](#). They will also address cross-industry R&D requirements identified by the Nuclear Waste and Decommissioning Research Forum, a group that aims to enhance coordination of R&D and technical programmes across UK Site Decommissioning and Remediation and Integrated Waste Management activities. DRP projects often lead to more extensive R&D projects carried out by Site Licence Companies (SLCs) and the supply chain. The combined annual R&D spend by NDA and SLCs is typically more than £85 million.

The framework contracts were awarded to:

University Interactions

Single consortium led by National Nuclear Laboratory

National Nuclear Laboratory

Supported by Frazer-Nash Consulting Ltd, Arup and National Physical Laboratory

6 consortia led by DBD, Eden Nuclear and Environment Ltd, Galson Sciences Ltd, Jacobs, NSG Environmental Ltd and Nuvia.

DBD

Supported by AECOM, Amentum, Westinghouse (WEC), United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) and University of Sheffield including Nuclear AMRC (UoS)

Eden Nuclear and Environment Ltd

Supported by Cyclife EDF, Gardiner & Theobald, Golder Associates (UK) Ltd, Hydrock Consultants Ltd, Integrated Decision Management (IDM), University of Bristol and WSP UK Ltd.

Galson Sciences Ltd

Supported by National Nuclear Laboratory, Frazer-Nash Consulting Ltd, Amphos 21, Lucideon, Mott MacDonald Ltd, Resolve Robotics Ltd, VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland, Orano, Veolia and Universities of Bristol, Lancaster and Sheffield.

Jacobs

Supported by Andra, CL:AIRE, British Geographical Survey, NPL, AFRY, Arup, Brenk Systemplanung, Costain, Thornton Thomasetti, Urenco, Croft, Cogentus, Decision Analysis Services, Longenecker and Associates, MCM, Imperial College London, Universities of Birmingham, Bristol and Manchester.

NSG Environmental Ltd

Supported by Abbott Risk Consulting, KDC, Quintessa Ltd, RPS Consulting Services Ltd, SOCOTEC UK Ltd, The University of Sheffield including Nuclear AMRC (UoS) and Veolia Nuclear Solutions, Lucideon, Mirion Technologies, STERIS and The University of Manchester.

Nuvia

Supported by TÜV UK (TÜV NORD), CIEMAT, Createc, Cognition Land and Water, Lucideon, NucAdvisor, Empresarios Agrupados.

Spent Fuels & Nuclear Materials

5 consortia led by DBD, Eden NE Ltd, Jacobs, National Nuclear Laboratory and Orano

DBD

Supported by AECOM, Amentum , Westinghouse (WEC), United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) and University of Sheffield including Nuclear AMRC (UoS)

Eden Nuclear and Environment Ltd

Supported by Integrated Decision Management (IDM), NSG-Environmental Ltd, Nuclear-21, TÜV UK (TÜV NORD) and the University of Bristol

Jacobs

Supported by Andra, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, British Geographical Survey, NPL, Arup, Brenk Systemplanung, Thornton Thomasetti, Urenco, Studsvik, Croft, StrataG, GRI Ltd, Decision Analysis Services, Longenecker and Associates, Thor Energy, Loughborough Materials, Integrity Corrosion Consulting, Gary Was Consulting, Nigel Donaldson Consulting, Imperial College London, Universities of Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Manchester, Oxford and Sheffield

National Nuclear Laboratory

Supported by Frazer-Nash Consultancy Ltd, Galson Sciences Ltd, GRI Ltd

Orano

Supported by EDF Energy, Cavendish Nuclear, Lucideon. Galson Sciences Ltd, University of Manchester, University of Sheffield.

[Online conference to mark OTS tenth anniversary](#)

News story

The OTS is holding a webinar on 7 September 2020 to mark its tenth anniversary



The Office of Tax Simplification (OTS) will be holding a webinar from 2pm to 3:30pm on Monday 7 September 2020 to mark its tenth anniversary.

Speakers and contributors are expected to include Rt Hon Jesse Norman MP (the Financial Secretary to the Treasury), Kathryn Cearns (OTS Chair), Bill Dodwell (OTS Tax Director), Jill Rutter (Senior Research Fellow, Institute for Government), Ruth Stanier from HMRC, Lindsey Whyte from HMT and Emma Agyemang from the Financial Times.

The event will provide an opportunity:

- to review the OTS's contribution to the development of the UK tax system over the last 10 years
- to debate and consider the future work and role of the OTS – not least in the light of the government's announcement of a Tax Administration roadmap on 21 July 2020
- to touch on the Office's current reviews into Capital Gains Tax and Claims and Elections
- for attendees to submit written questions during the event

Notes for editors

The OTS is the independent adviser to government on simplifying the UK tax system, to make it easier for taxpayers; it does not implement changes – these are a matter for government and for Parliament.

The OTS works to improve the experience of all who interact with the tax system. It aims to reduce the administrative burden – which is what people encounter in practice – as well as looking to simplify rules, as simplification of the technical and administrative aspects of tax are each important, both to taxpayers and to HMRC.

The OTS was initially formed in 2010 and [put on a statutory footing](#) in 2016

The OTS is led by Chairman Kathryn Cearns OBE and Tax Director Bill Dodwell and has a small staff team drawn from HM Treasury, HMRC and the private sector.

The OTS published its [annual report for the year to 31 March 2020](#) on 21 July 2020.

Press enquiries only please contact Julie Gillespie, OTS Press Officer Phone: 03000 585028

Published 13 August 2020