



Arts and  
Humanities  
Research Council

# Strategic Delivery Plan

2022–2025





# Contents

<b>Strategic Delivery Plan 2022–2025</b>	
Foreword .....	<b>3</b>
<b>What will we achieve .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Our strategic objectives</b>	
Objective 1: World-class people and careers .....	8
Objective 2: World-class places .....	11
Objective 3: World-class ideas .....	14
Objective 4: World-class innovation .....	17
Objective 5: World-class impacts .....	20
Objective 6: A world-class organisation .....	23
<b>Our budget .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Image references .....</b>	<b>28</b>



Professor Christopher Smith (*Executive Chair, AHRC*)

# Foreword

I am delighted to introduce AHRC's Strategic Delivery Plan for the next three years. Our Strategic Delivery Plan describes the role we play in delivering our UKRI Strategy and is part of a suite of documents we have produced to explain who we are and what we do. Our vision sets out the richness of arts and humanities research and the possibilities that it holds for the future. With staff and partners, we have developed a Theory of Change that draws a line between what we plan to do as an organisation and the changes that we want to make in our world. This Delivery Plan, set in the context of the UKRI Strategy, is an ambitious framework within which we can reach further and achieve more than ever before.

Arts and humanities lie at the heart of research and innovation in the UK. The work that we fund underpins health, happiness, well-being and thriving places; it creates the space for research and innovation to make a difference to society and the economy, and it is ever more powerful when combined with expertise from other disciplines, sectors and contexts. We place our values, creativity and imagination at the heart of UKRI and intend to be at the centre of its success in the coming years.

We believe deeply in the centrality of arts and humanities research to our understanding of the world, how we live in it, and what it means to be human. And we know that we are taking the right approach because we are already succeeding. The past year has brought transformational research and innovation-driven impacts for the creative industries, the renewal of partnerships with prestigious funders around the world and a stream of new international collaborators, immediate tangible benefits for cultural institutions through our first ever investment of infrastructure funds, and a hugely successful COP26 showcase of the role of arts and humanities in tackling the climate emergency.

These achievements give us the confidence to do more, working openly, highly collaboratively and with thoughtfulness and care for those we rely on to succeed, both within our organisation and outside of it. Our plans are bold, optimistic, and hopeful in uncertain times and we look forward to working with you to make them a reality.

**Professor Christopher Smith**  
*Executive Chair, AHRC*

September 2022



**The work that we fund underpins health, happiness, well-being and thriving places; it creates the space for research and innovation to make a difference to society and the economy.**



# What we will achieve

In the arts and humanities, we study what it is to be human. We bring to research and innovation expertise on the human condition to offer a fuller understanding of our world, how we live, and the challenges that we face as a society. To do this we look across the past, the present, and the possibilities of the future, engaging creativity, imagination and diverse voices to uncover brilliant ideas and innovations.

AHRC's ambition is to sustain a rich, diverse, resilient and creative research and innovation system through the contributions that arts and humanities ideas and people make. We seek to bring about healthier society, more prosperous economies, a more open civil discourse, a richer cultural landscape and a thriving environment for ideas.

Our approach begins with the six strategic objectives of our [UKRI Strategy](#), and the four principles for driving change identified in it: diversity, connectivity, resilience and engagement. In this plan we show how our work addresses each strategic objective in turn, and how we commit to embedding the principles for change across our work.

All of our activity is guided by [AHRC's Vision](#) and Theory of Change. These set out four aims which are woven throughout our Strategic Delivery Plan from people and careers through to innovation and impacts:

- **Discovering ourselves** – we are open and willing to do things differently to support the best ideas and broaden the reach and scope of arts and humanities research.
- **Contemporary challenges** – we bring people and organisations together to place humanity at the heart of solutions to today's biggest questions.
- **Cultural assets** – creating an environment where culture can be better conserved, curated and deployed to support happier, healthier lives.
- **Creative economy** – broadening our partnerships to place research and innovation at the heart of the creative economy.

The vision aims sit alongside firm commitments to addressing equality, diversity and inclusion, and to transforming our Council through listening and learning, acting with care and empowering people.

Our Strategic Delivery Plan presents just a sample of the new projects that we will launch in this period, ranging from major new strategic investments to initiatives that change how we work as an organisation. It shows how AHRC as part of UKRI, and the arts and humanities as part of a creative and diverse research and innovation landscape, can make a difference in our world.



## Our purpose

AHRC invests in a rich, diverse and creative research and innovation system through the contributions that arts and humanities ideas and people make.

**Our principles for change – we will embed the principles of diversity, resilience, connectivity and engagement across all our work, to drive change and create the conditions for an outstanding research and innovation system**

**Our strategic objectives provide the framework for how we will achieve our vision and realise our principles, through world-class:**

People and careers	Places	Ideas	Innovation	Impacts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bringing breadth, visibility and diversity to research careers.</li> <li>• Making connections between people, sectors and capabilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transforming infrastructure to enable the best research.</li> <li>• Working at the heart of thriving communities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being open and supporting the arts and humanities to thrive.</li> <li>• Taking global perspectives and equitable approaches.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening the creative industries.</li> <li>• Boosting innovation through design research.</li> <li>• Growing our investment in knowledge exchange and commercialisation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leading interdisciplinary responses to national priorities.</li> <li>• Building partnerships for a healthier, fairer society and more prosperous economies.</li> </ul>

Supported by **a world-class organisation**

- Learning to improve how we work and empower people.
- Positive action on equality, diversity and inclusion in our funded portfolio.
- Promoting the highest standards of transparency, openness and efficiency.



# Objective 1: World-class people and careers

The UK is home to 10 of the top 50 Universities in the world for Arts and Humanities and has an international reputation for research excellence.<sup>1</sup> At the heart of this success are talented people working in a breadth of roles and in many different disciplines and fields.

To unlock the full potential of a creative research and innovation system, we need diverse and interconnected people and careers. We will be open and accessible to wide-ranging talent, expanding our view of what careers in the arts and humanities look like, and working across UKRI to deliver people, culture and talent policies and funding that promote success across the entire system.

### 1.1: Bringing breadth, diversity and visibility to research careers

We commit to supporting breadth, diversity and resilience in research careers and improving the visibility of talent across the system and at all career stages, continuing to adhere to the principles in the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers.<sup>2</sup> In moving to greater collective working across UKRI, we seek to promote work that spans disciplines and sectors, creating more opportunities for innovation and public value.

#### We will:

- create new opportunities for arts and humanities research to generate public value by investing over £7 million in the next three years in key leadership roles to connect ideas, sectors and geographies.
- recognise the full breadth of skills and expertise on which research and innovation depends through schemes such as our AHRC/Research Libraries UK joint fellowships, working with the Institute of Conservation and investing £1.5 million over the next three years.
- develop a strategy for doctoral training that will attract diverse talent, support career development and transferable skills, and respond to emerging research and innovation priorities.
- deliver future talent initiatives and rounds of funding built on greater collective working across UKRI, with learning from arts and humanities development and embedded in UKRI's future approach to people, culture and talent.

### 1.2: Making connections between people, sectors and capabilities

We commit to building connections between people, sectors and capabilities to enable researchers to broaden their skills and to reflect a more comprehensive, global view of our research and innovation system.

#### We will:

- enable career mobility for researchers within the design and architecture sectors through a pilot £1 million Innovation Scholarships secondments in architecture and design programme.
- directly link research and professional practice through an investment of £1.1 million over three years for fellowships in public policy and the Galleries, Libraries, Museums and Archives (GLAM) sector.
- take a global approach to skills and capability that creates international opportunities for our researchers and sets international standards, including through our £1.1 million UK-US digital scholarship fellows.

## Highlights

### Innovation scholarships

In a dynamic and creative research and innovation system, talented researchers must be able to apply their skills in different contexts, moving easily between sectors and between research and professional practice. To boost skills, career mobility and knowledge and productivity in key creative sectors, AHRC will begin offering scholarships as part of the UKRI Innovation Scholars scheme.

Focusing on Architecture and Design, we will invest in secondments that foster knowledge exchange and collaboration between academia, private, public and third sectors, with the potential to deliver new insights for understanding places and levelling up, improving mental health and wellbeing, and the transition to Net Zero.



## Highlights

## Leadership roles to connect ideas, sectors and geographies

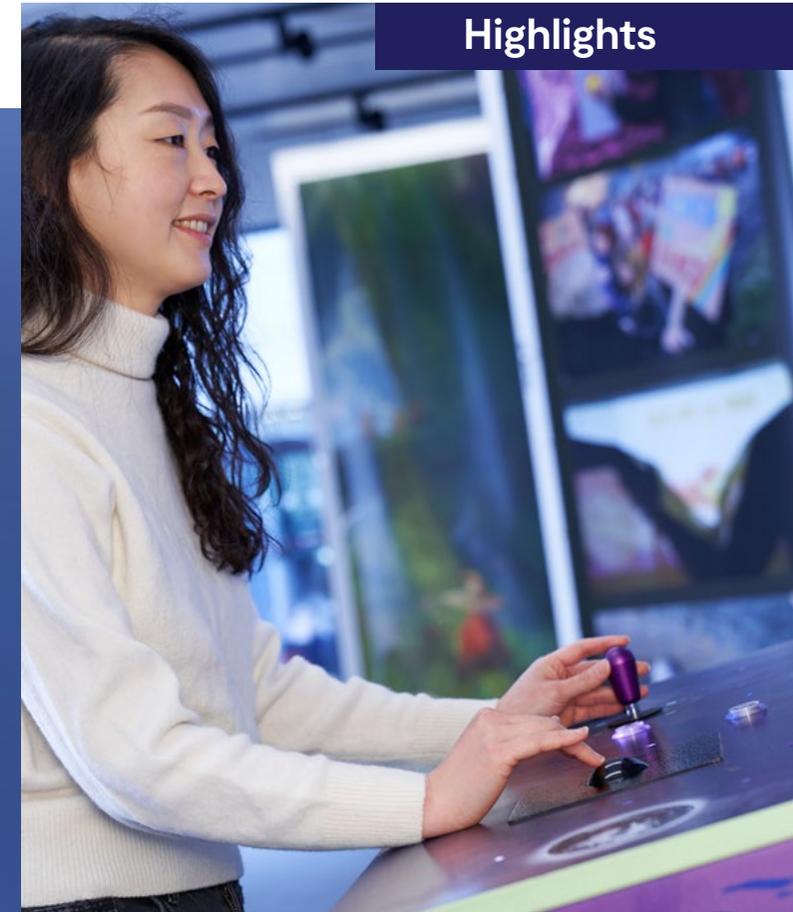
Arts and humanities ideas and approaches are essential to addressing some of the biggest challenges that we face today. To maximise the ambition, reach and impact of arts and humanities research, we have appointed five new Programme Directors to build on leadership strength across our portfolio.

Working in key priority areas (Health Disparities, Place, Design, Creative Communities and Story) and alongside existing Directors, they will lead activity and build partnerships to catalyse radical change in our understanding of what research can do and who should shape and benefit from it. They will engage new voices and methods helping AHRC to drive more inclusive research that brings benefits across society and the economy, influencing the nature and scope of future investments.

## UK-US Digital scholarship fellowships

Digital skills are vital to the sustainability and growth of cultural institutions, and instrumental to broadening audiences and access in the cultural sector.

AHRC is working with partners in the US to drive forward best practice in digital scholarship and future-proof cultural institutions. A new initiative will provide UK researchers fellowships at two of the world's leading cultural institutions – the Library of Congress and Getty Conservation Institute (GCI) – to open up new resources, enhance access and inclusivity, and advance the role of collections in addressing contemporary challenges. The initiative will provide fellows with access to the collections, tools, expertise and projects at the GCI and Library of Congress and support them to apply innovative digital tools and techniques to enhance the work and value of museums, libraries and archives. It will build new networks between researchers and professionals in the UK and US, enhancing knowledge exchange and best practice, and contributing to leadership and skills development.





## Objective 2: World-class places

The UK is world-leading for arts and humanities research and impacts.<sup>3</sup> Our cultural sector is internationally renowned, vitally important to the health of our economy<sup>4</sup> and home to outstanding collections that are unparalleled in breadth and variety.

We work within this rich landscape to support activity that is shaped by and brings benefits to many different people and places. By investing, for the first time, in large infrastructure projects supporting research, innovation and the cultural sector, we are making a step change in our contribution as a funder. This change will catalyse healthier, more cohesive communities, innovation and levelling up across the UK, at the same time as expanding the UK's offer in research, innovation and culture on the global stage.

## 2.1: Transforming infrastructure to enable the best research

We commit to building networks and infrastructure that enable research breakthroughs, innovation and research sustainability across the arts and humanities and beyond.

### We will:

- for the first time, deliver a £72.15 million baseline research infrastructure funding line, as part of UKRI's World Class Labs fund.
- lay foundations for more innovation in the culture and heritage sectors by addressing fragmentation and research capability gaps, through a c.£60 million national Research Infrastructure for Conservation and Heritage Science fund, investing £16.2 million in the next three years.
- ensure that arts and humanities research data are accessible, findable and reusable through specialist data services provided by a new national infrastructure for digital innovation and curation, investing at least £8 million in the next three years.
- launch a new £15 million capital investments call, Creative Research Capability awards, that builds on previous successes in the Capability for Collections fund by supporting targeted, capital investments to renew and upgrade research facilities within smaller specialist institutions, focusing on practice research.

- build a coalition across the UK for the development of future, shared collections through the final stage of the £18.4 million Towards a National Collection (TaNC) programme, an investment of £13.3 million in the next three years.

## 2.2: Working at the heart of thriving communities

We commit to capitalising on the UK-wide spread, reach and strength of our research and cultural assets to create thriving communities across the UK.

### We will:

- shed light on the role that creative communities play in generating public value, the importance of arts and humanities disciplines in designing public policy, and how policy interventions can create value through creative communities, via our new strategic programme Creative Communities, investing £1.3 million over the next three years.
- diversify and improve access to our cultural assets, by investing at least £1.1 million to support smaller galleries, libraries, archives and museums to work with UKRI Research Organisations to demonstrate their significant role in building communities; through these activities, growing and sharing knowledge about the social value of heritage and culture in the UK.



## Highlights



### Creative Communities

Effective policy making relies on being able to better understand the role of personal and collective identity in society. Why are some communities vaccine hesitant? What drives certain people to online hate? How do you convince people to make the changes needed to get to Net Zero? How do we tackle mental health issues in adolescents?

These are questions which are at the forefront of government and public service thinking, and which require a deeper understanding of how groups and individuals identify with themselves and the world

around them. AHRC's new Creative Communities programme seeks to recognise and communicate the role of arts and humanities research in understanding communities and the place of arts and culture in promoting a more cohesive society and driving positive outcomes for education, civic pride, wellbeing and inclusive, sustainable growth.

### Research Infrastructure for Conservation and Heritage Science

The interdisciplinary field of conservation and heritage science research deepens our understanding of the country's rich cultural collections and preserves and protects them for future generations. It is also a space of huge potential where new discoveries can find applications and impacts in unexpected places, including the health and technology sectors. There is a clear need for infrastructure that better connects excellence in this field across the UK.

The Research Infrastructure for Conservation and Heritage Science (RICHeS) will be a new network of facilities and expertise in heritage science. It will build on the UK's global reputation by enhancing and augmenting existing facilities to create clusters of excellence, unlocking the potential for heritage assets to contribute to innovation in areas such as digital twins, artificial intelligence (AI), robotics and bio-imaging.

### National infrastructure for Digital innovation and curation for Arts and Humanities

There is a wealth of untapped potential in arts and humanities research data. It must be better connected, more accessible, and protected over the long term to ensure that future researchers are able to build on and grow new ideas from past discoveries.

Our national infrastructure for Digital innovation and curation in Arts and Humanities (iDAH) will ensure that arts and humanities research data remain accessible, findable and reusable for all users well into the future. It will connect researchers to state-of-the-art large-scale computing facilities, equip arts and humanities researchers with the skills, knowledge and confidence to conduct digitally- and data-driven research, and create opportunities for arts and humanities research to drive R&D in data science, advanced visualisation and AI.

## Objective 3: World-class ideas

To deliver research and innovation that underpins health, happiness and well-being, the arts and humanities must be radically open to a breadth of ideas and methodologies, and to new people and challenges.

AHRC is ready to take risks and do things differently to support the best ideas. We will open doors to new spaces and different partners, working within UKRI to ensure that arts and humanities researchers thrive in the research and innovation system, that more people can participate in and benefit from research, and that new research discoveries contribute to better futures.



### 3.1: Being open and supporting the arts and humanities to thrive

We commit to supporting ground-breaking research wherever it is found, investing almost £100 million in our responsive mode calls over the next three years, encouraging researchers to be bold and take risks to make discoveries, and building the partnerships that support resilience and translate research into prosperity and public good.

#### We will:

- capture the best and boldest new ideas, using fit-for-purpose schemes and mechanisms, building on our 'Where next?' Programme and models from across UKRI, including the new interdisciplinary responsive mode scheme.
- expand and enrich our concept of excellence in research, learning from wide-ranging partners, organisations and communities, and from our £1 million investment in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Engagement Fellowships.
- improve our own and others' understanding of practice-based and embodied research to better support the generation of knowledge through innovative research approaches, including a £500,000 investment in dance research.
- expand the opportunities for arts and humanities researchers to engage the public with their research through partnerships and skills development with broadcast media, including an investment of £300,000 covering the next phase of New Generation thinkers and joint support for the Being Human festival working with our UKRI Public Engagement team.

### 3.2: Taking global perspectives and equitable approaches

We commit to being open to ideas and inclusive perspectives from around the world, working equitably with funders and other partners internationally to encourage research and innovation that is of the highest standard, fair and inclusive, and has reach and impact across and beyond borders.

#### We will:

- equip our researchers with access to the best ideas and resources from around the world by building on the success of our existing international partnerships and establishing new relationships.
- find global solutions to global challenges via collaborations that bring novel, international perspectives to some of today's biggest questions. Investments include our £1 million disability-focused inclusive sustainable development project, a €3.5 million Collaboration of Humanities and Social Sciences in Europe (CHANSE) initiative exploring social and cultural dynamics in the digital age with the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), and a £500,000 initial investment in new, multinational research partnerships focused on contemporary challenges, delivered through the Humanities in the European Research Area (HERA) platform.

## Highlights

### Indigenous Engagement Programme

Arts and Humanities research seeks out wide-ranging and different perspectives. We must constantly consider how we are conducting and delivering research to ensure that important ideas, approaches and communities are not excluded from what we do, and that our work is ethical.

Our Indigenous Engagement Programme will expand our portfolio of equitable partnerships with communities around the world, supporting us to explore how research is framed, how it is conducted and how it benefits the people that we work with. Addressing topics ranging from language to food security, the programme will improve our understanding of what ethical research looks like and deliver tools and learning to cement ethical principles across research and innovation.

- enable equitable global partnerships and uncover new, more fair and inclusive ways of conducting international research so that more and different groups can engage, contribute and benefit, including through £1.75 million investment in the first three years of our new Indigenous Engagement Programme.



## New and existing international partners

AHRC's longstanding international collaborations ensure that our researchers are operating at the forefront of research, working with the best people and facilities, wherever they are in the world. Building on highly successful partnerships such as our annual joint Research Grants call with the German Research Council (DFG), collaboration with the US National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) in Digital Scholarship for Cultural Institutions, and joint research programmes delivered through the Humanities in the European Research Area (HERA) platform, we are building new partnerships and networks that will generate the shared expertise, skills and tools needed to deliver research of the highest standard with global impact.

A new digital humanities partnership with Ireland will promote innovation in emerging technologies, social innovation, cultural heritage and the creative industries. A collaboration between the UK and India will establish activity in areas of shared social and cultural significance and promote sustainable growth and cultural understanding. In Europe we are playing a leading role in creating an Alliance for Research on Cultural Heritage in Europe (ARCHE), bringing together funders, heritage professionals, researchers and institutional bodies to co-design multidisciplinary strategies for cultural heritage research.



## Objective 4: World-class innovation

Arts and humanities drive and underpin innovation, from the bright ideas that find application in unexpected places to the development of new, creative products and services that drive economic growth.<sup>5</sup> Our innovations create new ventures and imagine new worlds.

AHRC's ambition is to catalyse world-class innovation in the arts and humanities, to increase the capability of researchers to work directly with industry, and to maximise opportunities for the commercialisation of arts and humanities research. We will deliver against the technology missions outlined in the UK Innovation Strategy, drawing upon the expertise within UKRI and across our ecosystem, to enable technologies to shape our lives in the decades ahead. We aim to embed research and innovation in the UK creative economy to boost and shore up its success, including attracting private sector investment. Across our portfolio we are committed to the government's goal of increasing economy-wide R&D investment towards 2.4% of GDP and beyond.

#### 4.1: Strengthening the Creative Industries

We commit to identifying and defining opportunities to strengthen the UK's creative industries through excellence-driven creative research and innovation, in line with the Creative Industries Sector Vision.

##### We will:

- invest £95.8 million in CoSTAR, a research and innovation infrastructure to create new products, experiences and markets for the screen and performance industries, including £31.5 million over this three-year period.
- enable evidence-based policy input on the health and future direction of the Creative Industries through an enhanced Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre with an annual investment of £1.75 million.
- convene new ideas to build on the success of the Creative Industries Clusters Programme (CICP) and extend the success of research and innovation-driven creative industries into new sectors, partnership and places, alongside a continuing investment of £6.5 million in CICP and the Audience of the Future programmes.
- create stronger paths to commercialisation and opportunities for Foreign Direct Investment, through scoping a UK-China Creative Industries Research and Innovation Hub, spending £3 million in this three-year period, rising to a full investment of over £10 million in future years.

#### 4.2: Boosting innovation through design research

We commit to driving innovation in the development of products and services through design research, building partnerships between researchers and the wider design sector, to harness creative ideas and promote talent and skills development within the sector.

##### We will:

- take a major step forward in our support for and investment in design by welcoming the Design Council into the UKRI family as an arms-length body, with £2.6 million provided via AHRC over three years (provided alongside BEIS funding and ensuring £2 million annually for the Design Council).
- expand the role of design as a key element of the innovation system and as a key player in delivering the Net Zero mission, through Future Observatory: Design the Green Transition, a new £68 million priority programme, investing £25 million in the next three years.
- build strong connections across the UKRI design portfolio, through close working with Innovate UK and ESRC, to align our ambitions and develop initiatives that reflect the ambitions of the whole of UKRI.
- help keep the UK at the forefront of global fashion through a collaboration with the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) and Innovate UK that explores economically and environmentally sustainable models for the fashion & textiles industry.

- maximise the impact of design research on other UKRI priorities, including Health, Resilience, and Transformative Technologies through existing and planned investments in other areas, Responsive Mode and Skills.

#### 4.3: Growing our investment in knowledge exchange and commercialisation

We commit to transforming the way ideas flow between researchers and the people and sectors that use research, scaling our investment in knowledge exchange to reach 10% of our core budget by 2024–25. We will ensure that the benefits of arts and humanities research (including commercial opportunities) are realised responsibly.

##### We will:

- support a greater breadth of knowledge exchange and impact activities and recognise the critical role of arts and humanities in the innovation system by establishing AHRC's first Impact Acceleration Accounts (IAA), as part of the wider UKRI process of IAA harmonisation, investing £15 million over three years.
- stimulate and support commercialisation of research outputs across the whole AHRC portfolio through a series of pilot activities, including a £1 million Follow on Fund highlight for commercialisation.

## Highlights

### Convergent Screen Technologies and performance in Realtime

The unprecedented success of AHRC's Creative Industries Clusters programme has demonstrated the transformational impact that our funded research can have on the creative sector. We are committed to building on this legacy to secure the UK's competitiveness, and our major new infrastructure investment in Convergent Screen Technologies And performance in Realtime (CoSTAR) is leading the way.

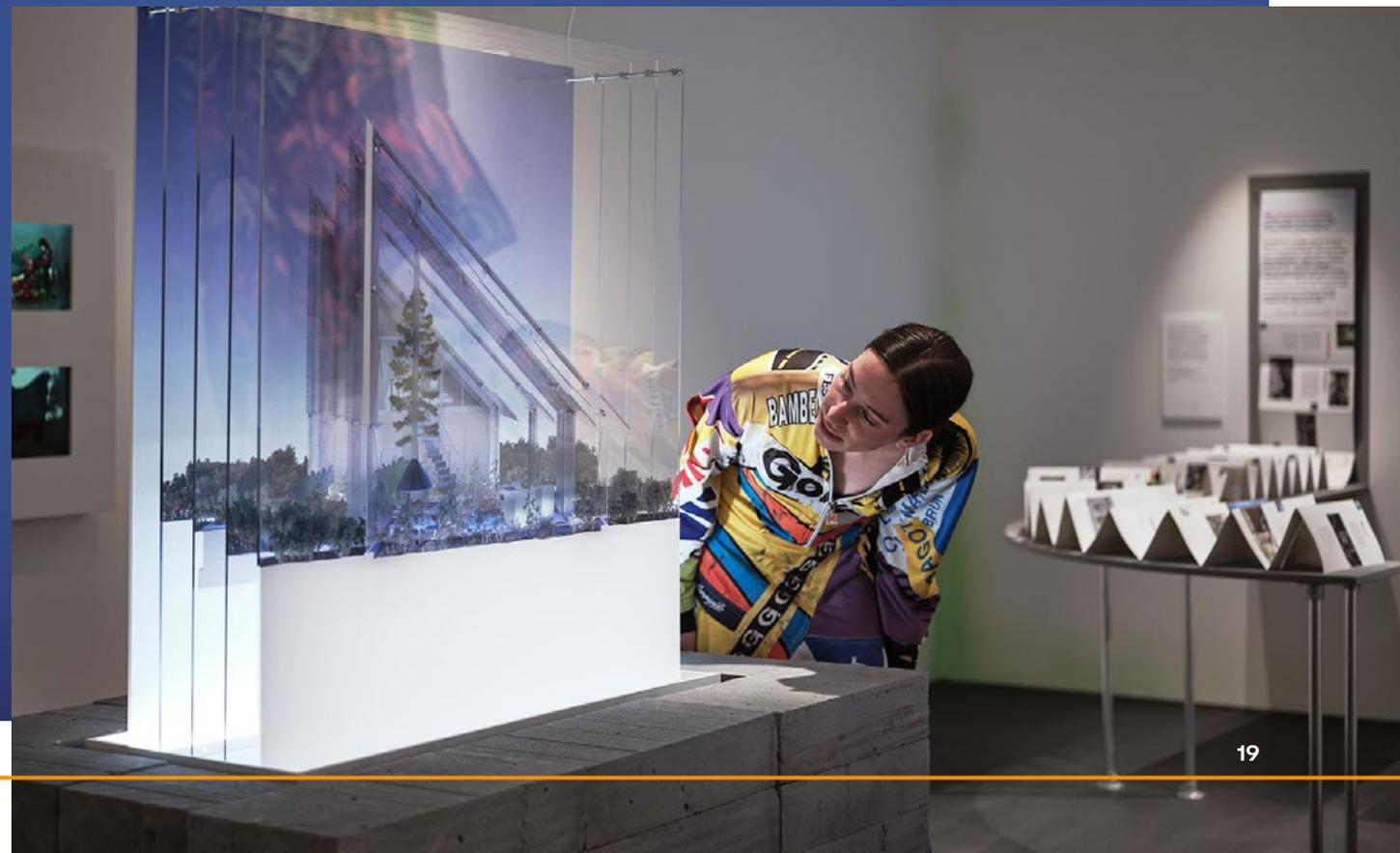
CoSTAR will transform the screen and performance sectors of the UK's creative industries. By providing access to new, innovative technologies and new space and resources for research and development, it will equip these sectors with the skills and resources to lead the world in technology-driven media, driving post-Covid revival and wider economic benefits. CoSTAR exemplifies the breadth of UKRI's innovation ambitions, and the unique combination of technologies and capabilities that we can marshal to unleash potential in key sectors, drawing on outstanding research and innovation across the UK to respond to the sector's very distinctive needs and support dynamic creative businesses.

### Future Observatory: Design the Green Transition

We do not predict the future, we design and make it for ourselves. With design impacting every aspect of our lives in some way, this future starts with the transition to Net Zero.

Our £25 million programme, Future Observatory: Design the Green Transition, will foster and upskill communities of design researchers and practitioners, connecting them through

de-risked, sustainable and scalable partnerships. The programme will contribute to levelling-up by targeting the organisations and geographies where public investment is most needed, adding significant, long-term commercial, social and environmental value to local Net Zero-supportive economies.





## Objective 5: World-class impacts

Arts and humanities are vital to understanding our world and the global challenges that we face. They offer us wide-ranging perspectives, rooted in understanding of the past, and the imaginative possibilities of our future, and solutions that are novel, creative and fair.

AHRC builds equitable partnerships across disciplines, nationally and internationally, and within and beyond research and innovation, to ensure that the best ideas are generated with the people and organisations who can offer the best solutions.

### 5.1: Leading interdisciplinary responses to national priorities

We commit to drawing on human experiences across time and cultures to uncover new ways to tackle today's most pressing challenges, shaping and informing national government and National Science and Technology Council (NSTC) priorities and global responses.

#### We will:

- lead the way in responsible, trustworthy and world-leading technology by reshaping AI research, in a new £16.25 million priority programme that will include collaborative working with the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) and across UKRI, investing £8.6 million in the first three years.
- strengthen social and economic resilience, and enhance national security across virtual and physical spaces through our leadership of the UKRI strategic theme *Building a Secure and Resilient World*, exploring how a human-centred systems approach can build better decision making and stronger communities.
- collaborate to address the human, cultural and societal factors that have contributed to climate change to reach a Net Zero future, working across UKRI and with international partners, towards delivery of the UKRI strategic theme: *Building a Green Future*.

### 5.2: Building partnerships for a healthier, fairer society and more prosperous economies

Arts and humanities research has a vital role to play in ensuring that places are safe, inclusive and equitable. We commit to building partnerships and networks to uncover inclusive, community-driven responses to health, and economic social challenges.

#### We will:

- address health inequality and create healthier communities in the UK by bringing the evidence for place-based approaches up to the standard required by medicine for tackling public health, through the £26 million Mobilising Community Assets to address Health Disparities programme. This is a Priority programme and a major commitment towards the UKRI strategic themes: *Creating Opportunities, Improving Outcomes*, and *Building a Secure and Resilient World*, which will invest £17 million in the next three years.

- connect and convene opportunities for local and regional authorities and agencies across England and the devolved administrations to be part of and benefit from arts and humanities research. Delivered collaboratively with ESRC and others, an £18 million Place programme will support working across geographies, economies and communities as part of an integrated research and innovation approach, and will include the establishment of local policy and innovation partnerships, contributing to the UKRI strategic theme *Creating Opportunities, Improving Outcomes* and investing £2.2 million in the next three years.
- deliver research that brings vital humanities perspectives to our understanding of how to combat the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic through the Cross-UKRI Transatlantic Platform programme on Recovery, Renewal and Resilience, investing £1.9 million over three years.

## Highlights

## Reshaping AI research

We want the development, deployment and use of AI and related data-driven technologies to be responsible, ethical and accountable by default. Part of a wider set of cross-UKRI actions supporting the recommendations of the [National AI Strategy](#), we will support activities that connect policy and practice through collaborative research to incentivise responsible and ethical innovation, delivering benefit to UK Plc and its publics.

Through our major investment in humanities-led AI research, *Enabling a Responsible AI Ecosystem*, we will deepen the UK's capability and global leadership in responsible and ethical AI to foster public understanding, trust and acceptance.



## Mobilising community assets against health disparities

Health disparities across the UK's regions and localities are worsening, and the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the unevenness of health outcomes. A multi-year cross-council research programme, led by AHRC, will connect research on cultural, natural and community assets directly with decision-making at local, regional and national levels in England and

across devolved administrations, and create and test new models for levelling-up health outcomes.

Phase 1 of this programme is underway with twelve regionally-distributed projects exploring how community assets are collaborating both with each other and with healthcare partners to address health inequalities amongst target populations.

Subsequent phases of the programme will progress to building consortia that connect local research and activity with place-based health deprivation research. These consortia will seek opportunities for assets to be scaled-up and fully embedded in integrated care systems to address health disparities.

# Objective 6: A world-class organisation

AHRC is a learning organisation. At the heart of our success is empowering people – within our council and across the breadth of research and innovation – to uncover the best ideas and to bring about change.

To deliver the differences that we want to make, we must be efficient and effective in our operations, transparent and open in planning and decision-making, and rigorous in evaluating performance. We must hold ourselves to the highest standards for equality, diversity and inclusion. We have a clear vision for change, and we will do this working as one UKRI.

### 6.1: Learning, to improve how we work and to empower people

We commit to using better evidence and insights and a wider, more inclusive approach to engagement to improve what we do and empower our people to drive forward the best research.

#### We will:

- learn from those we fund, those we partner with, and the people that we would like to work more with, through regular, open and constructive dialogue.
- actively engage stakeholders, communities, partners, and the public with a bold vision of what arts and humanities research can do, through investing at least £800,000 in a suite of compelling public engagement initiatives, addressing the goals set out in the forthcoming UKRI Public Engagement Strategy.
- implement the AHRC People Plan to embed long-term workforce planning, career pathways and skills development within AHRC.

### 6.2: Positive action on equality, diversity and inclusion in our funded portfolio

We commit to taking positive action to improve equality diversity and inclusion in our funded portfolio, creating the conditions for change across the system, in accordance with UKRI's [EDI Strategy](#) and in close collaboration with colleagues across UKRI, demonstrated through our EDI statement and action plan.

#### We will:

- directly address EDI in our portfolio, through our grant management and awarding processes including diversifying our decision-making through continuously improving the diversity of our Peer Review College and promoting inclusion in our approach to assessment.
- work with the community to offer and advocate for support for arts and humanities researchers that removes barriers and promotes diversity and inclusion across research careers.
- build a strong evidence base to support best-practice in progressing equality, diversity and inclusion across our research base, through £250,000 annual co-funding for the Cross-Council ED&I Caucus. Evidence generated and shared by the Caucus will inform policy and practice within UKRI and the wider research and innovation sector.

## Highlights

### Transparent and efficient portfolio management

To enable AHRC to become more efficient and more effective in its delivery of major investments, we are making major changes to our programme management processes. These will create a robust evidence base to support decision making, cement strategic alignment across our portfolios, and underpin a more open approach to addressing organisational challenges and sharing our successes as an organisation.

Working with our specialist programme teams, improvements led by a new, dedicated Programme Management Office will embed a mature programme and project management culture that is tailored to our needs for major programmes and highly effective in capturing and maximising the impact of the research that we fund.

### 6.3: Promote the highest standards of transparency, openness and efficiency

We commit to the highest standards of transparency, openness and efficiency, acting as one UKRI to become less bureaucratic, more outcomes-focused and more innovative in our operations, working responsibly as a Council and across shared UKRI priorities. This includes responding to the relevant Grant Review and Tickell Review recommendations through the UKRI Reforming our Business and Operating Model organisational change programmes.

#### We will:

- establish transparent and efficient governance mechanisms and portfolio management, enabling consistent strategic alignment, a confident approach to risk, and open assessment of progress and performance.
- develop long-term operational planning capability, underpinned by dialogue and engagement, to build and reflect shared ambitions that are supported by and support diversity in research.
- actively lead UKRI-wide efficiency and effectiveness programmes, embracing grant funding changes, reducing bureaucracy and operational expenditure, integrating data systems, and embedding trusted research and environmental considerations within our plans, in accordance with wider UKRI policies.

### Diversifying our decision-making

In 2022 AHRC will induct our most diverse cohort of Peer Review College members yet and our membership will meet or exceed diversity figures for the Arts and Humanities research community as a whole. Diversifying our decision-making processes will help us to embed EDI across our organisation and allow us to benefit from the new perspectives that greater diversity brings.

But this is just the first step. Between now and 2025 we will continue to identify areas where we must do more to drive change in the sector to increase representation and participation in our funding structures. For example, researchers identifying as being from Black backgrounds are still under-represented in both the research community and in our Peer Review College. We will set ourselves ambitious targets for representation, and work with communities and partners across the sector to hold us accountable for delivering them.

- deliver all of our ambitions within our agreed operating expenditure budgets, working in an agile way to ensure that resources are used fully effectively as part of the new UKRI Operating Model.

### Meaningful public engagement

As UKRI's new strategy recognises, public engagement is vital to extending the reach of research and to ensure that it is shaped by and benefits new and different groups of people. AHRC's track record in public engagement is strong, as exemplified by our recent success in showcasing the important role that the arts and humanities plays in tackling the climate emergency through a programme of activity aligned with COP26.

Our future public engagement initiatives will extend the reach of our research, bringing new audiences to great ideas. It will broaden the public's understanding of the possibilities of arts and humanities research, so that more people and groups feel empowered to contribute to it. Building on the success of COP26 we will anchor a programme of activities and partnerships to key, shared moments across the UK, including the BBC centenary and the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the NHS.

# Our budget

Budget category <sup>i ii</sup>	2022–23 (£m)	2023–24 (£m)	2024–25 (£m)
<b>Core R&amp;I Budgets</b>	<b>71.16</b>	<b>65.11</b>	<b>70.29</b>
<b>Existing cross-UKRI Strategic Programmes</b>	<b>20.46</b>	<b>11.53</b>	<b>3.77</b>
Fund for International Collaboration	4.16	2.78	0.95
Creative Clusters (ISCF)	6.18	0.30	0.00
Strategic Priorities Fund	10.12	8.45	2.82
<b>Infrastructure*</b>	<b>1.17</b>	<b>5.59</b>	<b>10.00</b>
World Class Labs	0.00	5.00	10.00
Digital Research Infrastructure Programme – phase 1b pilot projects (2022–23 – 2023–24)	1.17	0.59	0.00
<b>R&amp;I Budgets – existing time-limited commitments</b>	<b>0.14</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>
COVID interventions	0.14	0.00	0.00
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>92.92</b>	<b>82.22</b>	<b>84.06</b>

\* Infrastructure projects are detailed separately below. Note that further infrastructure allocations to Councils may be made during the Spending Review period from the Infrastructure Fund, Digital Research Infrastructure Programme and Carbon Zero Fund Programme.

Infrastructure Fund projects include:*	Total lifetime allocation (some in future SR periods)
Infrastructure Fund: Wave 1 – Full project – CoSTAR <i>Subject to business case approval</i>	69.71
Infrastructure Fund: Wave 1 – Full project – Research Infrastructure for Conservation and Heritage Science (RICHeS) <i>Subject to business case approval</i>	59.46

\* Further allocations may be made during the Spending Review period. Excludes wave 1 preliminary activities where spend was in 21/22 only. Allocations include contingency, which may be returned if unused.

## Notes

- The figures provided in this document are in line with the 2022–23 – 2024–25 budget allocations for UK Research and Innovation. These are broken down by our budgeting and reporting categories, and exclude funding for ODA, Financial Transactions, and BEIS Managed Programmes. Figures are indicative and may vary over the course of the three-year period due to budget adjustments made as a part of on-going financial management and planning processes to maximise the use of our total funding.
- From 2022–23 UKRI talent investments are managed collectively across the Research Councils. The funding for collective talent activities outlined in this delivery plan are accounted for in the broader collective talent funding line included in our Corporate Plan.

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# Image references

- Cover The Awakening-1676-Jamie Gray  
‘The Awakening by Gratte Ciel in Broadgate Coventry, part of Coventry City of Culture 2021–22’ <https://coventry2021.co.uk/>  
Copyright: Jamie Gray. Photograph taken from the AHRC-funded ‘The UK Cities of Culture Project: Towards a Research-informed Approach’
- Page 2 Professor Sonia Boyce OBA RA, Black Artists and Modernism, a three-year research project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) as a collaboration between University of the Arts London and Middlesex University  
Photographer: George Torode
- Page 4 AHRC New Generation Thinker 2019 – Dr Ella Parry-Davies, Lecturer in Theatre, Performance and Critical Theory at King’s College London
- Page 5 Visitors enjoying Sinuous City – Part of FloodLights by Absolutely Cultured, in partnership with the Risky Cities project, Yorkshire Water and the Living With Water Partnership  
Credit: Briony McDonagh, 2021
- Page 6 Botticelli’s Madonna of the Pomegranate during conservation, Ranger’s House, The Wernher Collection, Christopher Ison
- Page 8 Mykaell Riley, Principal Investigator at the Westminster School of Arts – University of Westminster on the AHRC funded Bass Culture project  
Photographer: Tim Stubbings
- Page 9 Future Fashion Factory, School of Design, University of Leeds, part of the Creative Industries Clusters funded by AHRC
- Page 10 InGAME R&D Centre based in the heart of the Dundee video games cluster, part of the Creative Industries Clusters Programme, funded by AHRC
- Page 11 Caribbean Reggae Fever 6 Dylan Parrin
- Page 12: Prototyping creative spaces at Bow Church, East London, to engage local communities on exploring and experiencing possible futures  
Credit: Empowering Design Practices project, Open University
- Page 13 An XRF spectrometer examines an illuminated manuscript  
Credit: The Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge (supported by AHRC funding)
- Page 14 Cast of On the Edge – By the National Youth Theatre in collaboration with the University of Hull  
Credit: Ali Wright, 2021
- Page 16 Cheltenham Jazz Festival signpost. From the research project ‘CHIME– Cultural Heritage and Improvised Music in European Festivals’  
Photographer: George McKay <https://chimeproject.org>
- Page 17 InGAME R&D Centre based in the heart of the Dundee video games cluster, part of the Creative Industries Clusters Programme, funded by AHRC
- Page 19 Felix Speller. ‘Design Researchers in Residence: Restore’, a free display at the Design Museum. Part of the Design Museum and Arts and Humanities Research Council Future Observatory programme
- Page 20 Professor Helen Chatterjee, currently Professor of Biology in UCL Biosciences and UCL Arts and Sciences. AHRC’s Programme Director, Health Disparities
- Page 22 ‘Museums on Prescription’, a three year research project (2014–17) funded by AHRC and led by UCL and Canterbury Christ Church University. The project connects lonely older people at risk of social isolation to partner museums in Central London and Kent to improve their health and wellbeing



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