

AHRC: Design Generators 2025

Background

Pre-announcement: Design Generators

Apply for funding to combine design-led interventions with arts and humanities methodologies to make positive contributions to the green transition.

Design Generators connect directly with the wider Future Observatory: Design the Green Transition Programme.

The Design Generators aim to fund innovative, design-led research projects that contribute to the green transition. They seek to generate new arts and humanities-based approaches and methodologies that harness design to address environmental sustainability, decarbonisation, circular economies, policy design and regenerative practices.

Funding will be provided to:

- co-develop interventions with a non-academic partner to assist sustained impact beyond the life of the grant
- engage collaboratively with communities or stakeholders, ensuring relevance and responsiveness to lived experience
- promote green transition-supportive behaviour change, either through deliberative policymaking and (de)regulation or through 'nudging'
- highlight the value of academic design research in addressing real-world, locally relevant challenges arising along the journey to net zero and a green economy

This round will focus on creating interventions within existing systems. These systems may include, but are not limited to, healthcare, food networks, governance structures, financial infrastructures, and other societal frameworks. *AHRC are particularly interested in projects that approach these systems from a community perspective and use design thinking and creative methodologies to identify leverage points for positive change.* **Applicants should propose research that is collaborative, community-engaged, and scalable.** Projects must be **grounded in arts and humanities disciplines**, drawing on methodologies including, but not limited to, design research, ethnography, and visual arts.

The full economic cost (FEC) of your project can be between £150,000 and £200,000.

These awards can be between 9 to 12 months in duration. **Projects must start by 1 September 2026.**

Applications are welcomed from researchers across all career stages, from early career to established researchers.

Every project must have a non-academic partner. These partners can include, but are not limited to, businesses, public sector organisations, third sector, civil society or community organisations.

Extended Internal Process

Call Opens	2 nd February 2026
Submission of Expression of interest to Beth Davidson (beth.davidson@ncl.ac.uk)	27 th January 2026, 12noon
Panel Date	5 th February
Panel Outcomes	w/c 9 th February
Funder Deadline	9 th April 2026, 4pm

Expression of Interest (Eoi)

Eois should be no more than 2 pages in single-spaced typescript (Arial 11), with margins of at least 2cms. Please return to Beth Davidson (beth.davidson@ncl.ac.uk), Research Funding Development Manager, by 27th January, 12pm for consideration at the internal selection panel meeting.

Expressions of interest are not expected to be fully formed applications but should provide enough detail for the panel to be able to make an informed decision e.g. bullet point text is acceptable, initial thoughts rather than confirmed positions.

Your EOI should cover the following:

- Name of Lead Applicant
- Title of Proposed Research
- Confirmation of eligibility: YES/NO
- Fit to call (providing a particular emphasis on the participatory approach and how it is contributing to the green transition)
- Summary of project (to include aims and objectives)
- Proposed Partners (please highlight how advanced conversations are with your nonacademic partner(s))
- Overview of communities/stakeholders that you propose to engage with