

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX Internal Selection Process for applications to [NERC's AI for Environmental Solutions](#)

Guidance for applicants

These guidelines are for PIs who would like to submit a proposal to the December 2025 phase one deadline.

The internal proposal should be a **maximum of 2 pages, single spaced, font 11.**

Please note, in order to be fair to all applicants, anything over the 2-page limit will not be shared with the panel.

When drafting your proposal please note that the internal NERC panel will include colleagues who do not have specialist knowledge of your field of research and therefore should be written with non-specialist reviewers in mind. Use the guidance below to help you draft your internal proposal.

Section 1: How does the project fit the funding call?

NERC is inviting applications to Phase one which will support relatively small 'pump-priming' activities, with high levels of innovation, adventure, and risk. This funding opportunity strongly encourages applications from consortia that are able to traverse different disciplinary boundaries in order to develop and apply AI and data science approaches to tackling environmental challenges. The objectives of this programme are to:

- develop AI and data science approaches to deliver high quality and trustworthy AI-ready environmental datasets
- support novel AI and data science capability and techniques in the areas of 'data analysis, modelling and prediction' and 'digitally-enabled decisions' to support breakthroughs in approaches to tackle significant environmental challenges facing the UK and beyond
- establish interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and cross-disciplinary communities to leverage expertise and techniques across different areas of science and research to stimulate innovative approaches, in line with user needs

NERC is investing up to £12 million over five years for research and innovation projects to develop creative and novel approaches to the use of data science and AI to tackle complex environmental challenges in the following three areas:

- Environmental hazards and human health,
- Terrestrial ecology, and
- Oceans and climate.

Section 2: Vision and approach

What are you hoping to achieve with your proposed work? Explain how your proposed work:

- is of excellent quality and importance within or beyond the field(s) or area(s)
- has the potential to advance current understanding, or generate new knowledge, thinking or discovery within or beyond the field or area
- is timely given current trends, context, and needs
- impacts world-leading research, society, the economy, or the environment

Within this section we also expect you to:

- describe how your project is novel, adventurous and potentially transformative
- articulate how your novel project using AI or data science or both, will enable significant advances in our ability to tackle key UK and global environmental challenges
- outline how your project addresses the priorities of the funding opportunity
- provide an initial vision for the potential longer-term impacts of your project if you were successful at winning both phase one and two funding

Approach

Describe how you are you going to deliver your proposed work. Explain how you have designed your approach so that it:

- is effective and appropriate to achieve your objectives
- is feasible, and comprehensively identifies any risks to delivery and how they will be managed
- uses a clearly written and transparent methodology (if applicable)
- summarises the previous work and describes how this will be built upon and progressed (if applicable)
- will maximise translation of outputs into outcomes and impacts
- describes how your, and if applicable your team's, research environment (in terms of the place and relevance to the project) will contribute to the success of the work

Within this section we also expect you to:

- articulate how your proposed approach will enable environmental challenges to be addressed in a new way, meeting the needs of key users and stakeholders
- evidence cross-disciplinarity, interdisciplinarity or multidisciplinary, or a combination of those, of team and approach
- describe how you will build trust and usability in the capability being developed alongside your adventurous approach
- demonstrate access to the appropriate services, facilities, infrastructure, or equipment to deliver the proposed work
- identify and mitigate against possible cybersecurity risks

Section 3: Applicant and team capability to deliver

Why are you the right individual or team to successfully deliver the proposed work? Evidence of how you, and if relevant your team, have:

- the relevant experience (appropriate to career stage) to deliver the proposed work
- the right balance of skills and expertise to cover the proposed work
- the appropriate leadership and management skills to deliver the work and your approach to develop others
- contributed to developing a positive research environment and wider community

Submission process:

Applications should be submitted to research.initiatives@sussex.ac.uk by noon 22 October 2025

Internal deadline	12 noon, 22 October 2025
Internal selection panel meets	By 29 October 2025
Applicants informed of outcomes	29 October 2025
External NERC deadline	4pm 11 December 2025