



Economic and Social Research Council

# SRA CONFERENCE



## CSR 2010 – ESRC FUTURE PLANS AND PRIORITIES

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# Excellence with Impact

ESRC enduring values – clear commitment to:


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Quality


Impact

Independence

# Government Spending Review 2010

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- Research Councils have submitted numerous delivery plan drafts to BIS
  - Set out future priorities and plans against a range of funding scenarios
  - Spending Review outcome announced 20<sup>th</sup> October ‘maintaining resource spending in cash terms’ – equates to an 8-9% reduction in real terms

# Government Spending Review 2010


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- Some key issues...
    - MRC's 'expenditure' has been protected
    - Individual Council allocations yet to be announced
    - Capital cuts may be substantial, and possibly immediate
    - Administrative costs – to be reduced over the SR period
    - 'Wakeham' efficiency measures
    - Demand management
  - Expect to publish ESRC Delivery Plan before Xmas

# Strategic Priorities


- Seven key challenges
- Three strategic priorities
  - **Economic Performance and Sustainable Growth**
  - **Influencing Behaviour and Informing Interventions**
  - **Vibrant and Fair Society**
- These will relate to research but also training, resources, knowledge exchange etc



# Strategic Priorities


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- The priorities will be flexible and responsive; we will undertake annual reviews and consider refreshing
  - They may require different levels of funding
  - We will support new work, but also reviews of existing knowledge
  - Need to maximise impact of existing investments and may need to ask some to refocus their activities
  - Note, we remain committed to responsive mode grants

# Impact Agenda


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- Demonstrating impact will remain a central part of the ESRC mission
  - Broad interpretation of impact
  - Need to encourage academics to engage with the impact agenda
  - RCUK pathways to impact




# RCUK Collaboration

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- Social science remains essential and central to all seven cross-Council themes (we contribute to all)
  - The value of social science is recognised by all the Research Councils
  - Inter-disciplinary research will continue to play an important role
  - ESRC will remain committed to ensuring social science features in the whole RCUK research agenda


# International Collaboration

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- Continue to encourage and promote international collaboration across all our activities
  - Focus on key international partners – 3 RCUK offices
  - Rationalise existing targeted schemes as with other areas of activity
  - Develop innovative new ways of enabling international collaboration (e.g. Open Research Area)
  - Actively encourage social scientists to engage with international funding opportunities – FP8


# Collaboration and Co-Funding

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- Build on existing proven mechanisms (e.g. placement fellows)
  - Will extend role of ESRC as a knowledge broker
  - ‘Ventures’ – now the standard model for research programme funding
  - Aim to increase business co-funding to 5% of external income by 2015 (e.g. Financial Services, Retail, Green Technology)

# Data Infrastructure

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- Strong data infrastructure is an essential core resource
  - We support some of the world's leading studies
  - Underpin research and training, and provide evidence to both academic and non-academic researchers
  - Only ESRC supports these kinds of large, long-term investments
  - The longitudinal 'jewels' appreciate in value
  - Despite possible cuts to capital, we will protect a 'core' data infrastructure

# Restructuring Schemes


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- Fewer but more flexible research competitions
    - Integrate Postdoctoral Fellowships and First Grants – create a single ‘Future Leaders’ scheme
    - Merge Large Grants and Centres
    - Phase out Mid-Career Fellowships
    - Phase out current Small Grants scheme
  - Result – a simpler but coherent set of opportunities

# Doctoral Training

- DTCs – deliver postgraduate training through more strategic allocation of studentships
  - A cohort of students in each DTC
  - Move from accreditation to allocation
  - May have to discontinue open studentship competitions
- Announce outcome in early January



# Managing Demand

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- Current system is unsustainable – manage around 3000 applications a year and success rates around 15%
  - May require more self regulation in HEIs
  - Considering a range of options:
    - Measures including tougher sifting, no resubmissions
    - Institutional sanctions
    - Institutional quotas
    - Charging for submission of applications
  - Overall strategy may include range of measures