

• Guidance Notes and Frequently Asked Questions

The purpose of this document is to provide additional information for the guidelines and application for of the RGS-IBG Geographical Fieldwork Grants

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1. What counts as 'geographical'?

To obtain recognition from the Society, the proposed research must contain a substantial geographical component. Geography is the study of the earth's landscapes, peoples, places and environments. It is, quite simply, about the world in which we live. For further guidance on what the Society understands as geography please visit <http://www.rgs.org/GeographyToday/What+is+geography.htm> To be eligible for funding the research must involve fieldwork that aims to make a significant contribution to existing geographical knowledge. Projects which do not make a significant contribution, but do contribute to geographical knowledge, may be considered for approval but not funding. It is important that in the application it is clear how the project contributes to geographical knowledge.

General advice on making an application to the RGS-IBG can be found by accessing the [Advice for Applicants](#) document on our website www.rgs.org/grants .

2. Can I do my own research or does it have to be a group project?

The Geographical Fieldwork Grants are only offered to teams. However, the Society encourages applications where group members are working on individual, independent projects (for example undergraduate dissertations or Masters theses), provided they can be shown to be linked together under a coherent research theme and that overall there are benefits and advances in understanding that extend beyond the

individual projects. In the application it is important to state clearly how the individual projects are related and how the results will be integrated in presentations, reports and publications. The group must submit a single final report at the end of the project which brings together all of the elements of their research.

Past examples of team members undertaking individual projects under a single theme include:

Theme: Post Conflict Issues in Cambodia:

Study 1: The Meanings of Angkor for Cambodian National Identity

Study 2: Women with Physical Disabilities in Cambodia

Study 3: NGO involvement in the Media in Cambodia.

Theme: The promotion of social change in Ghana through trans-national links

Study 1: Trans-national football links and football academies

Study 2: Fair-trade links with twinned towns in the UK

3. What is a team?

A team is defined as three or more people. At least one third of the team should be UK citizens and/ or registered at a UK higher education institution.

4. Will departmental fieldtrips be supported?

The RGS-IBG wishes to encourage good research and fieldwork practice and as such we believe that academic led projects, in which students gain fieldwork experience are very valuable. However, the Geographical Fieldwork Grants are intended to fund original research and geographical fieldwork and thus departmental skills based fieldtrips will not be supported. Projects that include a mix of university students and teaching staff will be supported provided that the students can demonstrate that they are playing a major role in the organization of the project and in the design and implementation of the proposed research. Projects in which the majority of team members are research active academics will not be supported.

5. What if I am not 18?

Younger groups from schools, youth clubs, or training exercises where senior people organise, teach and lead younger people, under the age of 18, are not supported by this programme. A list of alternative funding sources can be found at www.rgs.org/grants

6. Are group members expected to make personal contributions?

In the past applicants to the Geographical Fieldwork Grant programme were required to make personal contributions towards the cost of their projects. Due to changing funding circumstances for many students this is no longer a requirement of the award. However, teams will be expected to document how short-falls in funding will be made up.

7. Why work with the host country?

The involvement of researchers, students and members of the community from the host country is strongly encouraged. The extent to which this is occurring will be evaluated by RGS-IBG screening panels.

There are several reasons why in-country involvement is important when planning. In some cases local collaboration may be a legal requirement of your host country. More importantly, research programmes overseas involving local collaborators can give added benefit both to the communities in which you work and to your team through local knowledge and expertise. Moreover, teams should collaborate with the host country because it is the right thing to do. For example, local researchers are often aware of previous

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that can be provided by your in-country counterparts. You should demonstrate that you have reviewed relevant published resources and the appropriate academic literature.

9. Who has “ownership” of my project?

A key element of the newly approved British Standard (8848) for overseas fieldwork is the identification of the venture provider- the institution or individual(s) ultimately responsible for the project. Just because all members of your project attend the same higher education institution does not mean that the institution will take full responsibility for your project. You need to determine who has legal and financial responsibility for your project, whether this is you as a team, your university department, or another organisation.

The RGS-IBG will consider you to be endorsed by an institution if you have been given official confirmation from that institution that you comply with their rules and regulation and you are acting on behalf of that institution when in the field.

10. What should I include in my risk assessment and safety management plan?

Your risk assessment and safety management plan is where you should identify potential risks and hazards associated with your proposed project. This document should reflect what you feel are the greatest threats to your health and safety and how you are minimising and mitigating these potential threats.

If you are affiliated with an organisation (e.g. a university) then you may already be required to complete their risk assessment forms. The RGS-IBG will accept a copy of your institutional risk assessment form as part of your application provided it covers the risks associated with:

- **The team**
Health & fitness (including pre-existing medical conditions), attitude and behaviour, training & experience, personal protective equipment
- **The environment**
Mountain, savannah, tropical forest, urban, climate and weather conditions, wildlife (including insects), altitude, river crossings, muggings, route selection
- **Health**
Endemic disease (Dengue, Malaria, HIV/AIDS), polluted water, contaminated food, environmental health (heat/cold related illness)
- **Local people**
Political instability or civil unrest, theft, personal attack, rape, attitudes to foreign visitors, cultural differences, appropriate dress code and behaviour.
- **Fieldwork activities and methods**
Natural hazards (avalanche, rockfall, deep water), use of specialist equipment (electrical equipment, chemicals, climbing harnesses, ropes, theodolites)
- **Travel and camp life**
Transport (public/private), road/water conditions, other road users, camp hazards (stoves/fires/flooding/ burns/drowning/suffocation), accommodation, fire, electrocution, serious injury, disease, mugging, attack

members will be invited to attend the interview. It is important that the group leader and other members key to implementing the research methodology attend the interview. In teams containing academics and students, normally only the student members of a team will be asked to participate in interviews.

15. Will I get all the money that I apply for?

Applicants should be aware that if awarded financial support it may not be at the maximum level. Many worthy projects apply for funds and resources are limited. The level of financial support awarded will reflect the quality of the proposed research, involvement of those in the host country, and financial need.

16. Does the RGS-IBG have terms and conditions for grant winners?

Research teams and expeditions awarded *support* and/or *approval* may mention this recognition in their literature and use the Society's logo (which will be supplied on request). The Society should be acknowledged in any outputs (papers, presentations, videos etc). No other use of the Society's name or crest is permitted. The Society accepts no legal, financial or moral responsibility for the projects it approves. Research teams must *not* describe themselves as *sponsored* by the Society since this word is reserved for projects that the Society itself organises and administers.

All approved and supported research groups should submit a preliminary report (c.1,000 words) to the Society within one month of their return to the UK. A full final report must be submitted by **1 September** of the year following the award. This final report should be submitted in word format and in hard copy and must include an abstract of 250 words, a description of the project and its key findings, three to five digital images that capture the spirit of the project and its findings, a final budget and explanation, an incident report, and details of presentations, publications and any other outputs.

A *Guide to Writing Expedition Reports* is included in the Expedition Handbook and can be accessed at www.rgs.org/gopubs > Recording your expedition. A database of previous project reports held by the RGS-IBG can be searched from the website (www.rgs.org/go). Past reports are available for reference at the Society and may be consulted by appointment. Contact Geography Outdoors on go@rgs.org or telephone 020 7591 3030 to arrange an appointment. Reports can be viewed Monday-Friday, 10.00am – 5.00 pm.

17. What happens if our plans change?

The Society should be informed immediately of any changes to the project, including changes to the budget, participants and to the programme of travel and fieldwork. The Society will review the changes to the project and may request more information before deciding if support will be continued. Minor alterations to projects are unlikely to result in the withdrawal of funding.

If a project is abandoned or postponed the Society should be informed. Any funds received from the Society should be returned to the Grants Officer, with a covering letter to explain the circumstances.

18. Where can I get more advice?

Further questions regarding eligibility or questions about the grant and its application process should be directed to the Grants Officer at grants@rgs.org. Further advice on making an application to the RGS-IBG can be found by accessing the [Advice for Applicants](#) document on the grant webpage (www.rgs.org/grants).

Geography Outdoors (GO) provides information, advice and training to anyone planning overseas fieldwork. Groups are strongly advised to contact the Geography Outdoors at an early stage in their planning. GO keeps a database of all projects and expeditions which are being planned each year to help those planning similar ventures. GO can also advise on other sources of funding and publishes the booklet *Fundraising and Budgeting for Field Research and Expeditions* which includes a directory of grant giving organisations (£2.50



from GO or available free of charge on www.rgs.org/gopubs). Full details of the services of GO are available on the website (www.rgs.org/go).

More information on planning and undertaking fieldwork can be found in the Expeditions Handbook. For example, the handbook contains specific information on finance and fundraising, transportation, keeping records, and working in different environments i.e. mountains, arid areas, tropical forest and Polar Regions etc. This can be accessed online at www.rgs.org/gopubs