

Final Report ORA VI

This report summarises and analyses the main results and procedural steps of the sixth ORA call. After five successful calls, the ORA partners ANR, DFG, ESRC and – newly for this round – SSHRC, launched a sixth call in 2019. NWO did not participate in this sixth round because they are focussing on new forms of international collaboration in their new strategic plan (2019 – 2022)¹. JSPS (Japan) again participated as an associate partner. Following recommendations from ORA V², a significant procedural change was implemented in ORA VI, whereby outline and full proposals were simultaneously submitted (following the procedure implemented by the European Research Council).

Call Timeline

This sixth call was managed by the ESRC as the coordinating agency. The call was pre-announced in March 2019 and the call documents were published on 14 May 2019. All partners published the information about the Call on their websites. For this sixth call, two webinars were held for interested applicants, to help communicate important information.

11 Sept 2019	Call closes for Outline and Full Proposals
2 – 3 Dec 2019	Outline Panel meeting
4 February 2020	Notification of Outline results
Feb – May 2020	Eligibility checks, peer review and main applicant response
3 – 5 June 2020	Full Panel Meeting
1 September 2020	Notification of Full results
1 Oct 2020	Earliest start of projects

Outline Stage

103 proposals (including both Outline and Full proposals) were submitted to the ESRC. Eligibility was checked by all partners, with the partners focussing on their national eligibility requirements and ESRC also checking ORA-level eligibility. A number of applications were sent back for essential corrections, and ultimately 95 applications were confirmed as eligible.

Table 1. Submitted ORA proposals at Outline Stage by ORA partner and number of participating countries.

	ANR	DFG	ESRC	SSHRC	Total #	Total %
3-countries	45	57	76	62	80	78
4-countries	23	23	23	23	23	22
Total	68	80	99	85	103	100
Total involvement	66%	78%	96%	83%		

Panel Assessment

The Outline Panel was held face-to-face in Bonn. Assessment was made on the basis of Outline Proposals and documentation only. Similarly to ORA V, the ORA partners agreed to employ a process that largely

¹ The NWO budget for ORA transferred to the "Open Competition – SSH". See here for further details: <https://www.nwo.nl/en/research-and-results/programmes/magw/open-research-area-plus/index.html>

² For the published ORA V Final Report see <https://esrc.ukri.org/files/funding/funding-opportunities/ora-final-report-on-fifth-call/>

mirrors an established ESRC multi-panel competition (Grant Assessment Panels). The purpose of the Panel meeting was to determine which proposals should advance to the next stage on the basis of scientific quality. Proposals were split across two sub-panels according to disciplines:

- Panel A – Psychology, Education and Sociology.
- Panel B – Economics, Geography, Political Science, Management and Business Studies.

The role of panel members was to appraise outline proposals and classify them by score according to the procedures and assessment criteria. Each sub-panel had a Chair and Vice-Chair, and there was an overarching Chair who moved between the two sub-panels to ensure consistency (and chaired the Full Stage Panel). Each proposal was assigned 3 Panellists. Ahead of the meeting panellists provided written comments and a score. Comments and scores were circulated in advance of the panel so that panellists could see each others' thoughts. The outcome of the panel meeting was an agreed final score for each proposal and a ranked list of proposals.

The aim of the funders was to allow approximately 50 proposals to progress to the full proposal stage. This was roughly five times the number of proposals for which funding was expected to be available. In the end only 40 proposals were scored over the fundable quality threshold and therefore able to proceed to the Full Stage.

Full Proposal Stage

40 proposals proceeded to the full stage. Given the simultaneous outline and full submissions procedure, the full proposals were already on file and ready to assess.

Table 2: Submitted ORA proposals at Full Stage by ORA partner and number of participating countries.

	ANR	DFG	ESRC	SSHRC	Total #	Total %
3-countries	18	22	26	21	29	72.5
4-countries	11	11	11	11	11	27.5
Total	29	33	37	32	40	100
Total involvement	73%	83%	93%	80%		

Table 3: Budgets available for Full Stage proposals by ORA partner

	ANR	DFG	ESRC	SSHRC
Budget requested	€ 9,910,666	€ 12,919,071	£16,464,754	\$10,187,673
Budget available	€ 2,000,000	Acc. to proven scientific quality	£5,500,000	\$6,000,000

Review Process

To assist the multidisciplinary Panel in making its funding recommendations, each proposal was reviewed by a minimum of two external peer reviewers with content expertise. Where possible, peer reviewers were identified by the national agencies involved within each individual application; however, limited availability of peer reviewers sometimes meant that a particular national agency identified multiple reviewers. Applicants were invited to submit a response to peer review comments, to allow applicants to correct any factual errors, conceptual misunderstandings, or to respond to any questions highlighted in the comments from assessors on proposals.

Panel Assessment - Pre-Panel Assessments

Each proposal was allocated to two Panel members known as "Introducers" based on their academic expertise relative to the proposal(s). The two Introducers provided written comments and a grade ahead of

the panel meeting. Each proposal was also allocated one “Reader”. The Reader did not provide written comments or a grade in advance of the meeting, but did read the proposals.

Panel Assessment – Pre-panel discussions

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the decision was made to switch to a virtual panel meeting. To aid in the smooth running of the virtual panel meeting, the ORA secretariat requested that some proposals were discussed in part by introducers (and readers if needed) in advance of the panel. Proposals had a pre-panel discussion where they were disparately scored or if introducers felt they had important issues to raise which warranted a pre-panel discussion. Introducers prepared a summary of the pre-panel discussion to read out at the panel. To ensure validity, fairness and transparency of these pre-panel discussions, the secretariat set out principles to follow in these pre-panel discussions, and their subsequent use in the panel meeting. These principles were communicated to panellists in advance of the pre-panel discussions by two webinars.

Panel Assessment – Panel Meeting

The purpose of this meeting was to determine which proposals should be funded, based on the assessment criteria set out in the call. Fourteen panel members took part, with some overlap with the Panel from the outline stage, and from the previous ORA V Panel. Proposals were introduced by the introducers who summarised their comments and pre-panel discussion (if applicable). The Full Panel were then invited to discuss. Then the panel agreed on a final grade for each proposal. In light of the budget restrictions, and having identified more proposals worth funding than for which funding was available, the Panel ranked proposals near the funding cut off.

Following the Panel meeting funders reviewed their budgets, and it was agreed that they had enough funds to fund 13 proposals in total. Of these 13 proposals, one had a Japan component, and JSPS had evaluated this as “fund”. Therefore one of the final funded proposals has a Japan component funded by JSPS.

In the period following the Panel meeting, the ORA partners took formal decisions on the funding of projects they were involved in. This process was completed by the end of August, and applicants were informed of decisions on 1st September 2020. All applicants received a Panel statement as feedback.

Table 4: Funded Full Proposals

	ANR	DFG	ESRC	SSHRC	Japanese Funding	Discipline
Cognitive training effects across the adult lifespan: A diffusion modelling approach		yes	yes	yes		Psychology
Frames in Production: Actors, Networks, Diffusion (FRAMENET)		yes	yes	yes		Political science. & international studies
Muslim-Jewish encounter, diversity & distance in urban Europe: religion, culture and social model (ENCOUNTERS)	yes	yes	yes			Sociology

Public policy in food markets: understanding advertising and choice inter-dependencies	yes	yes	yes			Economics
Shaping 21st Century AI. Controversies and Closure in Media, Policy, and Research	yes	yes	yes	yes		Science and Technology Studies
Atmospheres of (counter)terrorism in European cities	yes	yes	yes			Human Geography
Beyond 'Left Behind Places': Understanding Demographic and Socioeconomic Change in Peripheral Regions	yes	yes	yes			Human Geography
Fiscal Citizenship in Migrant Societies: An International Cross Country Comparison		yes	yes	yes		Political science. & international studies
GEP Analysis: Assessing, understanding, and modelling the impact of gender equity policies (GEP) in the film industry		yes	yes	yes		Social policy
Linking National and Regional Income Inequality: Cross-Country Data Harmonization and Analysis	yes	yes	yes	yes		Human Geography
Police Accountability - towards international standards (POLACS)	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	Sociology
Prosocial development across childhood: Towards a comprehensive mechanistic framework		yes	yes	yes		Psychology
MAPHIS: Mapping History--What Historical Maps Can Tell Us About Urban Development	yes		yes	yes		Economics

Table 5: Funded Full Proposals by ORA partner and number of participating countries

	ANR	DFG	ESRC	SSHRC	Total #	Total %
3-countries	5	9	10	6	10	77
4-countries	3	3	3	3	3	23
Total	8	12	13	9	13	100
Total involvement	62%	92%	100%	69%		



Final Observations

The following observations on the final composition of proposals are noted, however please be reminded that the evaluation of proposals is based purely on scientific quality:

- **Distribution across partners:** There was a good distribution of partners on proposals throughout the 3 stages (outline, full and funded), ultimately ending with 13 UK partners, 8 France, 12 Germany and 9 Canada. France has a much higher involvement than in the previous round at all three stages, ultimately being involved in 62% of the proposals, whereas this was only 38% in ORA V.
- **Partnerships:** All partners paired up well with each other at all three stages. There was no particularly strong or weak partnership, however by the funded stage the weakest partnership was France/Canada (4 proposals) and the strongest was UK/Germany (12 proposals). So there was some variation. Regarding groupings, the least popular at Outline and Full stages was France-Germany-Canada, and ultimately no proposals were funded with this combination of partners. The most popular grouping at all three stages was UK-Germany-Canada. Unlike ORA V, ORA proposals with just two countries were not eligible for ORA VI. This resulted in an increase in both 3-country and 4-country proposals at all 3 stages. In the end three 4-country proposals were funded.
- **Success Rates:** Indicated by the number of funded proposals compared to submitted proposals. There is little variation between countries, with rates ranging between 11% (Canada) and 15% (Germany).
- **Disciplinary Coverage:** The final funded proposals appear to be a fair representation of the spread of original applications.
- **Funding Rates:** Indicated by the amount of funds granted compared to funds requested at the outline stage. There is again, little variation in the funding rates between countries, ranging from 12% for France to 18% for the UK.