

## **Scottish Research Alliance for Energy, Homes and Livelihoods**

*Comments from Katie Daniel*

### **Quality and importance**

The vision for the ARC is timely and appropriately ambitious. The proposed programme of activities for years 1-2 provides a good mix across the 3 themes, and ARC as a whole. I am pleased to see plans for years 3-4 are not fully fixed and there is a major review point after year 2. The use of seed funds is a good idea – these can be very successful when trying to get ideas/collaborations off the ground. It is a positive that the community engagement activities are ongoing and there will be inclusion of a rural-specific workshop in year 2.

The logic model doesn't clearly map from the inputs across to impacts, plus I don't think everything is listed under the appropriate heading – I would like to see this revised (although a minor issue).

A few specific questions:

- I like the inclusion of ERC capacity building/training events. How many people are expected to attend these yearly events? How will they be selected? I assume accommodation is not to be funded from the ARC?
- More generally, how are they going to select who attends events where numbers need to be limited to ensure inclusion, multidisciplinary and that it doesn't become a closed shop?
- How are they going to engage with funders outside a yearly funders event?
- Grant writing events are twice a year but funding opportunities can emerge at any time. How will they respond flexibly to major opportunities?
- How are they going to facilitate interactions outside meetings?

### **Applicants and partnerships**

The leadership team is perhaps a little skewed towards the social sciences/humanities but it is an interdisciplinary team. The key collaborators listed also appear to be missing people who have more of a technology focus. I would recommend that they need to ensure all relevant communities are engaged throughout the lifetime of the ARC.

### **Resources and management**

The roles of each leadership team member are clearly set out. The team have proposed an external advisory board, including membership overlapping with other ARCs which is good to see. How will they manage turnover of the group to prevent the entire group changing at the same time (it is suggested each will serve 2 years at a time)? Also, how have they factored EDI considerations into their membership selection? Figure 2 appears to show the leadership team but is labelled as external advisory board/key partners – I assume this is an error.

The suggested KPIs are broadly OK. A few comments/questions:

- How are they going to collect EDI information / what are they going to collect to enable them to write the EDI narrative report? EDI data can be difficult to collect/report on especially across multiple partners.
- The number of grant applications submitted is an appropriate measure (given likely timescales) but it would be good to capture the success of these applications, and

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information about the longevity of collaborations (e.g. are they working together across different applications/awards) too.

- I would suggest a KPI around the diversity of people/places engaged across the alliance (not just EDI but discipline/organisation etc)

Hybrid events are good for inclusion purposes but they can be more costly to run if additional AV equipment is required to give the best experience for everyone. Have they accounted for additional costs needed to make these events work?

Comment more generally applicable: why is the comms officer not shared across all 4 alliances?

**Added value**

The team have demonstrated the added value of the ARC. In particular I would highlight:

- The team have clearly placed a great deal of value on capacity building for early career researchers. It is good to see several ECRs embedded in the leadership team for the ARC, as well as targeted events on grant writing and other skills.
- The community engagement programme is also a nice addition and should ensure solutions take account of acceptability and usability.

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### *Comments from Matt McCallum*

#### Summary

This is a well thought out proposal that should coalesce a broad range of research strength around the critically important priority research and policy agenda.

#### **Quality and Importance.**

The need for an interdisciplinary, socio-technical approach to addressing the challenge of sustainable and just transitions is clearly stated.

The project leads have developed a coherent plan for the integration of disciplines and themes which are likely to generate timely and effective insights to shape public policy.

The logic model clearly articulates the connection between activities and impact.

#### **Applicants and partnerships.**

The leadership team demonstrate a broad range of expertise with complementary expertise in translation and policy engagement.

Themes are well integrated with potential for cross-cutting collaboration. The inclusion of a capacity building lead is particularly welcome given the focus on ECRs and piloting new interdisciplinary approaches.

The role of the Funder Liaison lead should be unpacked further. I was uncertain of the value of a specific funder liaison and activities aimed specifically at engaging funders for two reasons:

- 1) Funders could be invited to regular networking/ collaborative events.
- 2) The ARC shouldn't underestimate the potential to influence funder priorities rather than to shape their own activities to meet funder expectations.

I would have liked to have seen a cross-cutting leadership role aimed at seeding cross-thematic conversations and the coordination of ARC-level strategic funding applications.

#### **Resources and Management.**

The suggested Governance framework is sensible, and the use of funding is appropriate for the intended uses of funding according to SFC's criteria.

In the interest of inclusivity, I would recommend offering an honorarium to charity/ third sector representatives on any external advisory groups.

#### **Added value**

The application clearly articulates the added value of SFC funding.

The broad range of themes will be advantageous in securing funding across the ARC. There is a particular opportunity with the launch of UKRI's new interdisciplinary responsive mode scheme. The ARC provides an ideal focus for a potential CDT bid provided they can demonstrate a connection with existing strengths in postgraduate training.

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**Follow up questions**

- The ARC is interdisciplinary but is there sufficient STEM representation in the broader collaborative team?
- What are your views on how you can best catalyse knowledge exchange, particularly in relation to public policy? (Public Policy Fellowships?)
- Given the importance of shaping public perceptions and engaging with policymakers, have the team considered the advantages of collaboration with partners in the Creative Industries and/or GLAM sector? E.g., Glasgow Science Centre and COP26?