



Targeted call for rapid research

The role of business in addressing modern slavery in global supply chains: establishing visibility and influence over long and complex supply chains

30 September 2021

Call Overview

About the Call

The aim of this research call is to further explore how businesses can establish and increase their visibility and influence over (particularly) the lower tiers of long and complex supply chains, in order to prevent or mitigate the risk of modern slavery. The research findings should support the development of practical guidance for businesses wishing to take more effective action to address modern slavery.

Project proposals should be designed with a scope appropriate to the timeline and available budget. The proposed scope should reflect the following requirements:

- We encourage projects to have a focus on a particular sector; we would particularly welcome a focus on a sector that has received less attention in existing modern slavery research.
- Given the limited timescale for this project, we expect proposals to focus primarily on UK-based businesses (i.e. businesses based or established in the UK but including those that also operate multi-nationally); however, we would also welcome proposals that additionally include some comparative focus on non-UK businesses (those established and operating primarily outside the UK) if feasible within the budget and timescale.
- The successful applicant/s will be expected to address all the listed objectives within their project; proposals that only address a subset of the listed objectives will need to provide a robust justification.

The objectives are to:

- A. Conceptualise the range of understandings within businesses of what constitutes effective supply chain governance in the context of requirements to address modern slavery;
- B. Map schematically the approaches that businesses are taking to put those understandings into practice;
- C. Collect evidence, whether in the form of academic research, grey literature or internal business reports, as to the relative effectiveness of those approaches; and
- D. Identify specific examples of effective supply chain governance.

A maximum budget of £70,000 at 100% full economic cost (FEC) is allocated for this project. The Modern Slavery PEC expects to fund one project for this work. Projects must be led by a UK higher education institution or approved research organisation eligible to receive UKRI funding, and the project must be in collaboration with at least one non-academic organisation.

Key Dates

Action/Activity	Deadline
Call announcement	30 September 2021
Call webinar	To be confirmed
Call deadline	4pm (UK time) 12 November 2021
Decision to successful team	Week beginning 6 December 2021
Project start	17 January 2022
Delivery of final outputs	17 May 2022

Call Webinar

The call webinar will be held in October (date to be confirmed) to go through the scope of the call and answer questions from potential applicants. Following the webinar, a recording of it can be found on our [YouTube channel](#).

Introduction

About the PEC

The Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre (the Modern Slavery PEC) was created by the investment of public funding to enhance the understanding of modern slavery and transform the effectiveness of laws and policies designed to prevent it.

It's designed to provide independent, impartial and authoritative insight and analysis on modern slavery based on high quality research it commissions, aiming to have a transformational impact on the understanding of modern slavery and the responses to it.

The Centre brings together academics, policymakers, businesses, civil society, survivors and the public on a scale not seen before in the UK to collaborate on solving this global challenge. The Modern Slavery PEC's approach is rooted in human rights.

Led by the [Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law](#) (part of the [British Institute of International and Comparative Law \(BIICL\)](#)) the Centre is a consortium of universities and Independent Research Organisations with a track record in world-class work on modern slavery. The Modern Slavery PEC is funded and actively supported by the [Art and Humanities Research Council](#), with additional support from the [Economic and Social Sciences Research Council](#), on behalf of the [UK Research and Innovation](#) (UKRI), from the Strategic Priorities Fund.

Our aim and guiding principles for research

We support research which provides innovative, independent, impartial and authoritative insight and analysis on modern slavery. Our aim is to drive policy change and have a transformational impact on the understanding of modern slavery and the responses to it.

We aim to change the way in which modern slavery research is done through our guiding principles of effectiveness, equity and survivor-involvement. We aspire to facilitate new collaborations in modern slavery research including by supporting partnerships between those who have not previously worked together. By doing so, we hope to bring together the many different actors in the modern slavery space to maximise their collective influence.

The Modern Slavery PEC strongly encourages that applications involve people with lived experience in the design and/or implementation of the project. We design our calls with the aspiration for them to be inclusive to encourage a greater diversity of applicants and approaches to modern slavery research.

We intend for all of the research that we fund to align with our guiding principles. We therefore expect all research that the Modern Slavery PEC funds to support diversity and inclusion with respect to those who carry out the research and in terms of interdisciplinarity.

Background and context for this call

Modern slavery in supply chains is a priority research area for the Modern Slavery PEC. It is one of the four research priorities in the Modern Slavery PEC strategy, identified through an extensive consultation process, including with a group of business stakeholders. The need for better evidence on the prevention of modern slavery in supply chains has also been highlighted in

the UK Government's research priorities for modern slavery¹, and the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner's strategic plan.²

There is widespread agreement on the important role of businesses in helping to address modern slavery both in their operations and in their supply chains. Although there is a broad consensus on the strategic priorities for work on modern slavery and supply chains across the sector, the challenge, as the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner remarks in her strategic plan, is one of delivery.³ While promising initiatives are underway (including [existing research](#) funded by the Modern Slavery PEC), there remain evidence gaps about the most effective ways businesses can best address modern slavery in practice.

Key evidence gaps include, but are not limited to:

- The mapping of the full range of suppliers and relationships within complex, inter-connected and multi-tiered supply chains;
- Practical approaches to influencing the behaviour of businesses in the lower tiers of those supply chains;
- The range of response options and methods when cases of modern slavery are discovered;
- What new forms of collaboration (within and across sectors, and trans-nationally) can be facilitated and encouraged;
- What the barriers are that may prevent some businesses either (i) prioritising or (ii) taking action on modern slavery; and
- How to define and measure the impact of interventions undertaken to address modern slavery in supply chains.

We need more and better evidence in response to these gaps in order to support businesses as they develop their own plans and processes, individually and collectively, to address modern slavery.

The outputs from this research project will contribute to the evidence base for businesses to draw on and use to inform their efforts. They will also help to address an evidence gap identified by the finance sector in relation to how financial institutions can best use new or existing levers to prevent or mitigate supply chain modern slavery risk. The PEC will further use the findings to influence ongoing policy development, such as the future development and implementation of planned changes to section 54 of the UK Modern Slavery Act.⁴

In accordance with the Modern Slavery PEC's strategic objective of facilitating collaboration, successful teams will work cooperatively with the Modern Slavery PEC to ensure alignment with our objectives as well as to maximise impact.

Aim, scope, and objectives of the research

The aim of this research call is to further explore how businesses can establish and increase their visibility and influence over (particularly) the lower tiers of long and complex supply chains, in order

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907527/2018_UK_Annual_Report_on_Modern_Slavery.pdf, p. 57

² <https://www.antislaverycommissioner.co.uk/media/1329/independent-anti-slavery-commissioners-strategic-plan-19-21-screen-readable.pdf>, p.16

³ <https://www.antislaverycommissioner.co.uk/media/1329/independent-anti-slavery-commissioners-strategic-plan-19-21-screen-readable.pdf>, p.16

⁴ S.54 obliges businesses operating in the UK and with an annual turnover greater than £36m to publish an annual statement setting out their efforts to ensure that modern slavery does not occur in their operations or supply chains.

to prevent or mitigate the risk of modern slavery. The research findings should support the development of practical guidance for businesses wishing to take more effective action to address modern slavery.

Potential methods/approaches could include:

- Interviews with key stakeholders, including workers or appropriate representative bodies such as trade unions
- Comprehensive literature review
- In-depth case studies
- Analysis of individual companies
- Analysis of specific sector situations and initiatives

Additional considerations:

- We encourage applicants, where feasible, to include engagement with lower-tier supplier representatives in their proposals (both management and workers, or appropriate representative bodies such as trade unions) to explore the question of influence from a more 'bottom-up' perspective.
- When reviewing evidence on how businesses map their supply chains, we encourage applicants to explore the role of existing data and technology tools that are currently used by some businesses.
- The assessment of existing evidence should incorporate a review of both academic and grey literature.
- When reviewing evidence on how businesses influence their lower-tier suppliers, it may be useful to explore standard tools (such as contractual clauses and third-party audits) as well as non-standard approaches (such as cost incentives).
- It may be helpful to identify other supply chain actors (beyond the businesses at the top of the supply chain) who may be particularly important as facilitators of or obstacles to the exercise of influence down the supply chain (e.g. commodity merchants).
- Where examples of good practice are identified, it may be helpful to explore the causal factors behind their success to aid in their replication.

Project proposals should be designed with a scope appropriate to the timeline and available budget. The proposed scope should reflect the following requirements:

- We encourage projects to have a focus on a particular sector; we would particularly welcome a focus on a sector that has received less attention in existing modern slavery research.
- Given the limited timescale for this project, we expect proposals to focus primarily on UK-based businesses (i.e. businesses based or established in the UK but including those that also operate multi-nationally); however, we would also welcome proposals that additionally include some comparative focus on non-UK businesses (those established and operating primarily outside the UK) if feasible within the budget and timescale.
- The successful applicant/s will be expected to address all the listed objectives within their project; proposals that only address a subset of the listed objectives will need to provide a robust justification.

The objectives are to:

- A. Conceptualise the range of understandings within businesses of what constitutes effective supply chain governance in the context of requirements to address modern slavery;
- B. Map schematically the approaches that businesses are taking to put those understandings into practice;
- C. Collect evidence, whether in the form of academic research, grey literature or internal business reports, as to the relative effectiveness of those approaches; and
- D. Identify specific examples of effective supply chain governance.

Essential elements of the research

The successful applicant will be expected to develop a methodology in collaboration with the Modern Slavery PEC. This must include the following components:

- Scope of the literature review;
- Scope of the businesses/sector to be focused on in the research and reason for inclusion; and
- Intended approach to engaging other supply chain actors (including intermediaries, suppliers and workers / representative bodies).

The methodology should set out how the applicant/s intend(s) to work with businesses in conducting the research. Business engagement could take different forms depending on the project, e.g. engagement with multi-stakeholder initiatives, industry associations, sector initiatives or individual businesses. Individual or collective business actors could co-lead the project or join as a collaborating or supporting partner. Please note that for-profit businesses are not eligible to receive funding under this scheme, but may be project partners or contribute in-kind

The methodology should also set out how the applicant/s intend(s) to engage with people with lived experience of modern slavery within the project. The Modern Slavery PEC is committed to involving people with lived experience in our work and ensuring that their voice is heard. We welcome projects that include people with lived experience as part of the research team and we expect all projects to include engagement with people with lived experience as part of their research where feasible and appropriate, whilst taking into account any safeguarding and ethics implications. The applicant/s should specify how they intend to engage with e.g. affected workers in the lower tiers of supply chains, worker representative bodies such as trade unions, survivor leader representatives and/or other relevant groups.

The applicant/s should also specify how their project will complement related pieces of research that the Modern Slavery PEC has previously funded on businesses and supply chains ([listed here](#)).

Required outputs

The successful applicant will deliver a full report as well as a two summary briefings (see examples [here](#) and [here](#)): one for businesses and another for policymakers. The outputs will be co-produced with the PEC team so there should be ample time included in the proposed project timeline for the sharing of drafts to enable comments and feedback to be incorporated.

- The full report should be no more than 10,000 words (excluding references/annexes).
- The summary briefings should each be no more than 2,500 words.

The research report should include practical recommendations.

- For businesses, recommendations should highlight:
 - What works: what current practices are supported by robust evidence;
 - What does not work: where there is evidence for the ineffectiveness of particular practices;
 - Any evidence for why particular practices are effective or ineffective;
 - Practices for which evidence of effectiveness is lacking and more research is needed;
 - Examples of good practice that can be replicated by other businesses; and
 - Lessons learned with applicability beyond the particular sector focused on in the research.
- For policymakers, recommendations should highlight:
 - How government can support businesses to take effective action to target modern slavery in supply chains (e.g. facilitating collaboration or information sharing); and
 - How supply chain due diligence legislation might best take into account the practicalities of supply chain mapping and supplier influencing.

Projects should also consider any lessons learned that may have potential wider applicability to the public sector. With the forthcoming inclusion of public sector bodies within the obligations of s54 of the Modern Slavery Act, it is vital that we draw from evidence of good practice in the private sector to also inform recommendations for the public sector.

The Modern Slavery PEC would welcome proposals that include innovative ideas for presenting data, e.g. with visualisation of results in a format to enhance understanding and to support the uptake of evidence by our key audiences.

The project team will also be invited to present interim findings to the PEC team and other relevant audiences at a suitable mid-point during the research.

Project milestones and timeline

Milestones and timeline	
Application process	
Action/Activity	Deadline
Call announcement	30 September 2021
Call webinar	To be confirmed
Call deadline	4pm (UK time) 12 November 2021
Decision to successful team	Week beginning 6 December 2021
Project start	17 January 2022
Project milestones and deliverables	
Action/Activity	Deadline
Revised workplan and methodology (provided to PEC by project team)	Late-January 2022
Presentation of interim findings	Late-March 2022
Delivery of full draft of project report	Early May 2022
Delivery of PEC Research Summary	Early May 2022
Delivery of final outputs	17 May 2022

Additional information for applicants

Ways of working with the PEC

Collaboration and co-operation are key values for the Modern Slavery PEC. As such we will work jointly with the successful research team from the outset and will co-design and co-create research outputs that are timely, relevant, accessible, and have the potential to deliver policy impact. The Modern Slavery PEC and the successful research team will agree regular touchpoints throughout the project cycle to facilitate this collaboration.

Ethics and Safeguarding

There may be a need to collect primary data, e.g. via survey, semi-structured interviews or focus groups, from key informants and organisations that work in this sector, in which case the applicant should detail their proposed plans and processes for gaining ethical approval before data collection

begins. See the section below on working with people with lived experience where we outlining our safeguarding and collaboration expectations.

The Modern Slavery PEC strongly encourages that applications involve people with lived experience in the design and/or implementation of the project. Where a project undertakes new research directly involving vulnerable groups or people with lived experience modern slavery, projects should carefully consider ethics and safeguarding implications. In the ethics statement, applicants should include reference to organisational policies and processes around safeguarding, developing project specific policies where appropriate.

Data protection/GDPR

All data must be collated and stored in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018, the UK General Data Protection Regulation 2021 and, if necessary, the EU General Data Protection Regulation 2016. Applicants should detail their systems and processes for dealing with data securely. Proposals must cover how data will be transported/transferred, handled, analysed and stored, including retention schedules, within the Ethics Statement.

Any and all datasets produced in the course of this research will remain the property of the successful applicant. The final report will be co-branded with the Modern Slavery PEC, whilst the summary briefing will be branded as a PEC output ([example](#)). Both the successful applicant and the Modern Slavery PEC will be free to use the final report as they wish after the end date of the project.

For more information on how we handle your data please visit our [privacy policy](#).

Budget

A maximum budget of £70,000 at 100% full economic cost (FEC) is allocated for this project. The Modern Slavery PEC expects to fund one project for this work.

The project must be led by a UK higher education institution or approved research organisation which is eligible to receive UKRI funding⁵, and the project must be in collaboration with at least one non-academic institution, showing a clear link back to UK policy impact. Higher education institutes and approved research organisations will receive 80% FEC. Third sector organisations and international partners (on the condition that a clear link is made to UK policy) are eligible to collaborate on projects and will be funded at 100% FEC through the lead organisation. The combined third sector and international organisation budget must account for no more than 30% of the total cost. Costs for these organisations must be broken down by item in the budget spreadsheet. UK organisations that are not eligible under UKRI rules and are not third sector organisations may form part of project teams but are not eligible for funding within this call. This means that for-profit businesses are not eligible to receive funding.

We request that Principal and Co-Investigators are involved in only one application submission per call. There is no limit to the number of applications a higher education, research organisation can submit, nor to the number of applications a third sector organisation can collaborate on.

Eligible Costs

We will fund costs which are in line with AHRC's policies⁶, with the following exceptions:

⁵ <https://www.ukri.org/apply-for-funding/before-you-apply/check-if-you-are-eligible-for-research-and-innovation-funding/>

⁶ <https://ahrc.ukri.org/documents/guides/research-funding-guide1/> (from page 52)

- All staff costs, including academic time, must be costed as Directly Incurred due to the profiling of the award. We unfortunately cannot pay DA (Directly Allocated) Investigator costs but support the inclusion of PI/Co-I time as a DI cost.
- Any costs for travel must be realistic under the current circumstances and we request that any activity involving travel has appropriate mitigations and alternatives suggested
- Given the short-term nature of the project we will not be awarding costs for equipment such as audio recording equipment or laptops
- The design of the written outputs will be arranged by the Modern Slavery PEC and so design costs will not be eligible
- Dissemination activities will be led by the PEC in collaboration with the research team. Costs relating to dissemination should therefore not be included as part of the application

Working with people with lived experience

As per our guiding principles for researchers, the Modern Slavery PEC encourages researchers to include people with lived experience in all aspects of their research project. We encourage all projects to consider whether they should have a specific safeguarding policy or framework. According to organisations such as UK Collaborative on International Development Research (UKCDR), safeguarding means ‘taking all reasonable means to prevent harm from occurring; to protect people, especially vulnerable adults and children, from that harm; and to respond appropriately when harm does occur’.⁷ Policies should include consideration of rights of people with lived experience and whistle-blowers, and how the project addresses questions of equity, fairness, transparency and accountability. This should include all parts of the research chain, from research funders, planners and practitioners to participants and local community members, where everyone has the right to be safe from harm.⁸

We request that the following principles are adhered to when working with people with lived experience:

- Ground rules are established with the participants, including use of terminology, and agreed rules about withdrawal from discussions or activities
- Signposting to resources to support participants (the Modern Slavery PEC can assist with these) and consider funds to support this if appropriate
- People with lived experience are paid for their time (including being participants on interview panels and focus groups) and that this is done so in a manner appropriate to participants (considering cash payments or use of vouchers)
- Carrying out a risk assessment, specifically considering risks for those with lived experience

Application process

To apply for this call applications must be made through our online form (<https://modernslaverypec.submit.com/>) and include the following attachments or sections (where word limits are specified, please note that the panel will not read past the maximum word count):

1. **Team information** including a breakdown of team members, institutions or organisations and contact information
2. **Project description** (500 words maximum) which is suitable for a general audience. We may use this text for our website, so please ensure it's accessible to non-experts, and avoid acronyms or jargon where possible
3. **Project Narrative** (2,500 words maximum) outlining how the research team intend to approach the project, including:

⁷ <https://www.ukcdr.org.uk/what-we-do/our-work/safeguarding/>

⁸ <https://www.ukcdr.org.uk/resource/guidance-on-safeguarding-in-international-development-research/>

- a. A clear definition of the scope of the research, including any additional changes to the scope beyond those specified in the call documentation. This should cover terminology and the way that the project will focus specifically on modern slavery issues, or on particular aspects of modern slavery such as forced labour.
 - b. A clear explanation and justification for the chosen approach and methodology responding to the aims and objectives and essential elements outlined in this call
 - c. A detailed timeline incorporating the milestones and deliverables outlined in this call document
 - d. Details and relevant experience of each team member involved in the delivery of the project, and a description of why they and their organisations are best placed to address the research question
 - e. A description of how the project will support an equitable partnership between the higher education/research organisations and the non-academic organisation, including the reasoning for choosing this partner for this particular project
 - f. A list of the top two or three risks that might impact delivery of the project and how these will be managed within the team
4. **Ethics and Safeguarding Statement** (500 words maximum) describing the proposed methods and safeguards which will be put in place for working with vulnerable people and/or their data
 5. **Budget Table** (a template can be downloaded on the online form) detailing the costs of each organisation, cost need to be broken down by item, adding a new line for each item, including items within third sector organisation costs. Full instructions are included in budget template
 6. **Justification of Resources** (500 words maximum) explaining the reasons why each budget line is being requested (excluding Estates and Indirects)
 7. **Equality, diversity and inclusion data**, the Modern Slavery PEC is committed to inclusive and diverse research which represents the range of communities and people with lived experience from different ethnic, racial and other backgrounds, . The equality, diversity and inclusion information will be used to help us to monitor the range of applicants to Responsive Research calls. This information will not be used to assess application and will not be passed on to the panel.
 8. **Additional documentation**, this is not a requirement of the call, but projects may submit letters of support, GANTT charts, visual evidence, risk registers or other complementary documentation. This will not be scored, but will assist in project set up and timelines should the applications be successful.

Assessment process

The assessment panel will contain a mixture of experts including Modern Slavery PEC staff, policymakers, industry experts and people with lived experience of modern slavery. With this in mind, applicants should ensure language is clear and that technical terms and acronyms are clearly explained.

The panel will score applications, using the AHRC grading system⁹ against the following headings:

1. Project narrative:
 - a. Scope
 - b. Methodology, and how it relates to the aims, objectives and essential elements of the call

⁹ <https://ahrc.ukri.org/peerreview/peer-review-handbook/the-review-process/grading-scale/>

- c. Timeline, milestones and deliverables
 - d. Breakdown of team, organisations involved and inclusion of third sector organisation
 - e. Equitable partnerships between higher education organisation and third sector organisation and the appropriateness of the chosen non-academic partner(s) for completing the project
 - f. Alignment with the Modern Slavery PEC's guiding principles for research: equity, effectiveness, and survivor involvement
2. Ethics, including ways of working with third sector organisations and vulnerable people, with specific attention given to safeguarding policies
 3. Budget and justification of resources, including the distribution of funds and tasks between organisations

All applications will be reviewed by an assessment panel convened by the Modern Slavery PEC that will include external independent reviewers. Each panel member will, independently score the applications using the six point AHRC grading scale. Applications must score an average of 4 out of six (very good) or higher from the majority of panel members against each point in headings one and two in order for it to be assessed at the panel meeting. Projects with large discrepancies will be discussed at the panel meeting and the chair of the panel will decide on any disputes.

Call webinar

We will hold a webinar for prospective applicants on 12 October 2021 at 1pm (UK time). The webinar will provide applicants with the opportunity to hear more about the Modern Slavery PEC and its objectives, give an overview of the call, the application process and give more information on how the successful bid team will collaborate with the Modern Slavery PEC during the research.

A recording of the webinar will be found on [our YouTube channel](#). A Q&A from the session will be unrecorded, questions and answers will be put into an FAQ document on the Modern Slavery PEC website.

Contacting the Modern Slavery PEC

The Modern Slavery PEC team can be contacted at office@modernslaverypec.org. Please allow two working days for a response.

Change log

Date	Change
4 October 2021	On page 9, clarified that the combined third sector and international organisation budget must account for no more than 30% of the total cost