



Education
Endowment
Foundation

Application guidance

Communication and language
in Reception

Autumn 2026





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Foundation

About us

We're an independent charity dedicated to breaking the link between family income and educational achievement. We do this by making sure that the education sector has trustworthy and actionable information about how to improve teaching and learning. This is why we're evidence obsessives.

We build it. We develop, evaluate, and scale-up programmes and approaches that aim to boost outcomes for socio-economically disadvantaged children and young people.

We summarise it. We look at the whole global evidence base to find out what we already know about improving teaching and learning.

We put it to use. We help the education sector to use evidence in ways that really make a difference

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Application guidance

Guidance notes to support you in completing the application form for our Autumn 2026 funding round

Introduction to the EEF's funding

The EEF's grant-funding rounds test the impact of high-potential programmes and approaches aiming to raise the attainment of 2–19-year-olds from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Funding rounds focus on projects within selected themes. This ensures that we are funding projects that can answer the most important questions as suggested by the existing evidence base and educator priorities, giving precedence to the areas that are likely to be most beneficial for socio-economically disadvantaged children.

Reception programmes that focus on communication and language

Round open: Monday 21 September 2026

Closing date: 11am, Monday 2 November 2026

The Autumn 2026 funding round is open to Reception programmes that focus on communication and language.

Oral language underpins learning, social development and future attainment. Reception is a critical stage in children's development, as this is when formal literacy demands increase and children begin to participate in school life. Children enter Reception with varying levels of language development. Differences in communication and language development can persist throughout a child's education. Identifying needs early and planning appropriate support can prevent gaps becoming more pronounced. This is crucial in reducing education inequality.

The EEF has partnered with the Department for Education on this funding round. Our shared commitment is to fund independent evaluations to increase the supply of evidence-backed programmes that support educators working with 4–5-year-old children to improve the communication and language provision in their school. This includes professional development programmes provided to educators working in the primary school Reception phase. We are particularly interested in programmes that might benefit children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Priority areas and sub-themes

We have identified some specific evidence gaps where we are interested in funding projects. These are key priorities for this funding round to support with generating evidence and developing practice.

Applications may address multiple priority areas but must address at least one. The priority areas have been identified following a review of the existing evidence and practice in settings, stakeholder engagement and a review of the existing programmes that the EEF has funded within this theme. The application form will ask you to indicate which of the priority areas your application is addressing, referring to the number from the table below.

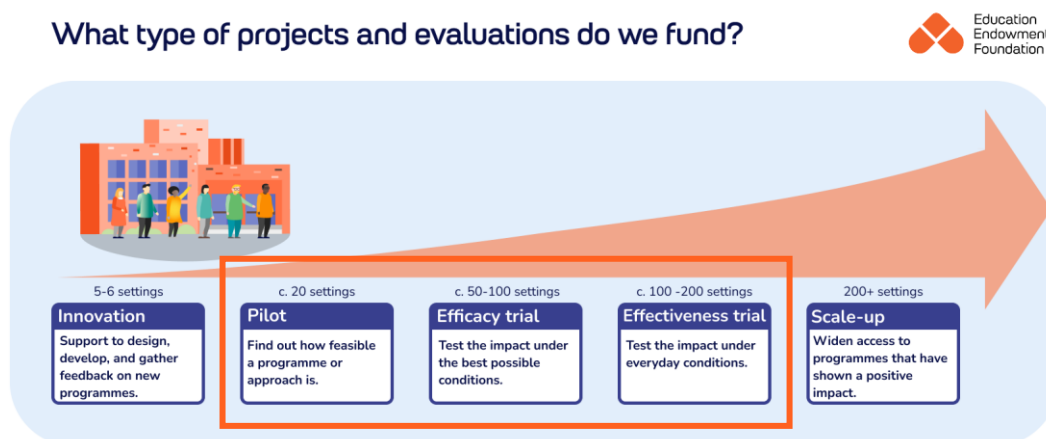
Priority area	We are interested in funding programmes that...
1. Reception leadership	Programmes that strengthen leadership in Reception to improve the consistency and quality of language support through effective use of the following strategies: • use of language environment audit tools • action planning • effective information sharing and monitoring • effective engagement between professionals.
2. Identification linked to support	Help Reception educators to use screening tools to identify language needs to appropriately inform children's support. Example tools include: ELIM, WellComm, and Language Screen.
3. Language development	Train and support educators to strengthen children's spoken language in Reception.

Leadership in Reception includes anyone with responsibility for decisions about provision. This could be Reception teaching staff, early years leads, curriculum leads or school leads. Programmes might facilitate information sharing and engagement between professionals through cascade training or coaching models, or by strengthening links between educators and leaders, settings and specialists (for example, special educational needs coordinators, speech and language therapists).

Funding streams

The EEF evaluates programmes in different ways depending on how developed they are, what their prior level of evidence is, and at what scale they are currently being delivered.

The below diagram shows the different project stages we fund, referred to as our **evidence pipeline**. The types of projects open to funding in this round are outlined. For this Autumn 2026 funding round, we are open to applications in the **pilot** and **trial** stages of our evidence pipeline. There are separate application forms for our pilot and trial funding streams.



Pilot projects

Pilots are evaluations in a small number of settings to test the programme's evidence of promise, scalability, and readiness for an impact evaluation. Successful applicants will be paired with an independent evaluator who will design and run the pilot evaluation. Programmes that are suitable for a pilot evaluation require minimal development work. Most elements of the programme have been delivered in more than 10 settings, and some supporting research data indicates that the programme has promise. This might include findings from qualitative data, such as case studies, or quantitative attainment data, often without a comparison group.

Pre-pilots

In limited circumstances, we may offer some pre-pilot developmental support to programmes that we think show promise in an area of high priority for the EEF but are not quite ready for independent pilot evaluation. In an EEF-supported pre-pilot phase, we provide you with some guidance on programme design and development, and the opportunity to deliver the programme to a small number of settings and collect feedback, before we commission an independent evaluator. A fixed grant of up to £25,000 would be available to contribute towards the costs of engaging in this development process, delivering the programme to settings, and collecting formative feedback. The expectation would be that a pilot evaluation would directly follow if the programme still showed promise at this stage.

Trials (efficacy and effectiveness)

Trials are impact-focused evaluations comparing programmes to usual practice. The aim of a trial is to rigorously assess the impact of the programme on pupil attainment, using a randomised controlled trial (RCT) approach, where children taking part in the programme are compared with peers who continue to receive usual practice in their settings. Trials are most often randomised at the setting level. This usually means that all participating children in a setting are allocated either to receive the intervention or to continue with usual practice as part of the comparison group. Depending on the nature of your programme, it may be suitable to randomise at class or child level. This can be explored with the independent evaluator and is not something you need to consider in your application, though if you have any concerns, please get in touch with our applications team.

Applications selected for trial at efficacy or effectiveness level have strong prior evidence: positive results, often quantitative, from prior evaluations of the programme or very similar approaches. Programmes are well defined and developed, have been shown to be feasible and attractive to settings, and have been delivered previously in at least 20 settings.

Efficacy or effectiveness?

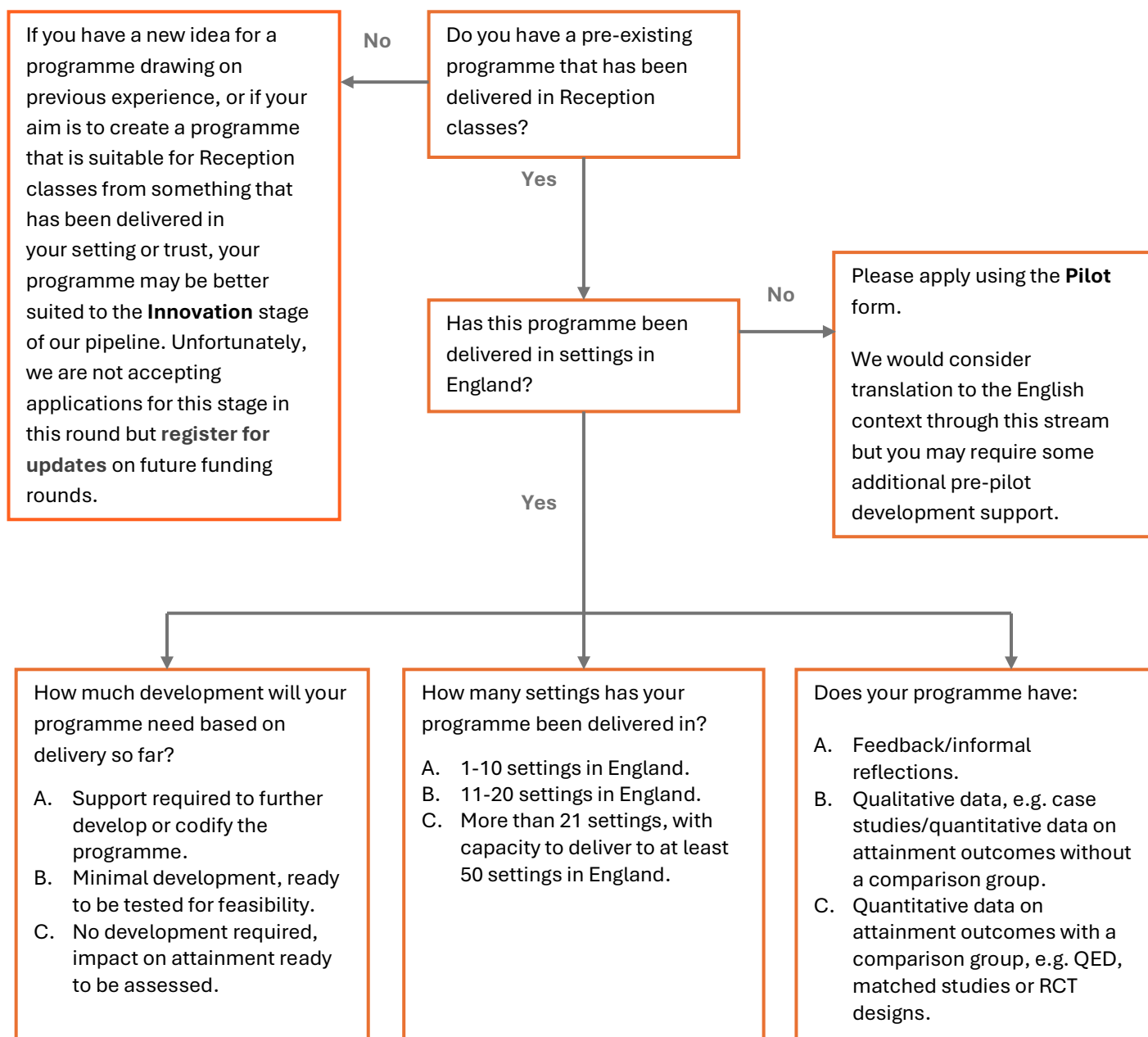
Most programmes start at the efficacy trial stage, which tests delivery under best possible conditions with close involvement from the programme developer. Effectiveness trials test the impact of a scalable version of the programme, which might include the programme developer training others to deliver the programme (a ‘train the trainer’ approach) or deploying an online training format. A programme that is already being delivered at scale might be suitable for an effectiveness trial straight away. In your application, focus on describing your programme well. If the programme is a good fit for an EEF-funded evaluation, we can discuss evaluation stage and design in the next stage of the application process (the interview stage).

In all EEF trials we also fund an implementation and process evaluation, which helps explain why an intervention has (or has not) been successful, what factors have contributed to this result, and what lessons we can learn about educational practice and research. There is also a cost evaluation so that educators can understand how much it would cost to implement the programme.

The evaluation will be designed and conducted by an independent evaluation team. As the programme provider, you will contribute to the design and share responsibility for ensuring that the evaluation is as robust as possible.

The decision tree below provides guidance on which of the funding streams suits your programme.

Which funding stream should I apply for?



If you've answered mostly As, use the **Pilot Application Form**. It might be that your programme requires some additional pre-pilot development support, however, we will assess this as part of scoring your application. Preference will be given to applications relating to programmes that are ready for an impact evaluation but your application may still be successful if no such programmes are identified.

If you've answered mostly Bs, use the **Pilot Application Form**.

If you've answered mostly Cs, use the **Efficacy/Effectiveness Application Form**: your programme is ready for an impact evaluation.

What makes a successful proposal?

Successful proposals will be:

- **Well defined, with a clear explanation of what the programme is and how it will be implemented.**
 - What will happen at every stage of your programme? What support will settings need to implement it effectively?
 - As the intention is to fund programmes that have an increased impact compared to what settings are already doing, your programme should be a sufficient change from usual practice.
- **Clear with regards to how they will support young children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.**
 - The EEF is dedicated to breaking the link between family income and educational achievement. There should be a clear rationale as to why your programme is likely to particularly benefit young children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Your project description should clearly outline the programme itself, the research evidence it is rooted in, and how change happens through your programme to ultimately have an impact on these children's attainment outcomes (this is referred to below as your theory of change).
 - Ideally, for efficacy/effectiveness applications, you will have specific evidence of how your programme has positively impacted young children from disadvantaged backgrounds, and evidence of running your programme in settings serving higher-than-average proportions of such children.
 - If the proposal is successful, we will usually expect grantees to prioritise recruitment of settings with high levels of socio-economically disadvantaged young children to the trial (this may be less important if your programme is targeted and targets these children specifically).
 - **Please note:**
 - Applicants do **not** need to have identified specific settings or areas to work in – this would be agreed in discussion with the EEF and an independent evaluator if your application is successful.
 - Applicants do **not** need to work exclusively with young children from disadvantaged backgrounds – but there should be a clear rationale for how the programme will support the EEF's mission to close the attainment gap.
- **Informed and supported by evidence of impact on learning outcomes.**
 - We are primarily interested in programmes that improve communication and language provision in Reception shown using valid, reliable outcome measures (for example, language screening tools suitable for this age group). Where helpful, you may also include proximal indicators closely linked to language development (for example, children's receptive vocabulary).

- We are seeking programmes with a clear description of the mechanisms that lead from the proposed activities to the positive impact on young children’s learning outcomes. This is commonly referred to as a theory of change. This should be supported by evidence from rigorous research, from wider literature, and/or previous evaluation of the specific approach. In addition, we expect applicants to build on previous literature reviews and any evaluations of similar interventions to describe how their programmes will mitigate any delivery barriers previously identified.
- We strongly encourage applicants to consult reviews of the wider evidence base in preparing their applications and reference the wider evidence in the application with clear links back to their programme.
- **Practical, cost-effective, and scalable.**
 - Our aim is to identify programmes that, if shown to be successful, could be taken on by educational settings across England. Therefore, we are only interested in developing and testing initiatives that are practical and cost-effective to deliver.
 - A programme that relies on the ability of one particular trainer or developer is not scalable. Scalable programmes can be delivered by other practitioners and other organisations. We will assess your programme’s scalability as part of your application, with higher expectations for scalability for programmes at more advanced stages of the evidence pipeline.
- **Willing and able to be independently evaluated.**
 - We expect you to be willing to work with an independent evaluator, who will design and conduct the evaluation of your programme. This includes a willingness to adapt your delivery plan and budget to accommodate the evaluation. For example, this could include recruiting a larger number of settings or delaying the implementation of the programme until baseline assessments can be collected.
 - **Please note:**
 - Applicants do **not** need to include an evaluation design in the programme plan or budget.
 - Applicants do **not** need to contact evaluation teams independently. The EEF will appoint an independent evaluator from our panel of evaluators, and work with successful applicants to design an appropriate evaluation plan.

How to apply

- To submit an application, please complete the online application form either for **pilots** or for **efficacy/effectiveness trials**.
- Guidance on each of the questions can be found below.
- You might also find it useful to have a look at our **Funding FAQs**. For examples of the types of programmes we fund, please check the **projects** we have funded in the past. We aim to fund a mix of different types of programmes, so if your idea is very similar to something we have already supported, do contact us before applying and/or ensure you address this clearly in your application.
- Please consider attending the applicant webinar we are hosting on **Tuesday 6 October 1–2pm** to support prospective teams in applying for funding. You can sign up [here](#).
- **The deadline for applications is Monday 2 November 2026 at 11am.**

How your application would progress

Longlisted applicants will be invited to an informal interview. Shortlisted applicants will be asked to attend a developmental theory of change workshop. This is the final part of the application phase. If the programme looks like a good fit for an EEF evaluation, the application is taken to the EEF Grants Committee for initial sign-off and then paired with an independent evaluator from the EEF's Evaluation Panel. Working closely with your team, the evaluator will lead the design of a suitable evaluation. At this stage, successful programme developers will refine their budget, working with the EEF to accommodate the needs of the programme evaluation. EEF funding typically covers a large portion of the costs to deliver the programme to a defined number of settings that are part of the evaluation, and separately, the costs associated with the evaluation of the programme. More information on what costs the EEF covers can be found in our **FAQs**. The final evaluation design is then presented to the EEF Grants Committee for final sign-off.

Timeline for pilots and efficacy/effectiveness trials

Activity	Date
Funding round opens	21 September 2026
Applicant webinar	Tuesday 6 October 1–2pm
Deadline for applications	Monday 2 November at 11am
Interviews with longlisted applicants	December 2026
Shortlisted applicants develop their theory of change, finalise their budget, and confirm the evaluation design in collaboration with the EEF and an independent evaluator	December 2026–October 2027
Final EEF Grants Committee decision	November 2027
School recruitment – project dependent (this is usually the grantees’ responsibility)	February–July 2028
Programme starts in settings – project dependent	September 2028

Pilot application form guidance notes

To submit an application, please complete the online **Pilot Application Form**.

Where the guidance refers to ‘teachers’, this can be read as referring to a range of practitioners, such as teaching assistants.

Applications can be saved on the system while drafting. You may find it easier to draft first in another programme, like Microsoft Word, paying attention to the word count for each question. If copying into the form, please format using the form’s tools.

Please note that confirmation that your application form has been submitted, and the outcome of your application, will be sent to the ‘applicant contact email’ address given in the application form below.

The following notes cover each question on the application form and provide guidance where necessary. Each section relates to a section on the form. If you have any questions, please contact the EEF at applications@eefoundation.org.uk.

Eligibility screen

1.1 Where will your proposed programme take place?

Please note that the EEF can only fund programmes that will work for the benefit of children and schools in England.

1.2 Is your application from a legally constituted organisation?

We accept applications from legally constituted organisations, and not from individuals. The organisation does not have to be based in England, although if you are not based in England, we would expect you to demonstrate reasonable partnerships and knowledge to support you to work with English schools.

1.3 Would this grant be used to pay for any costs already incurred?

Our grant funding is restricted to cover activities supporting your proposed programme and cannot be used to cover costs that have already been incurred. For pilot projects, the grant typically starts after the programme has been given final approval by the EEF Grants Committee (any travel expenses incurred before this can be expensed).

1.4 What types of costs or activities would the grant be used for?

We are not a source of funding for ongoing delivery of existing commitments. If successful, you will be required to work with new schools that you have not previously worked with. For pilot projects, if successful, you would collaborate with an independent evaluation team who will work with you to design a robust evaluation of your programme, and funding would support the direct costs of delivering the programme for the evaluation. Funding is not available to cover: property or capital items, pupil fees, scholarships or bursaries, loan or debt repayment. We do

not fund university overheads. Website development and seminar attendance are also out of scope, except for where they are part of a wider proposal with the broad aim stated above.

1.5 Does your application relate to the research agenda theme: communication and language in Reception?

- Yes
- No

About your organisation

2.1 Organisation name

2.2 Organisation type

Please select from:

- Early years setting
- Primary school
- Secondary school
- Special school
- Further education college
- Sixth form college
- Sixth form attached to a school
- Independent training provider
- University
- Local education authority
- Charity
- For-profit company
- Multi-academy trust / Teaching School Alliance
- Community Interest Company / Social Enterprise
- Other (please state)

2.3 Number of employees

2.4 Applicant title

2.5 Applicant first name

2.6 Applicant last name

2.7 Applicant contact email

Please note that confirmation that your application form has been submitted, and the outcome of your application, will be sent to this email address.

2.8 Applicant contact phone

2.9 Applicant job title

2.10 Please describe the experience and expertise of the proposed team, highlighting key members that will be involved in the delivery of the programme (*max. 200 words*)

The programme team is central to ensuring EEF funds are well spent and that the programme has the maximum impact. We would like to know about them and their track record in this area (e.g. recruiting schools/settings to programmes, managing complex programmes, development of professional development, working with partners, working with disadvantaged children, as well as expertise in the area your programme covers). Please provide a comprehensive list of members of the team that will deliver this programme. Describe what their responsibilities will be. Briefly describe their track record in this area.

2.11 Please give the name and a brief description of any partner organisations that will contribute to this programme (*max. 150 words*)

Please indicate what role the partner organisation(s) will play in the proposed programme. If the programme developer (the team who designed the programme) is not part of your proposed team, briefly outline your relationship with them. Please confirm that you own the intellectual property (IP) for the programme or, if not, please outline the existing IP arrangements.

2.12 Briefly outline your experience of working with children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds (*max. 150 words*)

Please include here an indication of the demographic of children your organisation works with – this would include, for example, indicating the percentage of children who are eligible for free school meals.

Programme priorities

3.1 Please select the main priority area the proposed programme is related to.

Further information on each priority area is included above:

Please select from:

1. Reception leadership
2. Identification linked to support
3. Language development

3.2 How does your programme link to the priority area? (*max. 150 words*)

If it links to any further priority areas, please mention it here.

Programme questions: overview

3.3 Name of the programme (*max. 15 words*)

Please give your programme a title. Simple, descriptive titles (for example, ‘Screening and Support Stories’) are welcome. Try to keep it under five words. If you are applying with a named programme, please include the name in the title.

3.4 Brief, two sentence summary of your programme (*max. 50 words*)

In your summary, aim to concisely capture the most important activities in your programme, highlighting its purpose, target audience, and the key outcome it seeks to affect. Focus on what makes your programme unique or impactful. Ensure that the sentences are clear and easy to understand by someone unfamiliar with your work.

3.5 Programme description (*max. 1,000 words*)

Please provide an overview of the programme.

Here is a checklist of useful information that we recommend you try to include:

- **Rationale.** Have you outlined the problem that the programme was designed to address?
- **Aims and objectives.** Have you described the aims and objectives of the programme?
- **Core components.** Have you described the essential elements required for the intervention to achieve its intended learning outcomes? (The EEF will support shortlisted applicants to understand core components through theory of change workshops. In the application form, the important element is explaining how you think the activities in your programme lead to the intended outcomes.)
- **Learners.** Have you specified the intended recipients of the programme? (You will cover this in the ‘settings/learners’ section below. Please provide here any additional information about who the programme is for and how the target population is selected, if relevant.)
- **Facilitators.** Have you outlined who delivers the programme to learners? This is most often teachers or teaching assistants but could be external staff such as tutors.
- **Instructors** (if applicable). Have you outlined who supports your facilitators to deliver the intervention as intended?
- **Professional development.** Have you described any professional development included in the programme? Consider:
 - the number, length and type of any professional development activities
 - who attends or completes the professional development activities
 - the delivery method(s) used. For example, face-to-face, self-paced online modules, cascading resources or learning from one or more members of school staff to other staff

- information about the core content of the professional development (such as key topics, and how the professional development builds knowledge, motivates staff, develops teaching techniques, and embeds practice)
- the materials involved in the training of intervention facilitators and/or instructors
- You may wish to consult the **EEF's guidance report on effective professional development**.
- **Setting.** Have you indicated the type of setting the programme could take place in and any that would be excluded? For example, some programmes exclude mixed-age classes.
- **Location.** Have you indicated where the programme will happen? This includes the space used for any training and for delivering the programme with learners as well as any geographical restrictions in terms of regions in England, if you know these details.
- **Delivery.** Have you described the activities that will be delivered with learners? Consider:
 - what happens during programme delivery with children
 - whether activities will be individual or group-based, facilitator-led or self-paced by learners
 - the main content and purpose (a brief summary of the content and techniques/practices used in delivery)
 - session length (in minutes), number of times the intervention will be delivered, and over what period of time
 - what activity this programme replaces, if relevant.
- **Materials.** Have you mentioned any physical or digital materials that will be used? Note the EEF's funding is subject to Crown Copyright, so we would not usually anticipate funding your team to develop new materials as this may impact your team's intellectual property rights.
- **Implementation.** Have you briefly outlined any strategies that you plan to use to support schools to implement the intervention well? You may wish to consult the **EEF's guidance report on implementation**.

It is common for programme providers to have multiple versions of the programme that could be suitable for EEF evaluation. Applicants with flexible programmes may wish to indicate variant options, for example, different intensities of delivery. The final design for successful applicants will be confirmed in collaboration with the independent evaluator.

3.6 Please describe how your programme is beneficial to socio-economically disadvantaged children (*max. 200 words*)

The EEF is dedicated to breaking the link between family income and educational achievement. When we assess how your application fits the EEF's portfolio, a key consideration will be alignment with our mission.

You can assume that we have some understanding of the broad issues facing socio-economically disadvantaged children. Here, we are interested in how your specific programme

aligns with the EEF's mission. Details specific to your programme, for example, specific language deficits or gender subgroups, should be briefly explained.

In particular, please outline why the programme is expected to have a greater impact on the learning outcomes of disadvantaged children. Please indicate what evidence supports your claims.

3.7 Please describe how your proposed programme is likely to be different from usual practice in schools (max. 100 words)

Please detail here precisely how the approach differs from typical practice, and how you know.

3.8 Please provide an explanation of the research evidence that supports the theory that your programme will work. You may provide references. Please also include information from any previous evaluations (max. 200 words)

In this question, we are looking to understand the academic literature that your programme is rooted in, and evidence from similar programmes that indicates that your programme is likely to work. If there has been a formal impact evaluation of your programme already, include that result here too. In question 3.14 we ask about feedback you have collected from your programme, which is where you can provide any formal and informal qualitative and quantitative findings from monitoring your programme delivery.

You may describe here evidence from evaluations of very similar approaches. This evidence could be drawn from international studies. If quoting wider literature, please make clear reference to the characteristics your programme shares with the programmes referenced.

Good applications will reference high-quality evidence. This might include systematic reviews and meta-analyses that collate multiple previously published research studies. Applications might also refer to experiments (for example, randomised controlled trials) that compare the impact of one teaching approach or programme with another approach or programme, or with no intervention at all.

Good applications will reference reliable studies. Indicators of reliability in a study include independence (the researcher is unbiased) and a large enough sample size to generalise its conclusions to the wider population.

EEF's resource **Using research evidence** gives an overview of different types of education evidence, what they can be used for, and what their limitations might be.

Settings/learners

3.9 Please confirm that your programme targets children aged 4–5 years old

- Yes
- No

Your programme may have been developed and delivered with other early years educators and/or age groups, but it must have been delivered in Reception to be eligible.

3.10 Please confirm that your programme will be delivered in state-funded primary schools

- Yes
- No

3.11 Is your programme targeting: whole school/whole group (or room)/targeted group of children?

Please give an indication of whether the programme is aimed at:

- **whole school change** (e.g. training all educators in a school)
- a **whole group/room** (e.g. training practitioners to improve their group/room practice)
- or a **targeted group of children** (e.g. additional small group support for struggling children).

3.12 Please outline how many schools/settings the programme has been delivered in, to date, and how many of those were in England (*max. 200 words*)

We are interested in how developed the programme is and what its reach has been prior to EEF involvement.

How many English schools/settings have participated so far? If your programme has been delivered in schools/settings outside of England, please specify to how many, and in which countries.

Did previous schools/settings deliver the same version of the programme that is being proposed in this application? How many schools/settings have received the version of the programme that is being submitted as part of this application?

For how long has the programme been available to schools/settings? How has the number of schools/settings receiving the programme changed over time?

What is the profile of schools/settings that have taken part so far? We are particularly interested in programmes that have already been running in schools/settings serving higher-than-average proportions of socio-economically disadvantaged children.

Your programme may have been developed and delivered with other early years educators and/or age groups, but it must have been delivered in Reception to be eligible.

3.13 How many schools/settings has the programme been delivered to in the last year?

3.14 Please describe any feedback you've collected from schools/settings and teachers that have participated in the programme (*max. 200 words*)

Briefly describe the methods you used to gather feedback, such as surveys, interviews, focus groups, or informal discussions. You might refer to quantitative data (e.g. survey results) or qualitative insights (e.g. comments from interviews) that you collected. Good responses to this question will summarise broad trends and insights, rather than relying on individual quotations.

Highlight any specific comments about the ease or challenges of implementing the programme. This could include feedback on how achievable the implementation was in terms of time, resources, and integration with existing school/setting practices.

3.15 Do you need to make any further adaptations to your programme before it is evaluated? (*max. 150 words*)

Generally, at pilot stage we would expect minimal adaptations to the programme to be required (applicants should be applying with fully developed programmes). In limited circumstances, we may offer some pre-pilot developmental support to programmes. Please describe here if any adaptations need to be made to your programme/intervention delivery before an evaluation and if you would like to be considered for pre-pilot development support from the EEF to make these adaptations to your programme. Note that more developed programmes will be prioritised in this funding round.

Scaling

3.16 If the proposed programme was to be funded by the EEF, and positive results were found, would your organisation be able to deliver the programme for an EEF-funded impact evaluation, likely in around 50 schools? This would likely be a randomised controlled trial (*max. 100 words*)

We are interested in how your programme might be scaled up so that it could be delivered in large numbers of schools in England. For example, does the lead organisation have the capacity and skills to grow the model? Or would it need to partner with a larger organisation/network?

We suggest reviewing the EEF's **Scaling Framework** to see the indicators of good scalability at all stages of our evidence generation pipeline and to support thinking about the areas that you may need to consider as an organisation.

3.17 If the answer to the question above is no, would you be willing to work with the EEF to develop routes to scale? E.g. through finding a partner organisation to support delivery at scale (*max. 50 words*)

Finance

4.1 Please include an indicative budget for a pilot with 20 schools, broken down into the direct cost per school and central costs for managing the project (*max. 200 words*)

All applicants will be required to submit an indicative budget for a pilot of 20 schools. Once the scoring process has been completed, shortlisted projects will hone their budget with the EEF team.

The EEF will consider funding overheads on staff costs for non-university delivery teams. Overheads are costs that are essential to but indirectly associated with delivering a programme, such as costs related to estates, administration, and management. Requested overhead costs should be reasonable and proportionate. If applicants have a standard overheads charge, this must be disclosed to the EEF and we would expect grantees to request no more than their standard amount. Grantees are not permitted to claim for overhead costs that are being funded by another source.

The EEF does not fund university overheads. Universities can apply for funding for all ‘directly incurred’ costs (e.g., salary costs of research assistants) and, subject to certain conditions, ‘directly allocated’ costs (e.g., the costs of support staff where these are specifically needed for the project). However, the EEF does not fund indirect university costs (e.g., estate costs of permanent university staff).

4.2 In each school, how many children benefit from the programme in a single academic year? (*max. 50 words*)

4.3 How much does it cost you to deliver your programme to one school for one academic year? What is included in this cost? Consider your staff costs, administrative costs, and non-staff costs (*max. 100 words*)

4.4 Your budget is for 20 schools. Please outline any cost savings you would envisage if scaling the programme to more schools in the future. These can be indicative (*max. 100 words*)

5.0 Additional documentation upload (optional)

If you already have a theory of change for your programme, please do include this as an additional document.

Efficacy/Effectiveness trial application form guidance notes

To submit an application, please complete the online **Efficacy/Effectiveness Application Form**.

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1.3 Would this grant be used to pay for costs that have already been incurred?

Our grant funding is restricted to cover activities supporting your proposed programme and cannot be used to cover costs that have already been incurred. The grant typically starts after the programme has been given final approval by the EEF Grants Committee (any travel expenses incurred before this can be expensed).

1.4 What types of costs or activities would the grant be used for?

We are not a source of funding for ongoing delivery of existing programmes. If successful, you will be required to work with new schools that you have not previously worked with, and to collaborate with an independent evaluation team who will work with you to design a robust evaluation. Funding should support the direct costs of delivering the programme for the

evaluation. Applicants should apply with a programme that has already been developed. We are not able to fund significant development work of a programme.

We cover:

- Programme delivery
- Staff costs
- Resources to deliver the programme
- Travel and venue hire
- Administration and printing costs

We don't cover:

- Property or capital items
- Pupil fees
- Scholarships or bursaries
- Loan or debt repayment
- Indirect university costs (e.g. estate costs of permanent university staff)

In some cases, we would cover the following, but this is not guaranteed and would be determined with shortlisted applicants during the funding process:

- Programme development work
- Website development
- Producing publications
- Seminar attendance

About your organisation

2.1 Name of organisation

2.2 Organisation type

Please select from:

- Early years setting
- Primary school
- Secondary school
- Special school
- Further education college
- Sixth form college
- Sixth form attached to a school
- Independent training provider
- University
- Local education authority
- Charity
- For-profit company
- Multi-academy trust/Teaching School Alliance
- Community Interest Company/Social Enterprise

- Other (please state)

2.3 Number of employees

2.4 Applicant title

2.5 Applicant first name

2.6 Applicant last name

2.7 Applicant contact email

Please note that confirmation that your application form has been submitted, and the outcome of your application, will be sent to this email address.

2.8 Applicant contact phone

2.9 Applicant job title

2.10 Please describe briefly the experience and expertise of the proposed delivery team (100 words)

The programme team is central to ensuring EEF funds are well spent and that the programme has the maximum impact. We would like to know about them and their track record in this area (e.g. recruiting schools/settings to programmes, managing complex programmes, development of professional development, working with partners, working with disadvantaged children, as well as expertise in the area your programme covers). Please provide a comprehensive list of members of the team that will deliver this programme. Describe what their responsibilities will be. Describe their track record in this area.

2.11 Please give the name and a brief description of any partner organisations that will contribute to this programme (100 words)

Please indicate what role the partner organisation(s) will play in the proposed programme. If the programme developer (the team who designed the programme) is not part of your proposed team, briefly outline your relationship with them. Please confirm that you own the intellectual property (IP) for the programme or, if not, please outline the existing IP arrangements.

2.12 Briefly outline your experience of working with children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds (100 words)

Please include here an indication of the demographic of children your organisation works with—this would include, for example, indicating the percentage of children who are eligible for free school meals. We are interested in your experience working with children from socio-economic disadvantaged backgrounds and/or delivering your programme to this cohort.

Programme questions

3.1 Please select the main priority area the proposed programme is related to

Further information on each priority area is included above:

Please choose from:

1. Reception leadership
2. Identification linked to support
3. Language development

3.2 How does your programme link to the priority area? (150 words)

If it links to any further priority areas, please mention it here.

3.3 Name of the programme (15 words)

Please give your programme a title. Simple, descriptive titles (for example ‘Screening and Support Stories’) are welcome. Try to keep it under five words. If you are applying with a named programme, please include the name in the title.

3.4 Please confirm that your programme targets children aged 4–5 years old

- Yes
- No

Your programme may have been developed and delivered with other early years educators and/or age groups, but it must have been delivered in Reception to be eligible.

3.5 Please confirm that your programme will be delivered in state-funded primary schools

- Yes
- No

3.6 Is your programme targeting: whole school/whole class (or room)/targeted group of children?

Please give an indication of whether the programme is aimed at:

- **whole school change** (e.g. training all educators in a school)
- **a whole class/room** (e.g. training practitioners to improve their classroom practice)
- **or a targeted programme** (e.g. additional small group support for struggling children).

3.7 Please provide a brief, two sentence summary of your programme (50 words)

In your summary, aim to concisely capture the most important activities in your programme, highlighting its purpose, target audience, and the key outcome it seeks to affect. Focus on what makes your programme unique or impactful. Ensure that the sentence is clear and easy to understand by someone unfamiliar with your work.

3.8 Please describe your programme (1,000 words)

Please provide an overview of the programme.

Here is a checklist of useful information that we recommend you try to include:

- **Rationale.** Have you outlined the problem that the programme was designed to address?
- **Aims and objectives.** Have you described the aims and objectives of the programme?

- **Core components.** Have you described the essential elements required for the intervention to achieve its intended learning outcomes? (The EEF will support shortlisted applicants to understand core components through theory of change workshops, the important element is explaining how you think the activities in your programme lead to the intended outcomes).
- **Learners.** Have you specified the intended recipients of the programme? Please include how the target population is selected, if relevant.
- **Facilitators.** Have you outlined who delivers the programme to learners? This is most often teachers or teaching assistants but could be external staff such as tutors.
- **Instructors** (if applicable). Have you outlined who supports your facilitators to deliver the intervention as intended.
- **Professional development.** Have you described any professional development included in the programme? Consider:
 - the number, length and type of any professional development activities
 - who attends or completes the professional development activities
 - the delivery method(s) used. For example, face-to-face, self-paced online modules, cascading resources or learning from one or more members of school staff to other staff
 - information about the core content of the professional development (such as key topics, and how the professional development builds knowledge, motivates staff, develops teaching techniques, and embeds practice)
 - the materials involved in training of intervention facilitators and/or instructors.
 - You may wish to consult the **EEF's guidance report on effective professional development**.
- **Setting.** Have you indicated the type of setting the programme could take place in and any that would be excluded? For example, some programmes exclude mixed-age classes.
- **Location.** Have you indicated where the programme will happen? This includes the space used for any training and for delivering the programme with learners as well as any geographical restrictions in terms of regions in England, if you know these details.
- **Delivery.** Have you described the activities that will be delivered with learners? Consider:
 - what happens during programme delivery with children
 - whether activities will be individual or group-based, facilitator-led or self-paced by learners
 - the main content and purpose (a brief summary of the content and techniques/practices used in delivery)
 - session length (in minutes), number of times the intervention will be delivered, and over what period of time
 - what activity this programme replaces, if relevant.
- **Materials.** Have you mentioned any physical or digital materials that will be used? Note the EEF's funding is subject to Crown Copyright, so we would not usually anticipate

funding your team to develop new materials as this may impact your team's intellectual property rights.

- **Implementation.** Have you briefly outlined any strategies that you plan to use to support settings to implement the intervention well? You may wish to consult the **EEF's guidance report on implementation**.

It is common for programme providers to have multiple versions of the programme that could be suitable for EEF evaluation. Applicants with flexible programmes may wish to indicate variant options, for example different intensities of delivery. The final design for successful applicants will be confirmed in collaboration with the independent evaluator.

Write your description in clear, straightforward language, avoiding jargon or technical terms. If you need to use specific terms, provide brief explanations so that someone unfamiliar with your field can easily understand. Use short sentences and bullet points where appropriate to make your description more readable.

If you have any pre-existing materials that describe your programme to an external audience (for example, a marketing slide deck), you can upload it with your application.

3.9 Please describe how your proposed programme is likely to be different from 'business as usual' in schools (100 words)

As in most trials, the programme will be compared to 'business as usual' (BAU). We would expect the approach to be a sufficient deviation from BAU for the proposed approach to have an impact. Please detail here precisely how the approach differs from typical practice, and how you know.

3.10 Has the proposed programme been previously evaluated? Please describe the strongest evidence for your programme's impact on attainment (200 words).

Ideally, you would have specific evidence for your particular programme's impact from a previous evaluation. Please include information about the sample size, child characteristics (including level of disadvantage), outcome measures and key findings of any evaluations completed. You can provide links/references to any evaluation reports cited here in question 3.13. Wherever possible, please show evidence that children who participate in the proposed programme improve relative to a comparison group of similar children who do not participate. You may also share evidence for mediators/causal mechanisms here.

You may also describe here evidence from evaluations of very similar approaches. This evidence could be drawn from international studies. If quoting wider literature, please make clear reference to the characteristics your programme shares with the programmes referenced. More information about what the EEF considers to be good evidence can be found on our **website**.

3.11 Please outline any other research that provides evidence that the proposed programme is likely to have an impact on attainment, or an outcome closely linked to attainment. This could include evidence from evaluations of similar approaches, pilots of the programme, or evidence of progress on attainment outcomes for the programme, but with no comparison group. (400 words)

Please draw on the wider research evidence to support the programme itself and also the programme theory of change. Are the approaches backed up by robust educational theory and research? You can provide links/references to any research cited here in question 3.13. You may wish to include a surname and year in this answer, for example (Harris, 2013).

3.12 Please describe how your programme aligns with the EEF's mission to break the link between family income and educational achievement (300 words)

The EEF is dedicated to breaking the link between family income and educational achievement. When we assess how your application fits the EEF's portfolio, a key consideration will be alignment with our mission. You can assume that we have some understanding of the broad issues facing socio-economically disadvantaged children. Here, we are interested in how your specific programme aligns with EEF's mission. Details specific to your programme, for example, specific language deficits or gender subgroups, should be briefly explained.

In particular, please outline why the programme is expected to have a greater impact on the learning outcomes of socio-economically disadvantaged children. Please indicate what evidence supports your claims.

3.13 References to quoted research (500 words)

Please provide either full references or URLs to key reports quoted in the previous answers here. This is not a space for detailed narratives about references. You may wish to use a numbering system for references in answers to other questions and use the numbers to organise your references here. For example: 1) Harris, Alma, 'Distributed Leadership: Friend or Foe?', *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, vol. 41, issue 5, 2013, p.545 <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143213497635>.

Please do not add references that have not been included in your answers. If you have referenced research that is unpublished or you envisage it will be difficult for the EEF team to find with university online library access, please upload it with your application, if possible.

3.14 If the programme has been implemented previously in England, please describe its reach so far, the context of schools/settings engaged, and whether schools/settings contributed financially (200 words)

We are interested in how developed the programme is and what its reach has been prior to EEF involvement.

How many English schools/settings have participated so far? If your programme has been delivered in schools/settings outside of England, please specify to how many, and in which countries.

Did previous schools/settings deliver the same version of the programme that is being proposed in this application? How many schools/settings have received the version of the programme that is being submitted as part of this application?

For how long has the programme been available to schools/settings?

What is the profile of schools/settings that have taken part so far? We are particularly interested in programmes that have already been running in schools/settings serving higher-than-average proportions of socio-economically disadvantaged children.

We are most interested in programmes that have been delivered to some extent already, and therefore do not require extensive development before they can be tested in large numbers of schools/settings. We require organisations to have the capacity to be able to deliver an EEF trial, which typically delivers to a large number of schools/settings (50+).

Your programme may have been developed and delivered with other early years educators and/or age groups, but it must have been delivered in Reception to be eligible.

3.15 How many schools/settings has the programme been delivered to in the last year?

3.16 If the proposed programme was to be funded by the EEF and a positive impact was found, what do you think are possible ways that the proposed programme could be taken to scale? (200 words)

We are interested in how your programme might be scaled up so that it could be delivered in large numbers of schools in England. For example, does the lead organisation have the capacity and skills to grow the model? Or would it need to partner with a larger organisation/network?

We suggest reviewing the EEF's **Scaling Framework** to see the indicators of good scalability at all stages of our evidence generation pipeline and to support thinking about the areas that you may need to consider as an organisation.

Finances

4.1 What is the cost (per school and per child) of your programme? (50 words)

- If you already provide the programme to schools and children, please indicate how much it costs per school and per child.
- If you don't currently offer the programme to schools and children, please estimate how much you think it would cost per school and per child if you were to offer it at scale.
- Please note that we are looking for programmes that are as manageable for schools as possible and we wish to prioritise programmes that could be funded in large part from schools' Pupil Premium (currently £1,550 per pupil)

- The EEF will consider funding overheads on staff costs for non-university delivery teams. Overheads are costs that are essential to but indirectly associated with delivering a programme, such as costs related to estates, administration, and management. Requested overhead costs should be reasonable and proportionate. If applicants have a standard overhead charge, this must be disclosed to the EEF and we would expect grantees to request no more than their standard amount. Grantees are not permitted to claim for overhead costs that are being funded by another source. The EEF does not fund university overheads. Universities can apply for funding for all ‘directly incurred’ costs (e.g., salary costs of research assistants) and, subject to certain conditions, ‘directly allocated’ costs (e.g., the costs of support staff where these are specifically needed for the project). However, the EEF does not fund indirect university costs (e.g., estate costs of permanent university staff).

4.2 Approximately how many schools would you be able to work with for an EEF trial? (50 words)

We are interested in the maximum number of schools you could deliver your programme in for an EEF trial. Please note that we ask that applicants are willing to be flexible on the exact scale and delivery model, in order to ensure that a robust evaluation can be undertaken. We work with successful applicants and an external evaluator to jointly design a programme and evaluation plan. However, it is useful to have an indication of the numbers of institutions that you are comfortable working with.

Please consider this timescale and your related capacity when providing your answer: we anticipate approving grants in November 2027, which for a typical project would allow the spring and summer terms to recruit schools ahead of delivery in September 2028.

4.3 What is your total budget? (150 words)

EEF funding can cover the costs needed to deliver your proposed programme and manage the programme. However, we would usually expect contributions from other organisations: e.g. you and/or your delivery partners and/or other funders.

Please estimate how much funding is required to deliver the programme in total. This should be based on the maximum number of schools you could deliver to (as stated in 4.2), and in line with the level of evaluation you are applying for. Please note that the grantee is usually expected to recruit the schools to the programme. How many schools are to be recruited depends on the programme design, but often twice the number of schools are recruited than delivered to, as half are allocated to a control group and carry on with ‘business as usual’.

EEF funding starts from when the grant agreement is signed, which is after the evaluation approach has been agreed and the programme has been signed off by the EEF Grants Committee. From sign-off, a typical EEF programme will have a preparation period before recruitment (typically 2–3 months), a recruitment period (typically 5–8 months), and a delivery period (the length of time that you deliver the programme in schools). Please see the timeline earlier in this guidance for rough timelines for this funding round.

If possible, please break the budget down into five broad cost categories:

- Programme development (if required)
- School recruitment
- Programme delivery (e.g. training, resources)
- Programme management and admin
- Other (please specify)

A more detailed budget is not required at this stage; programme budgets often change substantially once we begin working with successful applicants. For example, we may wish to change the number of schools involved in the programme in order to get a more robust estimate of its impact. We will ask for a more detailed budget breakdown if your application progresses to later stages of the process. At this stage, we are only looking for an approximate cost of the programme.

- You do not need to include costs of running the evaluation: the EEF will commission an external team who will be responsible for designing and delivering the evaluation, in partnership with you.
- We typically expect schools participating in trials to contribute to the costs of the programme where appropriate (for example, paying a subsidised fee for the programme), so you may want to suggest an amount for schools to contribute as part of your budget.
- For a description of what EEF funding covers you should consult our **Funding FAQs** on our website.

4.4 What funding are you intending to secure from other sources? (100 words)

- To enable us to continue funding innovative, evidence-based ideas, we normally expect all applicants to apply with a contribution within the range of 5% to 50% of the overall programme costs, or to be able to commit to fundraising for such a contribution. Please include in your application your plan for ensuring this contribution. If there are particular reasons why you think you will be unable to do this, please let us know.
- For-profit applicants are expected to substantially subsidise the programme cost.
- School or local authority applicants do not need to secure funding from other sources.
- If you have approached, or are considering approaching, any other organisations to seek funding for this programme, please outline these organisations and the amounts sought here.

5.0 Additional documentation upload (optional):

If you already have a theory of change for your programme, please do include this as an additional document. If you have unpublished research demonstrating the impact of your programme that you are able to share, please include this as an additional document.

The maximum file size that can be accepted by the form is 30 MB. Larger files that are crucial for your application can be emailed to applications@eefoundation.org.uk.