Additional guidance and clarification

There were a number of questions about costings and admin managerial support in the webinar. Some more specific responses are below but in response to all we would like to ask every proposal to respond to the following:

Managing a CDT is a significant undertaking. You should explain in your case what effort you estimate is going to be required to run and manage the CDT and specify the contribution that the partners and host are going to make, to meet those requirements. STFC may make a contribution towards administration in the future, but this contribution cannot currently be guaranteed and will depend, among other things, on the quality and value for money of the case made.

The planning of administration and management and the contribution level of the host institution will be considered during the assessment process

Flexible funding for students
A flexible arrangement in terms of the funding for studentships can be adopted. For example, 50% of a studentship's costs can be supported by STFC funding and 50% non-STFC funding. For a student to be classed as STFC funded they need to be funded 50% from STFC. These students will need to be recorded in the JeS student details portal.

Cost per application
Each centre will be funded to the amount of £1.22M. This will cover standard fees, stipend, Research Training Support Grant (RTSG) and fieldwork costs. Funding will be available for the full four years for the students PhD. In addition to this, STFC will provide the funds for an annual CDT student conference, but this is outside of any arrangements you might put in place for your own individual cohorts.

Applicants are encouraged to include what in-kind and direct contributions are being offered from the wider university and partner collaborators.

LTA's and non-STFC funded students
All students recorded as STFC funded on JeS studentships portal will therefore be eligible for LTA's, provided they have satisfied the 50% funding rule.

Research Training Support Grant
STFC have a set amount £1,000 per year per student.

Supervisor time
STFC does not fund supervisor time for any studentship scheme.

Additional funding post-award (similar to the previous IAA)
Additional funding may become available but is not guaranteed. UKRI is aligning the way that IAA funds are allocated, and we are not yet certain that these funds will be accessible for this sort or activity. If additional funding does become available, it will not be branded an IAA.

Additional funding to support the centre will be discussed with successful applicants as required. Applicants should not assume this money will be available at the point of submission

Number of students
STFC will fund 12 students per CDT. It is expected that the centre will fund at least 2 additional students per year from non-UKRI sources.

Additional engagement activities
STFC will host an annual summer conference for all students, academics, and partners involved with the centre. Furthermore, STFC holds annual showcase and networking events outside of this where students are welcome to attend. Funding for these events will be external to the costs of the centre itself.

Definition of an SME and local partnership
The definition of an SME is:
- the company must have a staff headcount of less than 250
- the company must have a turnover not exceeding €50 million or a balance sheet total not exceeding €43 million.

Local engagement refers to regional partnerships (i.e. south-east, south-west, Wales etc.) For example, a University situated in the South-west partnering with a company based in North Scotland would not be classified as engaging local SME's.

For larger companies, having a small UK presence does not classify them as an SME. The company as a whole must meet the definition of an SME provided above. Whilst they may not meet this classification – a larger company with a local presence in the UK would be an eligible partner so long as it is contributing to UK economy.

Non-UK partner and international company eligibility
International/multinational companies are eligible to be partner organisations in the CDT call, so long as they have a strong presence in the UK and are actively contributing to the UK economy in some capacity.

Requirement for partners and training agreements to be in place for the application
Partners and training agreements for students do not need to be identified at the point of submission. If a partner is interested in supporting students/placements, they can provide letters of support detailing their involvement, however STFC appreciates that companies may not be able to commit to this early in the application process. The purpose of the partner engagement is about seeding new relationships and it might take time to for projects to develop.

At the point of application there should be evidence that you have considered partner engagement, and it is not an afterthought, i.e., you need to have provided evidence that companies are interested in working with you to build a successful centre, but not all engagements/commitments need to be identified. There should also be evidence of a strategy to bring in potential partners as the centre continues to develop.

Third sector and charitable organisation eligibility
Charitable and third-sector organisations are eligible to be partners in an application. It is worth noting that the third-sector organisation / charity does not have to necessarily work in an STFC related area. For example, the NHS could classify as a third-sector organisation.

This call is about taking the skills in data science developed through the STFC core-science programme and applying them into a different area. The area itself does not have to fall within STFC's remit, however the underpinning training does.

Supporting the levelling up agenda
The levelling-up agenda and economic recovery is a major policy for the current government. This call is looking to apply the data science skills and expertise from the STFC community into different sectors/organisations. By working closely with local industry (especially SMEs in your local region) there is the possibility to support local growth.

Whilst it is not a requirement of the call, STFC would heavily encourage the centre to work with and engage local businesses/organisations where appropriate, especially if there are opportunities for a placement to take place where AI and data skills could have notable impact to the company's workflow.

Eligibility of International accelerator facilities
Facilities supported by STFC in some capacity are eligible to be a partner (for example, CERN, ESRF etc.). The PhD itself can be a collaboration with these facilities but the focus must be data intensive science. If a student works with these facilities, there must still be an element of industrial engagement built into the project.

Non-STFC funded facilities (e.g. DESY) can be considered on a case-by case basis. Whilst there must still be a link to STFC data science, in principle these facilities can be eligible partners, so long as they are contributing to the support of the centre.

Focus of the PhD projects
The assessment criteria are listed in the [guidance document](#). The focus of the centre is on training students in data skills which can be applicable to a wider employability base, outside of academia. The Knowledge Exchange aspects of the project should occur primarily through the placement. The student project does not have to be integral with the partner. Both the quality of training environment and knowledge exchange aspects are built into the assessment criteria. Both are primary criteria and should be treated equally.

If a partner wishes to support a KE project, then they are encouraged to do so, however engagement can also occur through the centre as a whole.

All projects should have engagement with an industrial partner and be related to that sector in some capacity. The placement aspect should be that the student spends a 6-month secondment at a different organisation as part of their PhD.

The training takes place in university and the project/application area should align with industrial partners.

Flexibility for placements to change as the centre develops
STFC appreciates that some companies may not want to commit to hosting a student/supporting a project up to 2 years in advance. If the company wishes to pull out of the agreement, then they have the right to do so. The relationships and working with industry are expected to develop and expected to evolve as the centre develops. As part of that it is certainly possible for some companies to pull-out of their involvement and new ones to come on board.

However, a company pulling support to host a student does not mean that that student should go without having a placement. It is expected that this impact be minimal to their own development and training.

Relationship between the placement and the PhD project
The focus of this call is giving students the skills and experience of working in a non-academic area and applying data-skills to help address real-world challenges. Whilst the industry aspects do not necessarily have to be fully integrated into individual PhD projects, it is expected at a minimum the two should resonate with each other. The placement should not be an after-thought to the project and tagged on as an added extra and is designed to add-value to the students learning and training experiences.

It is not expected that the industry partner be a formal co-supervisor on the project unless they decide to formally support a joint project. The co-supervision role is expected to be more a mentor position, however STFC would expect some form of supervision to occur during the 6-month placement.

Multidisciplinary collaboration between STFC funded areas and non-funded STFC areas.
Multidisciplinary collaboration is permitted, and indeed encouraged, so long as the underpinning data science aspects were developed through the STFC core science programme. This call is focusing on the application of data intensive sills developed through STFC core science programme. The application side of projects can fall outside of STFC's remit (for example AI science, healthcare etc.).

Definition of cohort training
The cohort definition can be defined by the applicant. Whilst STFC expects a cohort of students, there is no definition what this is in practise. For example, a cohort could be a single year-group of PhD students who can work and collaborate/support each other accordingly, or it can be all students as a whole, where second year students support new students.

Cohort training and additional degree qualifications (e.g. MSC, MRes)
The training aspect is down to individual institutions/collaborations to determine. If the centre wishes to build on existing courses/modules, then STFC will support this. Alternatively, a new training programme can be established. Each CDT should carry a training/taught element, how this is managed (and to what degree level) is in principle down to the applicants and universities.

Whilst centres are encouraged to adopt new and different models (for example MSc vs. MRes), building on pre-established university infrastructure is welcome, so long as students receive high quality training.

Number of projects expected per CDT programme
12 studentships will be funded by STFC per centre. In addition, a minimum of 2 students per year should be funded through non-UKRI funding. All students should undertake a 6-month placement.

Project area and links to STFC science
The project has to be in an STFC core science area, allowing students to gain significant training in the data skills required.

As such, the lead department and PI must be in receipt of funding through the core STFC science programme and have received accreditation for their training from STFC. To become accredited, please visit the webpage.

Joint applications
Joint applications from numerous institutions are welcome. In principle, one institution may put in more than one bid, however they must still meet the eligibility criteria for leading a centre.

Funding of placements
STFC will cover the costs of the student during the placement period. Additional costs (for example, travel) will have to be covered from the University or leveraged from the partner organisation

Student salary
Students can be paid a salary by the partners; however, the stipend would not be paid during this period.

International students
UKRI has changed the eligibility criteria for international students (please visit the webpage).

Length of projects
Research Councils expect doctoral projects to be designed and supervised in such a way that Students are able to submit their thesis within the funded period (in this case, 4 years), as defined at the outset of the project. Provision can be made to extend the funding period in specific cases e.g. parental leave. However, this is only under extenuating circumstances.

The 6-month secondment is included in this timeframe.

Relationship between the previous CDT call and the current call
This call will set a level playing field for all applicants. Existing CDTs are welcome to apply and develop a new centre based on their experiences and lessons learned from the previous round, however new applicants are also heavily encouraged who may have their own ideas and new approaches.

Panel make-up
The Panel will consist of academic (STFC and non-STFC funded researchers) and industry colleagues.

Leveraged funding from non-UKRI sources
Centres are expected to engage with partners and secure leveraged non-UKRI funding. This can be either internally from their own institution or with external collaborators.

Timeline
STFC appreciates the tight timeline for new applicants. Funding is expected to start April 2022, with the first students in place October 2022, so the call dates have been designed to reflect this, whilst still allowing for the peer review process.

Formal guidance document
Please visit the CDT funding finder webpage. Under "additional information" a guidance document can be located.