

Please note;

- The slides from the webinar are being made available
- If the question that you raised has not been answered then it is still being considered for a response.

General questions

Q Does the grant value of between £1m and £2.5m mean the project budget or the funding value?

A This is the 80% FEC value, and is the amount that should be request from UKRI.

Q There is a requirement on the call document that applicant must have the necessary staff in place so that the projects can start on the 1st May 2023. Could you clarify this. Does this mean a PDRA who needs to be recruited after the award?

A The start date is fixed and there will be no extensions at the end of the award. This means time is critical and we are aware of how long it can take to recruit PDRA's. Applicants should ensure that their projects can start immediately. PDRA's are allowed to be recruited but the successful delivery of the project should not be dependent on PDRAs that have yet to be recruited.

Q Given the timescales, what is the justification for having a minimum of two academic partners to be involved in the project? Are single institution proposal ruled out?

A Yes single institution applications are ruled out. The justification for this is that the funds have been made available to UKRI specifically to address cross and interdisciplinary research in AI and to bring AI research together with applications to solve actual problems that the country faces in achieving net zero, as well as addressing the place agenda. As such single institution bids are discouraged.

Q How strong is the emphasis on UK targets? Could proposals look at mitigation through offset overseas?

A This call is to look for solutions for the UK and should primarily consider UK solutions. However, the international nature of the problem is recognised and it would be unusual for a solution to be unique to the UK. Applicants should avoid projects that look like the UK is abrogating their responsibilities overseas.

Q Would UKRI expect the universities to undertake a sift of possible applications?

A No.

Q What is the permitted duration of the projects?

A The duration of the projects will be from 1st May 2023 to 31st March 2025, 23 months. No extensions to start or completion dates will be allowed.

Q How many projects are you looking to fund?

A We are looking to fund between 5 and 10 projects, depending on size.

Q What is the expectation with respect to the Host Organisation Statement?

A The host organisation statement is the opportunity for the university to make it clear that they support your application and for them to back up anything, such as any support they may be providing or how the project may align with university strategic priorities etc.

Q Why the call does not fund equipment over £10K?

A This is not a call for facilities, and due to the relatively short nature of the research projects it is anticipated that applying universities will already have the facilities in place to undertake the research.

Intent to submit

Q Is registration compulsory?

A No, but it is in your interest to do so as we can advise on eligibility, and keep you informed of any other relevant information.

Q Does the intent to submit need to include the final list of partners and investigators?

A No, we appreciate that the deadlines are short, and a fully formed project group is unlikely to be ready for the 20th Dec. Details can be changed subsequently, including project leads and Col's.

Data

Q There is an expectation of the reusability of data, but in some cases the data sits with commercial parties and not allowed to be disseminated externally, would this cause a disadvantage?

A Potentially, PI's should look at ways of anonymising data from companies, or at least ways of making the data shareable that is acceptable to the industrial partner. If the data is so sensitive then it suggests that the company should be paying for the research rather than the taxpayer.

Peer review

Q How will the proposals be reviewed?

A The proposals will be reviewed by an expert panel. The panel will receive the applications in advance of the panel meeting and asked for comments. These comments will be forwarded to the applicants for the applicants to respond to. The response will be discussed at the panel meeting. There will not be an interview stage.

Remit questions

Q Are the councils looking for proposals that sit under one theme, or proposals that incorporate multiple themes?

A As stated in the call document we are looking for proposals that AI to net zero proposals aligning with 1 or more of the 4 key areas will be considered, that is Energy, Transport, Environment and Agriculture and Food systems.

Q Are you interested in projects in the environment theme which create tools relevant to human health.

A As this opportunity is delivered on behalf of UKRI council-specific interests are less relevant to this question than fit to scope to the call in general and to the highlighted themes in particular. Human health is part of the broader conversation both for the agricultural and food systems theme and the environment theme. But you might also want to consider the upcoming opportunity in AI innovation to accelerate health research.

Q What does interdisciplinary mean here, must it be a collaboration between different universities/centres? Or can it be a different department/group.

A Projects should include researchers from two or more councils remits, and from multiple universities from different regions of the UK. Single discipline proposals will not be supported.

Q Should we explicitly define which theme we are applying to and justify the choice in our application? i.e. carbon sequestration could be between 'Environment' and 'Agriculture' themes.

A There is no requirement to do this but it will help applicants make their case for the interdisciplinarity of their project if they do point it out and give their reason why.

Q Do you see bids being led by EPSRC scientists only or could bids be led by potential users of AI? e.g. BBSRC, NERC, ESRC but collaborating with EPSRC scientists.

A Bids can be led by anyone who is eligible to hold Research Council grants regardless of which council they normally apply.

Q The environmental theme listings particularly mitigation/resilience don't seem directly relevant to net zero. Should we have to show a clear link in our proposal or can it purely address the theme of resilience to natural hazards applying AI extensively?

A This is an AI for net zero call so any application in this area should show a clear link to delivering net zero targets.

Q What is your general guidance on multisite co-creation balanced against carbon reduction in project activity?

A Projects that are successful in securing funding should look at innovative ways of working across different sites. The recent Covid epidemic has enabled many new ways of working so that travel is not always needed. That said sometimes face to face meetings are valuable. We would expect a balance.

Q How central do social science factors need to be in responses? Clearly there will be some form of behavioural change, but should we be looking to model human behaviour?

A This depends on your proposed research, but we hope to see social science integrated where possible. This could be in many ways, including thinking about the social and economic benefits your research will deliver, and engaging researchers with appropriate expertise as part of your research team. You should think about how people will be impacted by your research.

In terms of behavioural change, you don't necessarily need to model human behaviour, but if your proposed research is explicitly about changing behaviours then we would expect you to. Effectively, the composition of the research team needs to match the themes researched, methods applied, and your research questions.

Q Is the focus of this on the development of advanced AI technology, or are you interested more in the applied outcomes?

A Both. Though we appreciate that the projects may not have time to develop new AI technology, any projects looking at developing new AI tech should make clear the potential net zero applications.

Q Is there an expectation of a successful EPSRC track record.

A A successful track record with any of the involved Councils is acceptable. Should an applicant be unsure about the remit of their proposal they should contact UKRI using the contact details in the call document.

Eligibility

Q Can the funding of industrial partners be included?

A Only as project partners, and will be constrained by standard project partner rules. Industrial partners cannot be in receipt of funds from this call as the Research Councils cannot support industry. Only InnovateUK have the remit to do that.

Q PDRAs can be considered in this call but what about a PhD student. Can it be possible to claim the budget for a PhD student even though the project will finish sooner

A PhD student costs are not eligible be included in these projects as normal UKRI rules apply to this call. University studentships may be aligned, paid for from central university funding but no costs can be claimed on these grants.

Q Can an international post-doctoral research scholar doing research in a UK university be entitled to submit a research proposal?

A No, grants must be led by Academics with permanent UK university positions.

Q How many teams or consortiums can we participate in?

A You can only be PI on one proposal, you could be a PI on a proposal and Col on one other proposal, or Col on two proposals.

Q Are there expectations in terms of expertise for the PI? Does the PI need to be an expert on AI or the application side?

A No, the PI can be AI focused or application focussed, but we would expect AI expertise as Col if the PI is not an AI expert.

Q Can postdoctoral fellows apply to this call.

A No, it has been agreed between the participating Councils that the normal EPSRC application eligibility rules will apply.

Q Can early career researchers apply to this call?

A yes as long as they meet the normal eligibility criteria.

Q Can we have PI's and Col's from different countries?

A No, except for Norway as part of the UKRI agreement with the Norwegian funding agency.

- Q I am considering a proposal based on Energy Policy however I have no publications in this discipline. How would this metric effect assessment.
- A The panel will look at all aspects of the project. If Ai is not your field we would not expect you to lead a project, but if you were a Col we would expect the proposal to articulate in the case for support what your expertise brings to the project as a whole.
- Q Does acting as PI or Col make one ineligible for a new investigator award?
- A PI yes, Col no.
- Q Is it possible to have external contractors funded from the project?
- A Subcontracting can only be permitted in exceptional circumstances where expertise is not available in a UK university. Subcontractors cannot be beneficiaries of the funding in terms of the research outputs.

Leverage and industrial support

- Q Can you please elaborate on expectations on funding from Industry?
- A The aim of this call is to produce solutions to real world problems that industry (in its broadest sense) faces in decarbonisation. Therefore, we would expect to see real industry interest in the solutions that your projects promise. Cash and in-kind contributions are the strongest measure of the real level of interest of a company in a research project.
- Q What constitutes leverage and from whom?
- A Leverage or third party support can be from any appropriate source, it could be support from the associated universities or from industry partners, or indeed other interested parties such as NGOs etc. What is important is explaining in the case for support why the third party are interested in supporting your research.
- Q Can we engage stakeholders with the project?
- A Yes, but the usual EPSRC rules on project partners apply. Stakeholders can be involved as project partners or in co-production of the research challenge, but cannot be in receipt of Research Council funds.
- Q If industrial partners join the consortium, can we offer them consultation fees. If yes is there an upper limit?
- A No. Project partners cannot be in receipt of any funds from the grant as this is against UKRI rules.
- Q Do you expect strong industry support for these applications?
- A This expectation is stated in the call document. As stated in a response to an earlier question we are expecting proposal that address real world problems as such it is expected that there is a clear route to the research outputs being taken up by the user community. Therefore if you want your proposal to stand the best chance possible significant industry involvement is called for.

Project partners and the regional issues

Q There is a mention of requiring multiple institutions and research groups from different regions of the UK. We have local universities involved at the moment should we reach out to other universities in other areas?

A One of the conditions of us receiving the funding to be able to run the call was that it addressed the place agenda. As such we were given a steer that projects should look beyond their local region. I would recommend making contact with any groups that you have good relationships with as they may well be facing a similar issue. I would recommend completing an intent to submit even if you are only just considering things at this stage. It doesn't commit you to anything.

Q if IP is developed during the project is there any requirement by the funder for IP management?

A We would expect the host institution to consider IP in the usual way for a UKRI grant. This may for example involve a collaboration agreement regarding any IP generated.