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ESRC Policy Talent Accelerator Network Plus

Applicant webinar 6 July 2023

*This webinar will be recorded

*Your details will be shared with other attendees (subject to your permission)

Welcome

We will be recording this webinar so that it can be made available for those wishing to access it later.

If you have opted in your details will be shared with other attendees.

Please use the Q&A function to raise questions.

Please 'like' the questions you are most interested in.

Agenda

1 Welcome

2 Background

3 The Network Plus Model

4 About the opportunity

5 How to apply

6 Q & A

For full call information see:

Background

- ESRC seeks to optimise the impact of the research, data and people we support by strengthening links and partnerships

- Increased permeability between academia and policy to address societal challenges

- Benefits of increased scientific literacy recognised through the government **modernisation and reform agenda** and the **UK Science and Technology Framework**

- Demand for improved access, coordination and availability of 'policy to research' opportunities across all levels of government
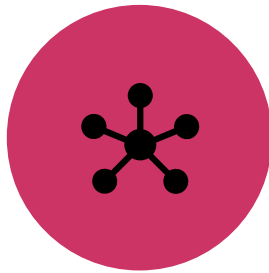
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The Network Plus Model

What is a Network Plus?

- Bringing together communities
- Identify area challenges
- Leadership in the field
- Increase collaboration
- Develops a priority area

Why fund a Network Plus?

How does a Network Plus work?

CONNECT AND COORDINATE

NEEDS IN RESEARCH, INFRASTRUCTURE AND SKILLS

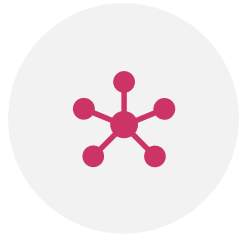THOUGHT LEADERSHIP AND VISION

SUPPORT NEW ACTIVITY USING A FLEXIBLE FUNDING POT

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Expectations

Increased connectivity and coordination

Generated new insights

Diversified offer and built new capability

Informed policy and practice

Engaged and established links

Network Core Team

The core team should include people from different relevant disciplines, with a range skills and expertise, at different career stages, who all collectively offer:

- leadership
- expertise in the flow of people, knowledge and skills across sectoral boundaries
- engage and collaborate
- articulate a clear vision
- deliver complex projects
- Incorporate specialist expertise
- bring together diverse expertise
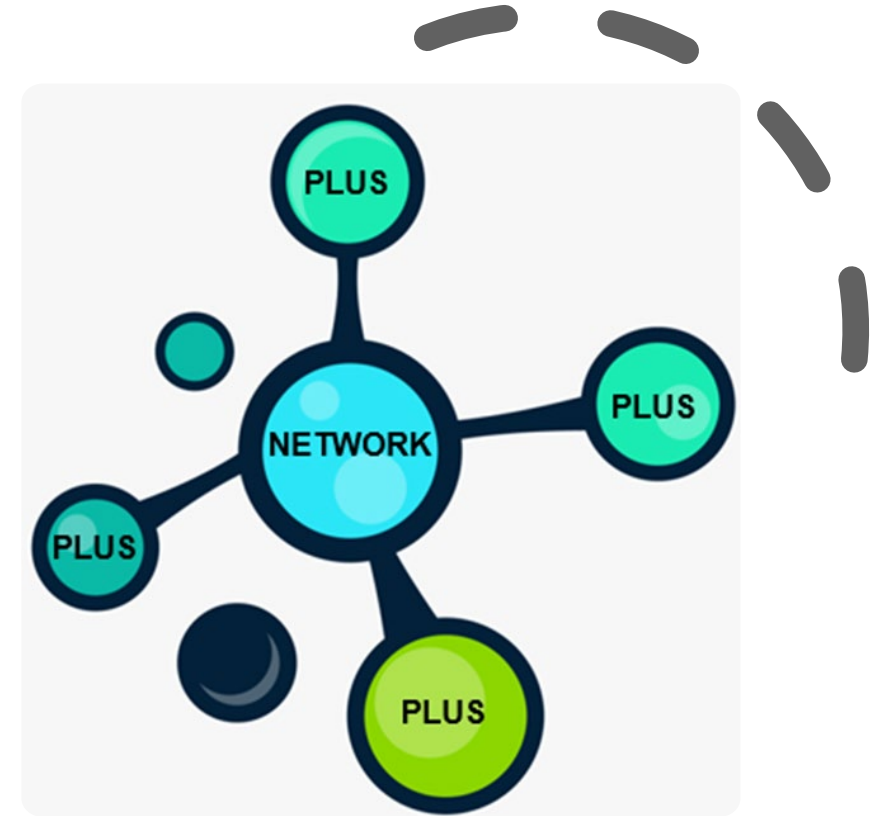
The Flexible Fund

Your Network will develop and run open funding opportunities to build capability and initiate new activities.

The flexible fund should be used to support activities involving those outside of the Network's core team.

Applicants should outline and justify the objectives of the flexible fund and how it will be it will be operationalised, governed and distributed through a competitive process.

What activities can the flexible pot fund?
- New P2R projects and activities across the UK *(which could include scoping, trials, placements, knowledge exchange, capacity building, methods development, or other relevant P2R activity)*
- Workshops
- Events
- secondments

Lessons Learned

A clear, well-defined focus

Sufficient administrative, financial services and host university support

Consider funding scale and process

Expectation and arrangements for full economic costing of Network activities need to be clear across all parties

Plan and cost for engagement, impact, dissemination and knowledge exchange activities

Long-term plans for the legacy and sustainability of the Network need to be considered early on

ESRC Policy Talent Accelerator

ESRC Policy Talent Accelerator

Funded by ESRC who will make one award up to £4.1m at Full Economic Cost (paid at standard 80% rate).

Award will commence April 2024, lasting 42 months, subject to a formal gateway review after an initial 6month scoping phase

The British Academy have committed to working with ESRC and the successful applicants for some elements of this scheme

Network objectives

The Network will bring together research organisations, policy makers, and intermediaries to increase their ability to exchange expertise and insights and support policy makers professional development.

Expand and strengthen current sector offers

Catalyse new sector offers

Improve coordination, awareness and access

Network features and considerations

Existing sector strengths
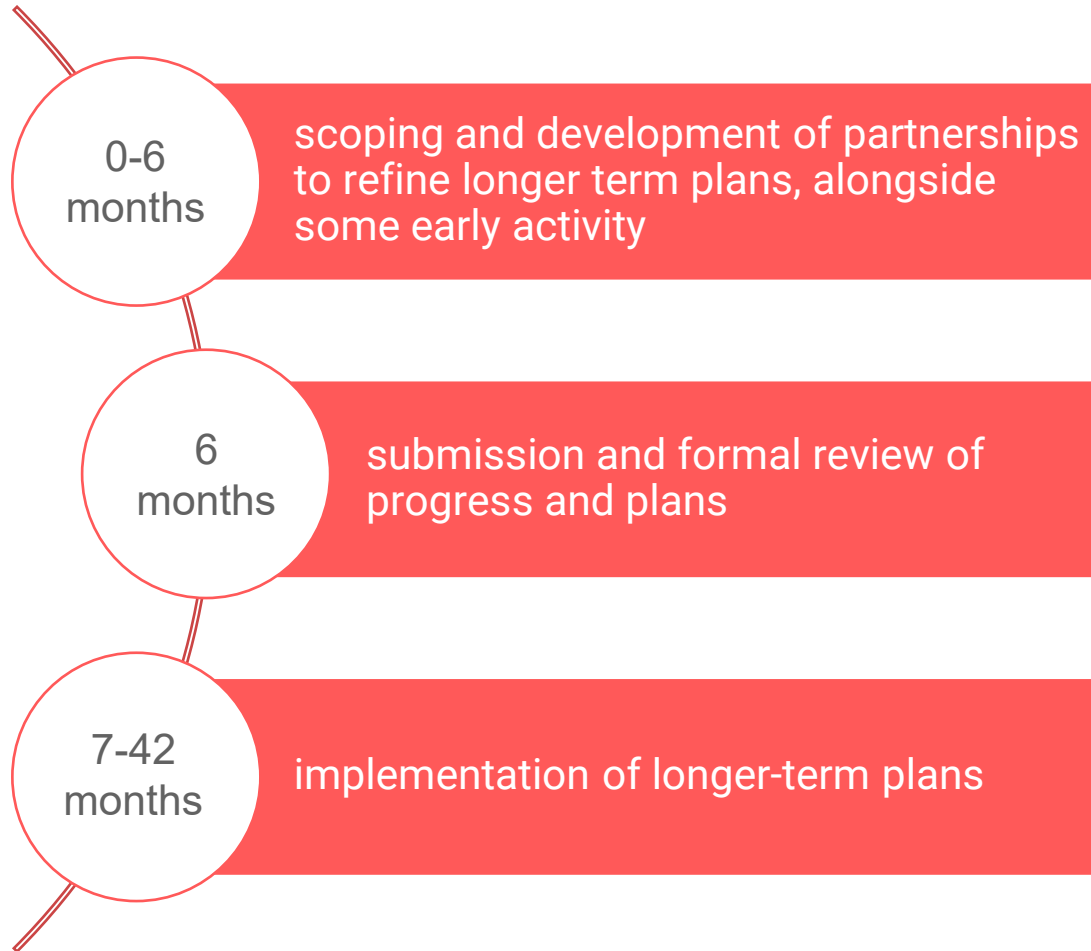
Geographical diversity

Policy-led themes

Incentives for diverse policy audiences

Coordination and access

Sustainable infrastructure

Emerging opportunities

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Gateway review

0-6 months
scoping and development of partnerships to refine longer term plans, alongside some early activity

6 months
submission and formal review of progress and plans

7-42 months
implementation of longer-term plans

Proposals to cover 42 months of activity and costs

Deliverables confirmed on award:

- Vision and long-term work plans
- Engagement and partnerships
- Policy partner sponsorship
- Demonstrated value add
- Operational procedures and governance
- Working relationship with ESRC

A break clause will be written into the contract

Example outcomes

- Greater number and diversity of engaged research organisations

- Policy responsive and geographically diverse offer

- Improved access and coordination of opportunities

- Policy responses informed by academic research and insights

- Effective approaches to increase policy stakeholder scientific literacy

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How To Apply

UKRI Transforming Funding Service

This opportunity is being run on the UKRI Transforming Funding Service.

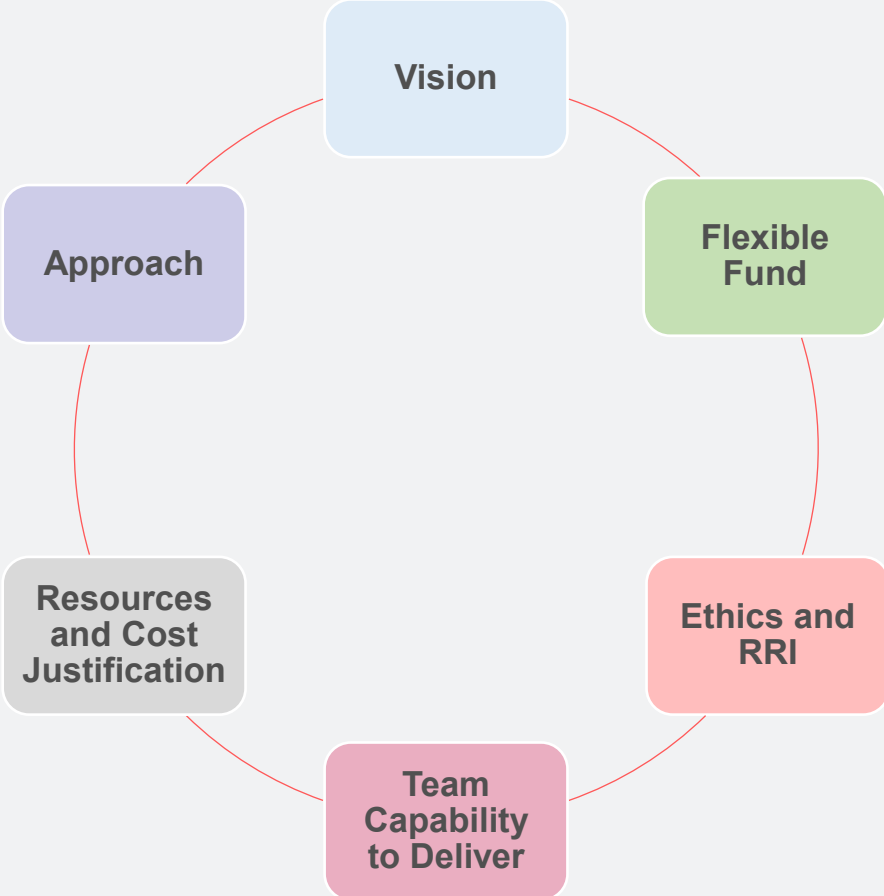You may wish to note that:
- UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) is introducing **new role types** for opportunities being run on the new UKRI Funding Service from 22 May 2023.
- For this opportunity applicants are asked to use The Résumé for Research and Innovation (R4RI).

Please direct all queries to:
- Email: **support@funding-service.ukri.org**
- Phone: 01793 547490

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Assessment Criteria

- Vision
- Flexible Fund
- Ethics and RRI
- Team Capability to Deliver
- Resources and Cost Justification
- Approach

Assessment Process

Peer Review
- Independently reviewed by academics and user experts, against opportunity criteria
- opportunity to respond to the peer reviewers' comments

Panel
- Expert assessment panel review your application against opportunity criteria

Time Scales
- We aim to complete the assessment process Feb 2024.
- We reserves the right to modify the assessment process.
- We will make the final funding decision.

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Application - Eligibility

Your Network must be social science-led and at least 50% within ESRC's remit.

Project lead must be based at a UK RO eligible for ESRC funding

Research organisations can only act as the lead organisation on one submission to this opportunity

Co-leads can be from UK business, public sector, third sector or eligible public sector research establishments

Non-UK PLs and Co-PLs not eligible

Associated studentships are not eligible for inclusion.

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Q&A

We will create and publish an FAQ document which will include responses to questions submitted in advance of and raised during the webinar.

If you have more questions, please email them to support@funding-service.ukri.org including ESRC Policy Talent Accelerator Network Plus in the subject line.

Eligibility

Am I eligible to apply?	Answer
How many applications can a Higher Education Institute (HEI) submit?	Research organisations can only act as the lead organisation (i.e. the organisation where the project lead is based) on one submission to this opportunity.
Is there a restriction on the number of opportunities a HEI can collaborate on?	There is no restriction on the number of opportunities that a HEI can collaborate on. *Please note that opportunity guidance has been updated to remove the following demand management feature: You may be involved in no more than two proposals submitted to this funding opportunity.*

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How to apply

What are the new 'role types' on TFS?	Answer
What do 'role types' on TFS refer to?	UKRI has harmonised the number of role types available for you to select to add to a grant application on TFS.
What 'role types' can I select for this opportunity?	For this opportunity you can select; project lead; project co-lead; specialist; grant manager; professional support enabling staff; research and innovation associate; technician and; visiting researcher
Where can I find out further information about new 'role types' on TFS?	Roles in funding applications: eligibility, responsibilities and costings guidance – UKRI

What supporting documents are required?	Answer
What supporting documents do you expect to see with the application if any are required?	The majority of information required as part of an application is provided directly into TFS (the new funding service), with the exception of uploaded documents for the following sections: Vision & Approach, Organisational Support, and Project Partner letters or emails of support.

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Assessment Process

How will my application be reviewed?	Answer
Are policy makers part of the review committee for this call? If so, can we get a sense of what level they might be?	We will invite academic and user experts to peer review your application independently, against the specified criteria for this opportunity. Further to peer review, we will invite experts to join an assessment panel which will collectively review your application against the criteria and rank it alongside other applications before making a funding recommendation. Experts will include users which may include policy makers at any level with relevant expertise and experience.

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Funding

What supporting documents are required?	Answer
How many Network Plusses are you expecting to fund through this opportunity?	We are funding one Network Plus under this opportunity.
Does standard ESRC costing rules apply to this opportunity?	Standard ESRC costing rules apply to this opportunity. Please see opportunity guidance ESRC Policy Talent Accelerator Network Plus – UKRI for full details or contact support@funding-service.ukri.org including ESRC Policy Talent Accelerator Network Plus in the subject line.
Is there an opportunity for additional funding beyond the 42 months?	There is no additional funding currently identified for this opportunity.

The Flexible Fund

How can I use the flexible fund?	Answer
Will the Flexible Fund be funded at 80% full economic cost (fEC) for non-IRO partners?	The expectation is for the flexible fund to be funded at 80% FEC for non-IRO partners
Can the flexible fund be used to fund original academic research by co-investigators/network members?	The primary focus of a Network Plus investment is to bring together new or disparate communities from across the research and development system to identify, prioritise and develop emerging research and knowledge exchange challenges. The Network should tailor its activities to the needs in its area, this may include components of original academic research.

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A Network Plus

What is a Network Plus?	Answer
What is the distinction between a Network and a Network Plus investment?	The 'Plus' part of a Network Plus refers to the flexible funding that the grant will have, to fund small projects.
Is there a list of existing Network+ available	There is no central list of Network Plus investments but examples include; ESRC Digital Good Network and; Violence, Abuse and Mental Health Network
Is there an accessible link to the evaluations of previous and current networks plus to enable bidders to learn from this practice?	The lessons learnt in the opportunity specification draws on informal evaluation of cross UKRI Network Plus investments.
Is a Network Plus similar to an academic think tank, rather than a programme of new research?	Yes, a Network Plus is a strategic investment that brings together new or disparate communities from across the research and development system to identify, prioritise and develop emerging research and knowledge exchange challenges. It provides leadership across disciplines and sectors, continues to expand its connections and relationships throughout the duration of its funding, and tailors its activities to the needs in its area.

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Collaboration

Collaboration with international stakeholders	Answer
Are international project co-leads permitted on this opportunity?	Project leads from non-UK organisations are not eligible to apply for funding for this opportunity. Project co-leads based in non-UK organisations are not eligible to be included in applications for this opportunity.
Can the network involve partners or organisations outside of the UK?	Collaboration with partners or organisations outside of the UK is permitted but applicants should note that project leads from non-UK organisations and Project co-leads based in non-UK organisations are not eligible to apply for funding from this opportunity and the flexible fund should be utilised to fund UK based research organisations.

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Collaboration

Collaboration with policy stakeholders	Answer
Can policy partners be named on multiple applications?	There is no limit to the number of applications policy partners can support or be named in.
What is required of organisations from the policy community during the application process?	It is a mandatory requirement to detail all direct and indirect, financial or in-kind contributions that will be provided by project partners. Applicants will need to provide a short description of the contribution and provide a named project partner. Project partners will need to provide an e-mail or letter of support.

Collaboration with other applicants	Answer
Do you have a location where institutions looking for partners, or interested in joining an application can share their details?	We don't have a shared platform for sharing details but will subject to permission circulate webinar attendee details.

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Thematic Priorities

What can you tell me about thematic priorities?	Answer
Is the application expected to fall under the example themes mentioned in the application e.g., reaching net zero, advancing regional development and productivity, dealing with artificial intelligence, and achieving energy security?	Example themes are illustrative, and applicants are not restricted to specific themes or policy priorities.
Can proposals focus on a broad thematic area?	Proposals can respond to broad thematic areas but should consider the Networks ability to respond to a range of current and emergent policy led priorities and demands.
What are the themes that are expected to be included?	Example themes are illustrative, and applicants are not restricted to specific themes or policy priorities. ESRC will work closely with the successful applicant during the 6month scoping phase to build connections across policy communities and refine the Networks programme of work.
Can you give specific examples of 'government areas of research interest'?	Areas of research interest (ARI) give details about the main research questions facing government departments, please see: Areas of research interest - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Network Reach

Geographical reach	Answer
How important is having regional representation in the core team?	The Core Network team should have the skills and capabilities to convene a broad range of academic stakeholders at national, devolved, and local level. The appropriate composition of the Core Network team to meet opportunity objectives, including geographical diversity and reach, should be determined by the applicants.
Is 'regional' being used to refer to UK regions or more internationally?	This refers to UK regions.

Institutional and policy reach	Answer
Is the scope limited to central government and the civil service?	No. The scope includes civil and public servants at national, devolved, and local level.
Given references to policymakers'/civil servants' professional development, is this loosely interpreted or are we expected to engage with (or show how we might engage with) their formal professional development frameworks (and relevant Professional Heads)?	This can be interpreted loosely, but connections to professional development frameworks also welcomed.

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Policy demand

Building capability	Answer
The call highlights the need to build new capabilities for 'policy to research' initiatives that facilitate policymakers engaging with research communities as part of their professional development. You note that there is already some (possibly hard-to-find/access) supply of such initiatives and opportunities; would you be able to share any assessment of policymakers' needs/wants, or absorption capacity, in this respect?	We anticipate that identification of policy demand and absorption capacity will form part of the successful applicants 6month scoping phase.

ESRC Network Plus Funding Opportunities

- In June of this year ESRC launched five further Network Plus opportunities.

- Each Network Plus will bring together new or disparate communities from across the research and development system to identify, prioritise and develop emerging research and knowledge exchange challenges in specific areas.

- An applicant webinar to cover principles regarding Network Plus investments in greater depth will be held Thursday 11am 20 July.

- To register visit: [Webinar Registration - Zoom](#)

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Dementia

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