ESRC Network Plus FAQ's

The Network Plus Model & Scope

What (if any) links are expected between the different Network Pluses?	There is no expectation for applicants to consider this at application stage, but it is ESRC's intention to look at this once the Networks are up and running.
What exactly does "social science led" mean?	Social scientists with a substantial presence in the leadership group, and social science questions and themes firmly in the plans and focus for the Network.
With regards to secondments, is the intent that we send people from our Network to other institutions or that people are brought from other institutions to work with us?	This depends on what is most appropriate for each Network, for achieving the aims and objectives and working within the landscape of the particular research area. Secondments and bringing people into and out of the Network are activities ESRC has seen other Networks undertake previously.
Is there a database or list of existing Networks funded by UKRI that we can review to prevent duplication of Networks and allow merging of efforts / joining of already existing Networks?	ESRC recommends applicants conduct their own searches using Gateway to Research. The ESRC website also has several pages dedicated to different recently funded Network Pluses.

Applying for Funding

Including the core team and applying to multiple Network funding opportunities

Could you clarify Demand Management for this scheme - you can only lead on one project, but could you also be a Project co-Lead on a separate submission?	An individual cannot be a Project Lead on more than one application to the Network Plus calls listed in the call information. All applicants and named research staff must be able to meet the time commitment to the project as stated in the proposal and their commitments should not exceed 100% FTE. The other demand management requirement is for Research Organisations - an RO can only act as the lead organisation (meaning the organisation where the Project Lead is based) on one submission to each Network opportunity.

How can early career researchers be involved in these Networks?	The core team should include people at different career stages, and capacity building opportunities appropriate for researchers at those different career stages is part of what ESRC expects to see proposed for those in the core team and for those who will become part of the wider Network. ESRC also expects to see the flexible fund used to support early career development and involvement in the Network. **Please check the Funding Finder page for the Network you are interested in applying to for more information.**
Is there any ideal number of research partners the funders have in mind? To what extent are multidisciplinary teams expected?	There is no specific number of partnerships. Networks are expected to connect with partners and build their network across relevant sectors. ESRC advises applicants to look at existing UKRI Network Plus awards on GtR, where you can see the kind of activities and partnerships they have.
Do most partners have to be ESRC/social science focused?	ESRC expect to see partnerships proposed that reflect the topic, landscape and environment that the Network will cover.
What is allowed in terms of academic staff buyout?	Please see our guidance on staff time and costs in section five of the ESRC Funding guidance, available here: ESRC research funding guide for the UKRI Funding Service
Can Research Organisations lead on more than one N+ proposal in each opportunity?	No. Research Organisations can only act as the lead organisation (meaning the organisation where the project lead is based) on **one** submission per N+ opportunity. E.g., an RO cannot submit as the lead organisation in multiple applications with the same opportunity.

Collaboration

Collaborating with other ROs, international researchers, industry, government and the third sector.

What kinds of collaborations are more important for this network?	This depends on the Network you are interested in applying to and what will help ensure the Network can meet the aims and objectives of the call. Our funding model

	ensures that representatives from all relevant sectors can be included as co-investigators or partners.
How many international Project co-Leads are allowed?	**Please check the Funding Finder page for the Network you are interested in applying to for more information as some calls do not allow international project co-leads.** Where international Project Co-Leads are permitted, ESRC does not limit the number, but our policy is that the combined costs for International co-Leads and co-Leads from UK business, third sector or government organisations must not exceed 30% of the total FEC of the grant application
To what extent is this expected to be a fully national bid? Can the network include members from across different institutions?	We expect to see highly collaborative bids, comprising of teams made up of applicants from multiple research organisations, that bring together a suitable leadership group and that this group then builds the wider Network. We expect networks to be representative of the UK community in their field, but it is not a requirement to include representation from every UK nation or region.
Is there scope to bring in learning and knowledge from outside the UK?	**Please check the Funding Finder page for the Network you are interested in applying to.** ESRC has an International Project Co-Lead Policy which some of the Networks can take advantage of when constructing their leadership team, and we have made clear in the calls specifications where Networks can be international in reach. Please note that Project Co-Leads of this type are not eligible to lead a Network application.
What would be the most effective way for a potential industrial member to engage with the Network Plus?	**Please check the Funding Finder page for the Network you are interested in applying to.** ESRC has a Project Co-Leads from UK Business, Third Sector or Government Organisations Policy which allows industry representatives to be involved in the Network leadership. Businesses could also be involved as project partners, members of the Network, or through opportunities offered by

	the Network using the flexible fund. Please note that Project Co-Leads of this type are not eligible to lead on a Network application. Please also note that the combined costs for International co-Leads and co-Leads from UK business, third sector or government organisations must not exceed 30% of the total FEC of the grant application.
How should the relationship between partners and the lead organisation be defined in the application?	Please see our guidance on project partners in section three of the ESRC Funding guidance, available here: ESRC research funding guide for the UKRI Funding Service

Assessment

What criteria is used by the funders to assess the quality of the Network?	The assessment criteria for each Network will include the following: Vision, Approach, Resources & Cost Justification, Team Capability to Deliver, Ethics & Responsible Research and Innovation, and the Flexible Fund. **For more detail on the assessment process and criteria please refer to the Funding Finder page for the Network you are interested in applying to.**

Flexible Fund

What percentage of the grant should be allocated to the flexible fund?	This figure varies between the different Network Plus opportunities so **please check the Funding Finder page for the Network you are interested in applying to for more information.**
If Project co-Leads from UK business, third sector or government are eligible to be funded at 100%, who will fund the remaining 20% of costs?	The Flexible Fund should be included in applications under the 'Other Directly Incurred' cost headings and will be funded by UKRI at 80% fEC. Networks should use ESRC research funding rules to fund activities using the flexible fund. Applicants applying for funding from the flexible fund can request funding under all standard funding headings. The flexible fund should support activities at the same fEC rate as activities would be supported on a standard ESRC award. Costs

	funded at 100% by ESRC (e.g. project co-leads from business, third sector or government organisations) should also be supported at 100% from the flexible fund. Applications should propose using the flexible fund to meet the aims of the network and will be assessed on the extent to which they: distribute funding appropriately across a diverse range of activities; where appropriate, distribute funding through clear, transparent competitive processes; and build capacity in key fields and career stages
What is the main intention about how flexible funds are expected to be used?	**Please check the Funding Finder page for the Network Plus you are interested in applying to as requirements may very between the different opportunities.** Flexible funds should be used by each Network to commission and administer funding for various activities, all of which should contribute to the Network achieving its main objectives. This allows the Network leadership team to tailor plans to the landscape and take ownership of the Network's efforts. The fund can be a useful mechanism for funding pilot studies, trialling new, novel or perhaps 'risky' ideas on a smaller scale, and for giving opportunities to early career researchers. Previous Networks have used their flexible funding to run knowledge exchange programmes, conferences, seminars, workshops, and produce specific outputs, all with the aim of engaging and connecting the academic community and stakeholders in relevant sectors.
What institutional commitment is expected?	ESRC will fund 80% of the full economic cost (fEC) of the core Network. The lead Research Organisation (RO), where the Project Lead is based, is expected to contribute the remaining 20%.

For the flexible fund, ROs in receipt of flexible funding from the core Network are expected |

	to make up the remaining 20% of the fEC balance.

Behavioural Science for Security and Defence Network Plus

To what extent do both behavioural science expertise and security & defence expertise need to be included it the core team?	We expect to see expertise from behavioural science and security and defence in the leadership team, but applicants can decide on how they wish to balance this expertise.

Polarities and Regions Network Plus

Does a Network Plus application to the Polarities and Regions call have to address both regions, or can it focus on only one?	Both regions must be included in the proposed work packages of an application. This call holds a Russia **and** China focus and are central to the respective regions identified in the call documentation. Beyond those, there are emerging powers to consider, as well as powers' dynamics with less powerful states, and applicants may consider different ways to address the focus of the call, but it should be noted that the call is not exclusively focussed on these two countries in isolation.
Can international researchers and project partners be included in the application?	Yes. International collaboration is permitted within this call. Please note that the UK government has suspended publicly funded research and innovation collaborations with Russia. In line with UK government policy, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) will not enter or support any collaboration with partners which involve collaborations with a Russian entity as a third party, where there is any strategic benefit to the Russian State. This includes sourcing any goods or services originating from Russia. The UK Government has also taken action against Belarus for their role in the current conflict (https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-to-implement-further-punishing-economic-measures-on-belarus)

	If you are still considering engaging a Russian or Belarussian entity (collaborator, supplier etc.) on your project, or think there is potential that your network+ might seek to engage with them in due course, you are strongly advised to contact ESRC before submitting your application.
If only one Network is to be funded, are you looking for a Network that covers a very wide range of countries from Eastern Europe, Russia, China, and East Pacific (e.g. South East Asia)? What about key players such as India or even Africa (where China has significant investments)?	**Please see the [Funding Finder](#) page for more information.** Please note that for this Network the focus is on Eastern Europe and Eurasia, and East and Pacific Asia. ESRC would not expect to see a large focus on other regions such as India, North Africa, or the Middle East. Applicants should make a case for why their Network Plus application focuses on the most salient areas for their research team's expertise and addresses the questions posed in the Funding Finder.
Is there more interest for a "deep and narrow" focused Network covering for example, economics/finance? Or a "shallower and wide" Network focusing on overarching themes and interplay between areas?	It is up to the core Network team to make a convincing case regarding what is most appropriate to them for their expertise and their intention of focus. ESRC has not defined a preference in the Funding Finder page and applicants are advised to refer back to the specification for more detail.
Can Network Plus funds be used to support further training and capacity building of researchers (including doctoral students)?	Yes, the network plus and flexible funds within that can be used for a wide range of activities. These should include training and capacity building through workshops and seminars, or support for other appropriate mechanisms. Proposed activities can be made available to researchers both within and beyond the core team to strengthen understanding and expertise in the areas of focus of this call and to build up the broader network.

Modelling UK Supply Chains as Complex Systems for Resilience Network Plus

Is there an existing Network Plus related to supply chain resilience?	This call focuses on the food, critical minerals, and fashion supply chains, and other investments have been made in these areas which can be found using [Gateway to Research](#). The [ESRC website](#) also has several

| | pages dedicated to different recently funded Network Pluses. |
| | Regarding current supply chain *resilience* investments, there is the Circular Critical Materials Supply Chains Programme, delivered through Innovate UK, which aims to support the development of resilient UK based supply chains for rare earth elements. There is also a Network Plus on circular fashion, with a focus on sustainability, as well as the Net Zero Food Network. While these investments are both relevant, neither have a focus on resilience. |