



Engineering and
Physical Sciences
Research Council

EPSRC Network to drive digital sustainability and a circular economy

Webinar

16 November 2023

Agenda

1 Introduction

Who are we?

2 Background, scope and expectations

The context and objectives of the funding opportunity

3 Application and assessment

More detail around how to apply and how you will be assessed.

4 Question and answer session

Please use the Q&A function to submit questions.

5 End



Opportunity background, scope and expectations

EPSRC Investments Aligned to UKRI Strategy

People	Places	Ideas	Innovation	Impacts
<p>Investing in people, skills and teams</p> <p>Embedding equality, diversity and inclusivity</p>	<p>Local, national and international partnerships, nurturing excellent research and strengthening clusters across UK nations and regions</p> <p>World-leading capital and digital infrastructure</p>	<p>Investing in 3 discovery research priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical and Mathematical Sciences Powerhouse Frontiers in Engineering and Technology Digital Futures 	<p>Co-working with business</p> <p>Connecting research and innovation</p> <p>Accelerating translation, commercialisation and knowledge exchange</p>	<p>Mission-inspired research with four priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engineering Net Zero AI, Digitalisation and Data: Driving Value and Security Transforming Health and Healthcare Quantum Technologies.



Opportunity background

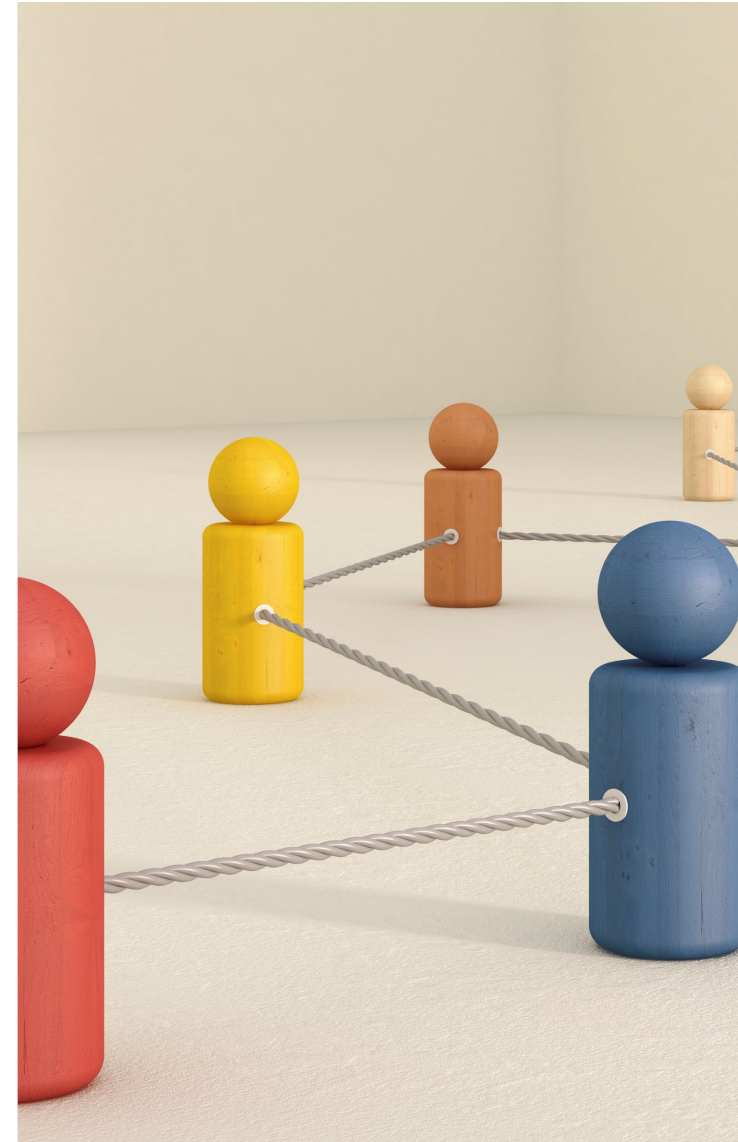
- Information and communication technologies (ICT) underpin the function of modern society
- They continue to play a vital role in tackling societal challenges from climate change to healthcare
- The majority of ICT is currently built on an unsustainable 'take-make-dispose' linear economy
- This results in growing e-waste and misuse of critical raw materials
- Circular economy considerations must be embedded across the ICT research and innovation landscape to achieve key sustainability targets
- Digital tools and ICT research and technologies can, in turn, accelerate the transition to a circular economy across sectors



Opportunity objectives

EPSRC aims to fund a **Network Plus** to drive the development of an interdisciplinary, collaborative and diverse community, build collaboration and knowledge exchange, in order to:

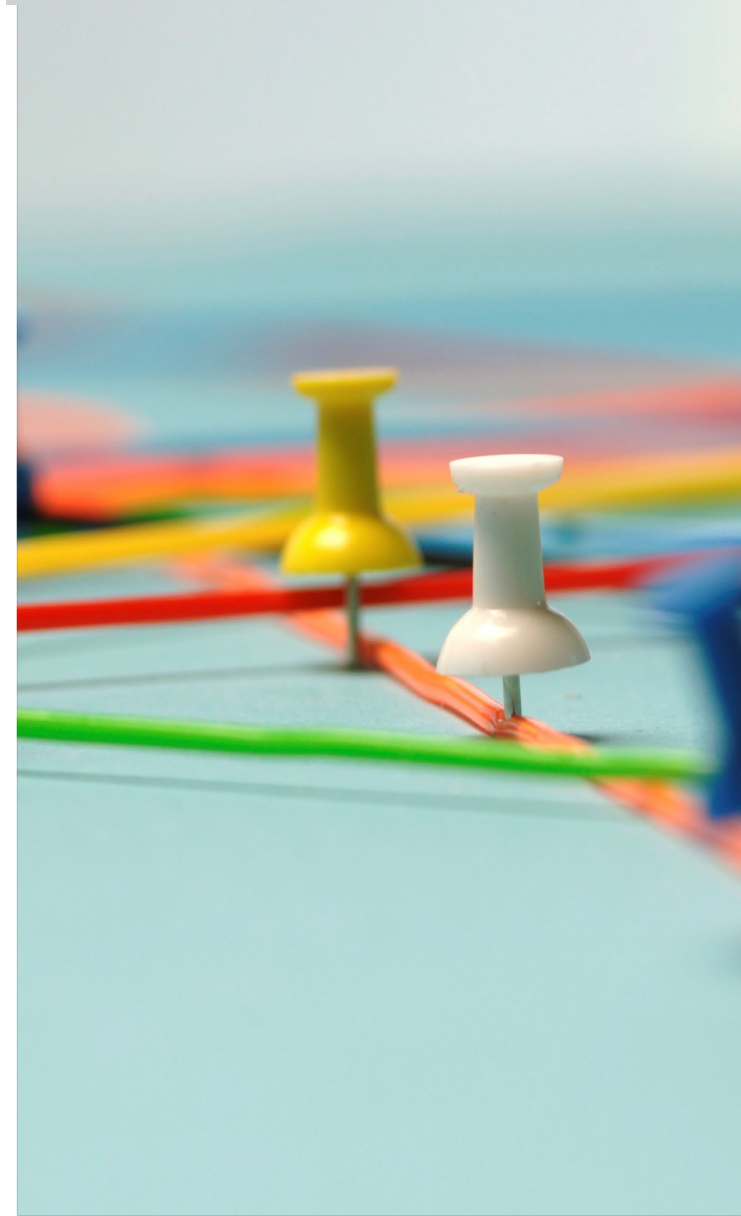
- lead to a step change in the **sustainability and circularity of digital and communication technologies**
- realise the potential of the **digital revolution to enable a circular economy across sectors**



Opportunity scope

The Network Plus should deliver:

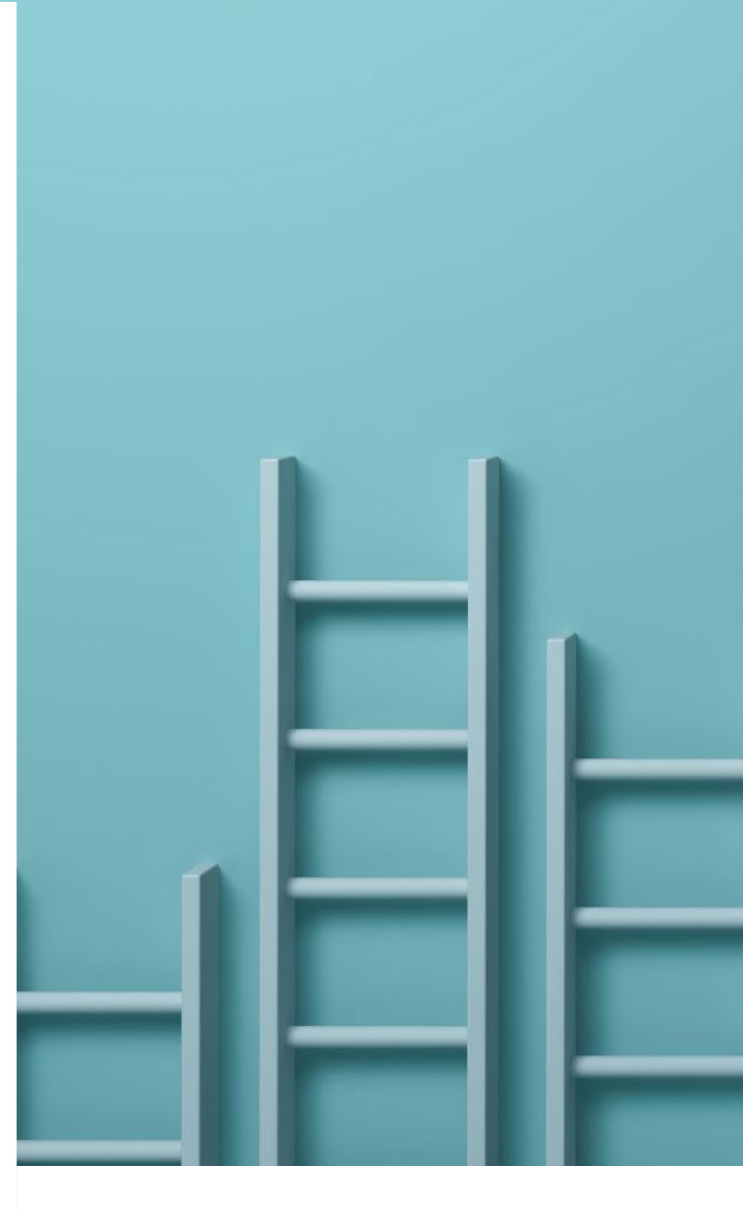
- leadership of diverse and inclusive interdisciplinary research communities across **academia, policy** and **industry**
- **new connections** between relevant communities and projects, (including [‘Research for a digitally enabled circular economy and sustainable digital technologies’](#)) to accelerate **knowledge transfer** and **realisation of impacts**
- an increase in **interdisciplinary** research projects and **collaborations**
- greater community capability to **embed** circular and sustainable considerations across research and innovation, including **new methods, tools** and **approaches, training** and **skills**
- evidenced assessments of **future opportunities** and what is needed to drive world-leading research and innovation and deliver significant **impact**
- a **10-year vision** with identified research and community challenges, considering **policy, research, research infrastructure** and **skills** needed to deliver against national and global **priorities**
- support for identification and realisation of **new research ideas** to **drive digital sustainability** and a **digitally enabled circular economy across sectors**



Network Plus goals

The Network Plus could achieve these deliverables by:

- facilitating **knowledge exchange** across programmes and driving progress in cross-cutting areas, improving **cross-disciplinary understanding** and facilitating application of the state of the art between different areas of research
- building and supporting **connections between research and non-academic stakeholders** to drive greater **co-creation** of problems and solutions and identifying **realistic translation pathways**
- run **small funding opportunities** to support high-risk projects, new collaborations, feasibility studies or impact acceleration activities
- convene **workshops** and **events** to enable **collaboration, horizon-scanning** and **generation of new ideas**



Network Plus purpose

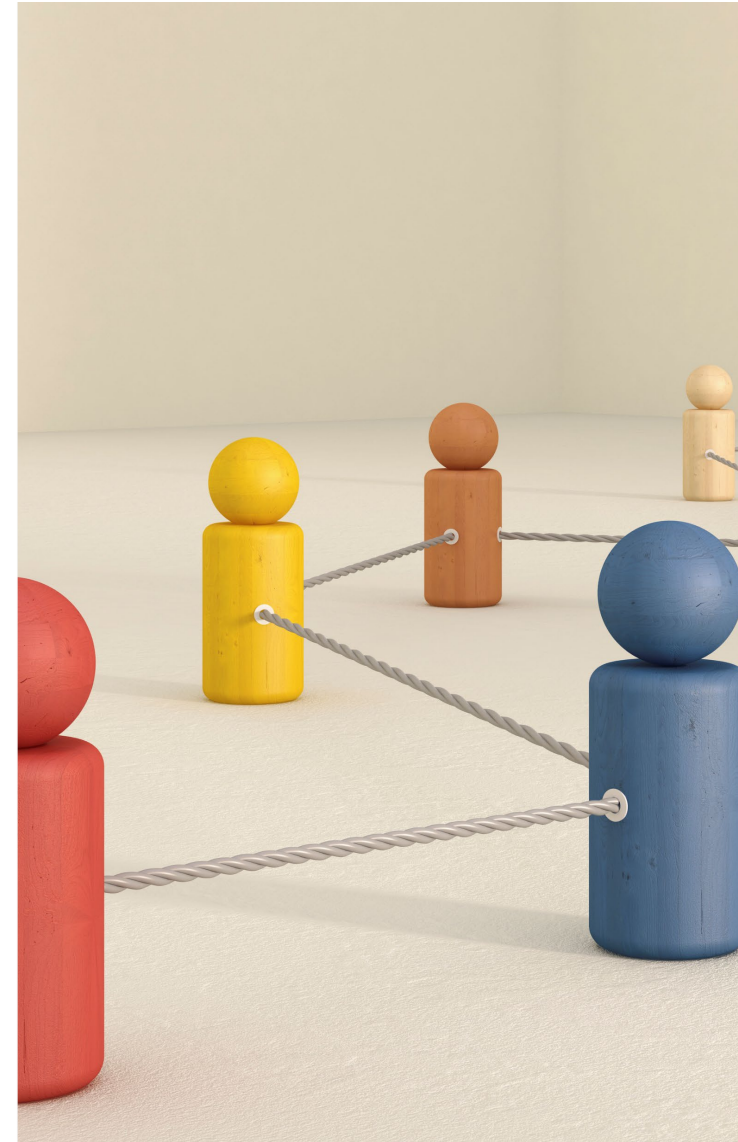
A Network Plus is **not** a research grant

We will fund

- innovative workstreams and activities
- community building and networking activities
- appropriate administrative support
- flexible funds to **externally** commission or run competitions for small-level projects (e.g. feasibility studies)

We will **not** fund

- Funds **cannot** be requested to support the Network Plus to carry out research-related activities itself



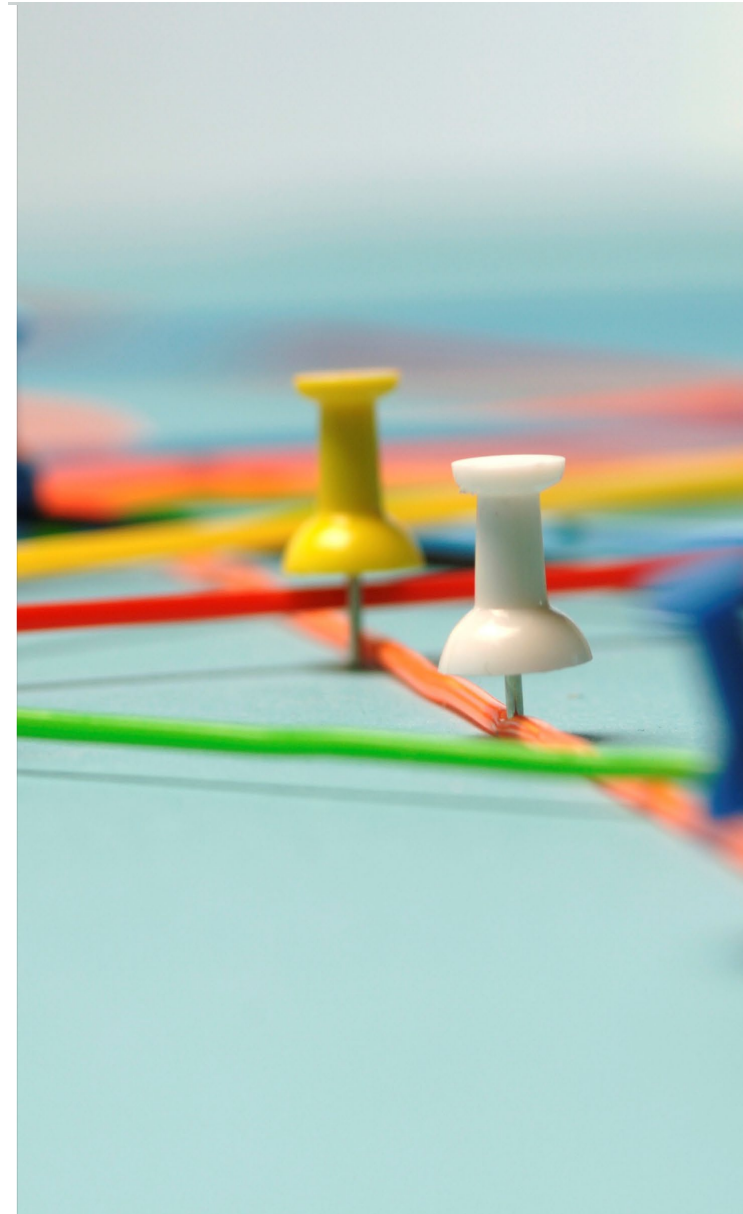
Network Plus example activities

You are encouraged to think creatively about the range of activities that could support the delivery of the Network Plus goals



Expectations

- The Network Plus will fit primarily in **EPSRC remit**
- Involvement of researchers and expertise from **other relevant disciplines** (e.g. social and environmental sciences) is welcome
- Workstreams should be **co-created** with **interdisciplinary collaborators** and **non-academic stakeholders** to provide understanding and context
- The Network Plus should bring together communities, including the projects funded through the [‘Research for a digitally enabled circular economy and sustainable digital technologies’](#) funding opportunity to accelerate knowledge transfer and the realisation of near- and longer-term impacts
- Broad engagement across academia, industry, third sector, end users, policymakers, research institutes, etc is expected
- The Network Plus is expected to take a **whole systems approach** in its activities, and support **upskilling** of the wider community on systems thinking and expertise
- Embedding careful consideration of **environmental sustainability** across all Network Plus activities is expected



Network Plus requirements

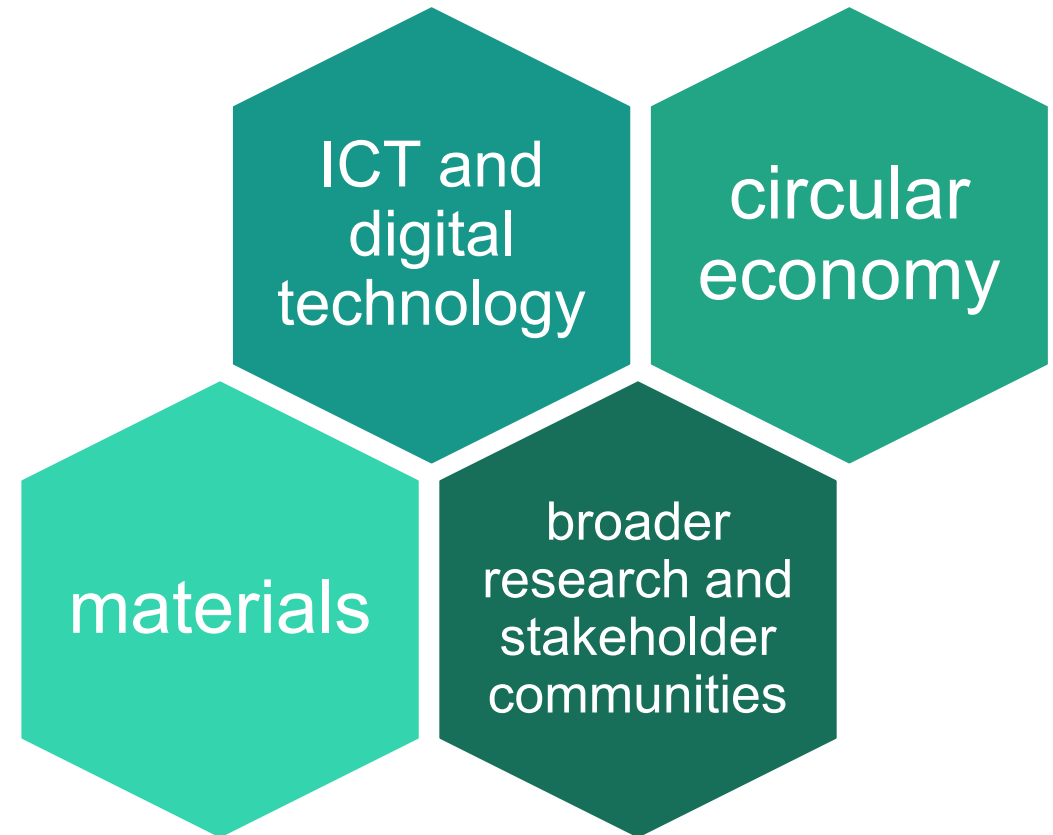


Who can deliver this

We are looking for applicants who can **bring together an interdisciplinary cross-sectoral multi-stakeholder community**

The applicant team should combine **different areas of expertise and experience** to lead the Network Plus and deliver:

- community engagement
- leadership
- driving impact
- Applicants who are also applying to the [‘Research for a digitally enabled circular economy and sustainable digital technologies’](#) funding opportunity are eligible
- Any single investigator is only permitted to be involved in **one** Network Plus proposal



Application and assessment

Opportunity key points

- This EPSRC opportunity aims to support **one** interdisciplinary Network Plus
- The Network Plus can apply for £2.5 million at 100% full economic cost
- EPSRC will fund **80%** of the full economic cost, up to £2 million
- Project duration should be 36 months
- Apply on the Funding Service (TFS)

Opportunity timeline

- 
- Opening date
5 October 2023
 - Webinar
16 November 2023
 - Closing date
29 February 2024
 - Interview panel
May 2024
 - Successful applicants informed
Jun 2024

Assessment criteria

- **vision** of the project; **approach** to the project
- **capability** of the applicant or applicants and the project team to deliver the project
- **added value** of the Network Plus
- **programme leadership and management**, including considerations of **equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)**
- embedding **environmental sustainability** into the programme management and delivery
- **resources** requested to do the project
- **ethical and responsible research and innovation** considerations of the project

Vision

For the vision, you will need to explain how the proposed Network Plus:

- **aligns strategically to the funding opportunity aims and scope**
- demonstrates a **coherent strategic vision** and establishes clear outcomes
- is of excellent quality and importance within or beyond the field(s) or area(s)
- has the potential to advance current understanding, generates new knowledge, thinking or discovery within or beyond the field or area
- is timely given current trends, context and needs
- impacts world-leading research, society, the economy or the environment

Within the vision section we also expect you to:

- **identify the potential direct or indirect benefits and who the beneficiaries might be**
- **identify key communities and future network members**

Approach

For the approach, you will need to explain how the Network Plus:

- **will deliver against the expectations outlined in the funding opportunity**
- is effective and appropriate to achieve your objectives
- is feasible, and comprehensively identifies any risks to delivery and how they will be managed
- **will maximise translation of outputs into outcomes and impacts**
- describes how your, and if applicable your team's, research environment (in terms of the place, and relevance to the project) will contribute to the success of the work

Within the approach section we also expect you to:

- explain how you will **identify key opportunities for future research**, innovation and growth in the relevant sectors, **support knowledge transfer and accelerate impacts** (economic, social and environmental)
- identify and embed **clear, realistic and proportionate routes to enable environmental, economic and societal impact**, from the network and support wider investments to do the same

Approach

Within the approach section we also expect you to (cont'd):

- provide clear plans for:
 - networking with relevant communities and stakeholders including how you will support and build equitable, diverse, inclusive and accessible communities
 - building links between government and policy stakeholders and academic communities, supporting two-way communication and collaboration
 - utilising flexible funds to commission feasibility studies or other activities, if relevant
 - engagement with the cohort of other investments made under the [**Research for a digitally enabled circular economy and sustainable digital technologies**](#) funding opportunity as well as other key investments in the broader funding landscape
 - management of all relevant work packages, including a dedicated grant manager with appropriate expertise as a core member of the team
- provide a project plan including milestones and timelines
- include a detailed and appropriate plan for how you will acquire and manage data

Applicant and team capability to deliver

In this section, we expect you to demonstrate:

- Why you are the right individual or team to successfully deliver the proposed work, and demonstrate how you have:
 - the relevant experience (appropriate to career stage) to deliver the proposed work
 - the right balance of skills and expertise to cover the proposed work
 - the appropriate leadership and management skills to deliver the work and your approach to develop others
 - contributed to developing a positive research environment and wider community

Added value

In this section, we expect you to demonstrate:

- The added value that this Network Plus will enable that would not be possible otherwise, and how it will:
 - create new interdisciplinary research communities and topics
 - provide a critical mass of researchers with a range of expertise and experience
 - promote mobility between academia, industry and other sectors
 - achieve sustainability of impacts beyond the funding requested

Programme leadership and management

In this section, we expect you to demonstrate:

- How you have co-created and designed your research programme to maximise the impact of the Network Plus, and how you will:
 - manage and monitor the progress of the programme, including consideration of how the flexibility of resources will be managed
 - embed creativity and agility into the plans for the programme in order to respond to a changing landscape
 - develop and progress the careers of all team members, including academic and non-academic staff
 - embed considerations of [equality, diversity and inclusion \(EDI\)](#) at all levels and in all aspects of the programme

Resources and cost justification

In this section, we expect you to explain:

- What you will need to deliver your proposed work, and how much it will cost, including the more costly resources like:
 - project staff
 - grant manager
 - significant travel for field work or collaboration (but not regular travel between collaborating organisations or to conferences)
 - any consumables beyond typical requirements, or that are required in exceptional quantities

We will need you to demonstrate how the resources you anticipate needing for your proposed work:

- are comprehensive, appropriate, and justified
- represent the optimal use of resources to achieve the intended outcomes
- maximise potential outcomes and impacts

Ethics and responsible research and innovation (RRI)

In this section, we expect you to explain:

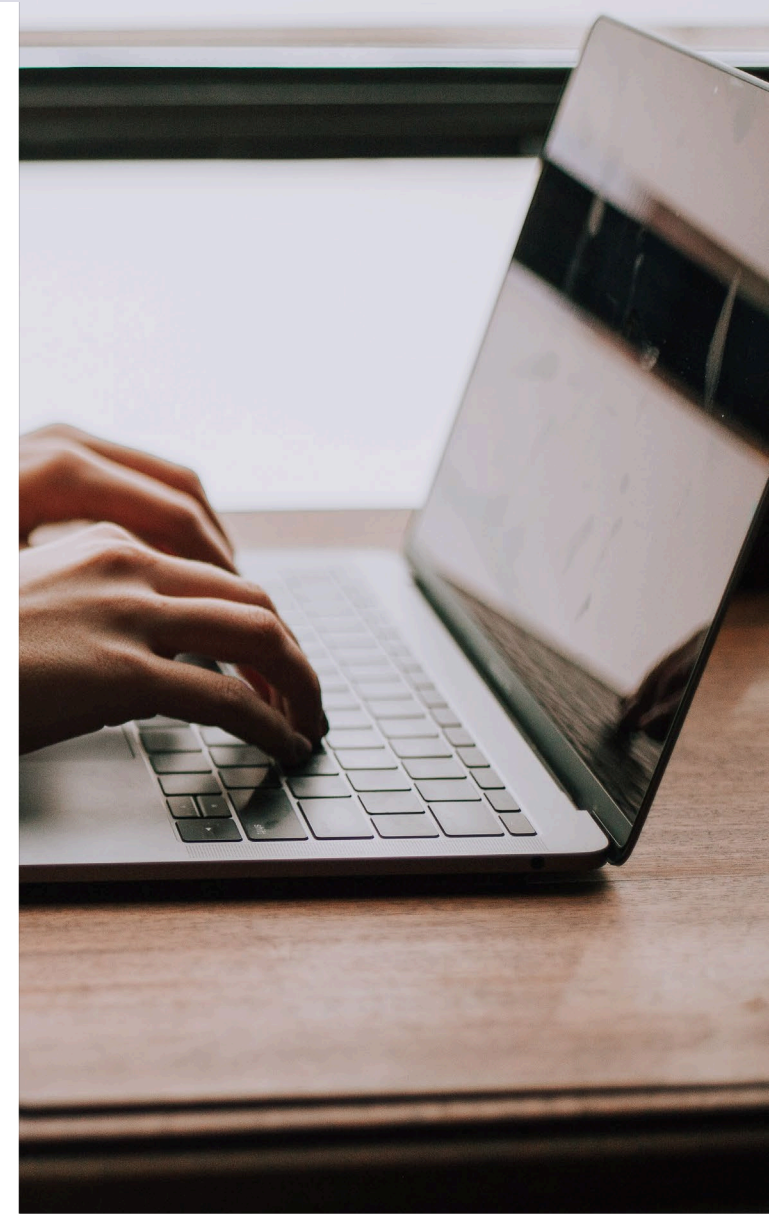
- The key ethical or RRI implications and issues relating to the proposed work, including:
 - the relevant ethical or responsible research and innovation considerations
 - how you will manage these considerations
- If you are collecting or using data:
 - any legal and ethical considerations of collecting, releasing or storing the data including consent, confidentiality, anonymisation, security and other ethical considerations and, in particular, strategies to not preclude further reuse of data
 - formal information standards with which your study will comply

Project partners

- The Network Plus is expected to have a broad range of cross-sectoral partners
- At application stage, the application will be strengthened by project partner letters of support
- We expect the Network Plus to continue to engage new partners throughout its lifetime

Final key points

- Applications close **29 February 2024**
- For questions related to this specific funding opportunity please contact: ict.theme@epsrc.ukri.org
- Any queries regarding the system or the submission of applications through the Funding Service should be directed to the helpdesk: support@funding-service.ukri.org
- A recording of this webinar will be uploaded to the funding opportunity online





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Questions?



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Thank you



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