EPSRC-Defra Reimagining Circularity Funding Opportunity Informational Webinar

Thursday 13 November 2025, 2:00pm UK Time

EPSRC Sustainable Manufacturing and Mobility Team
Defra Circular Economy Science Team

Format of today's webinar

- Introductions to the team leading this funding opportunity (~2 minutes)

- Webinar Housekeeping (~2 minutes)

- Applying to the Reimagining Circularity Funding Opportunity (~25 minutes)

- Moderated Question and Answer Session (~30 minutes)

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Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs

Housekeeping

- This event is being recorded for asynchronous participation.

- This event is fully closed captioned. **CC**

- Attendees are muted and your video is turned off.

- We have addressed all accessibility requests that we received.

- **Tech issues and Chat Protocol:**
  Please only use the chat for raising technical issues during the webinar (your name may be shown).

- The raise hand function is not active.

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Questions Protocol

- Submit your questions as the webinar progresses using the Q&A function.

- Have questions about the UKRI Funding Service? Email support@funding-service.ukri.org

- Questions can also be submitted to manufacturingandCE@epsrc.ukri.org after the webinar.

- **Eligibility questions which refer to a specific individual or team should be emailed directly to us.**

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Introduction to the Team

EPSRC Sustainable Manufacturing & Mobility Team

Anke Davis
Joint Head of Sustainable Manufacturing & Mobility

Rehemat Bhatia*
Senior Portfolio Manager

Manika Sidhu
Portfolio Manager

Rachel Bishop
Deputy Director

EPSRC Head of Regional Engagement Team

Helen Niblock*
Head of Regional Engagement, North East, Yorkshire and the Humber

Defra Circular Economy Science Team

Lynsay Blake
Joint-Head of Circular Economy Science (Lead scientist)

Luke Ridley*
Joint-Head of Circular Economy Science

Matt Royle*
Senior Scientific Officer

John Angus
Higher Scientific Officer

Franja Prosenc
Defra R&D fellow

UK RI Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs

*Presenting today

Purpose of the Webinar

- Introduce and provide an overview of the Reimagining Circularity Funding Opportunity

- Ensure applicants understand key aims of the scheme

- Application Process

- Assessment Process

- Opportunity for Questions

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Please make sure that you read the funding opportunity document

https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/reimagining-circularity-outline-stage/

Background

EPSRC Green Growth ambitions:

"decarbonising our economy and society, creating an alternative energy future & developing truly circular economies"

★ Aim to drive strategic change through research and innovation that maximises impact in targeted areas of UK opportunity:

- **Clean Energy –** Discover, develop and support deployment of affordable, accessible, secure energy that delivers the UK's net zero 2050 targets

- **Sustainable Manufacturing & Mobility –** Enable sustainable, resilient, and productive UK wide manufacturing and mobility sectors and a truly circular economy

*EPSRC Thematic Teams Involved in this Funding Opportunity:

- Sustainable Manufacturing and Mobility

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Sustainable Manufacturing and Mobility

Our **vision** is for a sustainable, resilient, thriving and productive UK wide manufacturing sector and a truly circular economy.

To enable this, our **mission** is to work in partnership with societal partners across and beyond UKRI to:
- support high impact, interdisciplinary research that is co-created with users and broader societal partners
- actively manage an environmentally sustainable portfolio to accelerate translation and implementation of fundamental research to deliver real world impacts (economic, social and environmental), enhancing the UK manufacturing base and realising a more circular economy
- embed consideration of and design for manufacturing and the circular economy, in research and training across the EPS landscape and throughout the research and innovation lifecycle

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Vision & Mission

Driving towards a vision of a sustainable, resilient, thriving and productive UK wide manufacturing sector and a truly circular economy

Cross-cutting principles

- Driving active engagement with stakeholders
- Interdisciplinary co-creation
- Developing people
- Embedding environmental sustainability

Designing for sustainability

Near term priority research challenges

- Manufacturing the next generation
- Advancing recycling capabilities
- Materials for a sustainable future
- Realising the transformational impact of digital technologies
- Maximising value from existing resources and systems

Driving a systems approach

World leading, high impact manufacturing and circular economy research

UKRI

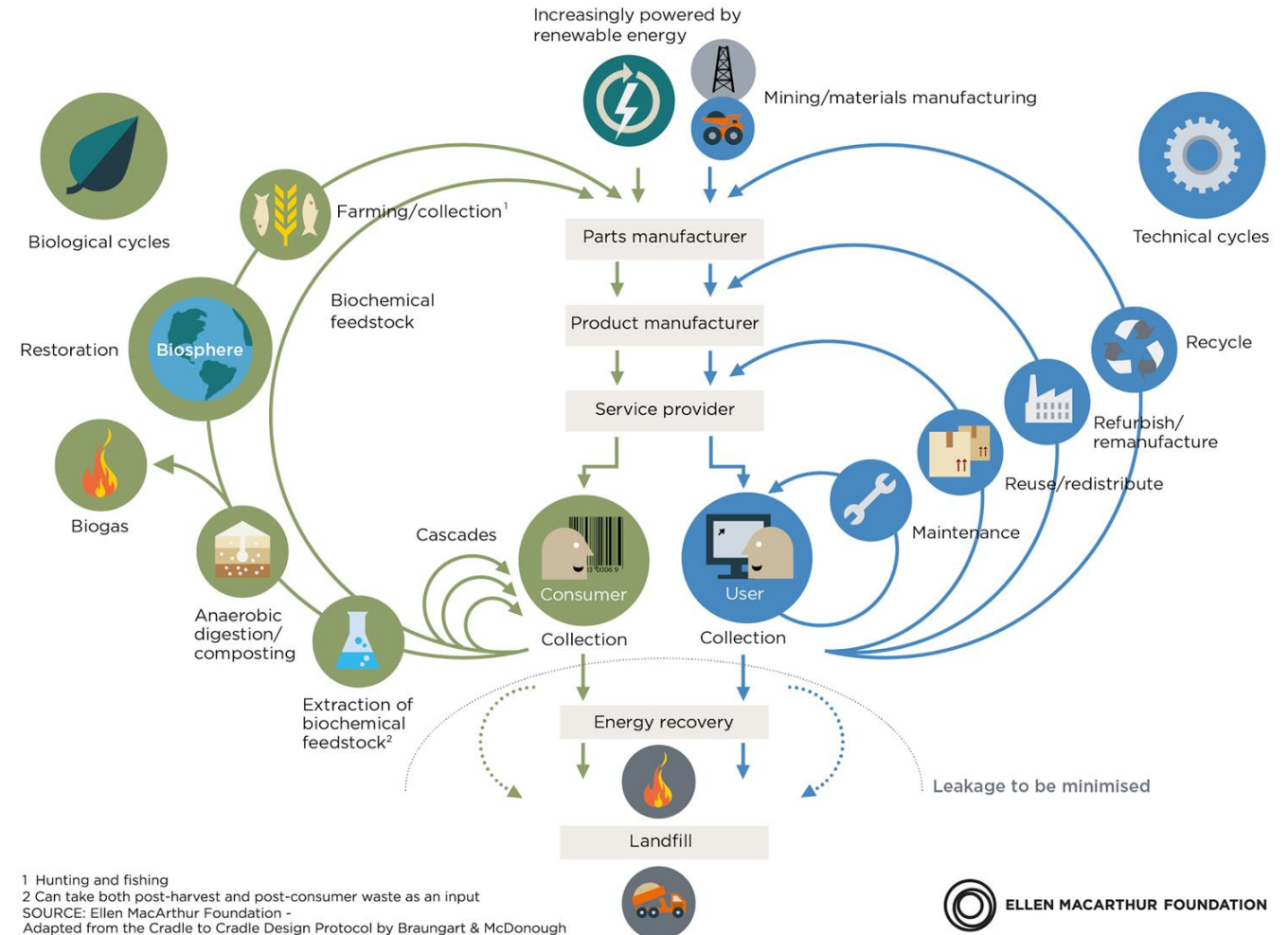Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

Circular Economy – how do we define it?

- **Producing and consuming less**

- **Keeping the products, materials, and resources we do use and produce in circulation at their highest value for as long as possible and recovering them after use;**

- **Importance of restoring nature.**
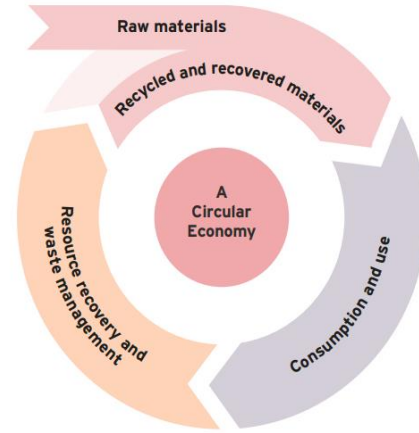
CIRCULAR ECONOMY - *an industrial system that is restorative by design*

1 Hunting and fishing
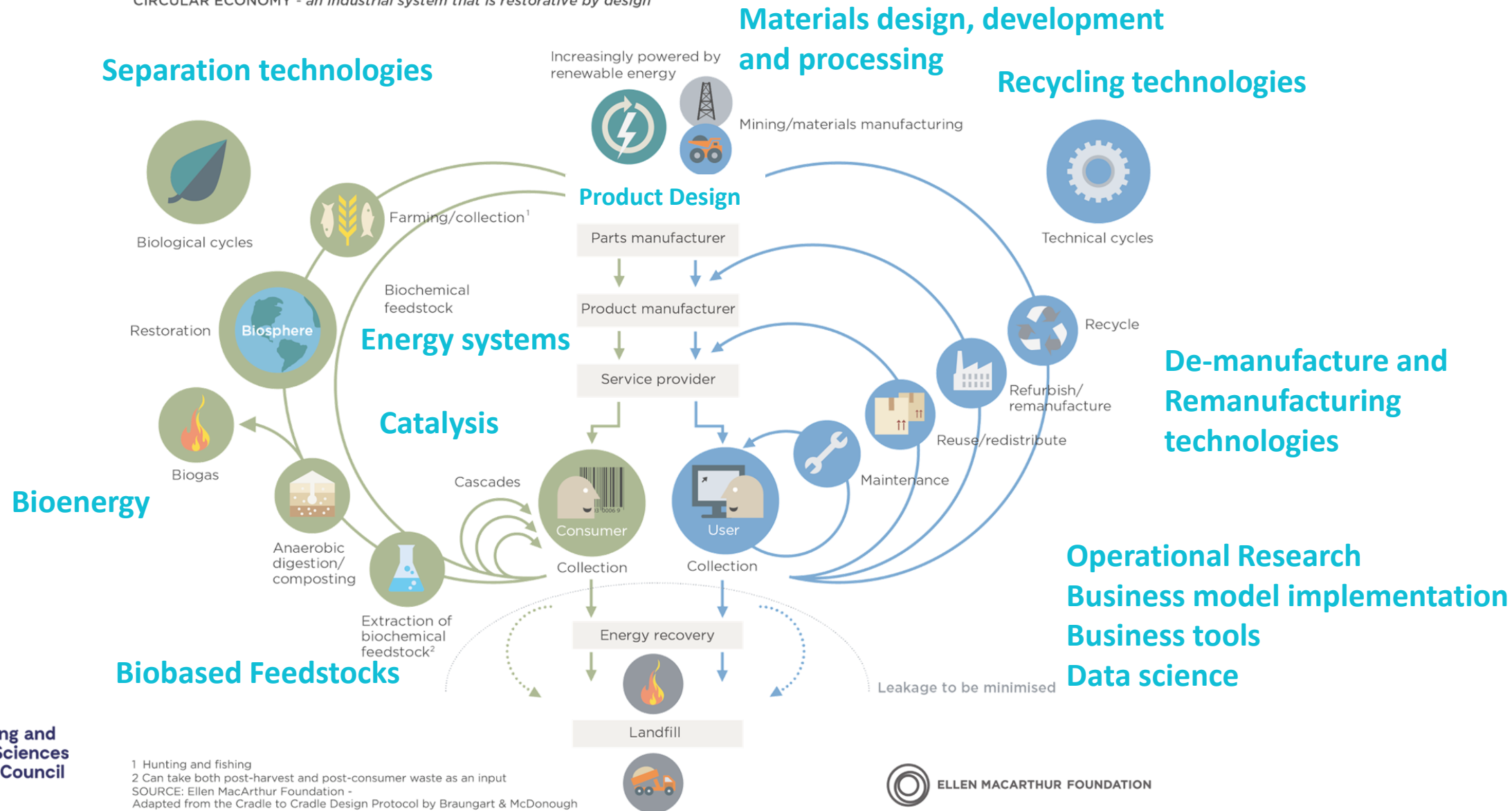2 Can take both post-harvest and post-consumer waste as an input
SOURCE: Ellen MacArthur Foundation -
Adapted from the Cradle to Cradle Design Protocol by Braungart & McDonough

Role of Engineering and Physical Sciences

CIRCULAR ECONOMY - *an industrial system that is restorative by design*

Separation technologies

Materials design, development and processing

Recycling technologies

Increasingly powered by renewable energy

Mining/materials manufacturing

Product Design

Parts manufacturer

Biological cycles

Farming/collection¹

Biochemical feedstock

Restoration

Biosphere

Energy systems

Product manufacturer

Service provider

Technical cycles

Recycle

De-manufacture and Remanufacturing technologies

Catalysis

Refurbish/remanufacture

Biogas

Cascades

Reuse/redistribute

Maintenance

Bioenergy

Anaerobic digestion/composting

Consumer

Collection

User

Collection

Operational Research
Business model implementation
Business tools
Data science

Extraction of biochemical feedstock²

Energy recovery

Biobased Feedstocks

Leakage to be minimised

Landfill

1 Hunting and fishing
2 Can take both post-harvest and post-consumer waste as an input
SOURCE: Ellen MacArthur Foundation -
Adapted from the Cradle to Cradle Design Protocol by Braungart & McDonough

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ELLEN MACARTHUR FOUNDATION

Recent EPSRC Circular Economy Activities

We strive to have a balance between larger grants and funding opportunities that are flexible in project size and duration.

Current managed mode opportunities
- Research to advance UK recycling capabilities – Full Stage (Invite Only, closed) https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/research-to-advance-uk-recycling-capabilities/

Large investments:

- RESCue-M2 Hub, RECREATE, DICE NetworkPlus, BuildZero,

Developing a Circular Economy Growth Plan
A Government Priority

Our mission:
- To restore and enhance the environment for the next generation, leaving it in a better state than we found it.

What we do:
- Defra oversees a wide range of areas including the natural environment, biodiversity, agriculture, fisheries, food, animal welfare, rural communities, and climate change adaptation.
- We want to drive a transition to a circular economy through policies that promote resource efficiency, waste reduction, and sustainable production and consumption.

Our Circular Economy objectives:
- The government has committed transitioning towards a circular economy.
- We have convened a Taskforce of experts to advise on circular economy across priority sectors.
- We want to embed circular economy RD&I within our flagship R&D programme to deliver transformative change.

Why does it matter?

And the rationale for government intervention

Boosting economic growth

- A circular transition could deliver economic growth capital investment and increased productivity.

- More efficient use of resources could save businesses money and increase their competitiveness.

- Redesigning products and processes to be more circular boosts innovation and investment.

Protecting our environment and sustainability

- Using products and materials in a circular way will slow down the use of natural resources, reduce landscape and habitat disruption and help to limit biodiversity loss.

- A circular economy is a key part of the UK's move to decarbonisation and net zero.
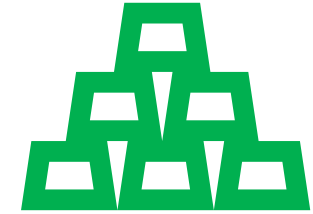
Reduce raw material dependence and improve resilience

- Supply of crucial raw materials globally is limited.

- The UK currently imports 80% of our raw material inputs, leaving us vulnerable to future global resource depletion and supply shocks.

- More circularity reduces our reliance on raw material imports.

There are many other potential benefits of moving from a linear to a circular economy, such as reducing waste crime and littering, or easing the cost of living through saving consumers money.

Delivering the Circular Economy Transition
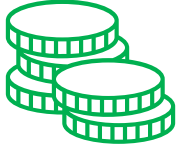
Delivering a Circular Economy is a **key contribution to the government's growth mission**, harnessing **investment into new business models** and **infrastructure** across the UK.

We will develop a **Circular Economy Growth plan** that will build on the significant reforms that government has already implemented, such as the Collection and Packaging Reforms. The growth plan will be developed with a **Circular Economy Taskforce** of experts from academia, industry, and civil society, and will set out:

how the circular transition can drive economic growth;

the interventions that government will prioritise across the rest of this parliament to kickstart the transition and reap the economic and environmental benefits as quickly as possible;

how we intend to partner with local places, academia, industry, investors and civil society to drive change right across the economy; and

how we will collaborate across the UK, given that the Strategy will be England-only in scope and that the Devolved Governments have already set out their own circular economy strategies or are in the process of doing so.

Areas Defra have funded

We have been working with UKRI and other government departments to fund research in the Circular Economy; here are three examples of live/closed funding calls

Advanced Recycling

- Defra-EPSRC

- Developing energy-efficient scalable, environmentally sustainable and economically viable recycling and separation technologies and systems needed to support them.

Research to advance UK recycling capabilities – UKRI

Contracts for Innovation

- DESNZ-Defra-Innovate

- Targeting construction, chemicals, and automotive sectors to assess and demonstrate the efficacy of circular solutions for resource efficiency.

Contracts for Innovation: Resource Efficiency Impact Validation Competition - GOV.UK

NICER programme

- UKRI-Defra

- Focused on multidisciplinary research to facilitate a transition to a circular economy comprising of 5 centres and a central hub.
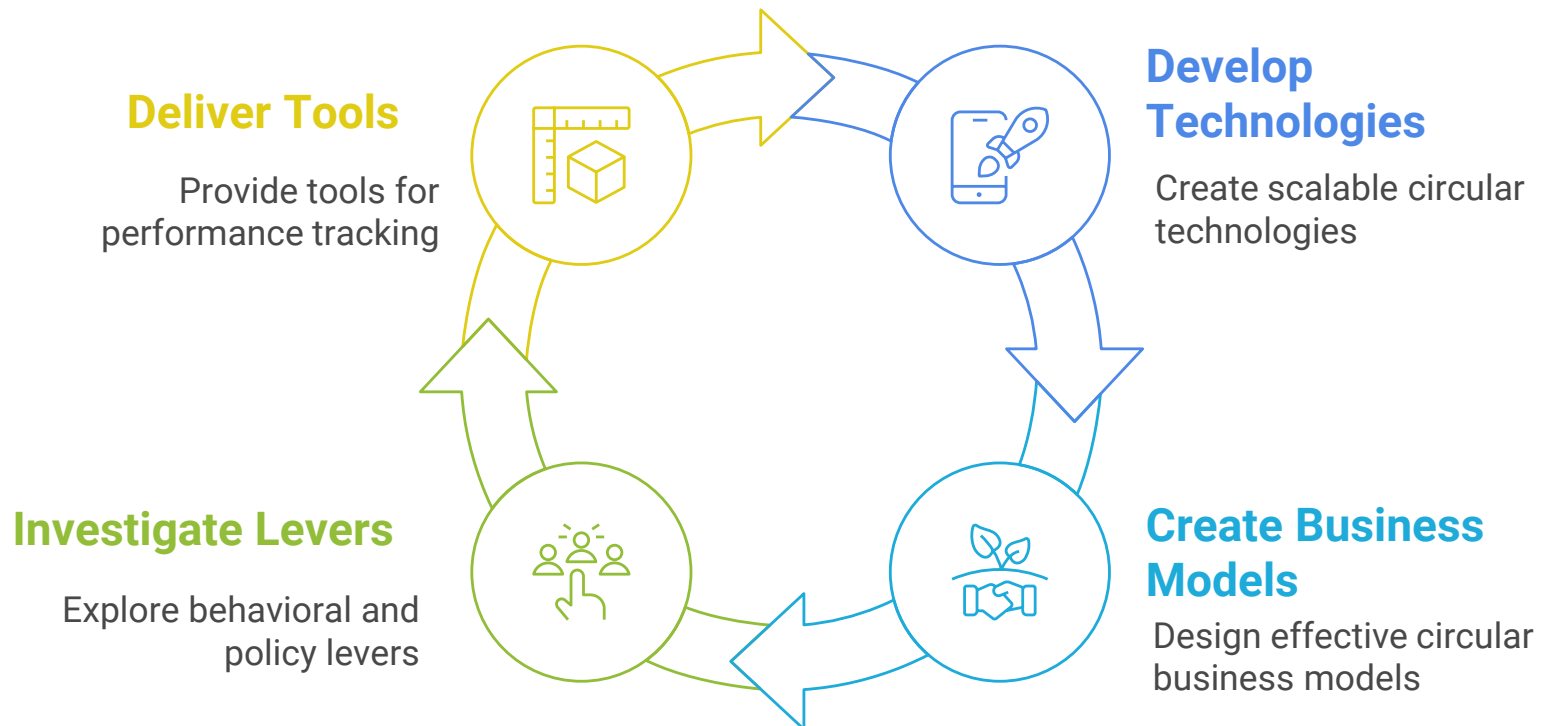
NICER Programme - CE Hub

A Collaboration to Advance Circular Economy

How will EPSRC-Defra collaborative activities focusing on circular solutions which maximise value and extend life transform the UK?

- The UK has always been a nation of researchers and innovators. Opportunity to continue to lead in building a circular economy.

- Futureproofs long-term growth and protects our natural world for future generations.

- To deliver a more resilient and regenerative economy, we need to consider new and innovative approaches, as well as revisit or refine current approaches and methodologies (or both) to be able to move towards a sustainable circular economy in a positive way.

- Strategic Collaboration to help transform the UK into a Circular Economy international leader.

- Opportunity focused on the circular solutions that maximise value and extend life of structures, products, components and materials, will directly deliver against EPSRC priorities and the UK government's long term environment targets.

Deliver Tools
Provide tools for performance tracking

Develop Technologies
Create scalable circular technologies

Investigate Levers
Explore behavioral and policy levers

Create Business Models
Design effective circular business models

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Reimagining Circularity: Core Aims

Build collaboration and knowledge exchange across research and societal partner communities within three specific challenge areas:

- Built Environment
- Data and Metrics
- Textiles

The Networks will be leaders in the community to create step changes in circular solutions which maximise value and are currently under-explored.

- **For example:** retrofit, repurpose, refurbish, repair, and solutions which synthesise the aforementioned solutions together with others, such as reuse.

Key 'Plus' Component: Flexible Fund (more later)
Three streams:
- seed-corn funding
- demonstrators/feasibility studies
- research to innovation or translational research

Reimagining Circularity: Core Outcomes

- Create visible, collaborative, innovative and interdisciplinary and/or transdisciplinary UK circular economy communities

- Drive progress to the challenge areas, identify research challenges, opportunities and priorities

- Foster an inclusive research environment that establishes a safe space to test new ways of working where failure is permitted and can be exploited to inform alternative approaches

- Lower barriers for engagement of non-academic societal partners, facilitating impact for circular economy action

- Grow capacity for and dissemination of good practice in circular economy.

- Provide early-stage support for progressing research outputs towards the next stages in creation of real-world innovation and impact via an allocation of the flexible funds

  - Improve knowledge exchange

  - Support initial testing of early-stage ideas in real world settings (feasibility studies) via demonstrators

  - Kick-start new collaborations between sectors, including via seed-corn funding

Funding Available

Budget (EPSRC and Defra will fund 80% Full Economic Cost of a Project)
- **Total fund:** £13,000,000

NetworkPlus Awards: One in each Challenge Area	Maximum Per Award (100% FEC)	Maximum EPSRC-Defra Contribution Per Award (80% FEC)	Funding duration
Built Environment			
Data and Metrics	**£5,410,000**	**£4,320,000**	**Up to 36 months**
Textiles			
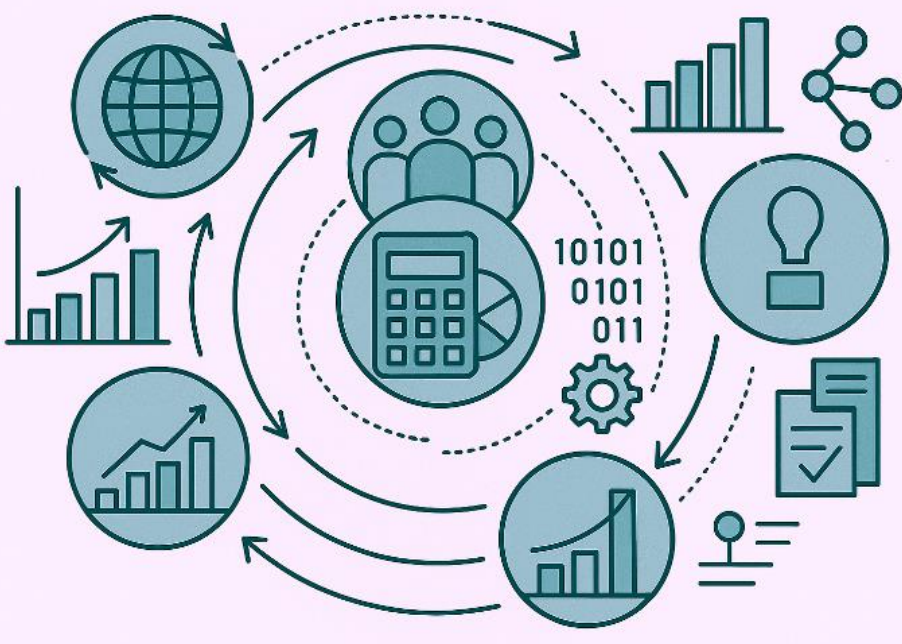
Flexible fund allocation
- at least 60% of overall funds applied must be allocated to flexible funds
- at least 50% of the flexible fund must be used for research to innovation or translational research to accelerate a route to market.

What is in Remit in Each Challenge Area?

Built Environment

Textiles

Data and Metrics

Please state your chosen area in your Intent to Submit and Application

Please see the funding opportunity for more information

Challenge Areas

Built Environment

Focus: Construction sector and skills development in circularity

Definition for this opportunity: spaces and structures that shape daily life including our homes, infrastructure, and public areas that support communities and businesses, as well as the products and materials of which they are composed.

- **Materials:** Aggregates, natural materials, concrete and cement, steel and other metals, timber, gypsum, glass, stone, clay products, and plastics, used within the built environment

- **Products**: Including heating and ventilation, lifts, bathrooms, furniture, fixtures and equipment, pre-formed structural elements

- **Structures:** Including buildings (residential, commercial, industrial and institutional), infrastructure (including transport and energy infrastructure)

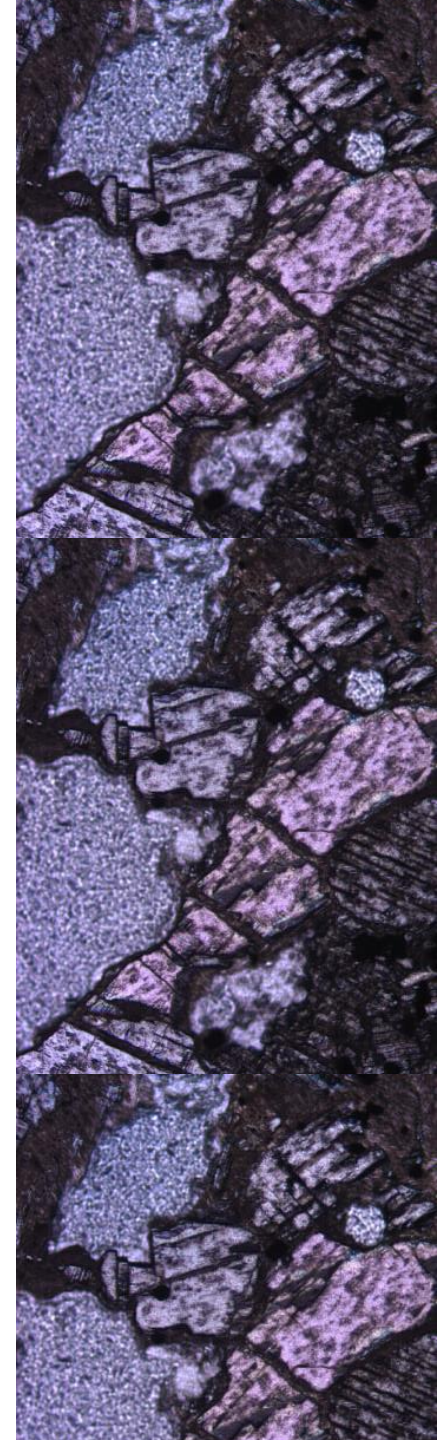**Please see the funding opportunity for exemplar outcomes**

Challenge Areas

Textiles

Definition for this opportunity:

Whole value chain, including:

- Clothing
- Fibres
- Furniture - for example, carpets and underlays
- Household textiles - for example, towels, bedding, pillows, duvets and mattresses
- Specialised uniform
    - Uniform with chemical components for PPE requirements included
- Technical textiles, or where it is a significant value contributor to the final product (for example, automotive)

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Please see the funding opportunity for exemplar outcomes

Challenge Areas

Data and Metrics

Cross-sector network advancing the circular economy through coordinated data sharing and the development of robust metrics, indicators, and frameworks to enable, measure, and accelerate progress across all Defra priority sectors.

- develop and integrate usable circularity metrics and indicators to track progress across circular solutions

- pull together data approaches to generate system-level insights into circular flows

- establish standards, protocols and frameworks to support interoperability, material traceability and ethical data governance

- enable the business use of circular economy data, circular business models, strategies and digital infrastructure to support decision-making and innovation

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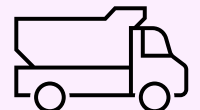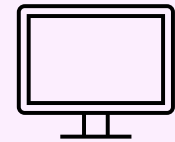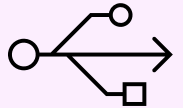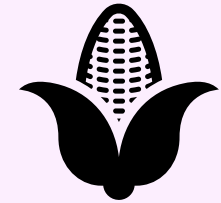
What is in Remit for All Projects?

Circular solutions which maximise value and extend life:
- ★ Refuse
- ★ Rethink
- ★ Redesign
- ★ Remanufacture
- ★ Retrofit
- ★ Reduce
- ★ Reuse
- ★ Repair
- ★ Refurbish
- ★ Repurpose

Two concepts which complement the circular solutions
- ★ Servitisation
- ★ Circular business models

Please see the Funding Opportunity for definitions – listed under Additional Information

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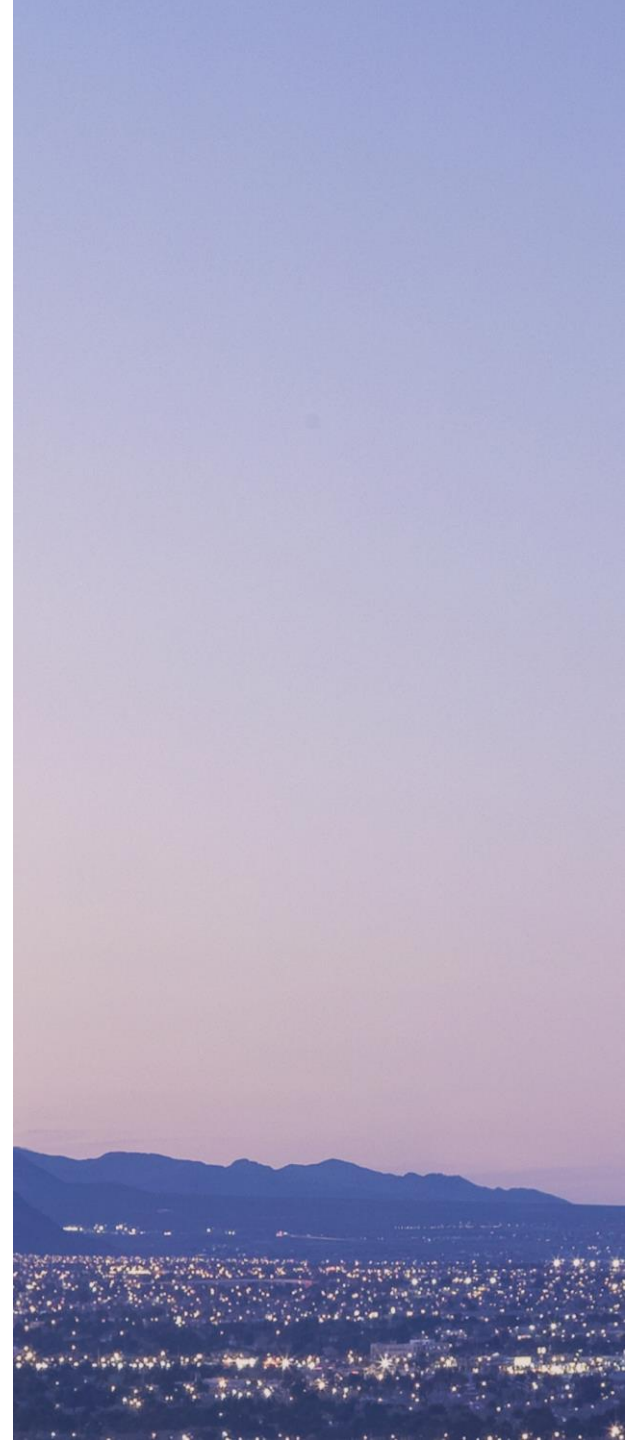
What is in Remit for All Projects?

- Circular solutions which maximise value and extend life
- Design for circularity
- NetworkPlus thematic work can, and is encouraged to, reach many areas across the entire value chain from extraction to before the end of life.
- Generate robust, scalable, and policy-relevant evidence to support circular economy transitions.
- Interdisciplinary approaches and engagement with real-world data contexts strongly encouraged.

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Please note:
Funds cannot be requested to support the NetworkPlus to carry out research-related activities. Please seek these through the normal mechanisms (for example, EPSRC responsive mode funding) or via open competition using the flexible funds.

Really Reimagine Circularity When Articulating Your NetworkPlus Vision

- Be adventurous and ambitious with the potential for high impact

- Address real-world challenges with respect to the priority sectors and cross-cutting theme and how that will deliver impact

- Prioritise environmental sustainability throughout the programme and across the life cycle of a circular process, to support sustainable approaches in relevant sectors and a greener UK economy

- Consider the whole system (technological, economic, social, cultural, and environmental) within which the proposed research outputs would sit.

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What is not in Remit for All Projects?

Please ensure that your NetworkPlus:

- Does not have the majority of the proposed work outside of EPSRC remit. We will reject applications deemed to have a majority remit within another UKRI council. EPSRC reserves the right to make such remit decisions without reference to peer review

- Does not have a sole focus on recycling as this research area has been the topic of recent UKRI investments. We understand that you may collaborate with individuals who work in this discipline area, however, their expertise must be sought in a secondary/collaborative capacity

- Does not have a focus on one circular solution that maximises value. Your project should involve a combination of two or more strategies such as refuse, rethink, reduce, reuse, repair, refurbish, remanufacture, or repurpose.

- Does not have a focus which would fit within the remit of the Research to Advance UK Recycling Capabilities funding opportunity

- Does not have a focus that is circularity of plastic packaging, as this topic has been the subject of several recent UKRI investments

Other Council Remits and Co-Creation

Applicants are expected to **co-create solutions between different disciplines**, **within and beyond EPSRC's remit, as appropriate.**
However:
• Overall majority of the research proposal must be within EPSRC remit*

- Workstreams co-created appropriately with interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary collaborators, or both.
- Co-create with external societal partners within spaces beyond academia who can provide further understanding of the contextual factors that influence the systems at appropriate disciplinary interfaces.

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*EPSRC reserves the right to make remit decisions without reference to peer review.

Disciplinary Approach Definitions

Circular Economy work is often **inter- and/or transdisciplinary.**
**Multidisciplinarity** is out of scope for this opportunity.

Interdisciplinarity
REF 2021 Interdisciplinary Advisory Panel Final Report definition (see UKRI Funding Finder page)
- Significant interaction between disciplines and/or moves beyond established disciplinary foundations in applying or integrating approaches from other disciplines
- Co-creation of frameworks
- Reciprocal benefits for all disciplines involved
- Integration of disciplines across all parts of a programme of work

Transdisciplinarity
"Research that transgresses boundaries between disciplinary knowledge or integrates different bodies of knowledge and actively co-creates knowledge between academic and societal partners such as policymakers or business."
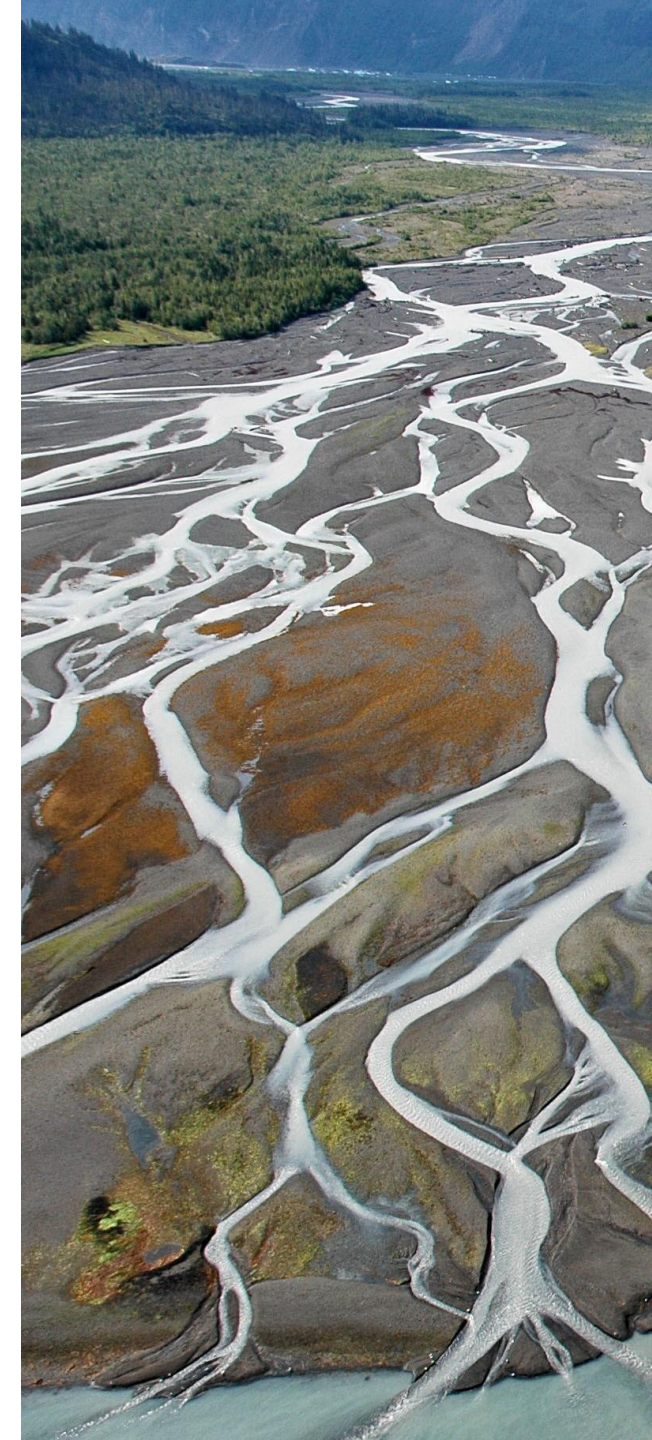

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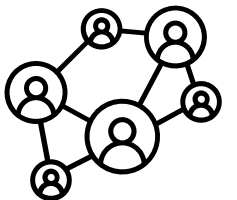Food & Rural Affairs

Core elements of the Network Plus

- **Engage widely and be inclusive**

- **Identify and address challenges and opportunities**

- **Support UKRI research strategy and government strategy**

- **Engage with different places in the United Kingdom**

UK Research and Innovation

UKRI Strategy 2022–2027
Transforming tomorrow together
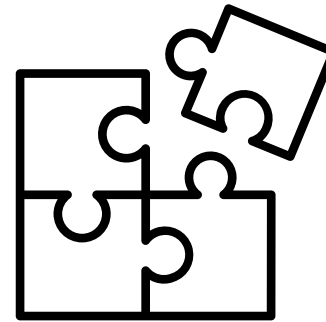
Engage, include and champion early and mid-career researchers, and professional research enabling staff. For example by inclusion on the management team, intentional mentorship, and/or by provision of opportunities which particularly benefit individuals in these career stages **and allow them the opportunity to build their networks**

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Please see Funding Finder page for more information

Expectations of the Network Plus

- **Community building:** Build and support a community of academic and non-academic societal partners.

- **User engagement:** engage with research users in the conception and implementation of the network to maximise impact where appropriate e.g. academia, industry, third sector, small to medium size enterprises etc.

- **Activities:** Support collaboration, networking, horizon-scanning, and identify key research challenges. In generation of new ideas, help community to navigate government strategies and inform development of future strategy in circular economy.

- **Data Sharing Agreements:** Incorporate open data sharing agreements to allow greater transparency and collaboration.

- **Implement a systems approach:** place your NetworkPlus in the context of the wider system (technological, economic, social, cultural, and environmental) within which the proposed outputs would sit. These aspects should inform and influence the direction of the proposed NetworkPlus throughout its lifetime

Expectations of the Network Plus

Evaluation and Monitoring

- Plan to evaluate and monitor work including milestones and key performance indicators.

- Plan to develop and report case studies annually via submission of an annual report (see additional grant conditions on The UKRI Funding Finder) as Network Plus progresses.

- Expectation to report progress every six months to the Advisory Board and provide information on request to UKRI and Defra.

- Carry out continuous learning, be agile in activities, develop key performance indicators and adapt according to feedback.

- Annual reports used by UKRI and Defra to highlight outcomes and impact from the network, and in informing thinking about future research, innovation, and evidence for policy making.

The 'Plus' Element: Flexible Funds
What Can a NetworkPlus Team Use The Funding For?

You must allocate:
- at least 60% of overall funds you apply for to your Flexible Fund
- at least 50% of the Flexible Fund must be used for research to innovation or translational research to accelerate a route to market.

Flexible funding must be used to fund:

- Targeted place-based demonstrators/feasibility studies (academic or addressing government or industry challenges),

- Seed-corn funding (high-risk projects, collaborative projects)

- Research to innovation or translational research.

Members of the NetworkPlus team are ineligible to apply for the Flexible Funds. Funds must be awarded as part of an open competition to the community.

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The 'Plus' Element: Flexible Funds

Key Points

- Deliver impact and broader benefits to society, the economy, and the environment

- Funds made available at points during the NetworkPlus lifetime.

- Funds can be allocated to researchers at any organisation currently eligible for EPSRC funding.

- Include your Flexible Fund costs in your Costs section on The Funding Service

- Specify total size of the fund according to balance of activity that your team propose to undertake directly versus to disseminate via the fund.

- Robust and auditable process implemented distributing of budget externally. Explain how you will ensure processes for the allocation of funds are fair and transparent.

- Need for activities is identified by the NetworkPlus and agreed with UKRI and Defra.

The proportion of funding allocated to the Plus element is significant and therefore a large commitment for the network lead and lead organisation.

Flexible Fund Streams

Seed-corn funding

Small-scale high potential projects to stimulate new collaborations, pilot ideas and generate early-stage evidence which can lead to larger initiatives.

Research to innovation or translational research

High-risk collaborative projects which can translate existing academic research into practical scalable solutions.

Demonstrators/Feasibility Studies:
Research and development stage instead of pilot scale innovation. Intended to support feasibility studies that test early-stage ideas/research outputs in place-based real-world settings and showcase innovative circular economy approaches (next stages in the impact pipeline).

Examples of each funding stream can be found in the call text

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What would a successful NetworkPlus look like?

- Creation of leadership of diverse and inclusive interdisciplinary and/or transdisciplinary research communities (both new and existing) across academia, industry, and policy.

- Foster new connections between relevant communities and projects, including the involvement and support for early and mid-career researchers. Applicants are strongly encouraged to form and establish long-lasting partnerships in local governance/with individuals in policy, and with third sector community groups.

- Successful embedding of the development of early and mid-career individuals within all NetworkPlus activities

- Advocate for and propose good practices to enable others to take research outcomes forward in their own discipline (e.g. toolkits, taxonomies and roadmaps). Purpose should be applicable wider than research with tangible relevancy to policy (e.g. circular economy strategy for England)

- Deliver an increase in projects addressing timely and strategically important challenges in selected research areas and sectors.

- Flexible funding successfully used for seed-corn funds, demonstrators/ feasibility studies, and research to innovation/ translational research to deliver impact and broader benefits to society, the economy, and the environment

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Who can apply: Key Information

- **Individual UK Project Leads and Research Organisations:** Standard EPSRC eligibility requirements apply
- **Industrial project partners mandatory**
  - Businesses are not eligible applicant organisations
- **Project Lead: <u>One</u> application only**
- **Two projects in total**
  - **For example:** one submission as project lead and one as project co-lead, or two as project co-lead.

Organisational Submission Constraints:

No demand management or limits on the number of applications per organisation.

Senior professional enabling staff: Can be project co-leads. Please represent these staff as an integral part of the leadership team.

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Mandatory Intent to Submit Stage:
More information later…

What Expertise Do I Need in my Team?

Combine different areas of expertise and experience in team as appropriate to lead a NetworkPlus and achieve the stated outcomes, including community engagement, leadership and driving impact.

To foster innovative interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary research, or both, and cross-disciplinary interactions for researchers involved:
- **Teams**: two or more researchers representing two or more areas of expertise to apply.
- Bring together diverse communities spanning multiple types of societal partners and others with expertise in related areas, such as behavioural science, innovation and circular business models, from across the UK.

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Who can apply: Involvement of Early and Mid-Career Individuals

We expect networks to champion and engage with early and mid-career individuals.

What is EPSRCs definition of early and mid-career?
What we consider as early to mid-career is broad. It can span from those recently appointed to their first permanent academic position to those who hold a modest portfolio of grants and are looking to expand their network.

Please remember:
- If early and mid-career individuals will be named in your leadership team on application, please mention this in the 'Applicant and team capability to deliver' section of the application form on the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Funding Service
  - Provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate they fall in these career stages.
  - We will not consider years post-PhD or job title as a marker of career progression.
  - We recognise alternative career paths and value the diversity of career experiences.

Who Can Apply and Eligible Costs

For this Funding Opportunity, EPSRC's standard business rules on eligible costs and eligibility apply.

Please visit 'Costs you can apply for' and Roles in Funding Applications

Flexible Funds

- Sum awarded under the heading of 'flexible funds' can include both directly incurred and directly allocated expenditure.

- Project Lead responsibility to ensure ongoing governance to ensure correct usage and accountability of the funds.

- Funds must be reported on the final expenditure statement (FES) as awarded on the offer letter and a breakdown of the expenditure must be submitted along with the FES.

- Projects funded via the flexible fund awarded at 80% FEC. No net cost to a host organisation.

Eligible Costs

Directly Allocated Costs	Eligible?
Project Leads and Project Co-Leads	Yes
Estates	Yes
Other directly allocated costs	Yes
Directly incurred costs	Eligible?
Staff	Yes
Travel, subsistence and consumables for staff	Yes
Equipment (up to £25,000)	Yes
Exceptions	Eligible?
Norway and International Institute of Advanced System Analysis (IIASA) co-leads	Yes
Studentships (Masters, PhD)	No

- Indicative Costs requested but not assessed at Outline Stage
- You must employ a grant manager

Key NetworkPlus Activities which can be funded

Horizon Scanning	Sandpits, flexible fund open competitions	Reports, websites, briefings to facilitate impact and advance policy	Secondment support
Career development and training support for all involved	Networking events	Communication costs e.g. web server/presence for project duration	Equipment for networking, events, communication
Expert Working Groups	Workshops	Online discussion fora	Debates, lectures, seminars

Other projects as appropriate for the NetworkPlus, and to allow the NetworkPlus to meet expectations

Project partners

Industry project partners are mandatory for this Funding Opportunity

EPSRCs standard business rules will apply to this Funding Opportunity

How do I list my industry collaborators in my proposal? Is there a match funding requirement?
Include as project partners. Support from project partners should be appropriate to your project – there is no match funding requirement.

If I have international collaborators, how should I list them?
International collaborators should be included as project partners or visiting researchers.

Project partners: Can receive small amounts of funding from the grant, such as for travel and subsistence to attend project meetings. Extended visits should be listed as visiting researchers.

Visiting researchers: Support may be requested for visits by overseas collaborators to the UK for up to 12 months per individual. The application may include estates and indirect costs for any visiting researcher, regardless of whether the support being requested includes a salary contribution or is only travel and subsistence.

Please visit 'EPSRC Project Partners Guidance' and 'Project partners, subcontractors and collaborators'

Funding Available: What Cannot Be Funded in a Project?

Research Activities

Funds cannot be requested to support the NetworkPlus to carry out research-related activities.

Must be sought through the normal mechanisms (for example, EPSRC responsive mode funding) or commissioned via open competition using the Network Plus Flexible Funds.

PhD studentships

PhD studentships and funding associated with PhD studentships may not be included in the costs sought from EPSRC.

Equipment

- Equipment over £25,000 is not available through this funding opportunity. We will not be funding laboratory or research equipment for this funding opportunity.

- Personal computers are not eligible.

- **However:** equipment to facilitate communication, networking and events can be requested below £25,000.

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Further Considerations and Information

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

EPSRC aims to support a diverse and inclusive research environment where there is equality of opportunities.

We support people to work in a way that suits their personal circumstances.

This includes:

- career breaks
- support for people with caring responsibilities
- flexible working
- alternative working patterns

Please visit 'Equality, diversity and inclusion – EPSRC'

Integration of EDI in your application

Am I expected to know about EDI as an applicant?
Project teams are not expected to have specific expertise in EDI.
An EDI Plan will be requested at Full Stage.

What should I think about in my application?

- How you will support Capacity Building and Skills Development across and beyond the programme:
    - Team Formation
    - Career development for all involved – this includes your grant manager and research enabling staff.
    - Activity and Outcomes planning

Integrate EDI principles in all parts of the application.
- How will you foster a nurturing research culture?
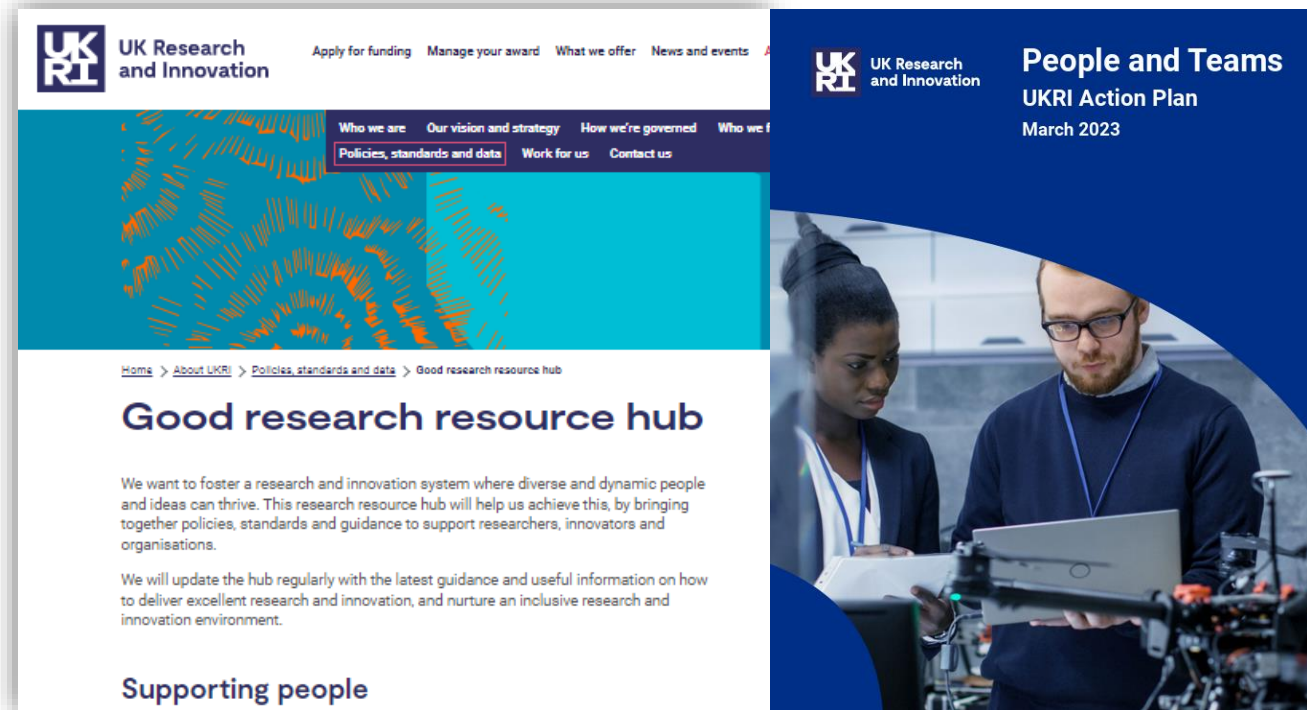
Vitae Researcher Developer Framework:
https://vitae.ac.uk/vitae-researcher-development-framework/

Other considerations

- Responsible Innovation

- Trusted Research and Innovation

- Export control

- Visas

- Environmental Sustainability

Additional Conditions

Community Network Expectations	User Engagement Strategy	Equality, diversity and inclusion	Project officer appointment
Advisory Board Membership and Operations	Flexible Funds	Publicity and Branding	Progress Reports
Management Structure	Management Resourcing		

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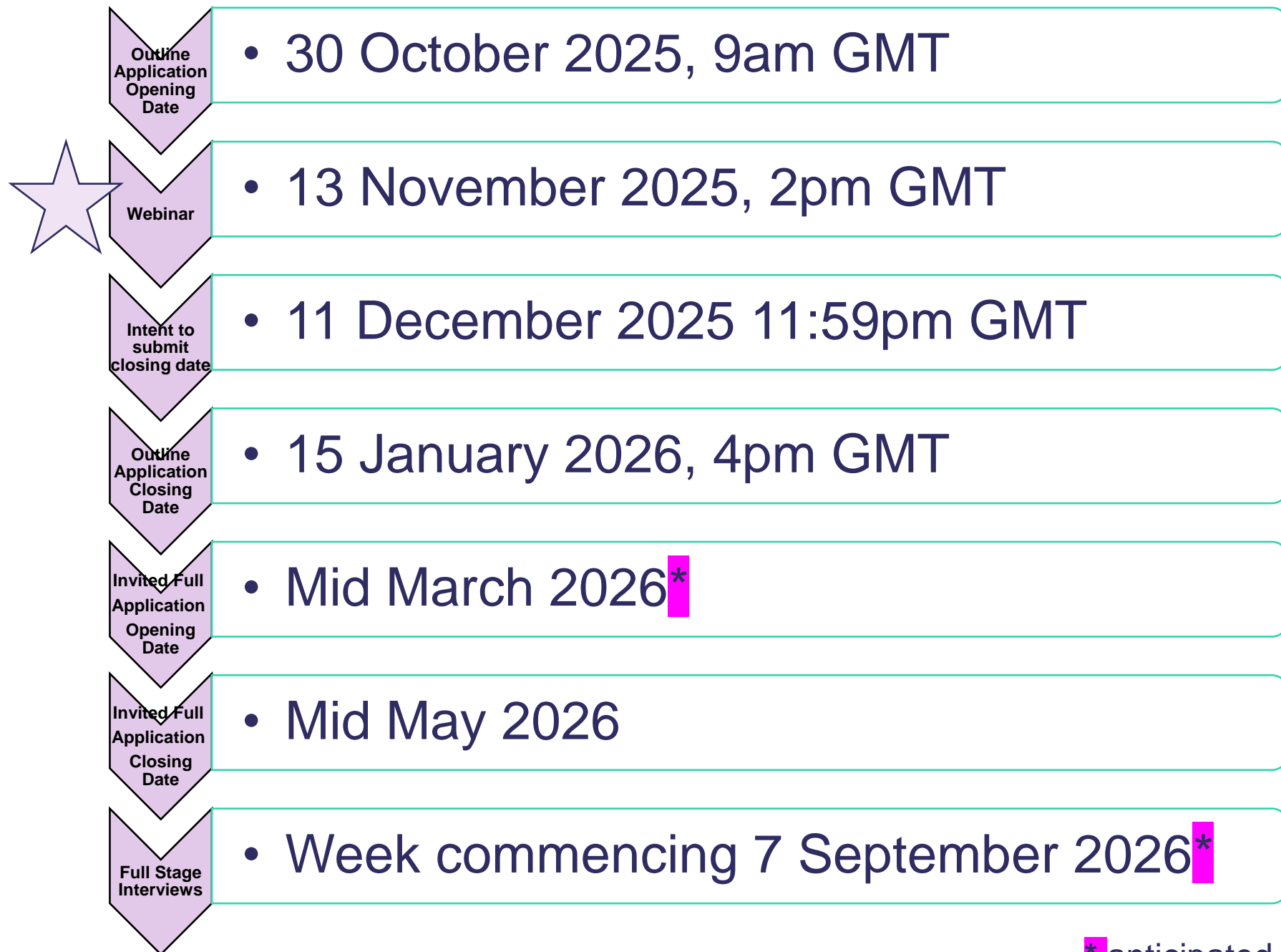Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs

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Application and Assessment process

Key Application Dates

UKRI can offer disability and accessibility support for applicants during the application and assessment process.

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Stage	Date
Outline Application Opening Date	• 30 October 2025, 9am GMT
Webinar	• 13 November 2025, 2pm GMT
Intent to submit closing date	• 11 December 2025 11:59pm GMT
Outline Application Closing Date	• 15 January 2026, 4pm GMT
Invited Full Application Opening Date	• Mid March 2026*
Invited Full Application Closing Date	• Mid May 2026
Full Stage Interviews	• Week commencing 7 September 2026*

*anticipated

Have you filled in an Intent to Submit?

This is a mandatory part of the application process

Link can be found in Funding Opportunity Page under How To Apply

https://engagementhub.ukri.org/epsrc-m-ce/reimagining-circularity-outline-its/

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EPSRC-Defra Reimagining Circularity Outline Stage - Intent to Submit

Overview

EPSRC-Defra Reimagining Circularity Outline Stage: Intent to Submit

Applicants who intend to submit an application to the EPSRC-Defra Reimagining Circularity Outline Stage Funding Opportunity should complete the following Intent to Submit by 11 December 2025 (23:59 UK Time). This funding opportunity can be viewed here: https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/reimagining-circularity-outline-stage/

Closes 11 Dec 2025
Opened 30 Oct 2025

Contact
EPSRC Sustainable Manufacturing and Mobility Team
manufacturingandce@epsrc.ukri.org
manufacturingandce@epsrc.ukri.org

Intent to Submit - What Will Be Requested?

The Intent to Submit (ItS) Stage will request the following details:

- Name of project lead
- Name(s) project co-lead(s) at the time of ItS submission.
    - This list can change prior to outline submission deadline
- Project lead email address
- Project lead UK academic host institution
- Your chosen Challenge Area
- Proposed project draft title
- The Funding Service application reference number.
    - You will need to begin an application on the Funding Service to get this number but will not be required to submit until the closing date

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UKRI can offer disability and accessibility support for UKRI applicants and grant holders during the application and assessment process.

Submission Process - Outline Applications

Proposals can be multi-institutional, however only one application form should be submitted for each bid.

Outline submissions should be made using The Funding Service. Please ensure sufficient time to:

- Create accounts for members of your project team who do not currently have one.

- Prepare for your research organisation's submission process

- Leave enough time between submitting your proposal to your research office and the funding opportunity closing date.

What do I need to submit on The UKRI Funding Service?

1. **Summary**
2. **Core Team**
3. **Outline Application Questions**
   - Vision and Approach
   - Applicant and Team Capability to Deliver
   - Costs
   - Place
   - Added Value
   - Flexible Fund
4. **Project Partners and letters/emails of support***

*Requested to manage conflicts of interest during the Assessment Process

How will my application be assessed?

Details of each assessment stage are listed in the funding opportunity guidance.
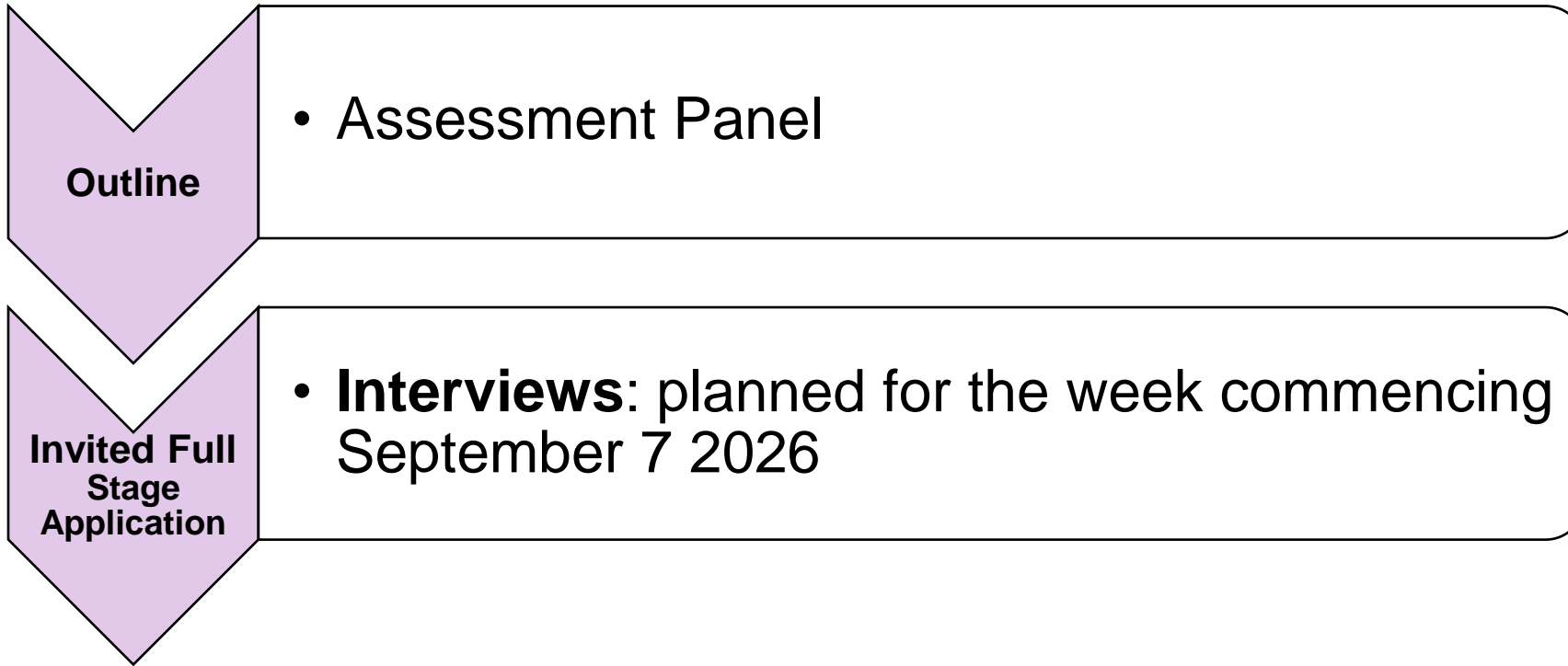
Outline

- Assessment Panel

Invited Full Stage Application

- **Interviews**: planned for the week commencing September 7 2026

How will my application be assessed?

Assessment process: Defra Involvement

- Recommend panel members

- Observer at the panel to advise on Defra interests and scope.

- Will not be present as a panel member influencing the rank order.

Funding Decisions: Portfolio Approach

Subject to a satisfactory quality threshold being met:

- Decisions may be made using a portfolio approach to ensure an appropriate geographic coverage across the UK. We will seek as much as is practical to avoid excessive clustering of investments in any one geographic area.

- Portfolio distribution considered at both stages in the assessment process (shortlisting at outline and full stages).

Assessment Criteria – Outline Stage

- **Summary (550 words):** to identify the most suitable assessors for your application

- **Vision and Approach (4 sides of A4)*:** What are you hoping to achieve with your proposed work and How will you deliver it?

- **Applicant and Team Capability to Deliver (1000 words)*:** How will the application team deliver the proposed research programme? Why are you the right team to deliver this work?

- **Costs:** What are the estimated expected costs of the proposed work?

- **Flexible Fund (1000 words)*:** How will you use and manage the flexible fund?

- **Place (500 words)*:** What are the place related challenges or opportunities for your application?

- **Added Value (250 words)*:** What is the added value that this network will enable that would not be possible otherwise?

Sections in The UKRI Funding Service have specific sub-prompts: Please read these carefully.

More information about assessment criteria can be found on the UKRI Funding Finder.

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Full Application Stage Criteria

- vision and approach
- applicant and team capability to deliver
- project partners
- project partners letters of support
- facilities
- resources and cost justification
- flexible fund
- place
- added value
- stakeholder engagement

- co-creation and systems approach
- EDI Plan
- governance and advisory structures
- programme leadership and management
- environmental sustainability
- ethics and responsible research and innovation (RRI)

At Full Stage: Describe clear and credible targets and success measures, including key performance indicators (KPIs) within the governance and advisory structures assessment criterion.
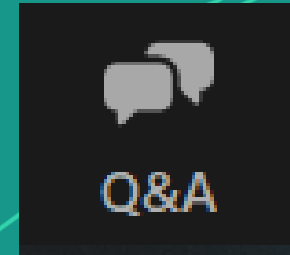
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Questions?

- Submit your questions using the Q&A function.

- Eligibility questions pertaining to an individual or specific applicant group should be emailed directly to us.

- Have questions about the UKRI Funding Service? Email support@funding-service.ukri.org

Thank you

- Look out for the Webinar Outputs!
  They will be published on the Funding Finder soon.
- Another question?
  - Please get in touch:
    - manufacturingandce@epsrc.ukri.org

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