

Network Plus: antifungal resistance in the environment

Webinar Q&A 15 October 2025

You should refer to the opportunity information on the [UKRI Funding finder](#) for full details of this funding call.

We are looking for a proposal to develop and run a network of antifungal resistance experts and stakeholders and not a research grant.

Answers to questions raised at the webinar about the call are below. If you have other questions please direct them to healthyenvironment@nerc.ukri.org.

	Question	Asker Name	Answer
1	The resource required to run the network plus is onerous. It is extremely difficult for universities to justify leading this type of activity because it is administratively burdensome.	Pre-submitted	We would expect administration support and staff costs for management to be built into the grant and so paid and supported by NERC, thus it should not be a burden for the RO. We would be concerned were those costs not included in any bid.
2	The flexible fund element looks as though it may not be financially viable for Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) to administer...leading to HEIs having to fund 20% of the shortfall as a cash contribution.	Pre-submitted	We sympathise with this point, but we have to follow the 80% FEC model and do not have flexibility around that. If the flexible funds are awarded to other HEIs, they will have to find the additional 20% of the requested funds. Once NERC has agreed on how we want the network to use the flexible fund, we give the network lead RO the funds, the RO will then act as the funder, designing and running any calls. The RO will then pay the flexible fund projects at 80% FEC, and the RO that is in receipt of the flexible fund project will provide the remaining 20%, same as they would if

			they received funding from NERC as we only pay at 80% FEC. The RO must follow UKRI eligibility rules, so the PL of these projects must be at an eligible RO, and award funding at 80% FEC for HEIs and 100% FEC for non-HEIs. Although non-HEIs can only claim for minor costs, such as T&S.
3	Are passive coatings in scope?	Pre-submitted	The call is for a network to deliver community capability and awareness in addressing the pathways of AFR on the environment from three sectors, it is hard to answer what is in and out of scope. Coatings are likely just one factor that helps define that pathway and emergence and so are of interest as part of the system, but they are not a research challenge for the call. The flexible fund is to be defined working with the network, and they may be in remit for this.
4	Fungal AMR is a global issue that cannot be resolved locally - are there restrictions on how the funds can be used for global activities/partners or to link existing global FAMR networks?	Michael Bromley	Whilst a global issue, the UK has specific challenges and movement of AFR in its environment, and management and regulatory systems that are specific to the UK. We would wish to see the funds used to understand and address AFR within the UK, this can include how a global perspective can inform that UK system or gaining UK-relevant understanding from partners.
5	If the flexible fund is with-held and not part of the initial contract it will be extremely complicated to distribute funds without contracts, as the Universities will not accept the risk. This has been a major issue in the UKRI (BBSRC) AMR networks. How	Darius Armstrong-James	Please also see question 2. The Network will be supported as a single grant separated from the flexible fund, which will be initially held by NERC, and treated as a separate funding

	will this be managed so the same problem does not recur.		stream subsequently for the lead RO to disburse at 80% FEC (100% non-HEIs). The exact process for disbursement of the flexible fund will be determined with the successful application. Please contact the mailbox if you have further queries on this matter.
6	A great- and challenging - call. 'Wider impacts on ecosystems' widens the scope beyond AFR (for instance impact of fungicides on fungal communities & impact on soil fertility / carbon sequestration etc). How do you envisage the focus between AFR and wider ecological impacts to be managed?	Matthew Fisher	The focus of this call is to build a network to consider how AFR exists in the environment. The scope is purposefully broad to take a holistic perspective and begin to understand processes and impacts. We hope network activity will lead to recognising if and how AFR impact ecosystem function, and delivery of services. This is an important knowledge gap not addressed elsewhere.
7	Can International groups apply?	Anonymous Attendee	No, we do not fund overseas organisations as leads/co-leads except agreed ones including IIASA or Norway. Please include all other international collaborators (or UK partners not based at approved organisations) as project partners.
8	How will the proposed network activities be different to existing UKRI AMR networks like F1ANR or Target, which focus on fungal AMR?	Anonymous Attendee	Several AFR-focussed networks are currently active and are funded across multiple bodies and more medical or genomic focussed. This network is intended to have the natural environment at its heart and specifically look at the AFR pathways from three business sectors. It is expected the network would be collaborative and benefit from interaction with the established networks.

9	Are hospital and patient environments in scope?	Darius Armstrong-James	As a network call to identify pathways into the environment, neither hospital nor patient 'environments' are in scope as they are sources rather than the pathways. The flow of AFR or pathogens causing AFR once they emerge into the environment is in scope.
10	Would an international non-profit independent research organisation be eligible to apply as a co-lead with a UK lead?	Bakul Piplani	No, we do not fund overseas organisations as leads/co-leads except agreed ones in IIASA or Norway. Please include all other international collaborators (or UK partners not based at approved organisations) as project partners.
11	How do you expect the most of the £2.8M network fund to be spent if it is not focused on discovery research? 'Integrated datasets' are mentioned so could data scientists be employed?	Matthew Fisher	The decision on how to deliver the network is for applicants to identify. As a network, a wide variety of activities are potentially applicable. Through the life of the programme funders will work with the network to support activities. Research can be conducted through the flexible fund; however, the collation, analysis and interpretation of data for example is an acceptable part of network activity.
12	To what extent and how will this research be informed by and help meet the policy commitments in the UK National AMR Action Plan such as policy commitment 1.3 that states "We will implement effective waste management, wastewater treatment methods and agrochemical stewardship to minimise dissemination of AMR and AMR-driving chemicals into the environment".	Anonymous Attendee	This call for a network has the NAP as a cornerstone of its thinking. It is intended to support bridging knowledge gaps and bring together thinking, expertise and data, and those involved in the challenge of AFR. The programme should be seen as providing the means to take a step forward in fulfilling commitments.
13	Is the selection of antifungal resistance in plant pathogens in scope, or is	Nichola Hawkins	Agriculture is a key sector driving environmental

	agriculture only considered as a potential driver of resistance in clinical pathogens?		pathways. Recognising this is an environmental pathways network, the 'selection' of resistant pathogens should be addressed in that context. This call recognises pathogens driving AFR come from multiple sources.
14	Other international stakeholders such as WHO, and global medical societies working on AMR (including environmental aspects) -ISHAM, ECMM, etc have resources and expertise that would be valuable as part of a One Health approach. Would these be welcome as collaborators?	Alberto Munoz	Yes, such collaborations where knowledge, data, and connections can expand the strength of the UK network to understand UK pathways would be welcome.
15	Is there a mechanism by which non-AMR network participants with expertise in, for example fungal ecology in the environment, can join existing or newly formed networks. That is: how do folk at the "fringes" of conventional AMR get involved?	Mark Tibbett	As a network call, we are seeking a structure that embraces those who have something to offer a complex systems-style challenge. It can be expected this would include those with knowledge and skills that are not directly linked to AFR expertise. Such people can become a major strength of the network. Those preparing applications should reach out to wider remits and such people are encouraged to articulate their 'offer' to the network.
16	There are some novel fungicides that are only used in other countries but are likely to be approved in the UK. Would the network be able to fund activities outside the UK to investigate the impact of these fungicides?	Michael Bromley	Recognising this is a network call, if the network activity can demonstrate impact and pathways knowledge relevant to the UK then such activity could be in scope. For such questions, please contact the office in advance of submission.
17	Is the domestic indoor environment in scope for this call?	Paul bowyer	The indoor environment is out of scope for the programme; focus should be on when AFR or organisms emerge from

			indoors and understanding their subsequent pathways and activity.
18	Can an international research organisation be a sub-contractor on a proposal led by a UK Lead?	Anonymous Attendee	Yes, an international organisation or individual can be named as a subcontractor on a UKRI funded project. They must be providing a defined piece of work or service, and this must be fully justified. All subcontracts must be within subsidy control limits and comply to trusted research policies. Note that if the contribution to the project is to be broader than a defined, costed piece of work, they should be listed as Project partners and only minor costs (e.g. travel) can be requested for their involvement. They can be listed as having a dual role (Project partner and subcontractor) only if they are providing both a defined piece of work or service which incurs non-minor costs and are providing in-kind input to the project. These roles must be clearly explained and justified in the proposal. See the NERC handbook from paragraph 81 for further details on subcontracts.
19	Is the wastewater infrastructure in scope?	Anonymous Attendee	Wastewater treatment plants and infrastructure such as pipework would be considered a source beyond the actual environment and so out of

			scope. The interest to this network is at the point of emergence from the infrastructure to the wider environment.
20	To build on question of the domestic environment. In the hospital system pathogens can build biofilm in the hospital environment that is then washed into the external environment. Is this in scope to look at preventing biofilm in hospital systems	Derek Irvine	The interest in a biofilm for this programme will be as it emerges from a source into the environment, or if the source is within the environment. Solutions focussed beyond the environment such as within hospitals or hospital pipes are not in scope.
21	Is this programme interested in sources, pathways, impacts, and solutions?	Anonymous Attendee	We are interested in sources in as much as when they emerge into the environment and their subsequent pathways and impacts. Understanding the situation within the source is out of scope for this call.
22	Could you clarify about the lead being an environmental scientist? Please could you clarify what areas you are classing as environmental science to be able to lead on this opportunity?	Anonymous Attendee	The lead for this network needs to be an effective leader for the environmental community, understand the AMR issues that are of both direct and indirect relevance to that community, and be able to connect the environmental space to a broad suite of sectors from which AMR emerges. For these reasons NERC has determined this network needs to be led by an environmental scientist, and within that someone that is currently embedded in the environmental questions being considered. Such a person should consider themselves to be demonstrably operating within the NERC remit .