

Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

Engineering Healthier Environments: Micro Network and Micro Network Plus

Questions asked and answered in the webinar on 6 August 2024

Question	Answer
<p>Does the project lead need to be an engineer or academic from an Engineering department? Or would you consider networks led by people from related disciplines such as natural scientists/atmospheric scientists/health?</p>	<p>We welcome multidisciplinary teams with engineering and physical sciences at the heart. As long as the overall network is within engineering and physical sciences remit, then the project lead can be from any related discipline (considering they are based at an organisation eligible to receive funding from EPSRC).</p>
<p>Regarding the involvement of early career researchers (ECR), is there scope for an ECR to lead on this?</p>	<p>Yes, as long as the early career researcher is eligible to apply as a project lead. Project leads and co-leads must be academic employees – lecturer or equivalent – of an eligible organisation and must be resident in the UK. Any fellows holding fellowships aimed primarily at the postdoctoral level are not eligible to apply. Please see more details on eligibility of individuals here: Check if you're eligible for funding – EPSRC – UKRI.</p>
<p>Can sandpit funding eligible costs support carers for attendees (for example childcare for multi-day events)?</p>	<p><i>To be answered in due course.</i></p> <p><i>In the meantime, please find general information on support for carers here: Equality, diversity and inclusion support – EPSRC – UKRI</i></p>

Question	Answer
<p>Can the project lead and/or the leadership team apply for the sandpit funding (funding for the feasibility studies)? Can other researchers (outside of the leadership team) from the host organisation apply for the sandpit funding?</p>	<p>We would expect the flexible fund budget for the sandpit-like activities to be commissioned via a robust peer reviewed process where the allocation of funds must be fair and transparent and within the framework of the UKRI Principles of Assessment and Decision making.</p> <p>Therefore, we would strongly recommend NOT allowing the grant holder and/or the leadership team to apply for the sandpit funding. Even if the grant holder and/or leadership team were to be removed from the assessment and decision process, this would not completely manage the conflict of interest.</p> <p>Other researchers (outside of the leadership team) from the host organisation can apply for the sandpit funding. We do however expect this to be a nationwide effort involving the best people across the UK and as already mentioned above, processes for allocation of funds must be fair and transparent.</p>
<p>Is the expectation that the network will have multiple academic institutions involved, or can the multidisciplinary teams be based between different departments (and external stakeholders) within one institution?</p>	<p>It is up to you to justify your approach and address all the assessment criteria. However, please note that it is unusual to not involve multiple organisations in network-like opportunities.</p>
<p>Other than the project lead, is there a limit on the number of project co-leads in this bid?</p>	<p>Although there is no formal limit, we generally recommend having a maximum of 5 investigators (one Project lead and four Project co-leads). However, this is guidance rather than a hard limit and we expect applicants to build an appropriate number of Project co-leads relevant to the expertise needed to lead the network. The panel will assess the capability of the applicants and the project team to deliver the project, so please bear this in mind when assembling the network leadership team.</p>
<p>Is there a limit to the number of applications from an institution?</p>	<p>No, there is no limit for number of applications per institution for this opportunity.</p>

Question	Answer
<p>One of the priority areas is 'Designing and adapting environments to help people be more active'. It is mentioned that this could include technologies to support physical activity and strength training. Do you have any specific thoughts/directions around the 'strength training' element in terms of how this might apply to environments?</p>	<p>We do not have any specific directions around this topic, and we look forward to seeing various approaches addressing the scope of the funding opportunity.</p> <p>'Designing and adapting environments to help people be more active' was one of the themes which strongly resonated with participants of the Engineering Healthier Environments workshop we held in October 2023. You can find the report from this workshop here.</p>
<p>Can the funds for sandpit cover patients and public involvement and engagement (PPIE) costs for end users?</p>	<p>Yes, standard EPSRC rules apply for the eligibility of costs for the sandpit funds. Please find more information regarding eligible costs here: Costs you can apply for – EPSRC – UKRI. The PPIE costs are covered in the section called 'Proof of concept studies in healthcare'.</p>
<p>Can you have a joint lead, i.e. joint project leads at different institutions?</p>	<p>No, you will need to identify only one project lead.</p> <p>Please note that submitting of the Intention to submit form by the 18 September is mandatory, so please bear in mind that the name under which you submit the form will need to match the project lead's name on the full proposal.</p>
<p>Can there be researcher co-leads (e.g., early career researchers) in addition to the recommended 4 project co-leads? If yes, how many?</p>	<p>Yes, researcher co-leads can be part of the core team and there is no limit on how many of them can be involved. The panel will assess the capability of the applicants and the project team to deliver the project, so please bear this in mind when assembling the network leadership team.</p>
<p>Does the Norwegian cooperation agreement extend to the feasibility studies? Can Norwegian sandpit participants receive funding from the plus aspect of the network?</p>	<p><i>To be answered in due course.</i></p> <p><i>In the meantime, please find general information on the Money follows cooperation agreement here: Money follows cooperation agreement with Research Council Norway – UKRI</i></p>
<p>Regarding the network, would a UK-based network be preferred to an international one?</p>	<p>We do not prioritise one over the other. International collaborations are welcome, however, we would like to see the centre of gravity in the UK and to understand the relevance of the research to the UK and how it will contribute to healthy lives in the UK, even though it may overall contribute to global challenges.</p>

Question	Answer
<p>How much emphasis should bids have on outcomes beyond just informing future EPSRC strategy in this space? Should there be evidence of impact such as policy, stakeholder take on of research outcomes etc.?</p>	<p>As the maximum duration (24 months) of the Micro Networks and Micro Networks Plus is shorter than a standard network would be, we do not expect the networks to focus solely on achieving high impacts in the real environment. We expect the networks to mainly lay the foundations, help frame the ideas, and find the right collaborations for future research in the space of engineering healthier environments. In case of the Micro Network Plus, we also expect the networks to test the feasibility of some of the research ideas within the topic.</p>
<p>Should project lead have a strong track record in the area?</p>	<p>No, as the project lead does not need to come from the engineering healthier environments background. The right set of expertise should lie within the whole core team. We welcome multidisciplinary teams with engineering and physical sciences at the heart.</p>
<p>Can we pay for international speakers or partners to visit us or vice-versa?</p>	<p>Yes, standard EPSRC rules regarding eligibility of costs apply. Please see more information regarding 'Visiting researchers', 'Travel and subsistence' and 'Other costs' here: Directly incurred costs – UKRI.</p>
<p>Are you expecting multiple environments to be included in an application or should the applications be focussed on one environment?</p>	<p>It is up to you how you decide to approach the opportunity. We appreciate that our definition of the environment is very broad, and we do not expect you to cover all the environments mentioned in the scope. We will not prefer proposals which include multiple environments to those focusing on one environment and vice versa. All proposals will be ranked based on how well they address the assessment criteria.</p>
<p>Can a professional staff (for example a project manager) be a project co-lead?</p>	<p>Yes, they may, though you can also include them without being a project co-lead. Please find more details regarding the core team roles here: Roles in funding applications: eligibility, responsibilities and costings guidance – UKRI</p>
<p>Can the grant be supplemented by industry?</p>	<p>Yes, you can list your industrial partners and their cash and in-kind contributions in the 'Project partners' section of the application.</p>

Question	Answer
<p>Do you really require letters of support from project partners? As for a network and small funds this will be a huge task.</p>	<p>We appreciate that the level of project partners' support is individual to the network's needs.</p> <p>A project partner is somebody who is besides supporting the idea of the network also prepared to be materially involved in the proposal. Therefore, we would expect to see a letter of support where project partners outline how they will support the network, either with cash or in-kind contributions.</p>
<p>Will in-kind contributions from industrial and other project partners make a grant more likely to get funded?</p>	<p>We will not prioritise proposals with more in-kind contributions over others. All proposals will be ranked based on how well they address the assessment criteria.</p>
<p>Is the expectation that the Micro Network Plus will act as seed corn for future larger grants under this area of the healthcare technology strategy? Would for example grant submissions to EPSRC under this area be one of the measures of success of the Micro Network Plus?</p>	<p>We are looking to work with the community over the lifetime of the grants and hope the networks will stimulate new ideas which will result in further applications to EPSRC but also to other funders, considering the multidisciplinary nature of the topic.</p>
<p>Is there emphasis on healthcare technologies (as per the strategy document) or since it also focuses on built environment, can the focus be more on the buildings and use of technology?</p>	<p>As both healthcare technologies and engineering are very broad sets of disciplines, the engineering healthier environments remit is also very broad. We do not prioritise one discipline over another, as long as the proposals are overall within remit of engineering healthier environments. If you have specific questions regarding remit, please email us at healthcare@epsrc.ukri.org.</p>
<p>Does closing date mean full proposal submission date?</p>	<p>Yes, the closing date for full proposals is 2 October 2024, 4:00pm UK time. Please note, there is a mandatory Intention to submit form which needs to be submitted by 18 September 2024.</p>
<p>Is it possible to participate in more than one proposal?</p>	<p>Yes. There is no limit on how many proposals you can participate in.</p>