

Build a network to enable resilient solutions for future UK systems

Questions and Answers – December 2021

Applications	
How many projects will be funded from this call?	One.
Is there a limit to the number of proposals an institution can be part of?	No, but be sure to discuss with your institution, as they will want to be backing the best application(s). As only one NetworkPlus will be funded, the submissions from the same institution would obviously be in competition with each other.
Does the proposal have to be collaborative amongst multiple PIs or can it be a single PI? Should multiple PIs be interdisciplinary, or can they all be from one discipline such as Mathematics? Is there a minimum or maximum to the number of Co-Is (individuals or institutions) allowed in a given proposal?	UKRI grants only have one PI when they are set up, and this individual will be the overall lead and grant holder. However, you may have any number of Co-Is. We would recommend that they should bring relevant expertise that complements and expands that of the lead PI and team.
Is there an expectation on the size of the network and the split between funds earmarked for feasibility studies and the network's own funding? Is there a guideline for the NetworkPlus to determine an appropriate amount of funding (out of the maximum of £2.25M grant) to develop and run calls for small projects? Are we free to choose how the costs will be broken down in the network+ (between mini projects, admin, researcher time)?	<p>The overall size of the award should be up to £2.25M (FEC).</p> <p>In terms of the reach of the network, it should be broad enough to encompass different ways of thinking and be able to act as a connection between these kinds of challenges in the MOD and academic community.</p> <p>The amount of resource dedicated to core activities of the network, e.g., PI, core staff, cost for events, etc., needs to be balanced with the need to support sufficient new activity throughout the life of the network. Therefore, the split has not been prescribed but is up to the applicants to make a case for their desired amount. Assessors will be looking for a good justification.</p>
Is payment for facilities (equipment, materials, technical staff, etc.) that enable the collaborative testing of resilient solutions permitted?	This is outlined on the call page - everything you could apply for through standard mode you can apply for on this NetworkPlus.
I am currently living aboard and will join a UK University in February 2022 as a Lecturer. Can I submit the proposal for the Network Plus project?	The PI must be a UK resident and be based at a UK institution at the time of submission of the proposal (by the closing date, 1 Feb 2022). The proposal needs to be submitted by your host institution.
How should interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary proposals be ideally prepared? Which key stakeholder groups and project partners should be ideally involved in the proposal?	<p>The leadership of the grant should have a collaborative mindset and be able to work across sectors and disciplines. Your case should evidence your team's capability to deliver this.</p> <p>The call document mentions "defence, government and industry stakeholders". It is up to applicants to interpret which stakeholders would make the best contribution and to make the case for this.</p>
Should the network be existing?	Our expectation is that this will be a new network, however if there is an existing network which is able to pivot to address this challenge exactly, then you may apply for funding through this call, but will be competing alongside other applications from networks which have been set up specifically to meet the challenges of this call.

<p>Should the application flesh out the scenario and then plan to work on the countermeasures to that specific one, or consider that the exact scenario is unknown and work on general countermeasures? Can the network tackle some of the questions/subproblems (and be of a smaller scale), or should it tackle all of them as one project?</p>	<p>The call is quite broad and open to be interpreted and fleshed out by your proposal. It is up to you to decide the strategy that you will take to address the challenges set out in the call document. Note that, as stated in the primary assessment criteria, the reviewers will be asked to judge the contribution that the NetworkPlus will make towards addressing the challenge, making reference to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the extent to which the proposal demonstrates an insightful grasp of the predefined scenario and associated problem domains, including an appreciation of the challenges and sensitivities of working in this area ▪ how the proposed project will build interdisciplinary capability relating to defence and resilient systems across the broadest possible range of disciplines ▪ how the proposed project will build and strengthen relationships between the UK defence sector, industry, and academic community, particularly those who may not typically engage with the defence sector.
<p>Would I be allowed to subcontract work through DST to, for example, a US Airforce Base?</p>	<p>DST would not support subcontracting directly. This is about creating a UK NetworkPlus team to look at these challenges. However, as part of your networking and collaboration, you can pay others for their time if you are drawing on expertise. We would welcome a more detailed discussion on this.</p>
<p>Is there any documentation to help potential applicants to become more familiar with the MOD/DST challenges?</p>	<p>The MOD S&T strategy is linked in the call page. In general, it is worth noting that threats have escalated in the last few decades, and part of this call tasks you with understanding what might happen in future. We see this as a cross-disciplinary challenge.</p>
<p>There is discussion in the community that this opportunity was announced after a de facto network had already been formed in expectation that that group would apply for the funding and be successful. Is there an already formed pre-identified consortium which is likely to receive the funding or is it really possible for anyone to apply and win?</p>	<p>There is no de facto existing network, and this is an open call. As a public body, EPSRC is open and transparent in the way that we operate. EPSRC has an invitation-only mechanism which we would have used if we already had any pre-identified consortia in mind. However, in this instance, this is an open call which any eligible organisation can apply to.</p>
<p>The timescale for responding to this call is VERY tight, particularly given Christmas. Is it realistic to expect us to have project partners fully on board by end Jan?</p>	<p>We appreciate Christmas isn't the best time for bids, but this call was pre-announced in November, and it's closing 1st Feb, which is over the 8 weeks that we'd normally give for a call. EPSRC and DST have worked hard to bring this opportunity to the community as early as possible, and we are also operating within time constraints for this call, with spending required in 2022.</p>

<p>Are there (implicit) requirements for geographical/gender/etc representation among the bidding team</p>	<p>None other than the eligibility requirements set out in the call document. We encourage you to review our equality, diversity and inclusion policy: https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/edi-at-epsrc/</p>
<h2>Collaboration</h2>	
<p>How many countries can be in the Network? Can international collaborators be co-I? What level of coordination is expected with the US and other allied countries? Can we bring in international partners and fund them for projects or is it UK focussed?</p>	<p>Per the call document, the leadership should be based in the UK. The focus should be on a UK scenario. The network may engage more broadly, as appropriate, taking note of principles of Trusted Research, and minimising vulnerabilities.</p>
<p>Is there an advantage of naming people on the advisory board, i.e. from Dstl, MOD, EPSRC, DST, or is this something which will be put in place after funding? Can DAP SG, Dstl and MOD be approached for help for the bid?</p>	<p>DAP SG, Dstl and MOD should not be approached for help with your bid. Dstl will be a partner on the successful proposal. As co-funder, DST will be involved in the steering group. We would not expect Dstl/MOD staff to be named on proposals.</p> <p>You may approach companies which comprise DAP SG, but there should be complete separation between any individuals you would work with, and that company's DAP SG members.</p>
<p>Can you please expand on the collaboration aspect?</p>	<p>The network will have a steering group which will involve DAP SG, DSTL, DST. They will be there to advise and help ensure the programme stays on scope. A network is designed for collaboration, so you should think about plans for collaboration, and intentions for partnering with the best expertise. You may use creative ways to connect people together.</p>
<p>Are we talking about academic or industrial collaboration? Can the proposal be something related to the education systems or should it handle some industrial problem?</p>	<p>We would certainly expect to see industry and academic collaboration in the network and would look for matched contributions from industry of ~25% across the portfolio of small projects funded by the network. If you can see an appropriate way to link in education systems in addressing the scenario then it is up to you to make this case to the reviewers.</p>
<p>Is there going to be a partnering event to allow academics to discuss options for teaming?</p>	<p>We are using the collaboration platform, Meeting Mojo, to enable interested parties to discuss collaboration options. You may register here: https://resilient-solutions.meeting-mojo.com/ A link to a recording of the webinar is also available on the platform.</p>
<h2>Scope</h2>	
<p>What are the typical crisis events to be considered? What kinds of threats are anticipated in the 2050 scenario you have described?</p>	<p>The predefined scenario upon which this NetworkPlus will focus is of a major human-caused disaster taking place in a densely populated future urban setting, around 2050. This is a malicious attack rather than a natural/climate disaster. This might be caused by a lone terrorist actor or a sophisticated state-sponsored attack, or something else.</p>
<p>Which areas of future UK systems are targeted through this call? Would the role of whole energy systems and integrated networks (e.g., electricity, heat and hydrogen) be relevant for this network?</p>	<p>No particular systems are targeted. It is expected that bidders will argue for this themselves. It's important to remember this problem is very much 'generation-after-next' - circa 2050. Consequently, any notions of systems must be cast in that timeframe.</p>

<p>Is the scenario specified to be a single attack in a future city, or can it be multiple attacks sequenced across a wide region?</p>	<p>There is no correct answer. This is about a long time in the future, and one of the main aims of this exercise is to use your creativity, ideas and thoughts on what the threats might be. The team is interested to hear what you have to say, and to be convinced. DAP SG has given some thought to this as has been presented in the webinar, but it is up to you to use your imagination and understanding to decide what the problems might be, and therefore what the key research questions might be.</p>
<p>Is my specific research area in scope?</p>	<p>The applicant's task is to convince reviewers that their proposal is addressing the full range of challenges set out in the call. We have deliberately not specified discipline areas as we want to make this as open as possible to new points of view. There is also nothing to stop you engaging with the final Network to establish how your research might contribute to their goals.</p>
<p>The scenario seems to be quite limited in its requirement - what about the broader environmental, societal, and physical impacts of such an attack?</p>	<p>As stated above - it's up to you to make the case for the specific approach you will take, and your interpretation of the scope. The panel will be briefed to ensure they think very broadly and take into account a broad range of ideas and considerations.</p>
<p>Is the focus of the funding based on short term deliverable solutions or more long-term thinking about the challenges and opportunities that may emerge with the next generation of technologies?</p>	<p>The focus is much more on the long term. We are thinking about "generation after next", circa 2050.</p>
<p>Is it a kind of disaster management system and our research goal should be developing a system that enables seamless communication flow in such hazardous infrastructure-less environments?</p>	<p>The scope of this network is to contribute to a research agenda, rather than create a management system. It's up to the applicant to define and scope how they will address the challenges set out in the specification.</p>
<p>Is the objective to grow the community in this field (as per a typical N+) or to drive research to respond to the scenario?</p>	<p>Both. As stated in the call, an objective here is to strengthen the community, bringing in new thinking, and inspiring new research to respond to these challenges.</p>
<p>Does the call has a stance on priorities? For example, rescue and treatment versus re-establishment of "normality"...</p>	<p>The scope is broad and open to interpretation. It is up to applicants to decide and make a case to reviewers for why they have chosen their priorities.</p>
<p>Does the resilience of structures (ability to resist blast loads and to assess structural integrity after the event) fall within the remit of this network plus? Does this NetworkPlus intend to address cyber security within the scope defined? Is there interest in the risk reduction and preparedness stages, e.g. building resilience in systems?</p>	<p>It is up to applicants to decide and make a case to reviewers for why they have chosen an area, and how it adds to addressing the challenges of the NetworkPlus as a whole.</p>