Sustainable Society: Achieving work-life balance in a digitally dependent world

Invitation to apply to participate in a virtual workshop (a Creativity Greenhouse) on the topic of Sustainable Society. This will take place in two stages, 04 and 05 July, and 10-13 July.

Please note: this is a ‘virtual’ remote collaborative workshop, which will take place using 3D collaborative software.

Closing date for Expression of Interest applications: 12:00 on 28 May 2012.

Introduction
The Research Councils’ Digital Economy Theme invites expressions of interest from eligible individuals to attend a virtual workshop (a Creativity Greenhouse) on the challenge area of ‘Sustainable Society’. The aim of the workshop is to:

• stimulate new thinking in promising areas of Digital Economy (DE) research
• bring together researchers to create an integrated vision for future research, both those already working on DE, and others whose research could directly contribute
• develop highly creative research ideas.

The Digital Economy Theme has allocated up to £1.5M to fund research arising from the workshop, to be taken up by genuinely novel and transformative approaches.

For more information on the virtual aspects of this workshop, please see the section entitled ‘A Virtual Workshop’ towards the end of this document.

The Research Challenge
The DE has the potential to transform lifestyles and improve quality of life, having an impact on society as a whole. Our ways of interacting and networking in research, business etc. are changing: rapidly evolving information pooling, collation, processing and exchange mean individuals have the prospect of being well connected, engaged and informed on a professional and personal level. The DE also has the potential to dramatically relax spatial and temporal constraints that dictate the ‘where’ and ‘when’ of individuals’ daily activity schedules.

However, the DE, whilst maybe delivering short-term benefits to individuals in terms of convenience, flexibility and productivity of business and social participation, could have unintended consequences in the longer term as society becomes more digitally dependent. For example, the ‘convenience’ of the Blackberry has for some turned into what some have referred to as the ‘Crackberry’ addiction. The flexibility of being able to field emails and be ‘ahead of the game’ is eroded as others do likewise with an overall effect of accelerated communications and ‘infected’ personal time.

Pressures on work-life balance precede the DE and stem from many facts such as: working harder not smarter; incompatibility between home location choice and
employment opportunities; immobility of office environments and resources; inadequacy of (social) support networks; and challenges of accommodating care of children and others. The DE has the potential to restore balance; but is also has the possibility of exacerbating any imbalance. Technological developments harness the art of the possible. However, human behaviour, our understanding of it and its incorporation into technological innovation significantly govern the effects of the DE.

Recognising work-life balance as a key theme relating to society’s economic, environmental and social sustainability, this Creative Greenhouse is an opportunity to explore digital (in)dependence. Many questions are prompted, of which the following are simply an illustration:

- What opportunities does the DE give in pursuit of greater work-life balance, e.g. remote working, creating time-space flexibilities in activity engagement, living and working in the Cloud?
- What is the future shape of social networking and how does this influence the nature and extent of co-present social interaction? How are the boundaries of social interaction in our lives changing or how could they be changed? Are employers at risk of infringing employee entitlements or even human rights as they respond to the prospects of the DE?
- What is the need for regulatory control to provides checks and balances to the technology wave? Should ‘consumer protection’ be factored into products and services as a principle, rather than reliance upon or presumption of ‘informed consent’?

Societal Implications and Ethical Issues

It is recognised that some areas of DE have the potential to raise societal, ethical, philosophical and legal issues, and opportunities also exist for research in areas outside the natural sciences and engineering, for example philosophy, sociology and history. The involvement of researchers from these other fields is essential to ensure that scientific research develops in a societal framework and that any ethical, legal and societal issues that are raised are fully explored as the area develops.

Structure of the Workshop

The Creativity Greenhouse is an intensive, interactive and free-thinking environment, where a diverse group of participants from a range of disciplines and backgrounds get together for five days to immerse themselves in collaborative thinking processes in order to construct innovative approaches.

The workshop will be run in two stages.

Stage 1: The Creativity Greenhouse will start with a 24 hour face to face meeting that will be held in Nottingham from **12:00 on 04 July 2012**, to **14:00 on 05 July 2012** covering the introduction of the Creativity Greenhouse team and approach, training on the 3D collaborative technology that will be used throughout the workshop, and also getting to know the other participants in person.

Stage 2: The Creativity Greenhouse workshop sessions will be conducted virtually, using a 3D environment, between the **10 and 13 July 2012**. During these facilitated sessions, running over **four days**, you, as a participant, can be physically located anywhere you wish when taking part in these sessions, as long as you have access to a
computer with a good internet connection (but please see the ‘A Virtual Workshop’
section).

The process that will be used in the workshop is similar to that used in the IDEAS
Factory sandpit and can be broken down into several stages:

• Defining the scope of the research challenges, evolving common languages and
terminologies amongst people from a diverse range of backgrounds and
disciplines
• Sharing understandings of the challenges, and the expertise brought by the
participants to the Creativity Greenhouse
• Taking part in break-out sessions focused on the challenges, using creative
thinking techniques
• Capturing the outputs in the form of highly innovative research projects
• Making a funding decision on those projects at the Creativity Greenhouse using
real-time peer review.

The Creativity Greenhouse will be led by a Director, whose role will be to assist in
defining the topics and aid facilitated discussions at the workshop. The Director will be
joined by a small number of Mentors. The Director and Mentors will take full part in the
workshop, but will not be eligible to receive research funding, and so will act as impartial
peer reviewers in the process. Participants will be expected to engage constructively in
dialogue with each other, the facilitators and the Director and Mentors to develop
collaborative research proposals.

The Creativity Greenhouse will be an intensive event. For the well-being of participants,
the timetable will include networking and other activities as a break from the detailed
technical discussions, as well as regular physical breaks from the computer.

**Workshop Location and Dates**

The face to face Creativity Greenhouse workshop will be in Nottingham starting at **12:00 on Wednesday 04 July 2012**, finishing by **14:00 on Thursday 05 July 2012**.

The remainder of the facilitated sessions, running over the **Tuesday, Wednesday,**
**Thursday and Friday (10, 11, 12 and 13 July 2012)** of the following week, will be
conducted virtually. Workshop sessions will be scheduled throughout the day so you will
be expected to be available between **09:00 and 18:00**. Please note sessions will not be
scheduled for the totality of this period.

An application to attend will be taken to mean you are available for the whole
duration of the workshop (both stages) and that you will attend and
participate fully, if selected.

It should be noted that for **stage one**, the face to face meeting, all accommodation and
meal costs will be met by the Digital Economy Theme. However, all travel expenses and
incidental costs incurred getting to and from the meeting must be met by the participant.
All accommodation, meal, travel and/or incidental costs for **stage two** must be met by
the participant.
Who Should Attend?
Having the right mix of participants influences the success or failure of such an event. Those participating will need enthusiasm and appropriate personal attributes to engage in collaborative research as well as demonstrating an enthusiasm for working at the interface between disciplines.

Applications are invited from individual academic researchers who can contribute to the workshop and resulting research projects. Anyone eligible to hold a grant from EPSRC, ESRC or AHRC is eligible to apply to attend the workshop. Up to 20 participants will be identified to take part in the workshop. In order to participate, the person applying must be available to attend for the full duration of the Creativity Greenhouse, both stage one and stage two.

Participants are welcomed at any stage of their research career. However, for information on the eligibility of organisations and individuals to receive EPSRC, ESRC or AHRC funding, see www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/Pages/Eligibilityforrcs.aspx.

Please note: EPSRC are calling for Expressions of Interest based on your potential contribution to the research challenge of Sustainable Society, not because of any expertise you may have in collaborative online activities.

Applying To Participate In the Workshop
Applicants should complete the short Expression of Interest (EoI) form (maximum two sides). Your answers to these questions will be used to assess your application and convince us that you have the suitable skills and attitude to participate in this workshop. No further documentation will be accepted. Please note that we are not looking for your academic publication or research track record but rather evidence of how you might approach multi-disciplinary problems in a novel area.

Please ensure you fully complete the EoI form, as this is the only information on which potential workshop attendees will be selected. It is therefore important to give evidence of your experience against the criteria in your application.

The deadline for submission of the EoI is 12:00 on Monday 28 May 2012. Applications should be submitted electronically. Please note that late submissions will not be considered. Applicants will be informed of the outcome of their application by Friday 15 June 2012.

Attendance at the Creativity Greenhouse does not guarantee funding will be obtained.

Assessing Applications
Applications to attend will be considered by a Selection Panel including the workshop Director and Mentors. The Selection Panel will seek to ensure that a balance of expertise is present at the workshop as well as a mix of disciplines and experience. Their assessment will be based on the specific criteria outlined below.

Participant selection criteria will be:

- The relevance of expertise to the challenges in Sustainable Society.
- The ability to develop new, adventurous and highly original research ideas
- The potential to contribute to research at the interface between disciplines
• The ability to work in a team
• The ability to explain research to non experts

Please note that because of the large number of applications expected, we will not be able to give individual feedback to unsuccessful applicants.

**Resulting Proposals**

The Digital Economy Theme has set aside a budget of up to £1.5M to support creative research projects arising from the workshop. The research projects and novel ideas that are initiated by this event must address the objectives of the Digital Economy Theme and can cover the remit of the following councils: EPSRC, ESRC or AHRC.

Participants will be provided with funding decisions (in principle) prior to departure from the stage two Creativity Greenhouse workshop, although these will be conditional upon the subsequent receipt of full, worked up proposal documentation covering the intended activities as identified at the workshop.

The deadline for submission of proposals generated at the Creativity Greenhouse will be **13 September 2012**. Final funding decisions will be made by October 2012. Further guidance on this part of the process will be available at the Creativity Greenhouse.

The primary criteria used to assess the merit of the final proposals will be how well they address the vision of the call. We seek to support those that show:

• Novel highly multidisciplinary research projects, clearly reflecting the distinctive opportunity for creating such projects that the Creativity Greenhouse produces.

• Clear evidence that the team have the capability to deliver their project as a high quality multidisciplinary activity, provided both through the presentation and their activity during the workshop.

• Convincing promise for making a distinctive and novel contribution to addressing the research challenges in this area.

**A Virtual Workshop: The Creativity Greenhouse**

As part of its strategy to support transformative research and creativity, EPSRC wishes to explore how to use digital technologies to facilitate the commissioning and development of ambitious and novel research ideas. Use of such 3D virtual collaborative technologies could enable the capability to work without geographical and/or time constraints, enhance the pool of people involved in contributing to meetings and generating ideas and also support more efficient and cost-effective ways of working, e.g. significant savings on meeting costs.

The workshop will be held in a bespoke 3D virtual environment, using software to be installed on participants’ computers. Participants will be able to interact with each other in this 3D customisable space through video and audio, alongside chat messaging and document sharing. Each participant is represented in the environment by an avatar (a graphical character), onto which can be mapped their live video and audio. The avatar gives access to all the necessary resources for the workshop such as documents, web pages and brainstorming tools.

Please note that the software will need to be installed on the computer you intend to use during the workshop. Full installation instructions will be given and this software can be easily uninstalled after the workshop.
Participants can join the environment from any location (in Europe) with enough network bandwidth, e.g. their office, another work location or their home. The location needs to be relatively quiet and needs to provide a level of privacy that is suitable for discussing and critiquing emerging research ideas. Participants will be provided with a web camera and headset for the duration of the workshop.

The technical requirements for the environment are as follows: It will run on Microsoft Windows XP SP3, Windows Vista SP1, Windows 7 and Mac OS X 10.5, 10.6 and 10.7 (Intel-based Macs only). Your computer should have the following: An Intel Pentium M 1.6GHz processor as a minimum, at least 1GB of RAM, access to the Internet at broadband speeds and hardware graphics capability (GPU) supporting OpenGL 1.3. The software is a visually oriented application and requires OpenGL v1.3 or later support. Newer generation computers, less than three years old or labelled as ‘Vista Ready’ or ‘Windows 7 Ready’ are generally adequate to support the software.

**Equal Opportunities**

EPSRC are committed to a policy of equal opportunities for our applicants for funding. No eligible applicant should receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of disability, sex or gender re-assignment, marital status, sexual orientation, pregnancy, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, or contractual and work roles.

If anybody has any concerns regarding our equal opportunities policies or any other aspect of the this application process then please contact us to voice these issues as we constantly strive for absolute equality within our organisation, and we make every attempt to make events available to as many people as possible.

To help us achieve our aim of equality and fair treatment, an equal opportunities monitoring form is supplied at the end of this Call document. This form is optional however; it will help us to monitor the effectiveness of our policy. The form will be removed from your application and the information you have provided will be used for statistical monitoring purposes only.

**For Further Information**

- Research scope and technical issues: Dr Richard Bailey, Richard.Bailey@epsrc.ac.uk, 01793 444423

- Creativity Greenhouse concept and approach: Dr Paula Bailey, Paula.Bailey@epsrc.ac.uk, 01793 444334