



## Quick Reference

**Please note that you must read the full call document for guidance before submitting your proposal**

### Digital Economy NetworkPlus

**Call type: Invitation for outlines**

**Closing date: 16:00, 29<sup>th</sup> August 2017**

**Funding Available:** £5.0M is available to support up to five NetworkPlus grants.

**How to apply:** Outlines followed by invited full proposals.

**Assessment Process:** Outlines will be considered by an independent panel of Digital Economy stakeholders, which will provide feedback. Invited full proposals will be assessed by an interview panel.

**Additional information:** An event will be held to facilitate discussion of potential NetworkPlus topics, and to allow possible applicants to ask questions about the call and to meet potential collaborators. Note that attendance at the event is not a prerequisite to applying to the call. A report of the day will be published on the EPSRC website.

**Key Dates:**

Activity	Date
Deadline for submitting a topic idea or applying to attend the Community event	1/6/17
Community event	3/7/17
Outline call opens in JeS	4/7/17
Outlines call closes	29/8/17
Invitation to full proposals for successful outlines	w/b 23/10/17
Deadline for full proposals	20/12/17
Interview Panel	February 2018
Funding decision	March 2018

**Contacts:** Claire Tansley (01793 444540; [claire.tansley@epsrc.ac.uk](mailto:claire.tansley@epsrc.ac.uk))  
 Tracy Keys (01793 444306; [tracy.keys@epsrc.ac.uk](mailto:tracy.keys@epsrc.ac.uk))



## **Digital Economy NetworkPlus**

**Call type: Invitation for outlines**

**Closing date: 16:00, 29<sup>th</sup> August 2017**

**Related themes: Digital Economy, ICT, PaCCS**

### **Summary**

The Digital Economy (DE) in the UK is growing twice as fast as the wider economy, with an economic output of close to £100 billion per year<sup>1</sup>. At the same time we are facing huge societal, economic, political and environmental challenges which can all benefit in some way from the development and use of transformational digital technologies. DE research therefore has a huge potential impact. It requires close collaboration between different academic disciplines and different stakeholders (non-academic and user) to provide solutions to real-world problems. In order to maximise the opportunities in emerging research areas, a variety of different parties need to meet, share knowledge, identify research priorities and opportunities and kick start activities in the area.

The DE Theme would like to support up to five 'NetworkPlus' grants to stimulate development of DE research and communities within key emerging areas of national importance for DE research. These networks will bring together relevant parts of the interdisciplinary DE communities and a variety of stakeholders, to identify the key research opportunities, build collaborations and grow the area of research for the benefit of the UK. Networks are intended to be UK-wide, and should involve a broad range of disciplines and non-academic stakeholders. The NetworkPluses could undertake a variety of activities including workshops, events, feasibility studies, secondments or horizon scanning. Applicants are encouraged to tailor their activities to the needs of the area and to be innovative in their approach.

There is up to £5.0M available for this call.

There will be a community event on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2017 to facilitate discussion of potential topics for a DE NetworkPlus, to allow applicants to ask questions about the call and to meet potential collaborators. Those interested in attending should complete the Expressions of Interest form which is available on the EPSRC Events page.

Those who are not able to attend, but would like to suggest a potential topic that they feel would benefit from a DE NetworkPlus, should also complete this form.

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<sup>1</sup> Tech Nation report 2017: <http://technation.techcityuk.com/>

Please note that places will be limited and you will be notified as to whether you have a place at the event by 12<sup>th</sup> June 2017. Attendance at this event is not a pre-requisite to applying to the call, and a report from the day will be published on the EPSRC website as soon as possible following the event.

## **Background**

The DE Theme seeks to rapidly realise the transformational impact of digital technologies on aspects of community life, cultural experiences, future society, and the economy. It seeks to bring together researchers in ICT, mathematical sciences, engineering, social sciences, economics, arts and humanities with stakeholders in different application domains to create digital technologies, platforms and solutions that are designed with and for users of the digital technology.

The DE Theme previously funded four NetworkPlus grants in the previous priority areas of IT as a Utility, Communities and Culture, New Economic Models and Sustainable Society. When these networks finished in 2016, a light-touch review was undertaken by EPSRC. These networks developed a rich body of outputs, including new collaborations, grant proposals, new research methods, feasibility studies, reports, policy briefings, films, and even led to some spin-out companies and patents. Lessons learned from the previous NetworkPlus activities include:

- A clear, well-defined topic for the network is needed to focus plans and activities;
- Administrative and Host-University support for the network is vital, in order to support activities such as feasibility studies and dissemination activities;
- Different scales of feasibility study funding are appropriate for different research topics or disciplines;
- Expectation and arrangements for Full Economic Costing of network activities need to be clear across all parties;
- Long-term plans for the legacy and/or sustainability of the network need to be considered early on;
- Any future networks should consider increased interactions with Catapults<sup>2</sup> and wider use of social media.

## **Aim and scope of the call**

The DE Theme would like to support up to five 'NetworkPlus' grants to allow development of DE research and communities in key emerging areas of national importance. The aims of these NetworkPlus awards will be to:

- Bring together experts from across all relevant research disciplines and stakeholders, building new communities or creating new links between different existing communities;

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<sup>2</sup> <https://catapult.org.uk/>

- Bring focus to the relevant research area, identifying research challenges, opportunities and priorities;
- Support initial testing of new ideas and kick-start new collaborations;
- Build pathways to impact.

These networks will undertake a variety of activities to bring together relevant DE stakeholders to identify the key research opportunities, build collaborations and grow the area of research, ultimately leading to academic, social, economic, policy or cultural impact. Activities could include workshops, events, feasibility studies, secondments or horizon scanning. Applicants are encouraged to tailor their activities to the needs of the area and be innovative in their approach.

NetworkPlus proposals should be focussed on an emerging area of Digital Economy research, and applicants will be required to provide justification of the need for a NetworkPlus in the area they are proposing. NetworkPluses should involve a broad range of disciplines. It is essential to include expertise in computer science, engineering and/or mathematical sciences. Additionally, NetworkPluses should be highly multidisciplinary. Depending on the topic, it will be important to include other relevant disciplines such as social sciences, economics, arts and humanities, as well as non-academic stakeholders, to provide the expertise required to co-create and implement novel, people-centred digital technology solutions which incorporate legal and ethical considerations. Network activities should be UK-wide, and open to all relevant researchers.

NetworkPlus proposals should complement current research activities and existing networks, for example the EPSRC-funded CREDIT research network<sup>3</sup> and the 'Industrial Systems in a Digital Age' NetworkPlus<sup>4</sup>. We are not looking to provide continuation funding for existing networks, but NetworkPluses may build on new opportunities highlighted by previous networking activities.

For more information about the portfolio and strategies of EPSRC and the RCUK Digital Economy Theme, see our website:

<https://www.epsrc.ac.uk/research/ourportfolio/> and  
<https://www.epsrc.ac.uk/research/ourportfolio/themes/digitaleconomy/>

## Funding available

The Digital Economy Theme would like to support up to five 'NetworkPlus' grants, and there is up to £5.0M available in total.

Awards will be made for between 36-48 months' duration. This is to ensure that funding for feasibility studies can be allocated and spent during the lifetime of the award.

Funding requested under the Directly Allocated cost heading may include:

**Investigators' salaries** - The Principal Investigator (PI) and up to four Co-Investigators (Co-Is) can request funds to cover their salary costs for the time spent on setting up and leading the NetworkPlus. The salary costs of NetworkPlus participants should not be included in the proposal and we would not expect these individuals to be Co-Investigators.

<sup>3</sup> <http://gow.epsrc.ac.uk/NGBOViewGrant.aspx?GrantRef=EP/N015525/1>

<sup>4</sup> <https://networkplusdigital.wordpress.com/>

Funding requested under the Directly Incurred cost heading may include:

**Travel and subsistence** - Travel and subsistence enabling members of the NetworkPlus to meet together to exchange ideas and expertise. This may include visits by or to experts overseas. This may also include travel and subsistence costs to support secondments. Where possible collaborators should meet their own travel costs.

**Administrative support** – A sufficient level of administrative support should be requested to help in the co-ordination and management of the NetworkPlus and ensure smooth running of the NetworkPlus. Reasonable costs for monitoring and dissemination of the NetworkPlus output can also be included.

**Organisation of Activities** - Funding can be requested for costs involved in running activities such as networking events, expert working groups, debates, online discussion forums, lectures, seminars, problem solving workshops etc. Applicants are encouraged to think creatively about the range of activities that could support the delivery of the NetworkPlus goals.

**Research** - Research activity to support the research strategy developed within the NetworkPlus. Funds can be requested for PDRA staff, consumables, travel and subsistence and any other costs eligible under 'Directly Incurred' headings. This is likely to include a budget for feasibility studies that can be allocated to researchers at other universities; in this case applicants will need to think carefully about how this budget will be managed. EPSRC would expect some examples of the types of projects at the application stage, but the research challenges should evolve during the course of the network activities and should be co-created and collaborative in nature.

Funding can also be requested for:

- Activities to identify and disseminate key research challenges in the area, for example horizon-scanning studies
- Activities to develop other pathways to impact, such as reports, websites and briefings.

Guidance on the types of support that may be sought is given on the EPSRC website (<https://www.epsrc.ac.uk/funding/howtoapply/>)

## Equipment

Equipment is not available through this call.

For more information on equipment funding, please see: <https://www.epsrc.ac.uk/research/facilities/equipment/>

## Eligibility

For information on the eligibility of organisations and individuals to receive EPSRC funding, see the EPSRC Funding Guide: <https://www.epsrc.ac.uk/funding/howtoapply/fundingguide/>

This call is a standard funding opportunity provided by EPSRC. A list of eligible organisations to apply to EPSRC is provided at: <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/eligibilityforrcs/>

## How to apply

You should prepare and submit your proposal using the Research Councils' Joint electronic Submission (Je-S) System (<https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/>).

When adding a new proposal, you should select:

- Council 'EPSRC'
- Document type 'Outline Proposal'
- Scheme 'Outline'
- On the Project Details page you should select the 'DE NetworkPlus Outlines' call.

Note that clicking 'submit document' on your proposal form in Je-S initially submits the proposal to your host organisation's administration, not to EPSRC. Please allow sufficient time for your organisation's submission process between submitting your proposal to them and the call closing date. EPSRC must receive your application by 16:00 on 29<sup>th</sup> August 2017.

Guidance on the types of support that may be sought and advice on the completion of the research proposal forms are given on the EPSRC website (<https://www.epsrc.ac.uk/funding/howtoapply/>) which should be consulted when preparing all proposals. Please also refer to the 'Funding Available' section above.

## Guidance on writing an application

At the Outline stage, applicants should submit:

- Outline application form
- Four-page outline Case for Support

These are the only attachments allowed. Project partners may be identified within the outline Case for Support, but should not provide letters of support at this stage.

Applicants should include the following information:

- The research scope of the proposed NetworkPlus, an explanation of the need for a NetworkPlus in this area and the benefits that will be achieved
- The track record of the team and leadership qualities of the PI - why are these the best people to run the NetworkPlus?
- Proposed activities of the NetworkPlus
- Proposed partners and members (we only require an overview of the types of people you would seek to involve at this stage, but if you have already had discussions with potential partners then please include this)
- Links to other relevant networks/research/activities
- Potential outputs and outcomes

Applicants should also bear in mind the assessment criteria below.

Full proposal total costs should not vary by more than 10% from the outline stage, unless feedback from the Outline panel indicates otherwise or prior agreement is obtained from EPSRC.

More than half of the proposed activity should fall within EPSRC's remit. Proposals that are not sufficiently within EPSRC's remit or the remit of this call will be rejected.

Applicants should use the Ethical Information section on the Je-S form to demonstrate to peer reviewers that they have fully considered any ethical issues concerning the material they intend to use, the nature and choice, current public perceptions and attitudes towards the subject matter or research area. EPSRC will not fund a project if it believes that there are ethical concerns that have been overlooked or not appropriately accounted for. All relevant parts of the Ethical Information section must be completed. If the research will involve human participation or the use of animals covered by the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 it is recommended that applicants pay particular attention to the guidance highlighted below. EPSRC reserves the right to reject applications prior to peer review if the Ethical Information sections are not completed correctly.

Further guidance on completing the Je-S form can be found at <https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/Handbook/pages/GuidanceonCompletingaStandardG/EthicalInformation.htm>. Other relevant guidance includes: EPSRC's policy on animal use in research (<https://www.epsrc.ac.uk/about/standards/animalresearchpolicy/>) and the Responsible Innovation Framework (<https://www.epsrc.ac.uk/research/framework/>).

Please note that on submission to EPSRC **all** non-PDF documents uploaded onto Je-S are converted to PDF; the use of non-standard fonts may result in errors or font conversion, which could affect the overall length of the document.

In addition, where non-standard fonts are present, and even though the converted PDF document may look unaffected in the Je-S System, when it is imported into the Research Councils Grants System some information may be removed. We therefore recommend that where a document contains any non-standard fonts (scientific notation, diagrams etc), the document is converted to PDF prior to attaching it to the proposal.

For advice on writing proposals see:  
<https://www.epsrc.ac.uk/funding/howtoapply/preparing/>

## **Assessment**

### **Assessment process**

NetworkPlus outline proposals will be assessed against the criteria below by an independent panel of DE experts, selected to represent a wide range of DE research and stakeholders, who will produce a rank order list. The outline panel may also provide feedback in the interests of preventing overlapping networks and creating the strongest possible networks for UK Digital Economy research. This may include suggesting that applicants discuss the synergies between their proposed NetworkPluses or work together. The highest ranked outlines will be invited to prepare and submit full proposals.

The deadline for submission of full proposals will be in December 2017. Applicants will then be invited to interview. An exact date for the interview will be communicated as soon as it is set. The interview panel will be asked to make funding recommendations to EPSRC.

A funding decision will be made in March 2018.

## **Assessment criteria for outlines**

- Fit to call
  - Potential to identify DE research opportunities and build new multidisciplinary DE communities and collaborations
  - Potential to advance the UK's capabilities in the DE. What will be different as a result of the NetworkPlus funding?
- Quality of the proposed network, including
  - Ambition and adventure
  - Appropriateness of proposed membership and activities
- National Importance
  - Need for a NetworkPlus in the area proposed
  - Contribution of the proposed NetworkPlus to DE research, and the success of the UK economy and society
  - New activity that complements existing networks and current research activities in related areas
- Ability of the applicant team to deliver the NetworkPlus
  - Track record of the Principal Investigator in research, leadership and management of complex activities

Additional assessment criteria for full proposals will include:

- Resources and management (including management of funds for feasibility studies)
- Pathways to impact

EPSRC reserve the right to apply additional selection criteria in the event of the call being so substantially oversubscribed as to be unmanageable as initially planned.



## **Feedback**

Guidance and feedback may be given to successful outline applicants in the interests of preventing overlapping networks and creating the strongest possible networks for UK Digital Economy research.

## **Moving forward**

Further guidance on submitting full proposals will be sent to successful outline applicants. Please note that we will require full proposals to be submitted on one single Je-S form even if they are multi-institutional bids. We will also require a letter of support from the host organisation.

Outline proposals submitted to this call will not count towards the Repeatedly Unsuccessful Applicants Policy. However, all full proposals submitted will count towards the policy. Further information about the policy can be found at: <https://www.epsrc.ac.uk/funding/howtoapply/basics/resubpol/rua/>

## **Additional grant conditions**

In addition to the standard terms and conditions for grants, successful applicants will be required to appoint an independent advisory board to provide advice on the strategic direction and activities of the network. This advisory board should have a membership (agreed with the RCUK Digital Economy Theme) drawn from the academic, industrial and international scientific community and include a representative from the RCUK Digital Economy Theme.

Feasibility funding will be awarded as 'flexible funds'. Notwithstanding the standard grant condition concerning the transfer of funds between headings, the sum awarded under the heading of 'flexible funds' can be used to fund both directly incurred and directly allocated costs.

These funds must be reported on the final expenditure statement (FES) as directly incurred and a breakdown of the expenditure must be submitted along with the FES. Normal conditions apply to all other funds awarded on this grant.

## Key dates

Activity	Date
Deadline for submitting a topic idea or applying to attend the Community event	1/6/17
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## Contacts

Claire Tansley (01793 444540; [claire.tansley@epsrc.ac.uk](mailto:claire.tansley@epsrc.ac.uk))  
Tracy Keys (01793 444306; [tracy.keys@epsrc.ac.uk](mailto:tracy.keys@epsrc.ac.uk))

## Change log

Name	Date	Version	Change
Claire Tansley	05/04/17	1	N/A