Quick Reference

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

Next Stage Digital Economy Centres

Call type: Invitation for Outline

Outline closing date: 16:00 on 09 July 2019

Funding Available: Up to £20 million at 80% FEC for up to six awards

How to apply: Outlines followed by invited full proposals.

Assessment Process: A two-stage assessment process will be used. Outlines will be considered by an expert panel. Invited full proposals will undergo expert postal peer review, followed by an interview panel, resulting in a rank ordered list.

Key Dates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Date*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deadline for outline proposals</td>
<td>16:00 on 09 July 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful outline applicants informed</td>
<td>w/c 12 August 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Briefing webinar with successful outline applicants</td>
<td>10:00 on 15 August 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deadline for full proposals</td>
<td>17 September 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prioritisation interview panel</td>
<td>12 &amp; 13 February 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planned issue of Grant Offer letter</td>
<td>March and April 2020</td>
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Additional information: Only one lead application per university. Outlines must demonstrate a £2.4 million (at 80% FEC) critical mass portfolio of UKRI DE related research funding (see eligible grant list) that has been active between 1 January 2014 and 31 December 2018. There is an expectation of at least matched funding support (cash and in kind) from collaborating university(ies) and partners. Only those successful at the outline stage will be invited through to submit a full proposal. Each proposal must be at least 50% in EPSRC remit. Host organisation letter of support (signed by Pro-VC) is required at outline stage.

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Next Stage Digital Economy Centres

Call type: Invitation for Outlines

Outline Closing date: 16:00 on 09 July 2019

Related themes: Digital Economy, ICT

Summary

Proposals are invited for Next Stage Digital Economy (DE) Centres. This call is designed to consolidate, harness and build upon existing DE knowledge and skills arising from DE Theme-funded and related UKRI funded awards (please refer to eligible grant list on the call website https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/calls/nextstagedigitaleconomycentres/) to help accelerate the research outcomes and outputs to the next stage and create more real impact (be it economic, societal or cultural).

A budget of up to £20 million (at 80% FEC) is available to support up to six interdisciplinary and user focused Next Stage Digital Economy Centres which span across a range of digital technologies, operating over a five-year period. They will promote the realisation of impact and enhanced exploration of the outcomes arising from DE Theme investments in the UK research base through a critical mass approach. It is expected that each centre will attract additional requisite match funding (cash and in kind) and support from partners and the host universities, and will develop committed routes for exploitation, as well as grow the pool of DE-trained interdisciplinary researchers.

An institution may only lead on one bid, but may be a partner in more than one.

Each bid is expected to consist of one lead institution, with a small number of collaborative institutions that bring together world leading research expertise in the disciplines required to deliver the breadth of research proposed. However applicants may wish to make the case for other models.

Background

The DE Theme seeks to rapidly realise the positive transformational impact of digital technologies on aspects of community life, cultural experiences, working lives, future society and the economy. It seeks to bring together researchers in ICT, mathematical science, 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 aims to address key societal challenges and social change across a wide number of different key sectors (including but not limited to energy, transport, healthcare, education and skills, services, government, and the creative industries).
There are four current DE Theme priority areas (https://epsrc.ukri.org/research/ourportfolio/themes/digitaleconomy/):

1. Trust, identity, privacy and security
2. Digital business models
3. The internet of things for a service economy
4. Content creation and consumption

The priority areas reflect the broad relevance and remit of DE research, and have formed the basis for the majority of recent DE Theme funding. Achieving the DE vision requires the bringing together of a unique community of researchers (from diverse disciplines including social science, engineering, computer science, the arts, humanities and medical research) and users (business, government, the third sector) to study and understand the fundamental challenges embedded in finding viable solutions to real digital economy problems, which can have significant impact.

The DE Theme has recognised for many years that critical mass scale research endeavours are essential in achieving maximum transformational impact. The 2012 Digital Economy Theme Impact Review (https://epsrc.ukri.org/newsevents/pubs/digital-economy-report-of-the-2012-rcuk-digital-economy-impact-review-panel/) confirmed that the DE Theme’s investments in research and training are producing significant research outcomes and impact, as well as having a leading role in the overall impact agenda. However, more work needs to be done to capitalise on this leading position and move to the next stage, to create real economic, societal and cultural impact. This Impact Review recognised that those DE Theme investments which had a critical mass had attracted considerable support and leverage from industry and the host universities. This then made for more successful research outcomes and impact.

It is evident that critical mass-sized investments clearly deliver an important facilitation role in supporting interdisciplinary DE research. Large investments aim to engender the DE mind-set and develop those people with the appropriate skills to take this agenda forward. Therefore, the DE Theme is looking to provide funding to support up to six interdisciplinary and user-focused centres of excellence operating over a five year period to promote the realisation of impact and enhanced exploitation in the DE research base.

For more information on the DE Theme mission, priorities, funding and investments, see our website: https://epsrc.ukri.org/research/ourportfolio/themes/digitaleconomy/

For more information about EPSRC’s portfolio and strategies, see our website: https://epsrc.ukri.org/research/ourportfolio/

Aims and Scope

This call builds on the previous Next Stage Digital Economy Call in 2014 which resulted in six centres being supported with additional funding from the AHRC, Innovate UK and other EPSRC Themes.
Through the successful centres the DE Theme is seeking to take DE research to the ‘Next Stage’ to make demonstrable real-world impact and influence through evidence of adoption by policy makers, adoption and innovation by business and industry, improvements in services, enhancement of provision of digital training and skills development, and economic/social/cultural benefits across the public, private or third sectors. It is expected that the centres will consolidate, harness and build upon existing DE knowledge and skills from DE Theme funding and related awards to help accelerate the research outcomes and outputs to the next stages of exploitation.

This call will support up to six interdisciplinary and user-focused centres of excellence operating over a five-year period which draw substantially on the outputs, knowledge, positioning of DE expertise and demonstrations resulting from previous DE related funding. Each centre will be of a sufficient scope and size to achieve critical mass, thereby enabling it to attract additional requisite match funding (both in kind and cash) and support from partners and the host universities. It will develop committed routes for the exploitation and will grow the pool of DE-trained interdisciplinary researchers.

Each centre will be able to demonstrate a credible and core critical-mass UKRI funded DE portfolio (this will form part of the initial eligibility criteria in the outline). This will provide a platform to exert influence and attract partnership funding in order to exploit existing DE knowledge and skills to maximise impact and enable the next stage of impact to be achieved. The centres must draw substantially on the outputs of the portfolio of the DE theme funded research and skills sets that is being consolidated, taken forward and built upon the Investigator(s) involved in each centre. Centres should have a clear interdisciplinary focus building upon the coherent and critical mass DE portfolio presented in areas of Investigator DE expertise involved.

The centre will need to demonstrate how it will mature and is able to optimise the funding provided through generating additional support and associated leveraging.

In summary successful applicants must demonstrate (see page 13 for additional detail and criteria):

1. **Critical mass, breadth and interdisciplinary nature of DE portfolio:** There must be a coherent research portfolio of sufficient critical mass (£2.4 million at 80% FEC) drawing substantially and building upon existing and recently completed (research grants must have been live between 1 January 2014 and 31 December 2018, please see eligible grant list on call webpage [https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/calls/nextstagedigitaleconomycentres/] DE Theme funded and related UKRI funded research consolidating a number of research strands cutting across key DE sectors, which can be taken forward to provide more impact and user engagement. The critical mass portfolio of DE grant funding must be held by the named investigators on the proposal.

2. **How impact will be maximised through the centre’s specific project plans:**
For example, this can be addressed by clearly defining research challenge(s) that have been clearly co-created with end-user(s) through undertaking research ‘in the wild’, appropriate knowledge exchange and early stage ‘proof of concept’ activities.

3. **Leveraging and matched funding:**
   There is an expectation of at least matched funding support (cash and in kind) from university, user partners and businesses.

4. **Strong people support:**
   Proposals must demonstrate that mechanisms are in place within the centre to grow and develop the pool of DE-trained interdisciplinary researchers across career stages including transitioning earlier career people into academic and industry leadership posts, ensuring user-led interdisciplinary DE research and culture is maintained beyond the life of the centre.

5. **Plans for cross centre activities:**
   The centres are expected to develop the DE community and network across centres and other DE Theme investments by sharing best practice, showcasing/disseminating outputs and engagement with, for example, the Digital Catapult, The Alan Turing Institute, Overseas Development Institute (ODI), Government Departments and other relevant organisations in a coordinated manner.

### Responsible Innovation, Societal Implications and Ethical Issues

It is recognised that some areas of the DE have the potential to raise societal, ethical, philosophical, legal and regulatory issues and risks. Consideration of these issues is essential to ensure that the research carried out is considered within a societal context and that any such issues that are raised are fully explored as the research develops. For further information on responsible innovation and ethical requirements, applicants are referred to the following guidance document:

https://epsrc.ukri.org/research/framework/

Applicants are also referred to ESRC’s Framework for Research Ethics: https://esrc.ukri.org/funding/guidance-for-applicants/research-ethics

### Funding available

Up to £20 million at 80% FEC is available for this call. EPSRC expects to fund up to six Next Stage Digital Economy Centres. The centres will last for five years and a midterm review will be undertaken.

The DE Theme will be seeking partnership with AHRC, ESRC and Innovate UK on a case by case basis, but each proposal must be **at least 50% in EPSRC remit.**
Centre requirements

Core Activity of the Next Stage Digital Economy Centres

As applied DE Theme research cuts across a wide range of sectors (e.g. energy, transport, healthcare, education and skills, services, government and the creative industries), each centre must therefore be interdisciplinary and have strong and significant partnerships with a range of commercial and public users including the third sector. Centres may focus on the research challenges or be sector-orientated but in all cases should aim to address the DE Theme’s core vision of supporting research to rapidly realise the transformational positive impact of digital technologies on all aspects of community life, culture experiences, working lives, future society and the economy.

It is expected that the centres will support activities that:

1. **Maximise impact**
   - Applied and translational research that has clearly identified and engaged stakeholders in the research design and formulation, and delivery of the work programme.
   - Knowledge exchange and early stage ‘proof-of-concept’ activities, for example to bridge the funding gap between traditional research grants and commercial funding to secure impact opportunities. (Will generally be considered early stage where they are prior to a full laboratory demonstration, are pre-production and prototype and where commercial funds for development are not available.)
   - ‘In the wild’ deployment and evaluation for risk mitigation. Activities could either cover the testing of new technologies and methods with potential beneficiaries or in the user(s) domain or looking at new ways of using existing technologies/methods.
   - Evidence of a multi/interdisciplinary research team and significant partnerships with a range of commercial and public users, including the third sector.
   - **Attract significant funding support (cash and in kind) from their partners and host university. There is an expectation that each centre will attract at least matched funding support (cash and in kind). This will be a key consideration as part of the full proposal assessment criteria.**

2. **Grow the pool of DE-trained interdisciplinary researchers**
   - Development of PDRA, and any PhD, cohorts associated with the centre (please note the centre cannot fund PhD studentships).
   - Peer support networks at all career stages
   - Support the transitioning of Early Career Researchers into positions of academic and industry leadership.
   - Host universities will be expected to provide on-going people support (e.g. in the form of transitional fellowships) to ensure that
user-led interdisciplinary DE research continues and the DE culture is sustained within universities beyond the life of the centre.

3. Enable cross-centre working

- The centres will be expected to develop the DE community and network across centres, share best practice, showcase/disseminate outputs and engage with other relevant organisations in a coordinated manner.

Given the nature of this call, centres are not expected to support ‘blue skies’ research, applied research for private companies or associated intellectual property costs (e.g. patent costs).

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The long term strength of the UK research base depends on harnessing all the available talent and the Research Councils have together developed the ambitious UK Research and Innovation Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan. Please see https://www.ukri.org/files/legacy/skills/action-plan-edi-2016/ for further information.

In line with the UK Research and Innovation Diversity Principles, EPSRC expects that equality and diversity is embedded at all levels and in all aspects of research practice. We are committed to supporting the research community in the diverse ways a research career can be built with our investments. This includes career breaks, support for people with caring responsibilities, flexible working and alternative working patterns. With this in mind, we welcome applications from academics who job share, have a part-time contract, need flexible working arrangements or those currently committed to other longer, large existing grants. Please see our Equality and Diversity webpages https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/equalitydiversity/ for further information.

Equipment

Equipment over £10,000 in value (Inc. VAT) is not available through this call. Smaller items of equipment (individually under £10,000 Inc. VAT) should be in the Directly Incurred - Other Costs heading.

For more information on equipment funding, please see: https://epsrc.ukri.org/research/facilities/equipment/

Eligibility

The call is open to all eligible applicants including the six previously funded Next Stage Centres.

Proposals must be at least 50% in EPSRC remit.

Applicants can only be principal investigator on one application, but may be co-investigator on multiple applications.
Please ensure sufficient time to create Je-S accounts for Investigators who do not currently have one.

For information on the eligibility of organisations and individuals to receive EPSRC funding, see the EPSRC Funding Guide: https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/applicationprocess/fundingguide/

A list of eligible organisations to apply to EPSRC is provided at: https://www.ukri.org/funding/how-to-apply/eligibility/

**Call eligibility: Assembling, consolidating and articulating a coherent and critical mass sized portfolio of DE Theme projects**

Proposals submitted to this call must draw substantially on the outputs of previous DE Theme and related funding. The applicant(s) must demonstrate that they have a substantial critical mass portfolio of current or previously funded (research grants must have been live between 1 January 2014 and 31 December 2018, please see eligible grant list on call webpage https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/calls/nextstagedigitaleconomycentres/) DE Theme and related research grant support and have used it to produce world-class research outputs and outcomes.

Prior to being invited to submit a full proposal, potential applicants will be required to demonstrate that they fulfil the critical mass eligibility requirements of the call via an outline proposal. The outline must demonstrate that the relevant DE Theme and related research funding assembles to form a substantial critical mass of coherent research and skills to build upon. The DE research grant portfolio list (detailing funding body, grant reference/title, and value of DE relevant funding) should be accompanied by a coherence statement, which sets out and justifies how this consolidated portfolio will enable the applicant(s) to deliver the overarching objective of this call as a summary statement of aims and future plans.

The portfolio can be constructed from consolidating a number of different DE Theme-funded and related research grants (training grants are not eligible) and can be from more than one HEI partner. Where appropriate justification can be made, all DE Theme funding will be taken into account as well as any associated grants within the DE Theme funding element from the AHRC and ESRC that have been considered to be aligned to the remit of DE Theme activities.

For reference purposes, a list of DE related funding will be made available on the call web page. Please note this list is purely indicative and not intended to be comprehensive or exclusive. If applicants feel they can justify the relevance of other UKRI funding to their DE portfolio then they are encouraged to make the case and justify this. Please contact digitaleconomy@epsrc.ukri.org as soon as possible, before 11\textsuperscript{th} June 2019 to discuss eligibility of grants not included on the eligibility list. DE will make a decision on eligibility of any additional grants within 10 working days.

**The value threshold for demonstrating a critical mass portfolio of DE funding, must be greater than £2.4 million (at 80\% FEC).** The critical mass value demonstrated does not need to correlate to the final size of the Centre bid.
This threshold value of £2.4 million denotes the minimum 80% FEC value of centre to be requested as part of this call.

The critical mass portfolio of DE grant funding must be held by the named investigators on the proposal.

**The specific criteria for the critical mass eligibility at the outline stage will be as follows:**

- Presentation of DE grant portfolio list (which has been live between 1 January 2014 and 31 December 2018) indicating sufficient critical mass and value of at least £2.4 million at 80% FEC.

- Supporting coherence statement providing evidence of portfolio fit to DE Theme remit and how the exploitation of this existing knowledge and skills will maximise impact and enable the next stage of impact to be achieved.

If any of the criteria **are not** met in the outline then you **will not** be invited to submit a full proposal.

**Call eligibility: Additional centre funding and leveraging**

A compulsory feature of this call is that user partners (public, private or third sector) must be involved in co-funding, and actively engaged in the co-creation of the research from the start of the project. The onus is on applicants to make the case to peer review at the full proposal stage that matched funding (cash and/or in kind) arrangements have been agreed. The host organisation(s) will also be expected to demonstrate substantial support for the centre through cash and/or in kind contributions (please note 20% FEC contribution to any funded grant will not count towards the consideration of matched funding). As stated previously, the matched-funding contributions from the host organisation(s) and other partners should be taken into account based on the 100% FEC value of the centre. This is designed to achieve a centre with a gross critical mass size and total worth of between £6 million and £10 million which is able to scale up the Next Stage activities from the existing DE-relevant activities.
How to apply

A two-stage application process will be used.

- **Stage 1 Outline Proposal:** Application details are detailed below.

- **Stage 2 Full Proposal:** Application details are within Annex 1 for future information, but remain subject to change. Further details of the Je-S submission route, including the full proposal deadline, will be made available to the successful outline applicants. Only successful applicants will be invited to submit an application to the full proposal stage. No other applications will be accepted. An interview panel will be convened to assess the full proposals.

Submitting an application

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

Although multi-institutional bids are expected, only one Je-S application form should be submitted from the Centre’s host institution requesting all of the funds for all of the involved HEIs.

When adding a new proposal, you should select:

- Council ‘EPSRC’
- Document type ‘Outline Proposal’
- Scheme ‘EPSRC Outline’
- On the Project Details page you should select the ‘Next Stage Digital Economy Centres 2019/20 Outline’ 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 09 July 2019.

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://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/applicationprocess/) which should be consulted when preparing all proposals.

Please also note that it is the responsibility of the lead organisation to ensure all the documentation required is submitted with the proposal form.

You should consult your Research Administration at the earliest opportunity when preparing your outline proposal, specifically with regard to costing your outline proposal and any internal procedures you need to follow.
Guidance on writing an application: Outline

In addition to the proposal details that you need to complete in Je-S (including outline costs and a non-technical summary of the proposal), you will also need to prepare the following attachments:

- Outline Case for Support (5 pages)
  - Overall Vision for the Centre
    - Innovative DE research programme which utilises a range of digital technologies and contexts to create real impact (be it economic, societal or cultural)
    - Alignment to institutional strategy(ies) and indication of commitment
    - User engagement
    - Timeliness. The centre should be set in an international context with reference to relevant academic research, business requirements and potential DE opportunities
  - Critical mass, breadth and interdisciplinary nature of DE portfolio
    - Presentation of DE-related grant portfolio list indicating sufficient critical mass and value of at least £2.4 million at 80% FEC (please see eligible grant list on webpage https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/calls/nextstagedigitaleconomycentres/)
    - Supporting coherence statement providing evidence of portfolio coherence, fit to DE Theme remit and how the exploitation of this existing knowledge and skills will maximise impact and enable the next stage of impact to be realised
  - Leadership qualities of the Director
    - Please note that EPSRC would usually expect the Director to be the PI of the grant
    - Provide evidence that the Director has the necessary skills and competencies to drive the Centre’s vision to create a world leading multi/interdisciplinary centre of excellence
  - Capability of the Centre’s Investigator team
    - Provide evidence that the necessary skills are present within the team to address the research challenges are present
  - Resources requested and management arrangements
    - Include the percentage of time the PI and CoIs will be spending on the project
• Explain the distribution of funding requested for the directly
  incurred cost of the proposal
• Detail the management structure of the centre

• CV of proposed Director (2 pages)
  o Demonstrate a track record in managing large complex research
    grants and of collaborating with users

• Statement of support from the host university and collaborative
  university(ies) (2 pages each)
  o Articulate how the centre aligns with the university’s research
    strategy
  o Indication of commitment is required at this stage (cash and in
    kind)
  o The letter should be signed by the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research
    or equivalent

**Assessment**

**Assessment process**
A two-stage assessment process will be used.

**Stage 1: Outline Proposal**

The outline bids will be considered by an expert peer review panel based solely
on the information provided on the Je-S form, in the Case for Support and the
accompanying attachments. The peer review panel, comprising of user and
academic members with a broad range of expertise, will produce a rank ordered
list of the outline proposals based on the assessment criteria. EPSRC will decide,
based on the advice of the peer review panel, which proposals to invite to the full
proposal stage. For unsuccessful outlines there will be no feedback. For outlines
invited to the full stage there may be specific feedback from the peer review
meeting which will be passed to the applicant.

**Stage 2: Full Proposal**

Full proposals will be sent to independent peer reviewers, including at least one
ominated by the applicant. The expert peer reviewers’ role will be primarily to
comment on the quality of the proposed research vision of centre. Those with
sufficiently favourable reviewers’ comments will be invited to respond to these
comments and then rank ordered against each other via an interview stage.

Applicants and two selected partners will be invited to interview by a specially
convened prioritisation panel. It is expected that the PI will attend and at least
one of the attendees will be a user. The interview panel will rank the proposal
against the full assessment criteria, using reviewers’ comments, the PI response
and overall performance at interview.
In the event of this call being substantially oversubscribed as to be unmanageable, EPSRC reserve the right to modify the assessment process.

**Assessment criteria: Stage 1 Outline Proposal**

The criteria for assessment of outline proposals will be:

- **Primary Criteria: Next Stage Digital Economy Centre Vision**
  - Innovative approach of DE research programme
  - Potential research quality
  - Alignment to institutional strategy(ies) and indication of commitment
  - User engagement
  - Timeliness

- **Primary Criteria: Critical mass, breadth and interdisciplinary nature of DE portfolio**
  - Sufficient critical mass (value of at least £2.4 million at 80% FEC, please see eligible grant list on webpage [https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/calls/nextstagedigitaleconomycentres/](https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/calls/nextstagedigitaleconomycentres/))
  - Supporting statement providing evidence of portfolio coherence, fit to DE theme remit and how the exploitation of this existing knowledge and skills will maximise impact

- **Primary Criteria: Leadership qualities of Director**
  - Necessary skills and competencies to drive the centre’s vision to create a world leading centre of excellence

- **Secondary Criteria: Capability of the Next Stage Digital Economy Centre Team**
  - To tackle research challenges, engage with users and deliver impact
  - Engagement of collaborators and indication of level of commitment

- **Secondary Criteria: Appropriateness of resources requested and management arrangements**
  - Appropriate PI and CoI time costed to the project
  - Suitable funding requested for the DI cost of the proposal
  - Management structure

**Assessment criteria: Stage 2 Full Proposal**

Applicants will be assessed at interview and proposals reviewed and ranked according to the following assessment criteria:
- Primary Criteria: Relevance to the objective of the call, in particular;
  - The centre consolidates an existing, coherent portfolio of DE Theme-related activity with sufficient critical mass and breadth, to take forward and build upon;
  - The centre undertakes activities designed to maximise impact and user engagement (for example demonstration of research challenge(s) being co-created by end-user(s)) and has specific project plans in place to deliver this;
  - Degrees of partnership support, leverage and matched funding
  - People support mechanisms are in place to grow and develop the pool of interdisciplinary DE-trained researchers ensuring the sustainability of user led interdisciplinary DE research and culture beyond the life of the centre;
  - Developing and leading the community and networking across the centres, sharing of best practice, showcasing and disseminating outputs and plans for future engagement with relevant organisation in a coordinated manner

- Primary Criteria: Quality of research programme including:
  - World leading research which is of internationally excellent levels of scholarly merit, originality, innovation, novelty and timeliness
  - Leading edge research that is transformative and/or creating new improvements to technologies/techniques/methodologies/tools
  - The ambition, adventure and transformative aspects identified
  - Appropriateness of proposed methodology
  - Joint intellectual challenge
  - Synergy and added-value of proposed research

- Primary Criteria: Ability of applicant team to deliver, including:
  - Track record of the team, the leadership quality of the PI
  - Balance of the skills of the project team and integration of different methodologies and approaches
  - The PI should demonstrate the experience and ability to run a large research programme and provide evidence that they are able to act effectively as an advocate for the broad field of DE research
  - The suitability of the proposed research team including the balance of expertise and track record and the capabilities of the multidisciplinary research team to deliver the aims and objectives of the centre

- Secondary Criteria: National importance including:
Contributes to, or helps maintaining the health of other disciplines
Contributes to addressing key UK societal challenges and/or contributes to the future UK economic success and development of emerging industry(s)
Meets national needs by establishing/maintaining a unique world leading activity
Complements other UK research already funded in the area, including any relationship to the EPSRC portfolio

- **Secondary Criteria: Pathways to impact, including:**
  - Relevance and appropriateness of any beneficiaries or collaborators (e.g. upstream engagement/co-design)
  - Clear communication strategy for dissemination and knowledge exchange
  - Plans for promoting cross-disciplinary cultures
  - User-engagement in the research programme development

- **Secondary Criteria: Resources and management, including:**
  - Outstanding approach to management and leadership
  - Robust management and governance plans, including the level of business/user direction and support
  - Appropriateness of resources requested and justified

**Guidance for reviewers**
Outline expert panel will follow the assessment criteria in this call document.
Postal peer reviewers at the invited full proposal stage will be directed to this call document and contacted to review the proposals.
Interview panels for the full proposals will also follow the assessment criteria in this call document.
Information about the EPSRC peer review process and guidance for reviewers can be found at: https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/assessmentprocess/review/
Guidance for reviewing standard grants can be found here:
https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/assessmentprocess/review/formsandguidancenotes/standardgrants/
Additional grant conditions

Grants will be subject to the standard UK Research and Innovation grant conditions however the following additional grant conditions will be added to this call:

- **GAC 01 Publicity and Branding**
  In addition to RGC 22 Publication and Acknowledgement of Support, the Grant Holder must make reference to ‘Next Stage Digital Economy Centre’ and UKRI funding and include the Digital Economy logo and relevant branding on all online or printed materials (including press releases, posters, exhibition materials and other publications) related to activities funded by this grant.

- **GAC 02 Networking**
  This grant is awarded on the understanding that, in addition to the core research programme, the project will undertake a wider networking role with the research and user community outside its membership. This may involve coordination of activities such as meetings, workshops or seminars on behalf of the EPSRC. A dedicated website must be set up within six months of the start of the grant and regularly maintained to provide a resource for engagement with the wider community.

  The Next Stage Digital Economy Centres Directors must work together to host one national Digital Economy meeting for the wider community before the end of the grant. Resources should be requested for this. The directors must also arrange and attend a ‘Next Stage Digital Economy Centre’ Director’s meeting every six months.

- **GAC 03 User Engagement Strategy**
  The grant holders must develop and execute a strategy for engaging with potential users of the research funded in the project, which is approved by the advisory board. This strategy should be reviewed and updated regularly as part of the formal management and reporting process agreed for this grant.

- **GAC 04 Communication Strategy**
  The grant holders must develop and execute a communication strategy that EPSRC approves to produce evidence for impact case studies and public engagement. Grant holders will be expected to produce a case study brochure at the end of the grant.

- **GAC 05 Governance**
  Further to RGC 7 Monitoring, this grant is subject to the framework principles of ‘Next Stage Digital Economy Centre’ and will be expected to work alongside other grants and governance structures under this scheme where appropriate.

  EPSRC will nominate a member of UKRI staff (The Project Officer) who will be your primary point of contact. The Project Officer will ensure that the project is being run in accordance with the terms and conditions and in line with financial due diligence. The Project Officer(s) should have access
to all documentation of Governance and Reporting bodies, in so far as it relates to the administration and application of the grant. As funding administrators, all UKRI staff have agreed to maintain the confidentiality required by all parties involved in EPSRC funded research.

This grant must establish and run an Independent Advisory Board, or equivalent body, to oversee the running of the project and provide advice on the strategic direction and activities of the project. The terms of reference and membership of this group (at least 50% independent membership and an independent Chair) should be agreed with the EPSRC. The Project Officer will also be expected to attend and participate in Advisory Board and other appropriate meetings for the duration of the grant.

- **GAC 06 Management Structure**
  The Grant Holder should have established an appropriate management structure with clear lines of responsibility and authority to oversee the day-to-day running of the project. This should be in place within six months of the start date of the grant. The terms of reference and management structure, including the Director, co-Director and senior investigators must be approved by EPSRC in advance. As must any changes to this structure. The Project Officer will be EPSRC's main contact with the project, and must receive all meeting minutes of the management committees. EPSRC reserve the right to attend any meetings.

- **GAC 07 Monitoring and Reporting**
  In addition to the requirements set out in standard UKRI grant conditions RGC 7.4 Research Monitoring and Evaluation, 7.5 Disclosure and Inspection, EPSRC reserve the right to instigate a review of all or part of the grant at any stage during the lifetime of the award as well as after the grant has finished. A midterm review of this grant may take place to assess the performance of the grant in line with the peer reviewed body of work, published scheme assessment criteria and deliverables. EPSRC will give the Grant Holder due notice of the date of any review and will provide details of the Terms of Reference and documentation required. Any review will be conducted by an expert panel, which will make recommendations to EPSRC for the grant’s future.

**Moving forward**
There will be a briefing session via a webinar for those groups invited to submit a full proposal on 15 August 2019. The webinar will be recorded and made available afterwards.

If you are currently restricted under the Repeatedly Unsuccessful Applicants Policy, you may submit an outline but you will only be able to submit one full proposal (as PI or Co-I) during the 12 month restricted period.

**Full proposal submissions to this call will count towards the Repeatedly Unsuccessful Applicants Policy. Further information about the policy can be found at:**
**Key dates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Date*</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deadline for outline proposals</td>
<td>16:00 on 09 July 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful outline applicants informed</td>
<td>w/c 12 August 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Briefing webinar with successful outline applicants</td>
<td>10:00 on 15 August 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deadline for full proposals</td>
<td>17 September 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prioritisation interview panel</td>
<td>12 &amp; 13 February 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planned issue of Grant Offer letter</td>
<td>March/April 2020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*EPSRC aims to adhere to the key dates as published, however there may be exceptions where the sift, prioritisation or interview meeting may have to change due to panel member availability.

**Contacts**

Dr Stephanie Dey; Stephanie.Dey@epsrc.ukri.org; 01793 44 4072  
Dr Gemma Adams; Gemma.Adams@epsrc.ukri.org; 01793 44 4306

If you experience any problems submitting the proposal through Je-S please contact the Je-S system helpdesk: JeSHelp@je-s.ukri.org; 01793 44 4164

**Change log**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Version</th>
<th>Change</th>
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<tr>
<td>Stephanie Dey</td>
<td>26/4/19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gemma Adams</td>
<td>04/6/19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Expanded upon model of the proposed centres on page 2 to ensure call webpage and call document are consistent.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Specifically, changed guidance from “Each bid is expected to consist of one lead institution, with a small number of collaborative institutions that bring together world leading research expertise in the disciplines required to deliver the breadth of research proposed.” to “Each bid is expected to consist of one lead institution, with a small number of collaborative institutions that bring together world leading research expertise in the disciplines required to deliver the breadth of research proposed. However applicants may wish to make the case for other models.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stephanie Dey</td>
<td>01/08/19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Grant conditions updated in light of updated UKRI grant conditions (<a href="https://www.ukri.org/files/funding/ukri-fec-grant-terms-and-conditions-jun19-pdf/">https://www.ukri.org/files/funding/ukri-fec-grant-terms-and-conditions-jun19-pdf/</a>).</td>
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## Appendices

### Je-S attachments Check List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attachment Type</th>
<th>Maximum Page Length</th>
<th>Mandatory/Optional</th>
<th>Extra Guidance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case for Support</td>
<td>Five pages</td>
<td>Mandatory</td>
<td>Articulating research centres vision, coherence critical mass (including grant list), leadership qualities of DI, capabilities of team and resources requested.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director CV</td>
<td>Two pages</td>
<td>Mandatory</td>
<td>Detail track record of managing large complex grants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Host Organisation Statement</td>
<td>Two pages</td>
<td>Mandatory</td>
<td>Detail how the centre aligns with the university’s strategy. Must be on headed paper, dated within 6 months of the submission and signed by the Pro VC of research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposal Cover Letter</td>
<td>No page limit</td>
<td>Optional</td>
<td>The cover letter can be used to highlight any important information to EPSRC. This attachment type is not seen by reviewers or panel members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other attachment</td>
<td>Not required</td>
<td>Not required</td>
<td>This attachment type is not seen by reviewers or panel members.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please ensure you adhere to the above attachment requirements when submitting your proposal. Any missing, over length or unnecessary attachments may result in your proposal being rejected.
Annex 1

Guidance on writing an application: Full Proposal

Applications must be made through Je-S. As well as the Je-S form, the following documents should be submitted:

- Case for support (12 pages)
  - Two page track record detailing the relevant expertise of each investigator and main project partners involved in the research project
  - Ten page description of the proposed activities of the centre. This must include a description of
    - The existing portfolio of DE research (at least £2.4 million at 80% FEC) and how it will be taken forward to the next stage.
    - How the centre will maximise impact and user engagement through its activities (for example demonstration of research challenge(s) being co-created by end-users)
    - The DE research challenge(s) being addressed, its specific context in the real world and how the research challenge has been co-created with the end-user(s)
    - The leveraging, matched funding and substantial support from the centre from both university and partners
    - The strong people support mechanisms in place to support the DE-trained interdisciplinary researchers
    - Plan for developing the community and networking across the centres, sharing of best practice, showcasing/disseminating outputs and future engagements relevant organisations in a coordinated manner.

- Pathways to Impact (2 pages)
  - User engagement strategy, resources for this can be requested and must be justified. This strategy should be reviewed and updated regularly as part of the formal management of the grant. Given the nature of the call, it is anticipated that this strategy will be developed implicitly as part of delivering the centre. The strategy should cover:
    - How and when potential users have been/will be identified
    - What form the engagement will take
    - What steps will be taken to ensure that outputs of the research are made available to potential users
- Suitable metrics for determining the success of the strategy in delivering value to users
  - Details on methodologies and resources needed to involve end user(s) in the centre and research project
  - Details on methodologies and resources required to realise the impact of the centre. This can include training for staff, professional services to visualise research outcomes, publicity, public engagement activities, and social media

- Justification of Resources (2 pages)
  - A narrative description of the need for the resources requested
  - Resources that can be requested under this call include:
    - Investigator and researcher time
    - Administrative support (sufficient level of administrative support should be requested to help in the co-ordination and management of the Next Stage Digital Economy Centre)
    - Travel and subsistence appropriate to delivery of the project
    - Cost associated with the practicalities of carrying out research ‘in the wild’
    - Equipment
    - Appropriate estates and indirect costs
    - Cost associated with cross centre working
  - Resources to fund project partners are not allowable (this includes subcontracting to a project partner)

- Host Organisation Statements (2 pages per Statement)
  - Letters are a requirement from all universities involved and should be signed by the Pro-Vice Chancellor for research or equivalent. They should articulate:
    - How the organisation will be an engaged key partner
    - What commitment, direct or in-kind the university will be contributing
    - What support will be given to the Next Stage Digital Economy Centre
    - How the Next Stage Digital Economy Centre aligns with the university’s research strategy
  - Letters must be on headed paper, dated and signed within 6 months of the proposal submission date
The letters should be uploaded to Je-S as ‘Host Organisation Statement’

- Work Plan (2 pages)
  - A full detailed five year plan is not required as it is accepted that a detailed research plan for the latter years is not known and will depend on research results from not only the centres but from other research groups nationally and internationally
  - It is expected that sufficient detail for the initial two years is given in order for peer review to have confidence that there is a structured approach
  - An indication of milestones and decision points for the final three years should be outlined to demonstrate the shaping of the research programme

- Project Partners Letter of Support
  - Letters of support are required from all project partners involved in the bid and listed on the Je-S form. They should:
    - Confirm their rationale for support of the Next Stage Digital Economy Centre and detail their involvement with the (relevant) institution(s) to date
    - Outline their involvement during the lifetime for the Next Stage Digital Economy Centre
    - Confirm and detail their contributions of cash and in-kind support
    - Indicate any willingness to increase this amount during the lifetime of the grant
  - Letters must be on headed paper, dated and signed within 6 months of the proposal submission date
  - Letters of support should be uploaded to Je-S as ‘Project Partner Letter of Support’.

- CV of the Director and Co-Is (2 pages each)
  - Directors track record in managing large, complex grants and collaborating with users

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.


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.

For advice on writing proposals see:
https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/howtoapply/preparing/

### Standard:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attachment Type</th>
<th>Maximum Page length</th>
<th>Mandatory/Optional</th>
<th>Extra Guidance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case for Support</td>
<td>12 pages</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Comprising up to two A4 sides for a track record, and ten A4 sides describing proposed research and its context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathways to Impact</td>
<td>Two pages</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Must include user engagement strategy, and details on methodologies and resources required to realise the impact of the centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work plan</td>
<td>Two page</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justification for Resources</td>
<td>Two pages</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Narrative description of the need for resources requested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution letter of support</td>
<td>Two pages</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Letters are required from all investigator institutions involved. Detail how the centre</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
aligns with the university’s strategy. Must be on headed paper, dated within 6 months of the submission and signed by the Pro VC of research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CVs</th>
<th>Two pages each</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>CVs are required from all investigators and the director on the grant.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project Partner Letters of Support</td>
<td>No page limits</td>
<td>As Required by EPSRC</td>
<td>Must be included from all named project partners. Must be on headed paper, and be signed and dated within six months of the proposal submission date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters of Support</td>
<td>No page limits</td>
<td>As Required by EPSRC</td>
<td>In exceptional circumstances a maximum of three letters can be submitted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposal Cover Letter</td>
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