



# Trustworthy Autonomous Systems

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Hub

**Q:** When does the Hub call open?

**A:** The call for Hub outlines opened on 18<sup>th</sup> October and will close 16:00 on 12 December 2019. A full proposal document for the Hub will be available prior to 12 December 2019.

**Q:** How long is the Hub for?

**A:** 48 months, with a fixed start date of 1 June 2020

**Q:** What type of organisation will be running the Hub?

**A:** Expectations on the lead organisation, or any organisations involved, are not pre-set. Any interested party should refer to eligibility criteria in the call document or the website (<https://www.ukri.org/funding/how-to-apply/eligibility/>).

**Q:** Are the 'pump priming funds' a new funding model?

**A:** No, there are other examples of very successful EPSRC and UKRI grants with this flexibility. The Hub will have the important task of building a coherent TAS community, and the pump priming funds will aid this task, being managed and delivered in line with UKRI principles. Pump priming funds may be used to (but not limited to) support new ideas, research avenues and opportunities across the community, establish new collaborations, facilitating engagement, etc.

**Q:** What's the relationship between Hub and Nodes?

**A:** As detailed in the call document, the Hub and the Nodes are interconnected entities, with the Hub taking the role of providing central coordination to the TAS programme and lead on the delivery of the programme objectives, and the nodes undertaking fundamental, cross-cutting research focused on a particular area. The Hub and the nodes will be expected to work very closely and be involved in other activities across the programme as appropriate.

**Q:** Will the Hub be involved in node peer review, node selection and criteria for selection?

**A:** No, the Hub will not be involved in any of these processes. Both the Hub and the Nodes will be delivered through different calls managed by EPSRC on behalf of UKRI, and both will undergo Peer Review.

**Q:** Can the Hub be virtual, or must it be physical?

**A:** The Hub can be either virtual or physical, but there will need to be a lead institution.

**Q:** Can one propose and do research in the Hub?

**A:** Yes. The Hub can include research activities.

**Q:** Can one be a Principal investigator (PI) on the Hub and a PI/Co-I on a node?  
Can one be a Co-I on the Hub and a PI on a node?

**A:** Yes, there is no reason why not, if you want to be involved in different parts. For you to be successful in one or more bids, your involvement would have to be appropriately justified within the proposals and be supported by the Peer Review.

**Q:** What are the assessment criteria of the planned approach?

**A:** The specific application requirements and the assessment criteria for the Hub outline stage is available in the Hub Outline call document:

<https://epsrc.ukri.org/files/funding/calls/2019/trustworthy-autonomous-systems-hub-outline-call/> Full proposal guidance and further details on the assessment process are published in the full proposal call document on the EPSRC website. It is up to the applicant team to set out an approach to ensure the delivery of the desired outcomes of the investment.

**Q:** How much of the nodes will the Hub know by the time it is funded?

**A:** The Hub and nodes will be funded via separate calls, both managed by EPSRC. Applicants to both the Hub and the nodes may engage during the development of their proposals, but this is not a requirement.

**Q:** When will the results of the Hub Outline call be known?

**A:** The TAS Hub Outline panel is expected to convene during the week of 27<sup>th</sup> January 2020. Successful applicants at this stage will be notified a few days after the panel and with sufficient time for them to prepare and submit applications for the Hub Full proposals (deadline 12 March 2020). See the full delivery timeline here (page 82) <https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/calls/trustworthy-autonomous-systems-hub-outline-call/>

**Q:** What will the £12 million reserved for the Hub used for?

**A:** It is up to the applicants to decide what resources are needed and should be requested when applying for the Hub. All requested resources must be appropriately justified. We suggest that applicants engage with their finance team with sufficient time. Hub applications can reserve funds for pump-priming funding and as set out in the call document, which we anticipate that will be up to £4 million.

**Q:** Does a Hub proposal need to address all 7 nodes?

**A:** No. Proposals should focus on one of the nodes topics (trust, responsibility, resilience, security, functionality, verifiability, legality)

## Nodes

**Q:** When will the nodes call open?

**A:** The call for research Nodes is expected to open in December 2019 with deadline February, and the specific dates will be confirmed once the call document is published. Additional information on the research nodes is available alongside the Town Hall meeting documents (<https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/calls/trustworthy-autonomous-systems-hub-outline-call/>)

**Q:** How long will the nodes last?

**A:** 42 months, with a fixed start date of 1 October 2020.

**Q:** What areas are the nodes expected to address?

**A:** Seven areas were identified during the development of this programme: trust, responsibility, resilience, security, functionality, verifiability, legality. It is expected that each funded node will focus **on one** of those aspects.

**Q:** Might a node work across two of the “aspects”? (If it made a strong multi-disciplinary case for support...)

**A:** A node should have a primary focus on one aspect, but will likely need to work closely with other nodes to address aspects that cut across (depending on the challenges posed by the topic).

**Q:** Should node teams be single or multiple institution?

**A:** UKRI has not set any expectations and it is down to the applicants to design the most appropriate team to deliver the objectives.

**Q:** Do you expect a node to be funded under each category?

**A:** Yes. It is up to the applicants to outline the expertise needed to address each area and how to best approach these topics in practice.

**Q:** Could one institution bid (separately) for and lead two distinct nodes?

**A:** Yes, given that they can design the most appropriate team to deliver the objectives and subject to success at Peer Review at all stages.

**Q:** Can one be a Principal investigator (PI) on the Hub and a PI/Co-I on a node?  
Can one be a Co-I on the Hub and a PI on a node?

**A:** Yes, there is no reason why not, if you want to be involved in different parts. For you to be successful in one or more bids, your involvement would have to be appropriately justified within the proposals and be supported by the Peer Review.

**Q:** In the £4 million “flexible fund” open to everyone, or just the nodes?

**A:** It will be accessible to the whole research and innovation community, including the nodes. The funding will be distributed by the Hub through a competitive and transparent process in line with UKRI principles.

**Q:** Should there be cross-node working? How to work with others?

**A:** Yes. We recognise that it is hard to work with others when you don't know who they are (during the application process). Applicants may want to think about plans as to how you might engage with the nodes, and plans to

collaborate with the broader community, existing investments & other stakeholders.

**Q:** Will you match, make or merge node bids at outline?

**A:** We will take into account any recommendations made by the outline panel into consideration and communicate these to the applicants and facilitate or encourage node restructuring as appropriate.

**Q:** How would a bid for node show the capability to work across disciplines without diluting its own aspect focus?

**A:** It is up to the groups proposing to run a Hub to identify a particular approach and establish a roadmap of how cross-disciplinary work and interaction will be achieved.

**Q:** How much funding will each node receive? (given that you are expecting to fund 7 nodes)

**A:** The core amount will be around £21 million and would anticipate that it will be split at around £3 million for each of the seven research nodes.

**Q:** What do you mean when you talk about “disciplines” that may need to be involved in the nodes?

**A:** In the case of the call for the Nodes, we expect to fund 7 Nodes and each of those nodes will cover a different topic (trust, responsibility, resilience, security, functionality, verifiability and legality). What expertise (or “discipline”) is needed to address the challenges that are posed by those specific topics is something that applicant teams. Whether it requires computer science research, mathematical view, is it a perspective from the social scientist, humanities, or perhaps politics, law; this is what applicants would be expected to develop when putting their proposal together for the Nodes.

## General Questions

**Q:** Was attending the Town Hall meeting a requirement for eligibility to this call?

**A:** No, attendance to the Town Hall meeting was not a pre-requisite for eligibility, nor attendance to the event will guarantee subsequent funding.

**Q:** Are UKRI going to provide “central coordination” for meetings to facilitate collaboration and networking for potential applicants?

**A:** This was our objective for the Town Hall meeting in London on 18 October 2019. The meeting was held in order to inform the community of the details on TAS programme and the investment approach (e.g. delivery timeline, SPF specifics), as well as foster new connections and help promote new ideas by bringing together stakeholders from wide range of disciplines (as detailed here: <https://epsrc.ukri.org/newsevents/events/ukri-trustworthy-autonomous-systems-programme-town-hall-meeting/> ). UKRI does not have plans to hold additional Town Hall meetings.

**Q:** Can one have industry partners/consultants?

**A:** Yes, as on normal EPSRC grants (not like ISCF).

**Q:** How would UKRI like industry/businesses involved and how can industry support this call?

**A:** For the Hub to succeed in delivering the objectives of the programme, proactive engagement with industry, businesses and third sector stakeholders at all levels will be needed. Industry and businesses may be engaged as industry as project partners, contribute as key stakeholders, etc.

**Q:** Why is this programme £33M specifically?

**A:** This was the amount that we were successfully awarded through a competitive bidding process. More information on the Strategic Priorities Fund (SPF) can be found here: <https://www.ukri.org/research/themes-and-programmes/strategic-priorities-fund/>

**Q:** Why is the delivery timescale so short?

**A:** Strategic Priorities Fund investments have set financial spending profiles and fixed start/end dates that we have to adhere when planning the calls.

**Q:** Have ESRC and AHRC been involved in this programme?

**A:** Yes. The TAS programme is a cross-UKRI activity led by EPSRC working closely with colleagues in ESRC and AHRC, as well as Innovate UK and STFC. The TAS programme is expected to be highly multidisciplinary.

**Q:** Is there a way UKRI could help broker the engagement of non-academic stakeholders?

**A:** We are exploring how to best take this forward during the bidding process. Additionally, once the Hub is established (fixed start date is 1 June 2020) the Hub may be able to facilitate some of these conversations during node set up.