



## **Cross-disciplinary mental health network plus call Frequently asked questions**

Last updated 5 March 2018

This document may be updated to reflect those questions most frequently raised with the ESRC by potential applicants. This document should be referred to in conjunction with the call document.

### **1. Can you provide examples of successful inter-disciplinary working?**

The call document will not include information about current or previous successful cross-disciplinary projects. However it is intended that the networking event will provide participants with the opportunity to listen to a range of presentations, some of which will be from speakers with experience of leading networks and working collaboratively across the disciplines.

### **2. How should we check an organisation's eligibility to lead a network and how long does this take?**

There are two categories of organisations from which proposals can be submitted:

- UK higher education institutions and some other independent UK research organisations are already recognised institutions on Je-S. A list of these organisations is available from the Je-S login page. The organisation will have set up the Je-S submission process and will therefore be available within the Je-S searches.
- The list of independent research organisations eligible to submit proposals is available at: <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/eligibilityforrcs/>. To note, this includes all NHS Trusts, Hospitals, Boards, Primary Care Trusts and GP Practices.

Please note that applicants based in UK NHS Trusts, Hospitals, Boards or GP Practices who are considering applying as the lead applicant to this call should contact the Je-S Helpdesk ([jeshelp@rcuk.ac.uk](mailto:jeshelp@rcuk.ac.uk) or 01793 444164) to ensure that their organisation is correctly registered on the Je-S system. If the organisation is not correctly Je-S registered, an e-mail request for Je-S registration will be required from the organisation. Please allow at least six weeks for the Je-S registration process, prior to the closing date of the call. Additionally, please ensure that all personal Je-S accounts associated with individuals expected to be named on the proposal have been requested at least seven working days before the proposal will be submitted.

### **3. Could PhD students be funded through this scheme as a network activity?**

PhD students are not eligible for funding through this call.

- 4. Could post-doctoral researchers be funded as part of this call?**  
Post-doctoral researchers would be eligible to be members of the leadership team within Network Plus applications. We encourage the inclusion of early career researchers (ECRs) as well as those with more established academic careers.
- 5. Does the PI of the network plus call have to be a senior academic/professor OR is there opportunity for early career researchers to lead?**  
ECRs would be eligible to lead a network plus if appropriate. All applicants would need to be able to demonstrate that they have the necessary skills required to successfully lead the network.
- 6. Are you looking for projects with international collaborations?**  
The leadership team for network plus awards can be local, regional or national. Networks can include international members but the network plus leadership team (PI and Co-Is) should be UK-based. This call is focussed on building UK capacity and other calls are available focussed on global mental health.
- 7. Can you provide guidelines regarding the acceptable range of project funding?**  
The total funding available through this call is £9-10 million, with network plus awards able to bid for up to £1.25 million each (100% fEC) for up to 48 months. We expect to fund between 6 and 10 awards. With respect to each network's 'plus' funds, the leadership teams should set aside an appropriate amount of funding for their 'plus' activities (which are expected to include the funding of small research projects). Networks should be answering specific research questions relevant to one or more of the research areas listed within the cross-disciplinary mental health research agenda, therefore this may aid the development of their plans for 'plus' activities.
- 8. Can you say something about expectations of the networks - will the funding cover small scale projects and seminar series as pump priming?**  
The networks are expected to include the funding of small research projects within their planned 'plus' activities. As well as funding small projects, a number of other activities can be considered such as seminars, lectures, workshops. Activities funded through 'plus' funds, including funding of research projects, must be open to the whole research community and not just network members.
- 9. Should each proposal address all the cross-cutting themes?**  
Proposals do not need to address all five cross cutting themes; however they should aim to consider the themes where appropriate.
- 10. How cross-disciplinary does an application need to be?**  
Networks will need to cross multiple research council boundaries as appropriate to the proposed research questions to be addressed.
- 11. Why are activities such as small projects, seminars, lectures, working groups called 'plus' activities?**  
Each network will set aside an appropriate amount of 'plus' funds which can be used for a range of different activities. These activities will include the funding of small projects and could include other activities such as running lectures or seminars etc. It is

anticipated that the focus may change slightly over the duration of the network, as important issues and topics arise through their activities, and therefore the 'plus' funds are designed to allow the networks more flexibility.

**12. If small projects, seminars, lectures, and working groups are 'plus' activities, what would be considered 'core' activities of such networks?** Core costs or activities of the networks would include the salaries for the leadership team and any administrative staff. They would include costs for activities or events that can be planned from the outset and the cost of the general management of the network.

**13. Can you define 'a network'?**

A network should aim to bring together relevant researchers and stakeholders that cross multiple research council boundaries. Networks should address specific research questions to further scope and understand the respective research areas and cross-cutting themes they are addressing. It is anticipated that networks will grow, and deliver activities to facilitate this growth, over their lifespan.

**14. Can researchers with a single research project idea but which has interdisciplinary partners apply?**

If researchers have a specific project in mind that aligns with the aims of the cross-disciplinary mental health research agenda, but does not require the creation of a network, they can direct these applications to the research councils' standard research grants routes. Details of standard grants schemes can be found within the cross-disciplinary mental health research agenda document, or on the respective research council websites.

**15. Ideally, how many investigators should there be in each network?**

There is no set number of investigators per network; we would expect that the size of the network plus to be commensurate with its reach.

**16. What is the expected range of outputs of the networks?**

The networks will be required to complete Research Fish with details of their outputs and impact on an annual basis and within 3 months of the end of the award. The research councils may ask for additional reports during the course of networks awards.

**17. Is there an outline stage?**

There will not be an outline stage for the network plus call. Applications must be submitted by 16:00 on 22 March 2018. Following the closing date a shortlisting panel will take place in May 2018, followed by interviews for the shortlisted applicants in late May/early June 2018.

**18. Will there be a cross-council fund that will accept and consider cross-disciplinary bids for full scale research projects?**

The research councils all run standard research grants schemes, of which the details can be found within the cross-disciplinary mental health research agenda. Cross disciplinary mental health applications are welcomed to any of these schemes (subject to their usual eligibility criteria). There may be further cross-council activity planned within the area of mental health research in the future; however we are unable to provide any details at present.

**19. In terms of developing capacity, could this include developing clinicians, service users, carers etc. as researchers and non-mental health researchers to develop skills/interest in mental health research?**

We are using the term 'building capacity' in the broadest sense. We would be interested in applications and activities that could build capacity in the mental health field both within and outside of academia.

**20. How will you guide reviewers to review cross-disciplinary applications and educate peer review colleges?**

With respect to the network plus call, the research councils are setting up an independent panel of reviewers who will receive specific criteria on which to base their reviews. These criteria will include details around the importance of these networks being cross-disciplinary.

**21. Are there any thoughts on the balance between research and impact/engagement activities?**

Networks are expected to include the funding of small research projects as part of their 'plus' activities. The assessment criteria for network plus applications include the requirement for impact and engagement activities. It will be the responsibility of the network leadership team to decide the appropriate balance of these activities.

**22. Can you clarify how to demonstrate that a research proposal is 'cross-disciplinary' - would the application explicitly state this in text?**

Cross-disciplinary projects should include the collaboration of researchers from disciplines that cross multiple research council boundaries.

**23. Do research projects need to be specifically identified within the application or can projects/proposals emerge during the lifetime of the network?**

Details about the funding of small research projects would not need to be defined in full detail within the application. The plus funds are intended to allow networks to be more flexible and to react to topics throughout the lifetime of the awards, and to run open funding competitions for small projects as appropriate.

**24. Will the application be mostly about the members of the network or the activities/projects they intend to undertake over the course of the funding?**

Applications will include details of the leadership team, the plans for creating a diverse membership of the network and also the specific research question(s) that the network will be answering. Details about potential use of the plus funds and the types of activities planned should be included within the application as well as timelines, governance and assessment criteria, for the distribution of 'plus' funding.

**25. Can research on dementia be funded through this call?**

It is widely accepted that neurodegenerative disorders, including dementia fall under the broader umbrella of mental health problems, however as research on neurodegenerative disorders is being funded through alternative routes, the research councils have deemed them to be out of scope for this agenda. A network could include some research on neurodegenerative disorders where they are secondary to other mental health conditions.

**26. Can you clarify what you meant by Public and Patient Involvement as an important element of research to be proposed?**

We would encourage networks to consider public and patient involvement from the outset of their planning and any within any related research under these awards.

**27. Is there any guidance about how many partner organisations the networks should include?**

There is no maximum number of partner organisations for the Network Plus call. The number included should be appropriate for the size and reach of the network.

**28. What balance do you expect to see between networking activities and actual new research?**

The research projects will be small scale but, as a whole, the network should be answering a specific research question or set of questions relevant to the research areas listed within the cross-disciplinary research agenda. Following announcement of the successful Network Plus awards the research councils will open a call for a Network Co-ordinator. This Network Co-ordinator will have funding to organise activities in order for the successful networks to collaborate.

**29. Is there an expectation that the Principal Investigator's research sits within the remit of the ESRC?**

No, the Principal Investigator's remit can represent that of any of the research councils. Networks don't need to cross the remits of **all** seven research councils; however they should cross multiple research council boundaries.

**30. Should applications to GCRF mental health calls align to the research areas and cross-cutting themes documented within the cross-disciplinary mental health research agenda?**

No, any GCRF calls run by the research councils should be seen as separate to the Network Plus call and therefore proposals will not be required to align with the cross-disciplinary mental health research agenda.

**31. Would bids that contain multiple organisations be prioritised over bids that involve a single institution?**

Neither scenario will be prioritised; however applications will need to make a clear case for why the institution(s) involved have the relevant expertise in order for their network to be successful.

**32. What is the next stage for the cross-disciplinary mental health research agenda, after the network plus call? What is the status of the research agenda for individuals or groups of researchers not in a funded network?**

It is intended that the cross-disciplinary mental health agenda will help to inform future cross-disciplinary research council investments, whether they are developed collectively by the research councils or individually by a particular research council. The cross-disciplinary mental health research agenda indicates the research councils' collective interest in mental health research and also in strengthening and encouraging further cross-disciplinary research in this area. The research agenda does preclude the research councils from developing individual strategies around mental health research or from

funding research separately in this area. We would like successful networks to engage as many individuals or groups of researchers as possible, in addition to relevant non-academic partners and stakeholders. Applications in the area of mental health can be submitted to research council standard research grants schemes and being part of one of the successful network plus awards would not be a criterion for submission to these schemes.

**33. Is it possible, or even advisable, to have multiple PIs for a network?**

Each proposal is permitted to have one formal PI attached to it, however there is no set limit to the number of Co-I's that can be involved to help to manage the network. The number of people involved in the any one leadership team for the network should be appropriate for the scale and reach of that network.

**34. Is there a limit on the number of submissions from any one institution?** There is no limit to the number of proposals that any one institution can submit to this call. However it may be that institutions want to co-ordinate internally about applications to make sure that there isn't duplication in terms of research ideas from the same institution.

**35. Can research activities/small research projects be part of the core activities of the cross disciplinary mental health networks, or would all research have to fall within the 'plus' activities?**

Research activities/small research projects should be funded through the 'plus' activities. Networks should set up an open process that allows those outside of the network to apply for 'plus' activities. The network leadership team should not hold back money for their own research projects, however they would be eligible to apply for 'plus' funds through the networks own funding competition(s).

**36. Could practitioners be Co-I's if they have a research element to their work?**

Any researcher from an established UK business, third sector or government body will be eligible as a Co-I. On receipt of the application, the eligibility of the relevant business, third sector or government body will not need to be checked if it is reasonably clear that they are appropriate to conduct the work but, should there be any doubt, checks will be carried out.

**37. Does the network lead have to be an academic researcher?**

Yes, the PI and Co-I(s) must be an academic or a researcher. The PI's institution will be submitting the application on behalf of the network; the PI will therefore need to be employed by an eligible UK institution or independent research organisation.

**38. Would projects with Co-PI's be considered for funding? If so, is there any specific guidance around how we should describe management arrangements for this?**

There should be only one person identified as PI on your application. However, there is nothing to prevent the PI and Co-I(s) agreeing to share responsibility for management; if appropriate, any such agreement could be set out in the Case for Support document submitted as part of the application.

**39. If an organisation is listed as a project partner and are making a contribution in kind or in cash, can any DI costs for them be included in this call?**

There can't be any double funding, for example - they couldn't contribute time as a project partner but also cost it in as directly incurred. It is possible that an organisation may give event space in kind and also cost in the time of an individual.

**40. Are doctoral students eligible to apply?**

The PhD must have been awarded by the time the grant application is submitted.

**41. Is a permanent position within a university required in order to apply as a PI?**

To be a PI (or Co-I) you would need to have a current contract that outlasts the grant duration, or acknowledgement from your RO that if successful a contract will be in place.

**42. Is it acceptable or advisable to include references in applications to this call?**

It is acceptable to include references (as an 'Other' type attachment), but your transferable skills are most important. You could submit a letter of support from a head of department or relevant senior academic.

**43. Is it advisable to provide evidence as to why PI's have been chosen to lead bids to this call?**

Yes, you should attach a CV and provide further details in the case for support. If the proposed PI has no prior experience of leading a network, evidence should be provided with examples of situations where transferable skills have been acquired.

**44. Does this call exclude mental health research carried out in countries other than the UK?**

No, but the research proposed must clearly and directly benefit the UK.

**45. Does this call exclude longitudinal research?**

The proposed research is limited to 48 months in duration and funding of £1.25 million (100%FEC) per network.

**46. Does 'management team' mean the same as 'leadership team'?**

Yes; these terms both refer to the PI and Co-Is who will lead/manage the network.

**47. What is an appropriate amount of funds to set aside for 'plus' activities?**

A sufficient amount of money should be set aside to fund small projects that will help to address the research questions posed. The 'core' funds should be used to address unforeseen issues that may arise through the duration of the network.

**48. What constitutes a 'significant proportion' of the PI's time to be spent on grant leadership/co-ordination?**

The call is not prescriptive about the proportion of the PI's time that should be spent on leadership/co-ordination. A case should be made for why the time allocated is appropriate and will contribute to the successful delivery of the network. It may be that a different amount of time is appropriate for different individuals; for example if the PI is a senior professor s/he might be experienced at leading projects or networks and

therefore need to contribute relatively less time to leadership/co-ordination, whereas if s/he is less experienced s/he might need to contribute a larger proportion of time.

**49. Can an NHS employee claim salary costs?**

An NHS employee could claim salary costs if s/he is a researcher and will be involved in the management of the network. If not, s/he could be included on the proposal as either a consultant for a specific piece of work, or as a project partner offering a valuable contribution (in kind or monetary).

**50. Must a Co-I have part of their salary funded by the grant?**

The application need not include any Co-I salary costs.

**51. Must information about the specific 'plus' activities envisaged be included in the proposal?**

Please provide as much information about the proposed 'plus' activities as possible; however, we appreciate that specific details of these activities are unlikely to be known at the time of application.

**52. Can an employee of a government body/business/third sector organisation be a member of the team?**

A person not employed by an eligible Independent Research Organisation (IRO) listed at <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/eligibilityforrcs/> may be eligible to be a Co-I with certain costs included if s/he is employed at an eligible UK business/third sector/government body. Please refer to the following information: <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/inclusion-of-uk-business-third-sector-or-government-body-co-investigators-on-proposals/>

**53. Can a person be included on more than one application from different institutions?**

Yes. Please note that the researcher's total time committed across all applications must not exceed their full-time hours.

**54. With regards to the leadership team, would it be a disadvantage to name a relatively inexperienced member as the PI?**

No, all applications will be assessed by a panel of experts using the criteria specified in the call document.

**55. Can the Research Councils help with building a network?**

Unfortunately the research councils are unable to help directly with the arrangement of networks. However, you might find useful information on our website <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/funding-opportunities/cross-disciplinary-mental-health-network-plus-call/> , particularly in the document entitled 'List of potential network collaborators'.

**56. Is brain injury/disability research within the scope of this call?** Research on brain injury/disability in conjunction with an additional mental health problem would be within the scope of this call.

**57. Where in the application would it be best to describe the skills and experience of our leadership team and advisory board?**

The leadership team/advisory board's skills and experience should mainly be set out in the Case for Support and any CV you might be including.

**58. Is ethics approval from the host institution expected to be in place at the time of application?**

We do not expect university ethical approval to be in place at the time of application to this call. However, we do require applicants to explain as far as possible the overall situation in the 'ethical information' section of the application form, including assurance that the proposed research will be carried out to a high ethical standard and stating clearly how any foreseeable potential ethical and/or health and safety issues have been considered and all foreseeable potential associated risks minimised.

If applicable, applicants should also complete as far as possible the human participants form and/or animal usage form (templates can be found on our website:

<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/funding-opportunities/cross-disciplinary-mental-health-network-plus-call/>)

We appreciate that at the time of application applicants are unlikely to know the details, ethical or otherwise, of 'plus' activities.

**59. Can a mental health service user be a Co-I?**

A Co-I would need to be affiliated to an organisation. If they are being paid for their time they could be included as a Consultant.

**60. Is there a limit to the amount of letters of support that can be included?**

There is no limit on the number of letters of support as such, but they should only be included if they are from parties providing something to the project and are confirming their involvement. Please do not include a letter of support from a PI/Co-I's institution unless it is offering something extra to the project.

**61. Can international members of the networks travel and subsistence costs be claimed?**

International members of the network cannot be part of the management team (PI/Co-I(s)) but, as part of the wider network, their appropriate travel and subsistence costs can be included in an application.

**62. How should evidence of support from patient groups be provided?** Patient groups/advisers can provide a letter of support setting out their contribution to/reasons for support of the project.

**63. Are final/interim reports required for this call?**

Research fish should be completed annually in the usual way. In addition to this, the research councils may ask for additional reports or information from time to time.

**64. Can a person be a PI or Co-I on more than one application to this call?** We would not expect to receive more than one application to this call listing the same person as PI; however this would be possible provided that the applications each address clearly distinct issues/topics. A person may be PI or Co-I on more than one application

provided that they would be able to commit sufficient time should all applications be successful.

**65. How does the UKPRP networks call relate to the ESRC led cross-disciplinary mental health network plus call?**

These two calls are part of different initiatives with different purposes. While both schemes will support interdisciplinary networking activity to generate new and more effective approaches to mental illness prevention, the key distinguishing features of the UKPRP networks are:

- UKPRP networks will focus on the primary prevention of mental health conditions by addressing upstream determinants that are likely to be common to several non-communicative diseases (NCD's), not just the antecedents of mental ill health
- UKPRP does not cover secondary prevention
- the outputs from UKPRP networks may include:
  - an interdisciplinary community of researchers and users bringing novel approaches and insights to the prevention research arena
  - the development of a research road map, on a broad NCD primary prevention research challenge, setting-out an agenda on how interdisciplinary teams could work productively together
- UKPRP is a managed initiative that aims to produce new knowledge through promoting multidisciplinary, systems-oriented research. Where appropriate, UKPRP networks will be in a good position to access further funding opportunities through this initiative
- Research looking at neurodegenerative disorders is in scope for the UKPRP networks and consortia call.

**66. How does the Network Plus call relate to the NIHR Mental Health themed call?**

Applications that evaluate healthcare interventions, health services, social care or public health measures operating at either the individual, or the population level should be directed to NIHR's mental health themed call <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/funding-and-support/themed-calls/mental-health.htm>.