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Questions about what we are looking to fund

Would you fund research for a product beyond TRL 3 (Technology Readiness Level 3)?

EPSRC is very much about fundamental engineering and physical sciences research. If there is a solid engineering and physical sciences research question that can be addressed by research, that could be relevant at any number of developmental stages for a product, but probably more at the early stages of product development rather than at the later stages. As long as your project can be expressed as a solid research question that is clearly within the EPSRC remit, that's the key thing. It does not specifically matter what stage of the product development process that research question comes in, but bear in mind that we are looking to fund research that enables a fundamental, step change in products and services, not incremental improvements. Also, we are looking to fund projects that have a collaborative, multidisciplinary, co-creation approach. We are not looking to fund people who are just want funds to get their product to market.

Would you fund a project about the psychosocial aspects of AT?

We are looking to fund multi-disciplinary research, so the psychosocial dimension could certainly come into a project, so long as the project fits with our aim to fund fundamental engineering and physical sciences research that will enable step-changes in AT products and services.

Should the geographical focus of our project be the UK or is there an international angle as well?

We are funded by the EPSRC to stimulate interdisciplinary working on issues within the context of UK research institutions, and between research institutions and other stakeholders (AT users, clinicians, industry, policy makers, civil society etc.). However, given the inter-connected and often global nature of the challenges, we do not expect that all work funded by or associated with the Network + will be exclusively UK-focused. However, we would require international collaborations to have a lead partner based in a UK institution that is eligible for EPSRC funding. Also note that international collaborators can't be named or budgeted on the application as Co-Investigators. We anticipate that commercial partners and collaborators will provide in-kind support to the project and donate their time. If there is a good case for meeting the expenses of other non-commercial collaborators or partners who can't be named or funded as Co-Is, their expenses can be included in the budget.

Will you be funding project applications from people in LMICs (Low- and Middle-Income Countries)?

No. We cannot fund project applications submitted by people in LMICs because they do not qualify for EPSRC funding. We welcome engagement from people in LMICs but for this funding call it has to be as a partner with a UK academic who is eligible for the funding (see Information for Applicants for eligibility).

There are overlaps between rehabilitation and AT (assistive technologies). Will you fund rehabilitation technologies?

There is another EPSRC Healthcare Technologies Network+ that is looking at rehabilitation technologies. To qualify for funding under this TIDAL funding call, your project should be predominantly an AT project.

Can I apply for funding for a project that has already started?

No. Awards will not be made retrospectively: this means that the work for which support is requested must not have started, or be planned to start, before the funding contract with UCL has been signed.

Questions about eligibility

I work for a non-UK organization. Can I apply?

No. Unfortunately you do not qualify for EPSRC funding. However, you can be a partner or collaborator on a project being led by someone in the UK who does qualify for EPSRC funding. In most cases, and especially where partners or collaborators are commercial organisations, we would expect them to support the project in-kind by donating their time. If the lead applicant and PI believe that a strong case can be made to meet a partner/collaborator's expenses, they can be costed into the project budget, and the cost justified on the application form. This funding must not be used to provide any other kind of funding or subsidy for a partner/collaborator or their organisation.

We are intending to include non-UK based team members in our application. Is this allowed?

Yes, but they cannot be a PI or a Co-I. All proposed Co-Investigators must be academic employees of an eligible organisation and must be resident in the UK. Non-UK-based team members can be included as partners or collaborators. In most cases, and especially where partners or collaborators are commercial organisations, we would expect them to support the project in-kind by donating their time. If the PI believes that a strong case can be made to meet a partner/collaborator's expenses, the PI can cost these in the project budget and justify the cost on the application form. This funding must not be used to provide any other kind of funding or subsidy for a partner/collaborator or their organisation.

Questions about project partners

What level of commitment do we need to show from industrial or commercial project partners at the application stage?

Co-creation is a very important aspect of the projects we are looking to fund. Interaction between different partners is important for allowing new ideas and novel perspectives to emerge. That is one of the key things we would like to support. So, if you are going to involve partners, that needs to be from the beginning, which means they have to commit at the outset. We are looking for genuine collaboration. One important thing we are trying to do by funding this research is not to start with a product or solution and improve it but to go back to the problem: if we understand the problem

then we can find a better solution for it. We need consider what is the problem from the perspective of the end users, and how we can find a solution to the problem, so that should be the focus of your research question, rather than jumping in with an existing solution that you may want to improve (for example, electrifying wheelchairs). It's not that there aren't worthwhile projects of that nature, but we want to get to the grassroots level, get to the real problems, and then go from there to create transformative solutions.

I am working on a proposal for a project involving private businesses who will want their involvement acknowledged. Is this allowed?

One of the aims of the network is to encourage collaboration between academic and non-academic organisations. It should not be a problem to acknowledge their involvement, so long as this is alongside acknowledgement of TIDAL N+ and the EPSRC (requirements for which will be set out in the terms and conditions for any awards made).

Questions about finances and budgets

If TIDAL only reimburses 80% of the total allowable costs for the project, where does the other 20% come from?

Your institution will have to cover the other 20%. This is usual practice with EPSRC funding. You must get the permission of your Head of Department or Head of Finance (or other appropriate financial authorities as required by your institution) before applying for the workshop, to ensure that you have their commitment to pay the other 20% if you go on to be successful in your funding application.

Can I also get funding from other sources for my project?

Yes. If you can secure matched funding for your project and/or contributions in kind, we would welcome that.

Under what circumstances can I include air travel in my project budget?

We would consider a request to cover air travel if the travel was essential and there was no alternative means of travel, or if an individual would be significantly disadvantaged (not merely inconvenienced) in some way if unable to travel by air. In all cases, you would need to request permission for air travel from the TIDAL N+ team before incurring the costs. We envisage that essential travel will be minimal and do not anticipate funding any international travel.

If my application were successful, would the salary money be additional to someone's existing salary or would it just buy them out so that they were still getting what they earn now?

This is up to your organisation. Note, however, that funding cannot be awarded directly to individuals, and must be paid to your organisation.

Are salary costs indexed to account for inflation and salary increases?

Funded projects will only run for 6 months. We will not add future pay awards or indexation to the salary costings at the time awards are made. You will need to account for them in your budget (e.g. known or anticipated pay awards pending) or your institution will need to cover these.

Questions about the application and funding process

Am I allowed to submit an application if I don't attend the workshop?

Not for this funding call. To be eligible to apply for funding, the lead applicant (PhD student) must first apply to attend an online workshop. Only those who are given a place on the workshop, and attend the workshop, will be able to apply for the funding.

- If you are given a place on the workshop, you must attend in order to be able to submit a funding application after the workshop
- If you are not given a place on the workshop, you will not be eligible to submit a funding application
- If you are given a place on the workshop but do not attend, you will not be eligible to submit a funding application

Can I submit more than one funding application?

No. Each workshop attendee should submit one funding application.

Where in the application form do we list any team members who don't qualify as Co-Is?

We want to be able to assess the quality of your proposed team, so there will be a section where you can include details and credentials of partners and collaborators on the proposal/application form even if you are not requesting funding for their time. As noted above, where individuals are employed or otherwise funded by a commercial organisation, we would expect them to donate their time in kind and cover their own expenses. If there is a good case for meeting the expenses of non-commercial collaborators or partners who can't be named or funded as Co-Is, their expenses can be included in the budget under Directly Incurred costs and justified in the application form.

What approvals do I need from my organisation before submitting an application?

We require the approval of your Dean, Head of Department and/or Head of Finance, or other appropriate authority **as required by your organisation**: you should follow your organisation's rules on this. They will need to sign your workshop application form and your funding application form, to show that they approve it, and that they agree to fund the additional 20% of your budget if you are awarded TIDAL funding. (Any TIDAL grant will only cover 80% of eligible project costs; the other 20% has to be covered by the host institution.)

Your PI will also need to sign the form to confirm that they will supervise your project. (The PI could be your PhD supervisor but could also be another academic.)

Your organisation will have its own internal rules about who you need to consult before submitting an application and whose approval you need, so **you also will need to follow these**.

What are the key dates and deadlines?

Deadline for workshop applications

Review workshop applications

Workshop

Applicants write grant applications /
TIDAL team provide coaching support

Deadline for grant applications

Review grant applications

Applicants respond to reviewer comments

Deadline to submit response to reviewer comments

Consideration of responses and final decision

Contracting

Project begins

Project delivery date

Weds May 31st 2023

Mon 5th June to Fri 9th June 2023

Weds 28th June 2023 – all day (9.30am to
5.30 am times t.b.c), online

Thur 29th June to Thurs 27th July 2023

Thur 27th July 2023

Mon 31st July to Fri 11th August 2023

w/c 14th August 2023

18th August 2023

w/c 21st August 2023

September to end Nov 2023

Target date 1st Dec 2023

No later than 1st Jan 2024

No later than 30th June 2024

Any other questions? Anything not clear?

We hope that, read together, the Information for Applicants and FAQs documents should answer all your questions, but if not, please let us know.

We want you to put in a great application so we are really happy to answer any other questions and queries you may have, or to clarify anything that isn't clear in the call documentation. Please contact TIDAL@ucl.ac.uk