Housekeeping

- Please keep your microphone on mute while speakers are presenting.
- This webinar is being recorded and will be available on our website.
- If you do not wish to be included in the recording, please keep your camera off.
- The slides will also be shared after the session on our website.
- There will be time for Q&A at the end of the presentation. Please add your questions to the chat.

DICE NETWORK+ DIGITAL INNOVATION & CIRCULAR ECONOMY

UKRI Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

DICE NETWORK+
DIGITAL INNOVATION & CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Flexible Funding Call Launch

28 Jan 2026, 4-5pm

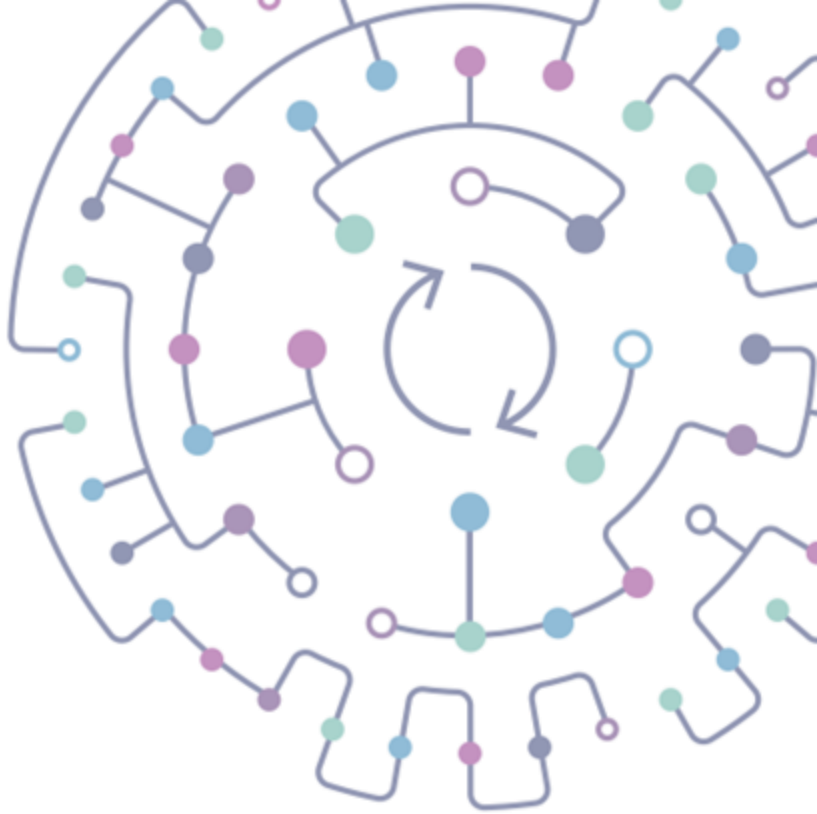
UKRI Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council
University of Exeter
The University of Nottingham
The Open University
Queen's University Belfast
University of Salford Manchester
University of Sheffield
University of Southampton
University of Surrey
Swansea University Prifysgol Abertawe

Agenda

DICE Network+	Fiona Charnley	10 mins	16:00
Flexible Fund overview	Georgie Hopkins	10 mins	16:10
Funds available - Knowledge Exchange Placements - Feasibility Studies - Demonstrators	Fiona Charnley	15 mins	16:20
Timeline & Support	Georgie Hopkins	5 mins	16:35
Application Process	Georgie Hopkins	10 mins	16:40
General discussion, Q&A	Fiona Charnley	10 min	16:50
	Close		17:00

DICE Network+

Professor Fiona Charnley



DICE NETWORK+ DIGITAL INNOVATION & CIRCULAR ECONOMY

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Project overview

UKRI EPSRC funded Network+

3-year term: Jan 2025 – Dec 2027

Budget: £2,500,000

"Leveraging the power of the digital revolution to drive a circular economy across sectors and value chains"

Partner Organisations:

Ellen Macarthur Foundation, High Value Manufacturing Catapult, Rolls Royce, Airbus, SAP, National Physics Laboratory, Faraday Institute, Royce Institute, Amazon, Ebay, Electrolux, OEMs from across the semi-conductor industry

Nine universities, including University of Exeter as lead

University of Exeter

University of Southampton

Queen's University Belfast

University of Sheffield

The Open University

University of Salford Manchester

The University of Nottingham

University of Surrey

Swansea University Prifysgol Abertawe

Addressing key challenge areas

EMBED

Embedding sustainability and circularity within the design and development of digital and communication technologies.

ENABLE

Realising the potential of the digital revolution to enable a circular economy across sectors.

DICE NETWORK+ DIGITAL INNOVATION & CIRCULAR ECONOMY

UKRI Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

Key pillars of activity

1

Insight & Evidence

Drawing upon our network of networks, develop a comprehensive understanding of existing activities, challenges and opportunities to inform the 10-year vision & actionable roadmap towards digitally enabled CE.

2

Capacity Building & Knowledge Exchange

Develop an evidence-led knowledge base to inform, educate and upskill members of the community, facilitate knowledge exchange and support the development and adoption of digitally enabled CE solutions.

3

Research, Impact & Legacy

Facilitate mechanisms of interdisciplinary, cross-value chain collaboration, research and solution innovation, including Flexible Funding to support feasibility studies and demonstrator calls.

4

Inclusive Community

Underpinning all activity, the objective to build and coordinate an inclusive DICE community to enable and empower collaboration among diverse user groups.

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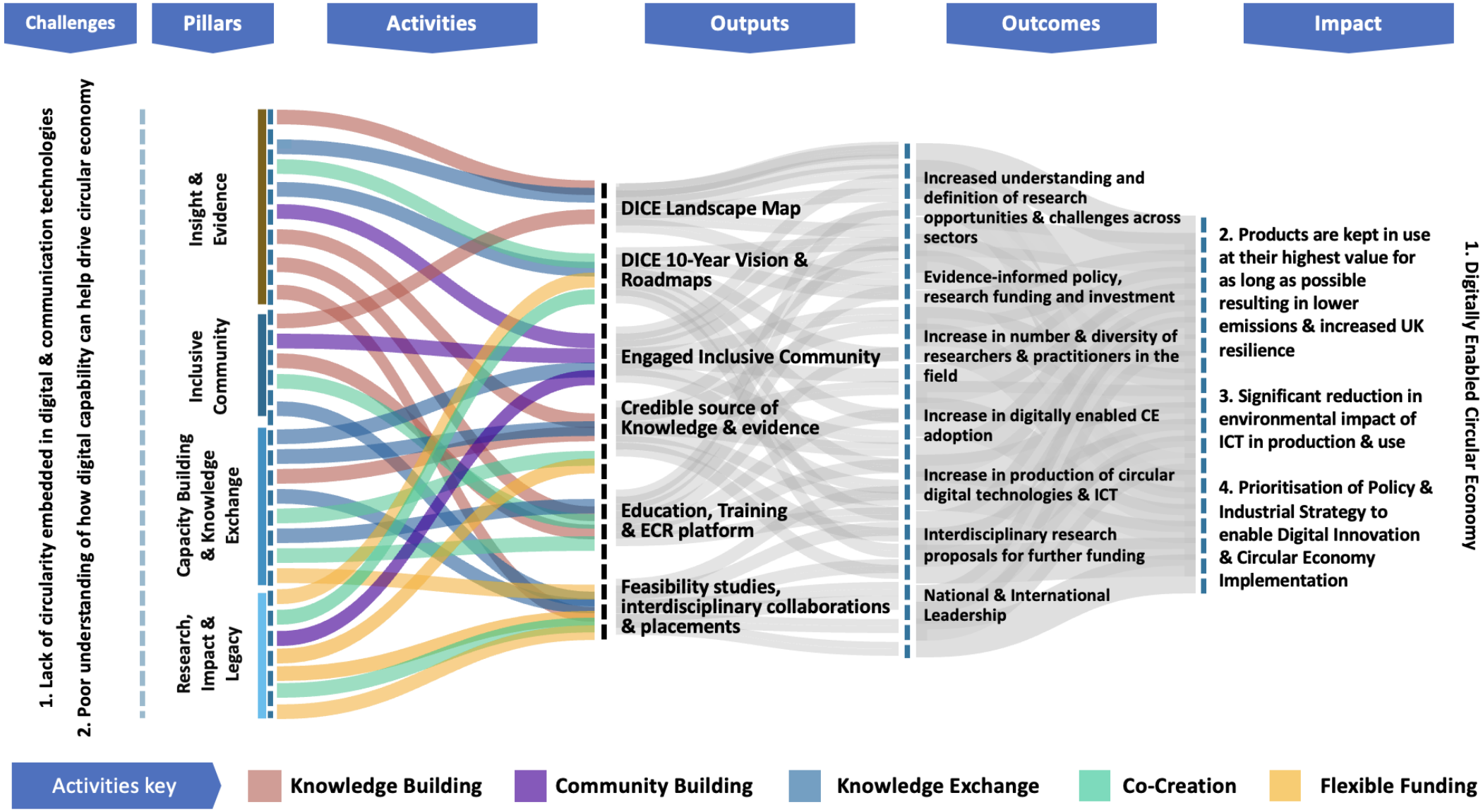
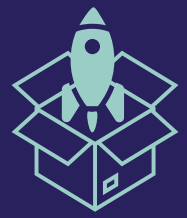
Theory of change



Progress to date

Knowledge Exchange Placements – 6 awarded
Feasibility Studies – Round A - 3 awarded
Round B to launching, including Demonstrator call

Support letters for research projects and practitioner connections



ECR Community – 4 monthly meetings & 2 capacity building workshops

Informing policy - Government Buying Standards feedback

Bi-monthly Newsletter – 300+ subscribers
LinkedIn DICE News Wrap - 270+ subscribers
CE ITC procurement thought-piece (*Just published*)

Research, Impact & Legacy
£100K+ funds awarded

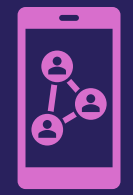
DICE NETWORK+

Insight & Evidence
10+ Network team publications

DICE Flywheel, integrates CE practices with Digital Tech (WIP)
CE Data Centre roadmap (WIP)
IDEALL roadmap

CE & DC position paper (WIP)
CBM & Finance report (WIP)

230+ partners engaged
30+ ECR members
20+ Networks engaged



520+ LinkedIn followers
Regular posts & 25,600+ impression

Capacity Building & Knowledge Exchange
520+ connections & 50% engagement*

London launch event (80+), Data Centre roundtable (20+), Surrey Roadshow (30+) Salford Roadshow in December

20+ events attended, including CE keynotes, panels, & presentations

*Have engaged at least once

Research position - EMBED

EMBED

Embedding sustainability and circularity within the design and development of digital and communication technologies.

- Transforming industries from linear to circular will need a radical holistic systems approach. The literature suggests that studies so far have focused on CE within downstream functions (production, use and disposal) within a linear system, instead of redesigning products, services and the system itself.
- There is more literature available on how digital technologies can enable the CE, although this is disjointed and lacks prioritisation.
- Research currently falls short in covering this challenge area and there is far less on how CE principles can be embedded into digital technology design.

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Research position - ENABLE

ENABLE

Realising the potential of the digital revolution to enable a circular economy across sectors.

- The main Digital Technologies as enablers of the circular economy are AI, IoT, Blockchain and Big Data Analytics.
- Most DT's enable the CE by optimising operations, resource use, maintenance, and resource recovery through Smart Management Models including Product Lifecycle Managment tools and Supply Chain Management tools
- Most of the literature focuses on the second and third phases of the CE value chain,
  - extending the lifespan of a product/part
  - material value recovery.
- There is a gap in the research into DT applications for phase 1 (smarter product use and manufacturing) especially for Refuse and Redesign.

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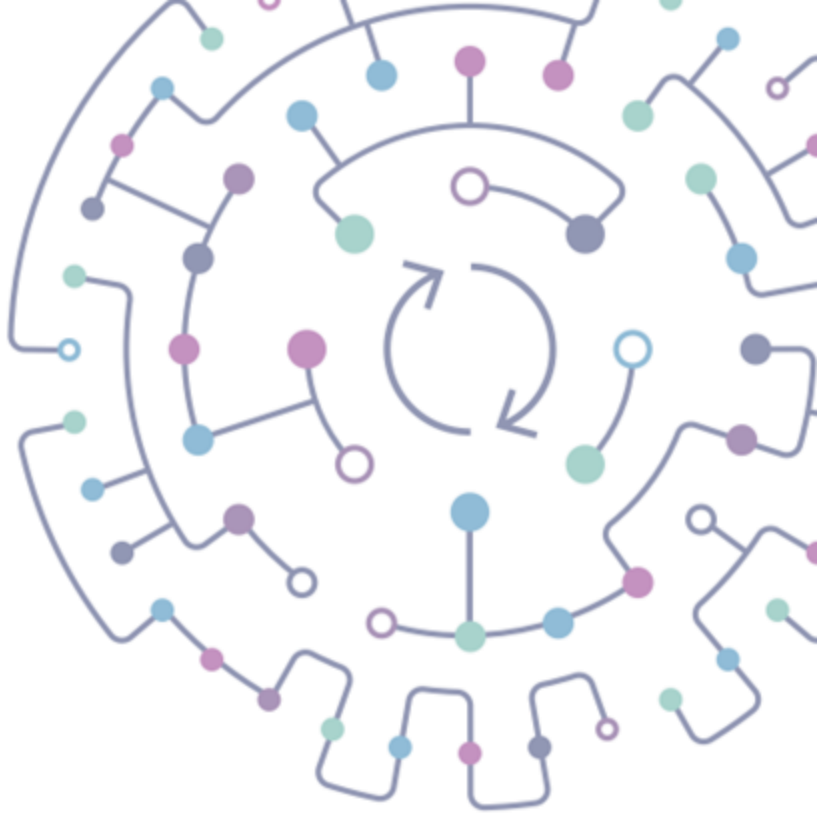

Flexible Fund overview

Georgie Hopkins

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UKRI Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

Awarded Funds to date

Feasibility Studies: 3 funded to date

Robotic and AI-enabled sensing for timber reuse: testing the feasibility of AI-ready material passports to unlock circular construction automation (UCL)

Busloads of Value: Circular, Digitally Enabled Business Models for Retrofitted Bus Fleets (Queens University Belfast)

SurplusMap: Feasibility of a City-Scale Digital Twin to Enable Surplus Food Redistribution in London (Nottingham Business School)

Knowledge Exchange Placements: 2 funded to date, 4 placements in contracting

Bridging local wisdom & scientific Innovation: a citizen science approach to climate resilience in the Mekong Delta (Vietnam)

Future Histories: Weaving Data into Digital Storytelling for Circularity

4 new awards cover topics such as:

- Exploring Digital product passports
- Predicting item desirability with machine learning
- Space-Based Solar Power

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Funds launching today!

Knowledge Exchange Placements

£5k per placement (at 80% FEC)

Rolling quarterly application – deadline 8 March 2026.

To enable researchers to spend time with industrial or government partners or academics from different disciplines, to attend events conferences or work placements outside of their normal practice.

Feasibility Studies

£50k per study (at 80% FEC)

Round B deadline MIDDAY 27 Apr 26

To fund 6-9 month interdisciplinary studies that address cross-cutting challenges at different scales. New collaborations between sectors and disciplines, involving early carer professionals and industry partners are encouraged.

Demonstrators

£50k per study (at 80% FEC)

Round B deadline MIDDAY 27 Apr 26

Funds to support projects providing proof of concept and demonstration of ideas from the network activity. Each activity is expected to be 6-9 month collaboration between academics and industrial partners.

DICE NETWORK+ DIGITAL INNOVATION & CIRCULAR ECONOMY

UKRI Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

Total funding pot

Fund	Total funding available (80% fEC)	Max funding per project (80% fEC)	Awarded projects to date	Expected number of projects to be funded	Total funding to be awarded
Knowledge Exchange Placements	£50,000	£5,000	6	**6**	**£26,800**
Feasibility Studies	£300,000	£50,000	3	**3**	**£151,525**
Demonstrators	£100,000	£50,000	-	**2**	**£100,000**
TOTAL FUNDING	**£450,000**				**£278,325**

DICE NETWORK+ DIGITAL INNOVATION & CIRCULAR ECONOMY

UKRI Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

Setting the ambition

We have an ambitious approach with a desire to create impact and meaningful change within the sector.

Our Flexible Funds provide opportunity to undertake **speculative** and **potentially high-impact research** to accelerate innovative solutions that promote the adoption of a digitally enabled circular economy.

We are focused on:

- **Engaging Early Careers Researchers:** each application should include an ECR either leading or playing an active role within the research team.
- **Addressing real world challenges:** each application requires an industry, policy or third-sector partner providing a Letter of Support.

DICE NETWORK+ DIGITAL INNOVATION & CIRCULAR ECONOMY

UKRI Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

EDI focus

We understand that excellence will be achieved through recognising the value of every individual. We want to encourage, support and respect ideas from everyone and ensure our inclusive activities are representative of the diverse circular economy community.

Our ambition is to instil these values across all our activities, supporting a diverse cohort of participants and welcome applications from diverse and underrepresented groups.

Our funding assessment process includes EDI considerations as a core element and has been designed to minimise potential bias in decision making.

You are welcome to discuss any specific requirements that will enable participation – please contact Georgie Hopkins by email DICE_Network@exeter.ac.uk.

DICE NETWORK+ DIGITAL INNOVATION & CIRCULAR ECONOMY

UKRI Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

Responsible Innovation

Responsible Innovation is a process championed by EPSRC, that takes the **wider impacts** of research and innovation into account. It aims to ensure that **unintended negative impacts are avoided**, that barriers to dissemination, adoption of research and innovation are reduced, and that the positive societal and economic **benefits of research and innovation are fully realised**.

We expect researchers involved in funded feasibility studies & demonstrators to **anticipate, reflect and engage** on the wider **ethical and societal impacts**, implications and value of their work, entering into dialogue with the public and other stakeholders where appropriate, and **respecting the views of others**.

Further resources can be accessed through the UKRI website.

DICE NETWORK+ DIGITAL INNOVATION & CIRCULAR ECONOMY

UKRI Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

Joining our DICE N+ community

We invite all our flexible fund awardees to form a core part of the DICE Network+ community.

Awarded projects are required to acknowledge funding support from UKRI and the DICE Network+ when promoting their work.

Successful applicants will be invited to participate in DICE Network+ events and will be requested to present project updates in person at the network's annual conference (we recommend this consideration is included in the project costing).

DICE NETWORK+ DIGITAL INNOVATION & CIRCULAR ECONOMY

UKRI Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

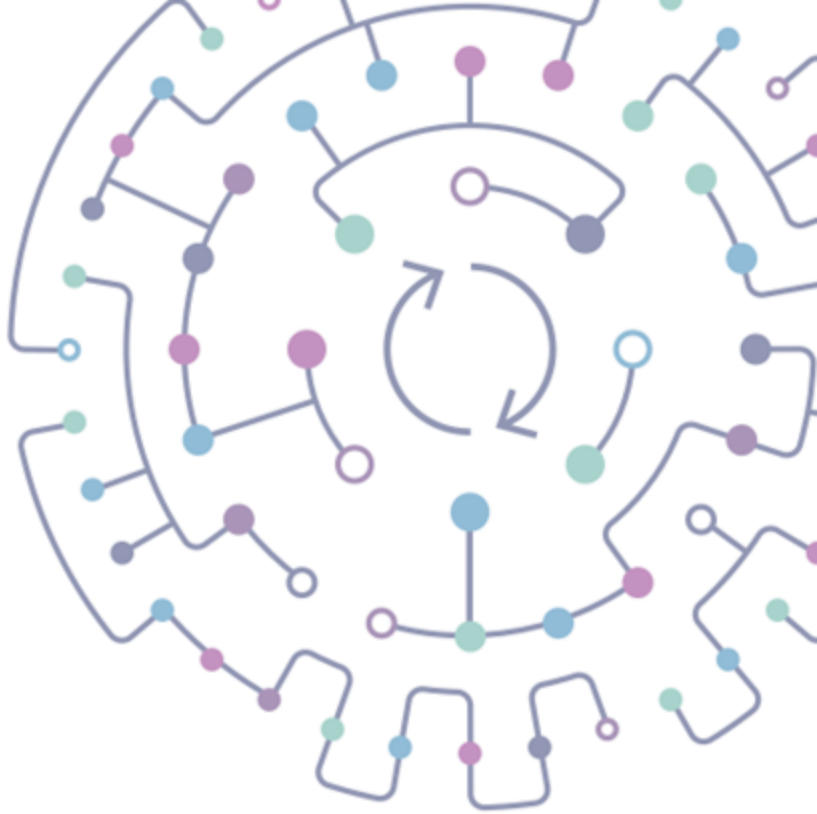
Eligibility – key highlights

- Funding is available to higher education institutions, research council institutes and independent research organisations in the UK that are normally eligible for UKRI funding. Full guidelines can be found here.
- Standard UKRI eligibility rules apply.
- Subcontracting is allowed, although we would not expect to fund proposals where more than 40% of the award is subcontracted.
- Individuals may submit or be named on more than one application.
- Matched funding from industry, policy and third sector organisations or other programmes is both permitted and welcomed.
- Project Partners must be organisations with a research and/or innovation base. They can be based outside the UK provided there is a clear link back to the UK.
- An organisation should only be named as a Project Partner if it is providing specific contributions (either in cash or kind) to the project, detailed in a Letter of Support. Any financial or other interests with any project partners named in the application must be disclosed to ensure integrity of research.

Full details are available within the Funding overview documents available to download from the DICE N+ webiste

Knowledge Exchange Placements

Fiona Charnley



DICE NETWORK+ DIGITAL INNOVATION & CIRCULAR ECONOMY

UKRI Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

Overview

Purpose: To provide interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral knowledge exchange related to the DICE Network+ key challenge areas.

Objectives:

- Well-planned and hosted placements, 1-3 months with UK or international organisations.
- Providing academic partners with first-hand experience in an industrial or government context across disciplines related to DICE N+ key challenge areas.
- The development and sharing of knowledge with hosts, through outputs such as short reports, white papers or conference papers, detailing identified research gaps and proposed steps to address them.
- The funds may also be used for academics to attend events or conferences outside of their ‘normal’ disciplinary area, research or practice.

Funds available

- Funding of a maximum of **£5,000 per placement**
- **Funds currently remain for up to 6 further placements, total £26,800**
- **Awarded at 80% FEC** – maximum total placement cost £6,250
- The lead institution will need to provide the remaining 20% cost.
- Funding can cover direct costs such as travel, subsistence, accommodation and related consumables. It is not intended to be used to cover salary costs.
- Lead institutions will be expected to support overheads for any staff that are on placement, and applications where a portion of the placement costs are met by industry funding are also welcomed.

DICE NETWORK+ DIGITAL INNOVATION & CIRCULAR ECONOMY

UKRI Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

Timeline

Round C:

- Submission Midday 9 March 2026
- Decision notification 30 March 2026
- Project start date from 1 June 2026

Round D (if funds remain available):

- Submission Midday 8 June 2026
- Decision notification 30 June 2026
- Project start date from 1 Sept 2026

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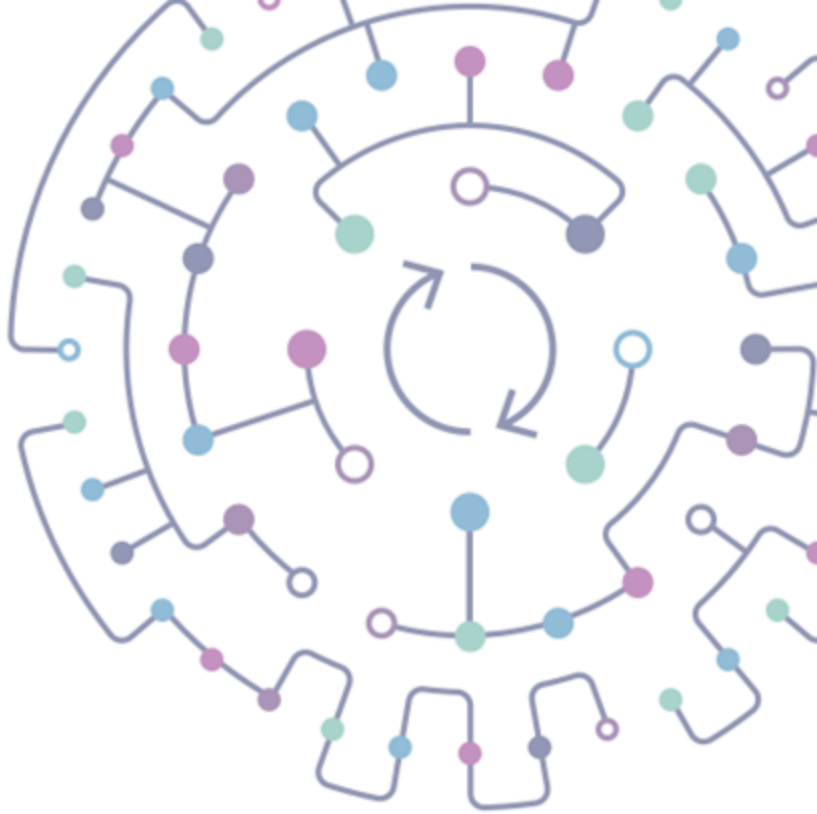
Feasibility Studies

Fiona Charnley



DICE NETWORK+ DIGITAL INNOVATION & CIRCULAR ECONOMY

UKRI Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

Overview

Purpose: to undertake speculative and potentially high-impact research to accelerate innovative solutions related to the DICE Network+ key challenge areas.

Objectives:

- Research to accelerate innovative solutions that promote the adoption of a digitally enabled circular economy.
- Innovative, evidence based & applied research that takes a **whole system approach**.
- The study should **result in increased confidence** in the proof of concept developed, which then has potential to attract further prioritisation and investment in the area.
- Applications should include or be led by an **early career academic** and should involve **at least one industrial, government or third-sector partner** to ensure real world application and impact.

DICE NETWORK+ DIGITAL INNOVATION & CIRCULAR ECONOMY

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Areas of DICE N+ focus

Data Centres:
Material intensity & e-waste

Space:
Extending use & end-of-life recovery of critical raw materials

Semi-conductors:
Component manufacturing & substitution

Renewables:
Extending use & end-of-life recovery of critical raw materials

Telecoms:
Consumer device takeback & end-of-life materials

DICE NETWORK+ DIGITAL INNOVATION & CIRCULAR ECONOMY

UKRI Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

Funds available

- Funding of a maximum of **£50,000 per project**
- **Awarded at 80% FEC** – maximum total project cost £62,500.
- **Funds currently remain for up to 3 further studies, total £151,525**
- The lead institution must be willing to provide the remaining 20% FEC.
- Funds can cover both directly incurred and directly allocated costs, including investigator time, travel and subsistence appropriate to delivery of the project, and consumables.
- The duration of each individual project should be 6-9 months .
- Applications where a portion of the project costs are met by industry funding are welcomed.

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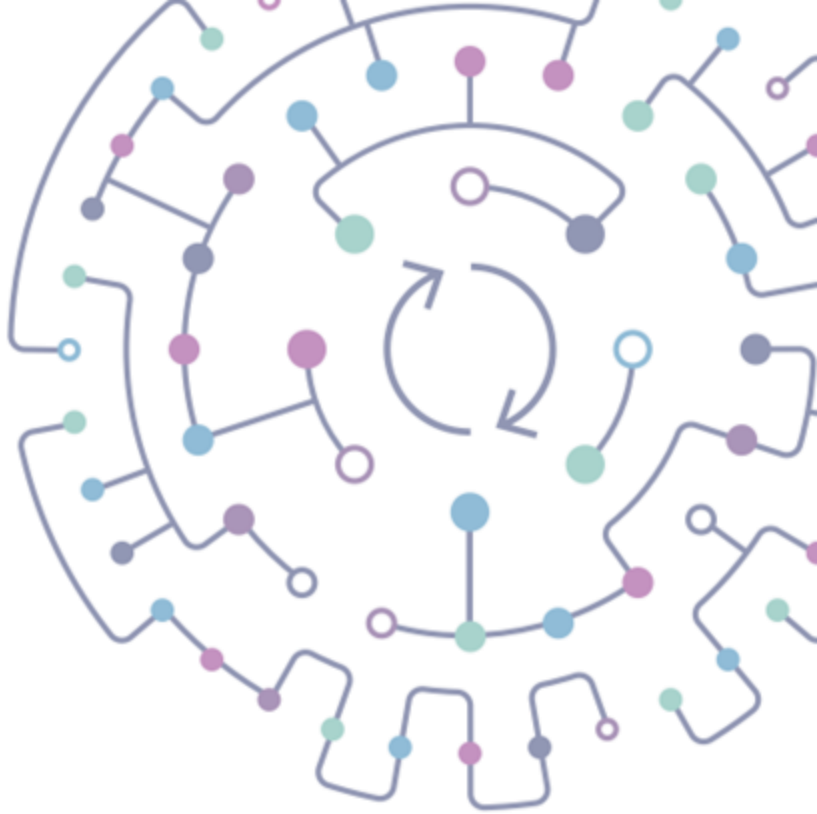

Demonstrator Call

Fiona Charnley

DICE NETWORK+ DIGITAL INNOVATION & CIRCULAR ECONOMY

UKRI Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

Overview

Purpose: to prove innovative concepts working in practice through prototypes, pilots, or proof-of-concept demonstrations that promote the adoption of a digitally enabled circular economy.

Objectives:

- Innovative, evidence based & applied research that takes a **whole system approach**.
- Demonstrators to build upon prior research work or equivalent proof of concept creating tangible, working illustrations of potential real-world applications and wider adoption.
- Applications should include or be led by an **early career academic** and should involve **at least one industrial, government or third-sector partner** to ensure real world application and impact.

DICE NETWORK+ DIGITAL INNOVATION & CIRCULAR ECONOMY

UKRI Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

Demonstrators vs Feasibility Studies

Demonstrators **build upon prior research work or equivalent proof of concept**, creating tangible working illustrations of potential real-world applications and wider adoption.

Demonstrators should **move beyond theoretical feasibility to practical implementation**, providing evidence of scalability and replication potential across sectors or contexts.

DICE NETWORK+ DIGITAL INNOVATION & CIRCULAR ECONOMY

UKRI Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

Areas of DICE N+ focus

Example projects include, but are not limited to:

- Demonstrating how products, processes or systems can use digital technologies to enable innovation in circular economy implementation.
- Piloting advances in AI and Machine Learning to accelerate the adoption of circular innovation within one or more industrial sectors.
- Demonstrating the application of digital technology to accelerate the widescale adoption of Product as a Service (PaaS) models, including Digital Product Passports.
- Piloting the use of digital technologies to gather evidence for implementation of circular economy initiatives in a range of contexts.
- Prototyping the socio-technical aspects of new circular digital system adoption, including approaches to address Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in circular digital revolution.

Funds available

- Funding of a maximum of **£50,000 per project**
- **Awarded at 80% FEC** – maximum total project cost £62,500.
- **Funds available for 2 demonstrators, total £100,000**
- The lead institution must be willing to provide the remaining 20% FEC.
- Funds can cover both directly incurred and directly allocated costs, covering investigator/ researcher time, travel and subsistence appropriate to delivery of the project, consumables, and equipment necessary for the demonstration.
- The duration of each individual project should be 6-9 months .
- Applications where a portion of the project costs are met by industry funding are welcomed.

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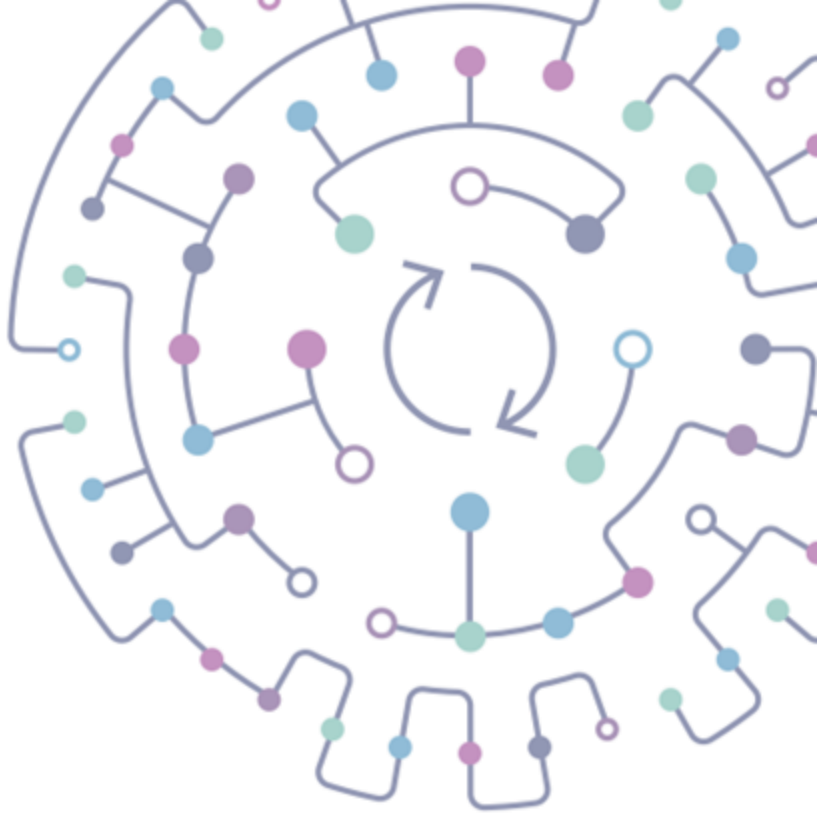

Timeline & Support

Georgie Hopkins

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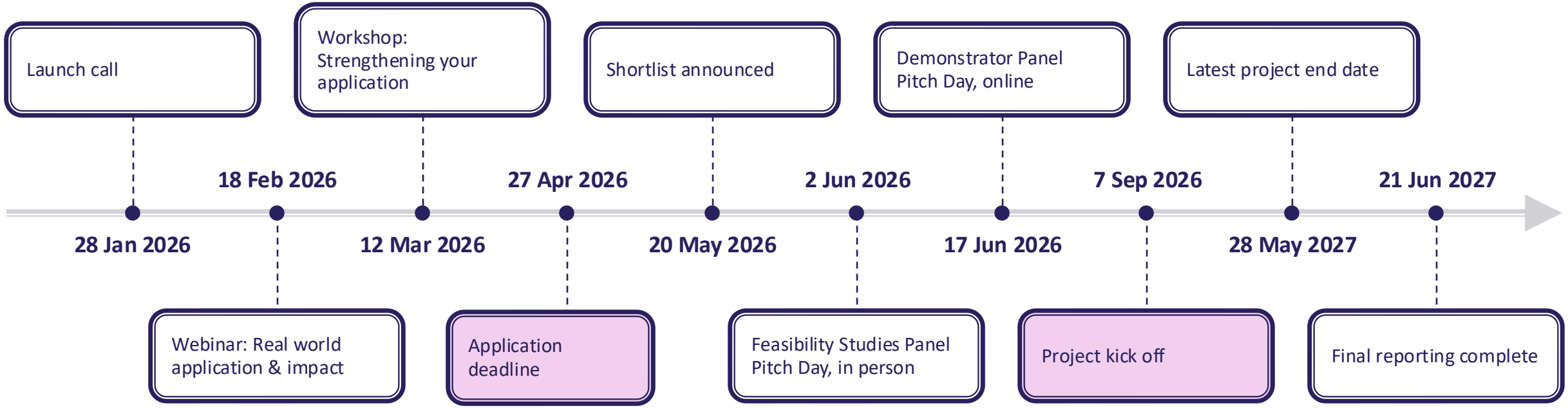
Feasibility Study & Demonstrator Call



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Knowledge Exchange Placements, Round C:

- Application deadline Midday 9 March 2026

We're here to support

Project development

Supporting the development of your concept and project application, including collaboration with non-academic partners

Mentoring

Helping you access and build your project support network for lasting impact

Networking

Linking academics to industry, policy & third-sector partners from across our network

COLLABORATION NOTICE BOARD

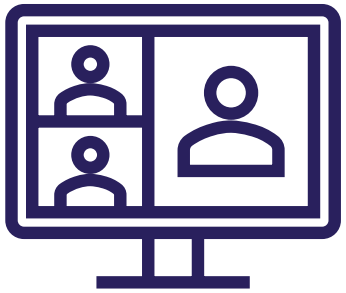
Please add to our collaboration board to share your challenge focus, project idea or research area.

We can provide introductions across our network.

DICE NETWORK+ DIGITAL INNOVATION & CIRCULAR ECONOMY

UKRI Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

WEBINAR: Real world application & impact



Register now to join this interactive webinar! Open to all

12-1pm Weds 18 February

Designed to connect researchers with industry, policy and third-sector partners, who will share more on their experience navigating real-world challenges in transitioning to a circular economy.

Participants will have the opportunity to:

- Hear directly from partners about their circularity challenges
- Explore how digital innovation could address these issues
- Connect with researchers and organisations looking to collaborate
- Begin shaping research proposals aligned with DICE N+ priorities

DICE NETWORK+ DIGITAL INNOVATION & CIRCULAR ECONOMY

UKRI Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

WORKSHOP: Strengthening your application

Register now to join this interactive webinar! Open to all

1.00-3.30pm Thursday 12 March

Drawing on insight from successful funding applications, this interactive workshop shares tips and tools for developing your funding proposal and crafting the strongest applications.

Participants will have the opportunity to:

- Understand how to respond to the application criteria
- Learn practical tips for collaborative proposal development
- Utilise EDI cards to explore and strengthen EDI considerations
- Begin shaping research proposals in readiness for submission

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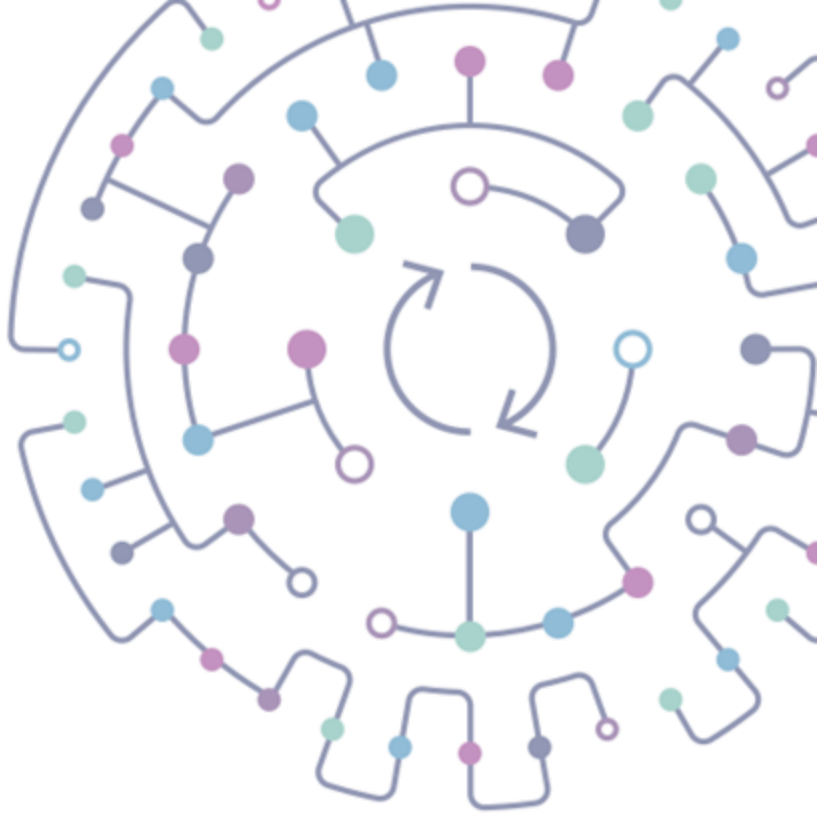

Application process

Georgie Hopkins

DICE NETWORK+ DIGITAL INNOVATION & CIRCULAR ECONOMY

UKRI Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

Application process

Full information and all forms are available to download on the DICE N+ website, under the relevant funding type:

- Knowledge Exchange Placements
- Feasibility Studies
- Demonstrators

Forms to submit with each application

- **Part A**: Identifying information (required)
- **Part B**: Case for support (required)
- **EDI Questionnaire**: one per applicant (voluntary)
- **Project Partner Letters of Support:** (with individual letters combined into one PDF document)

Submit by email to Georgie Hopkins dice-network@exeter.ac.uk in advance of application deadline

Project Lead confirmation

On submission, the Project Lead will need to confirm that:

- You have fully completed the required documents.
- The proposed project has been appropriately costed and the budget has been approved by authorised staff at the lead institution.
- The proposed project is eligible to receive UKRI funding.
- The proposed project adheres to UKRI's principles of Responsible Innovation.

DICE NETWORK+ DIGITAL INNOVATION & CIRCULAR ECONOMY

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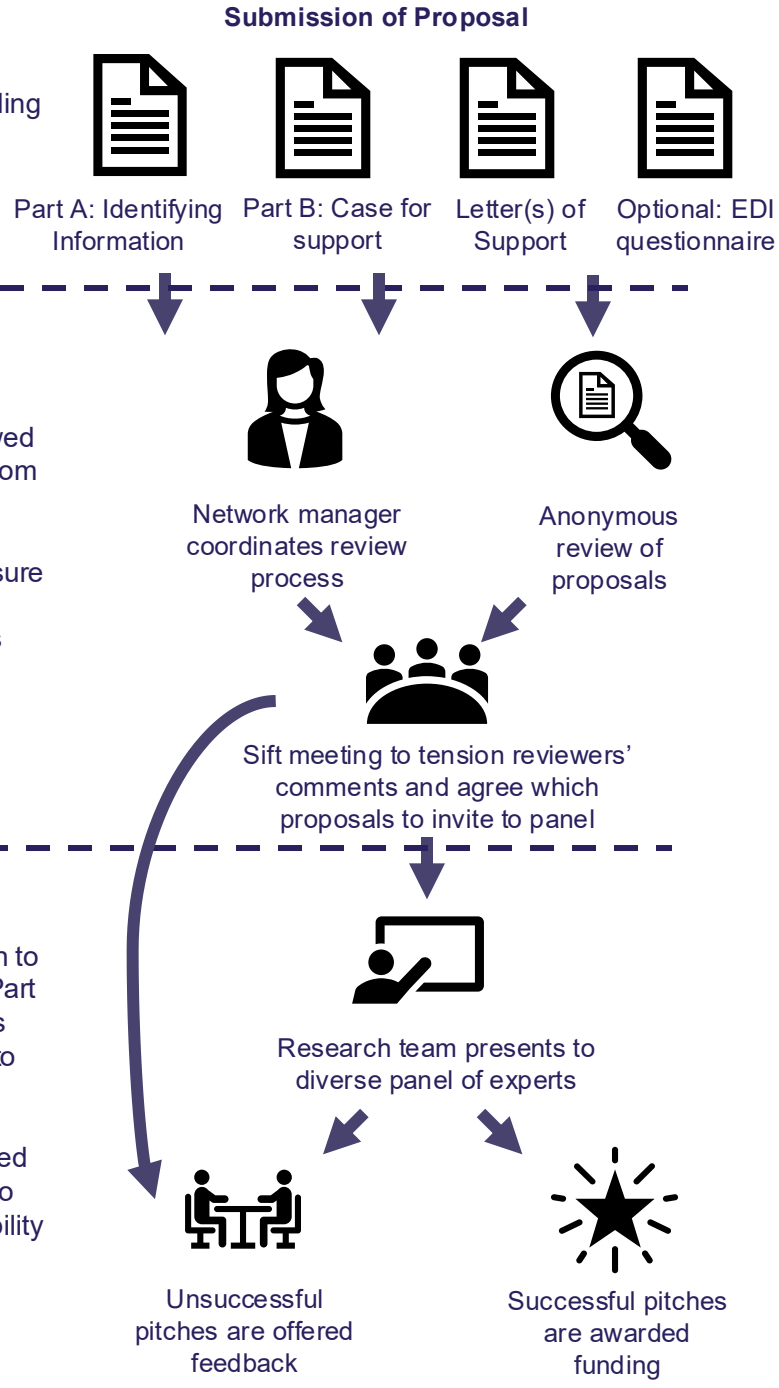
Evaluation process

The evaluation process follows the proposed best practice for promoting EDI in research and funding as presented in [this reflective paper](#).

Pre-application: DICE Network+ team are availableto provide advice and guidance, including
- Webinar: An overview of the application process.
- Webinar: Real world application & impact
- Workshop: Strengthening your application



Stage 1: Research idea is anonymously reviewed by two reviewers, who are randomly selected from a pool of expert reviewers from the DICE Network+ team and Advisory Group. Network manager uses the identifying information to ensure no conflict of interests emerge and to track proposals. Optional EDI questionnaire provides monitoring detail. Individual panel members assess the application based on the selection criteria only.

Stage 2: Successful projects are invited to pitch to a diverse panel. Panel members receive both Part A and Part B of the proposal at least two-weeks ahead of the panel. A panel chair is appointed to lead the discussions and ensure EDI considerations have been suitably considered. Individual panel members assess the pitch based on the selection criteria only. Panel members do not discuss their decision on whether the feasibility will be funded until all pitches have completed.

DICE NETWORK+ DIGITAL INNOVATION & CIRCULAR ECONOMY

UKRI Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

Selection criteria

We will be assessing against:

Criteria	% Contribution of Total Score
Quality and novelty of proposed placement	30
Complementing the work and challenges of the DICE Network+	30
Likelihood of achieving wider impact*	20
Consideration of EDI principles	10
Project management	10

For each of the criteria, a minimum threshold of 50% of the available score is required for an application to be considered for funding.

*across disciplines and/or sectors

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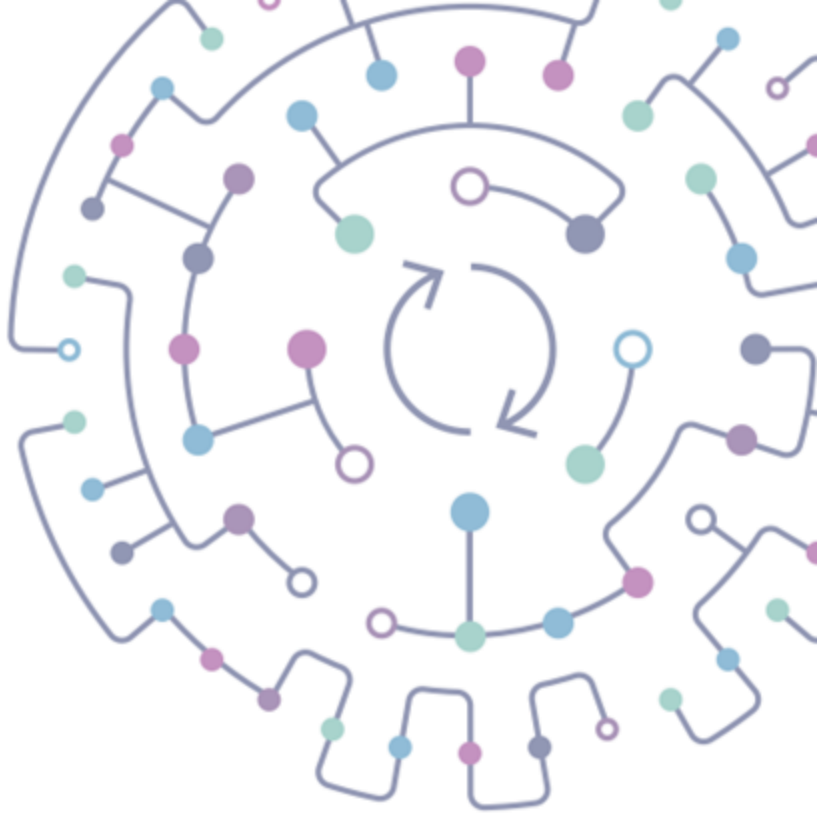
General discussion Q&A

Facilitated by Fiona Charnley



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UKRI Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

DICE NETWORK+
DIGITAL INNOVATION & CIRCULAR ECONOMY

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The University of Nottingham
The Open University
Queen's University Belfast
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