



DICE Network+ Flexible Fund

Knowledge Exchange Placements

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DICE Network+

The Digital Innovation and Circular Economy (DICE) Network+ will realise a transformative shift in the sustainability and circularity of digital and communication technologies.

Leveraging the power of the digital revolution, the network will drive a circular economy across sectors and value chains. By adopting a network of networks approach, harnessing interdisciplinary collaboration, research, and technological innovation, our network will be a beacon for change, inspiring and guiding industries, governments, and communities towards a digitally enabled sustainable and circular economy. See [website](#) for more detail.

Engaging teams from the Universities of Exeter, Sheffield, Salford, Swansea, Southampton, Surrey, Nottingham, Queens University Belfast, and the Open University, the project will run from January 2025 to December 2027. In addition, the Network+ is launched with a wide reach of **industry partners** (including Ellen MacArthur Foundation, AMRC, Digital Catapult, British Computer Society, SAP, BASF, Wabtec, eBay, BSI), **leading UKRI-funded projects** (including Faraday Institution, Royce Institute, NICER Programme, Pro2 and Connected Everything Networks) and **government partners** (DESNZ, Defra, DSIT).

Funding Opportunities:

One of the key opportunities within the DICE Network+ is flexible funding to accelerate wider research into specific challenge areas at the interfaces of digital technologies and circular economy. This funding consists of £450,000 at 80% full Economic Cost (FEC) as detailed below.

This call covers the Knowledge Exchange Placements and first round of the Feasibility Studies.

Fund	Total funding available (80% fEC)	Maximum funding per project (80% fEC)	Expected number of projects	Application schedule
Knowledge Exchange Placements	£50,000	£5,000	10	Rounds A, B & C closed. Round D closes 8 June 2026
Feasibility Studies	£300,000	£50,000	6	Round B closes for applications 27 April 2026
Demonstrator Studies	£100,000	£50,000	2	Round B closes for applications 27 April 2026

Knowledge Exchange Placements:

The total funding available for Knowledge Exchange Placements is £50,000 to be awarded:

- at 80% full Economic Cost (fEC).
- to a maximum award value of **£5,000 per individual**.
- with total cost not exceeding £6,000.

This is an open call with applications reviewed on a quarterly basis. The number of projects funded will be dependent on the quality of the applications received and the budget for each placement.

Approach:

The DICE Network+ has an ambitious approach with a desire to create impact and meaningful change within the sector. As part of our focus on engaging Early Careers Researchers, the Knowledge Exchange Placements are designed to support interdisciplinary collaboration of academic, industry and network partners across the UK, promoting the adoption of a digitally enabled circular economy.

Areas of focus:

We are seeking well-planned and hosted placements, lasting between 1 to 3 months with UK or international organisations, providing academic partners with first-hand experience in an industrial or government context across disciplines related to the DICE Network+ key challenge areas. The funds may also be used for academics to attend events or conferences outside of their 'normal' disciplinary area, research or practice.

The placements will likely demonstrate 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.

Application of funds:

Funding will 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.

As the grant holder, University of Exeter is responsible for allocating funding to successful proposals and will reimburse the lead institution at 80% fEC. The lead institution must be willing to provide the remaining 20% fEC.

Key dates:

Date	Action
Midday 6 June 2026	Deadline for submissions to be reviewed in Round D
1 July 2026	Funding decisions shared with applicants, contracting progresses for successful placements
1 September 2026	Expected start date of Knowledge Exchange Placements

Application process:

The deadline for submissions to be reviewed in Round D is **Midday 6 June 2026**. Given funds available, this is likely to be our FINAL ROUND.

The short, written application form consists of two parts and should be submitted via email to Georgie Hopkins at DICE-network@exeter.ac.uk by **midday on Monday 6 June 2026**. The application form is accessible on the [DICE Network+ website](#).

Eligibility criteria:

- 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](#).
- We welcome applications from investigators who work on a part-time basis.
- We are keen to support applications from early career researchers.
- We encourage collaboration across organisations where it will be beneficial to the delivery of a project; where two or more organisations are participating, a single application should be submitted via the lead institution, and they will be responsible for the disbursement of funds to third parties.
- Standard UKRI eligibility rules apply.
- Individuals may submit or be named on more than one application.
- Matched funding and collaboration with industry, policy and third sector organisations or other programmes is permitted. Partnership be it financial or in-kind with industry is encouraged. Named Project Partners must be UK based. An organisation should only be named as a Project Partner if it is providing specific contributions (either in cash or kind) to the project. Any partners should be from an organisation with a research and/or innovation base. There is no limit to the number of Project Partners. A letter of support should be supplied from all project partners confirming:
 - o The organisation's role in and commitment to the proposed project and explain how it will contribute to the impact of the project.
 - o The value of any cash in-kind contributions.
- Any financial or other interests with any project partners named in the application must be disclosed to ensure integrity of research.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion:

The DICE Network+ understands 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, and we wish to support a diverse cohort of participants. As such, we welcome applications from diverse and underrepresented groups and encourage applicants to discuss any specific requirements that will enable participation - please contact the DICE Network+ Manager, Georgie Hopkins, by email DICE_Network@exeter.ac.uk.

The principles of EDI will be adhered to across the Fund, specific measures include:

- Assessment panel composition will be considered with the aim of maintaining EDI.
- All assessment panel members are encouraged to have undertaken equality and diversity training prior to appointment.
- The application process has been designed to minimise any potential impact of bias in decision making:
 - o The short, written application form consists of two parts allowing the project idea to be reviewed separately to identifying information.
 - o The application review process follows a two-stage process against pre-defined criteria.
- Applicants will be invited to complete a voluntary EDI questionnaire. This confidential information will enable DICE Network+ to review funding activities for diversity amongst protected characteristics (as identified in the Equality Act 2010)

Responsible Innovation:

[Responsible Innovation](#) is a process 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 and diffusion of research and innovation are reduced, and that the positive societal and economic benefits of research and innovation are fully realised. The DICE Network+ wants to ensure that any research it funds is undertaken with the values of Responsible Innovation in mind. In this case, we expect researchers involved in funded feasibility studies 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.

Evaluation process

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

Applications will be assessed by a panel made up of delegates from the DICE Network+ Academic Team and Advisory Group following the process detailed below (and Figure 1).

Pre-Application: DICE Network+ team are available to provide advice and guidance. An open access webinar provides an overview of the application process with opportunity for Q&A. The webinar recording is made available online for future reference.

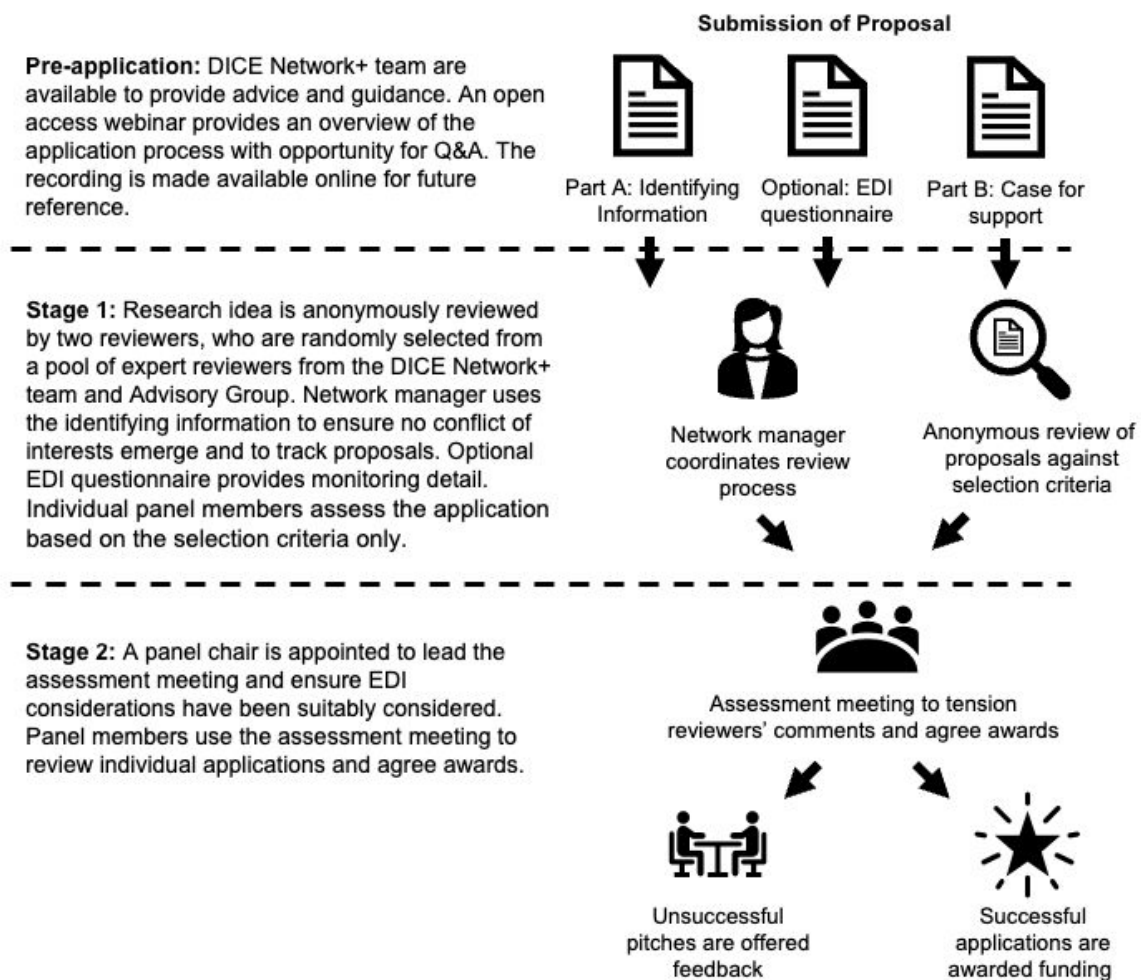
Stage 1: An initial screening will be undertaken by the DICE Network+ Manager to check:

- Applications meet the essential criteria and eligibility requirements.
- Applicants have submitted all the required materials.
- Any declared conflicts of interest prior to circulation to the assessors and to consider any additional potential conflicts of interest before allocation of proposals to assessors.

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: A panel chair is appointed to lead the assessment meeting and ensure EDI considerations have been suitably considered. Panel members use the assessment meeting to review individual applications and agree awards.

Figure 1: the Evaluation Process



Further information

If you require any further information or have any questions regarding this funding call, please contact the DICE Network+ Manager, Georgie Hopkins, by email DICE_Network@exeter.ac.uk