

CE Hub Feasibility Study Call Frequently Asked Questions

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1. What is the CE Hub?

The [CE-Hub](#) is a coordinating Hub for the NICER Programme, constituting [five Circular Economy Centres of Excellence](#). The NICER Programme is a four-year £30 million investment from UKRI to move the UK towards a Circular Economy. Starting on 1st January 2021, the CE Hub's objectives are to:

- Accelerate understanding and solutions to enable circularity of specific resource flows,
- Provide national leadership, coordinate and drive knowledge exchange,
- Embed research by involving business, policy makers, consumers and the wider community in every part of the programme.

We will continue to implement a collaborative, multidisciplinary and inclusive approach to knowledge creation, knowledge transfer, new collaborations and strategic influence to achieve demonstrable impact on people, society and the economy.

2. What are the Call Details?

The CE-Hub will fund its first round of Feasibility Studies to accelerate Circular Economy research, innovation and implementation across disciplines, sectors and value chains. The fund will provide the wider Circular Economy community with the opportunity to undertake speculative and potentially high-impact research to accelerate innovative solutions. Proposals that consider different scales (including regional and place-based research), new collaborations between sectors and disciplines have an appreciation for the whole system and involve early career professionals (from academia, industry and government), will all be encouraged. Funded projects will be expected to deliver a tangible piece of work that would achieve a specific output such as early-stage concept development, decision making tools and methods or demonstrator projects focussing on evidencing the transferability of Circular Economy principles across scales, disciplines and industrial sectors.

3. What is the deadline for the current call?

Thursday 5th May 2022 at 4pm

4. How much funding can I apply for?

The expectation is that we will fund up to 4 projects of up to a maximum full Economic Cost (fEC) of £50,000. Funding will be awarded at 80% fEC.

5. Which organisations can be funded?

Eligible organisations include all UK Higher Education Institutions that receive grant funding from one of the UK higher education funding bodies, along with research institutes for which the Research Councils have established a long-term involvement as a major funder. Other independent research organisations (IROs) may also be eligible, and a list of such organisations is available [here](#). Industry cannot be directly funded.

6. What can the funding be used for?

The budget outline for the proposed feasibility studies can include investigator/ researcher time, travel and subsistence appropriate to delivery of the project, and consumables.

As the grant holder, the University of Exeter is responsible for allocating funding to successful proposals and will reimburse subcontracting organisations at 80%fEC.

7. How long should a study take to complete?

Projects can be between 9 and 12 months in length and must complete before the end of September 2023. Therefore, we do not expect future pay awards in the salary costings or indexation will be added to grant at the time the award is made.

8. What is the selection criteria for choosing proposals to go to the panel pitch?

Applicants should consider that the following criteria will be used by the review panel when assessing the proposal:

- Multidisciplinary,

- Involvement of Early Career Researchers,
- Involvement of Industry and / or Government Stakeholders,
- Commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion,
- Complimenting the work of the NICER programme
- Demonstration of Circular Economy Principles across scales, disciplines and industrial sectors,
- Potential for the development of future funding applications,
- Potential to lead to strong dissemination materials,
- Pathways to accelerate the impact of the research to ensure rapid transfer to industry, government and other end users.

9. Who are the reviewers?

The reviewers are members of the CE-Hub Executive Management Group from academic and industrial backgrounds who have extensive knowledge of Circular Economy. Each proposal will be reviewed by 2 independent reviewers.

10. Can Early Career Researchers apply for funding?

Yes – we actively encourage ECRs to apply for funding and can be the Principal Investigator. Applicants are responsible for seeking approval from their own institution before submission as there are often local eligibility criteria which need to be met.

Feasibility studies should include people in the team who are transitioning to or establishing research independence. There are no eligibility rules based on years since PhD or whether the applicant currently holds a permanent/open-ended position or job role. Applicants must be employed in an eligible UK academic institution. To clarify eligibility as an early career researcher, applicants are expected to hold a doctorate by the start date of the funding being awarded or to be able to demonstrate equivalent research/innovation experience and/or training. Applications are welcome from those returning to research from a career break or following time in other roles; there are no time limits in respect of time spent outside a research or innovation environment. **Definition of an ECR:** [UKRI ECR Definition](#)

11. What are the key dates?

Key Dates

Date	Action
Thursday 24th February 2022	Call goes live
Wednesday 2nd March 2022	Announcement & Facilitated Networking @ CE Showcase
Monday 21st March 2022	Webinar for interested participants
Thursday 5th May	Deadline for submissions (4pm)
Monday 13th June	Invitations to Panel Pitch Day issued; Unsuccessful proposals advised
Thursday 30th June	Panel pitch
Monday 11th July	Applicants notified of Panel Pitch outcomes
Thursday 1st September 2022	Feasibility studies start
Thursday 15th September	Feasibility studies kick-off meeting
Friday 29th September 2023	Feasibility study completion

12. How can this call work with the current restrictions on movement?

In light of the current social distancing guidelines, all proposals submitted must be able to conduct and complete their research while adhering to government guidance. We hope that as we progress through 2022/23 that we will then have more opportunities to hold face-to-face activities and have easier access to laboratories, but all proposals should include contingency plans should social distancing guidance continue during the funded period.

13. Do I need to provide letters of support / evidence of funding from Industry or other partners?

Letters of support are not required but you can provide a statement of support within your proposal. Applications where a portion of the £50,000 costs is met by industry funding are welcomed. The CE Hub can help you if you need support to identify an industry partner. Please contact please contact the CE Hub Project Manager, Katie Cooke email: k.cooke@exeter.ac.uk

14. How many applications can I make per call?

We are unlikely to fund two projects from the same applicant as we are keen to ensure a diverse range of projects covering all areas of the country as well as diverse disciplines.

15. Why are there 3 parts to the proposal?

The CE Hub has a strong commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, in line with the UKRI commitment to ED&I and strives to ensure that all our activities are open and accessible to all. We particularly recognise the impact of engaging with activities and are keen to challenge our own thinking as we deliver our programme. Therefore, we encourage applicants to discuss any specific requirements that will enable participation with the CE Hub team. You can read more about our [ED&I Statement on our website](#).

We have designed our funding allocation process with an aim to minimise any potential impact of bias at all stages of decision making. We are therefore piloting a new approach in the application process. The application form will be in two parts: Part 1 will contain contact details, project team and track record information and Part 2 will be the outline Case for Support, which will be considered anonymously by the reviewers. **Please make every effort to ensure that no identifying content is included in Part 2** (e.g., host institution / affiliations).

As you will see from the application form, proposals for feasibility studies includes the following content:

Part One

- Project Title
- Lead organisation
- Principle Investigator
- Details of the project team, including industry partners. Please indicate which members of the academic team are early career researchers.

Part Two

- Start date and duration.
- Context, aims and objectives, and benefits of the proposed work.
- A statement of the novelty of the proposed work.
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion considerations

- An outline project plan
- What are the tangible deliverables of the feasibility study?
- How could further funding in this area be obtained?
- Explicit links to the UKRI [Circular Economy Centres](#)

References can be included as an appendix and will not be counted in any word count. Please complete the form in Arial 11. Please submit your forms in MS Word and MS Excel documents. Do not send in PDF version.

Part Three

A breakdown of the allocation of the funds with a short justification for each category is also required. The categories are:

- Directly Allocated
- Directly Incurred
- Indirect Costs

The budget should be submitted via a separate excel template. Please ensure you annotate the excel sheet, so the costs are explained.

16. What happens next if I am successful and awarded a feasibility study?

A contract process will be initiated by the University of Exeter with your institution to formally agree the contract for the funding. We will ask you for details of your contract team when you are successful.

Successful applicants will be expected to participate in CE-Hub events and will be required to present project updates at the CE Hub annual conferences. In addition, there is a requirement that presentations on the successful projects are made at a kick off meeting to be held online. From experience, one of the most valuable outcomes of feasibility studies is the informal network of researchers that emerges, and we expect our feasibility study teams to form a core part of the CE Hub community.

Each project will be provided with access to a mentor who will support the activities of the project. Your mentor will provide advice and feedback to you at appropriate times during your project activities. The aim is to provide your project with an additional level of support and guidance, rather than monitor its progress. Mentors may be asked to provide feedback to the CE Hub Executive Management Group from time to time.

18. How can industrial partners benefit?

Industry can relate to a project as a project partner OR as a subcontractor. So, when it comes to project partners an industrial partner cannot contribute and benefit from a proposal under our funding guidelines. Applicants can get funding from an industry, and they can subcontract some work to industry, but it can't be the same partner doing both, the same also applies to discounts on products and services.

“As a rule, Project Partners are expected to provide contributions to the delivery of the project and should not therefore be seeking to claim funds from UKRI. However, where there are specific circumstances where Project Partners do require funding for minor costs such as travel and subsistence, this will usually be paid at 80% fEC unless otherwise stated”

For subcontractors, there is not a limit to how much of the funding can be assigned, but we would expect to have it justified in the application how much and why is being subcontracted



out and there should be consideration paid to this in the assessment, like why are they subcontracting X amount and has the applicant justified that appropriately

“**Subcontractor** is a third-party individual who is not employed as staff on the grant, or a third-party organisation, who is subcontracted by the host organisation to deliver a specific piece of work. This will be subject to the procurement rules of the host organisation. All costs that support the delivery of the subcontract are eligible and will be paid at 80% fEC unless otherwise stated, these should be outlined and fully justified in the proposal and will be subject to peer review. Entitlement to the outputs of the project and/or Intellectual Property will be determined between the parties involved”

17. Any other questions?

We are holding a live Q&A session on **Monday 21st March 2022 at 12.00pm**. To book your place go to [Eventbrite](#). This session will be recorded if you can't attend.

If you have any questions regarding this call for proposals, please contact the CE Hub Project Manager, Katie Cooke email: k.cooke@exeter.ac.uk