

Ageing Across the Life Course

Interdisciplinary Networks: Topics covered in the webinar

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The network

A network brings researchers and stakeholders together to successfully address a particular challenge. The aim is to share and acquire information and build a community. The network should be open throughout its duration to welcome new members

Size

We do not have a restriction on the size of the network, instead the size of the network should be appropriate to address the challenge-led area, and the range of expertise, disciplines and stakeholders required should reflect this. We expect the networks to be open and allow people to apply to be members over the duration of the funding period.

Activities

Some examples of networking activities are:

- conference
- public dialogue
- workshops
- training
- webinars.

Involving existing collaborations or networks

Networks that are based solely on existing collaborations or networks are not permitted to apply and would be ineligible for funding.

Networks that include members who have worked together should aim to draw in new members who are yet to work together and look to incorporate members from a wider geographical area. It is important that you justify why you want to work with an existing collaboration and how you are bringing in new expertise.

Definition of existing collaboration or relationship

An existing collaboration is one that is already established and might have recently worked and published together. We understand groups of people will have previously worked together, but we want collaborations to be novel, or expand upon what has already been achieved and bring in new expertise and disciplines to address the challenge area.

Building up the network over time

You can apply with a broad concept of the network. We expect networks to be open, dynamic, and evolve over the time period. We will be considering the networks potential to deliver its objectives, the challenge it aims to address, how it will be structured and managed, its communication and engagement plans and how it will build capacity.

We do not expect applications to list the full membership, simply a good plan of how to attract and bring in researchers both in and outside the ageing field, other disciplines and stakeholders.

Focus on coordination and networking, rather than research

The focus of the network must be on coordination and networking activities. Only 25% of funds can be used for pump-priming activities and this may include some small proof of concept/feasibility studies.

Macro-coordination role is optional

If you do not wish to bid to macro-coordinate the networks this will not affect the assessment of your proposal.

The macro-coordination role is optional and is not included in the assessment criteria for the networks.

Previous networks funded by UKRI research councils

Both BBSRC and MRC have funded a number of networks in the past including the [International Veterinary Vaccinology Network](#) or the [Integrated Biological Imaging Network](#)

Network in ageing this year only

We anticipate that this opportunity for networks in ageing will be a 'one-off' and will not be available again next year.

Scope of the network

This is a joint BBSRC and MRC opportunity which BBSRC is administering. The network should address the scope of the opportunity.

Acceptable challenges focus on biological mechanisms of ageing

Networks should focus on better understanding the biological mechanisms of the ageing process. Networks are not allowed to focus solely on age-related diseases.

Problems associated with the ageing process may end up causing disease, but the focus of the network needs to be to understand the biological mechanisms of the challenge area and not focus on an age-related disease, for example, dementia.

Looking at early signs of an age-related disease is also not acceptable, as this is focused on disease. The network should seek to understand the biological mechanisms behind ageing and should not be looking at anything related to disease and should not be pump-priming research related to understanding disease.

Application process

Applications must be submitted on a single Je-S form. The lead PI organisation must submit the application. Even though investigators must come from a minimum of three research organisations, it is important that you submit a single Je-S form, not multiple forms.

You do not need to fill out or submit the Equality Impact Assessment form. The form is there as a supporting document to demonstrate how UKRI is addressing equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

There is no scope to extend the deadline.

Investigators

Find investigators to work with

You can use the [Gateway to Research](#) website using key words where details of all the UKRI-funded grants are published (along with details of the project and people involved).

Principal investigators (PI)

The PI can be of lecturer level or above.

The project can be led by a PI from a non-bioscience background, as long as the network activity and outputs will inform the better understanding of the biology of ageing.

The PI does not need to have a track record of BBSRC funding. But we will require the PI to have a strong track record demonstrating their ability to lead the network

It is not possible to have joint PIs for this opportunity.

Contract of employment length

In line with UKRI terms and conditions, you must have a contract of employment that outlasts the length of the grant or an assurance from the submitting organisation that, if the proposal is successful, a pre-existing contract of employment at lecturer level or equivalent will be extended beyond the end date of the grant. Please refer to Section 3.6. of the [BBSRC Research Grants Guide](#).

Investigator time

There is no limit on the percentage of investigator time or costs that can be requested.

However, it is expected that staff costs should not form the majority of costs of the proposal and should be reasonable and fully justified.

Eligibility for the early career researcher co-investigator (ECR Co-I)

The purpose of the early career researcher (ECR) is to support capacity development within ageing research and will provide the ECR with the opportunity to demonstrate their leadership skills early on in their independent research career, increase their national visibility and support their career development.

To see if you're eligible to be the ECR Co-I, all fellowship holders should check the terms and conditions of their awards. Approval should be sought from the funder of the fellowship and a letter of support provided.

If the PI started their independent career research or set-up their research lab or group before 2016, they would not be eligible to apply as the ECR Co-I, even if they received their first PI grant after 2016. Instead they should be a named Co-I.

Postdoctoral research associates (PDRAs) cannot be included as the ECR Co-I. However, we encourage PDRAs to be involved as members of the network as we expect networks to be inclusive and to support capacity development'

For the purpose of this opportunity we are not allowing Research Co-Is on the network application.

Network Manager

The network manager does need to be an existing member of the admin staff. However, applicants need to justify the funding for a network manager, especially with regards to the expertise required, and commit to starting the network award on time. The networks need to start by the 14 February 2022, so it is acceptable to use existing admin staff.

The network manager can be based at a different research organisation to that of the PI, as long as how this would work in practice is clearly articulated in the proposal.

The network manager can be from an organisation that is not a research organisation, for example, from a learned society. However, justification for appointing a network manager from outside a research organisation would need to be detailed within the application and the lead organisation would need to be willing to subcontract that individual to be a network manager.

The role of the network manager can be allocated to more than one person, for example, if each person provides a different skill or expertise. However the costing can only add up to 1.0 full time equivalent.

Cost heading for the network manager

The cost for a network manager can be requested at 100% fEC as no general estates and indirect costs can be claimed in association with the network manager's role. The costing should be included in the '*100% fEC exceptions spreadsheet*' in the '*FEC exceptions*' tab, with all details included above the '*DI- Staff (i.e., Network Manager, please fill...)*' subheading. The final value of all costings requested at 100% fEC must be entered under the '*exceptions*' heading on the Je-S form.

Network membership

We expect crossover of membership in these networks. This is important for cross-fertilisation of ideas.

In terms of numbers of members, there are no limits to the size of network, but we expect it to reflect the membership required to address the challenge area.

There is no set percentage for the members who need to be non-academic stakeholders, but we expect it to reflect the membership required to address the challenge area.

Compensating public and patient representatives

To be compensated for their time, public and patient representative members of the external advisory group need to be classed as a 'subcontractor'.

Public and patient representatives who are members of the network cannot be paid.

External advisory group membership

Members of the external advisory group can be based outside the UK.

There is not a limit on numbers, but justification of the size and composition of the advisory group will be required.

Joining a network as a member

The successful networks will be published on the UKRI website and will be open to new members to approach and join.

Stakeholder involvement

Industry partners

There are mechanisms through which industry partners can join. Please refer to the project partners section (2.49) of the [BBSRC Research Grants Guide](#). Industrial representatives as well other stakeholders are encouraged to be members of the network.

Industry partners can be from outside the UK.

Charities and societies

Network proposals are encouraged to engage with a range of stakeholders which includes charities or societies and it is anticipated representatives from these types of organisations would be involved as project partners, network members and/or external advisory group members. They are not eligible to be named investigators on the proposal. Please refer to the project partners section (2.49) of the [BBSRC Research Grants Guide](#).

Charities and societies can be potentially employed as a subcontractor but **only** to provide operational support to the network (that is, to act as the network manager to support event coordination and communications). Please refer to the subcontracting section (2.55) of the [BBSRC Research Grants Guide](#).

Any further inclusion of these organisations would not fit within the scope of the opportunity and these applications would not be considered for funding. It is important that proposals clearly state the role and level of involvement of charities and societies.

Letters of support from stakeholders and advisory group members

Letters of support from stakeholders and advisory group members can be attached to an application, but it is suggested that these are limited to no more than 10 Letters of Support and these are provided in one PDF document.

Stakeholders cannot be named as a Co-I

Stakeholders can't be named as Co-Is because Co-Is must be based at an eligible UK research organisation. The stakeholder can be a member of your external advisory group.

Pump-priming activities

We expect access to the pump-priming funds to be open to all network members and not retained by the applicants. We expect the activities pump-primed from the network award to reflect the open, transparent and collaborative nature of the networks and expect to see a strong governance framework supporting the allocation of funding, which will also support capacity development in the field.

Examples of pump-priming activities

Some examples include:

- lab exchange
- discipline/sector hopping
- writing policy documents
- commissioning reports/analysis
- desk studies
- supporting small pilot projects
- early career research training.

Detail expected in proposal

We do not expect networks to have a definitive list of pump-priming activities as these activities should develop over the duration of the network.

Instead, we expect networks to have a broad understanding of the amount of money to be allocated to pump-priming activities to help support the final outcomes and outputs of the network and also detail the governance mechanisms for allocating pump-priming funds.

Feasibility study funding

Feasibility studies can be funded as a pump-priming activity. Studies can focus on using existing data or collecting new data. However, if collecting new data, justification as to why you want to collect new data will be needed. The purpose of the networks is to increase collaborations and define the ageing challenges that need to be addressed.

Costings

Equipment is not an eligible cost and cannot be requested for this opportunity.

PhD stipends are not eligible costs and cannot be requested.

Networking with other networks

You could consider putting some budget aside for networking with other networks funded under this call, where there might be areas of mutual interest. However, please bear in mind that there will also already be macro-coordination of the networks.

Further enquiries

Please contact us via ageingnetworks@bbsrc.ukri.org.