Future Blood Testing Network+

FBTN Funding Call 1 Guidance Document

Call Announcement: 03/02/2022
Application Deadline: 10/03/2022
Funding Announcement: 07/04/2022

FBTN-Funding-Series:Call-1

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Network: Future Blood Testing
This Network+ is EPSRC Funded under Grant No: EP/W000652/1
Principal Investigator: *Dr Weizi (Vicky) Li*
Co-Investigators: *Dr Robert Baker, Dr Mark Elliott, Professor Jeremy Frey & Dr Sergiy Korposh*
Network+ Coordinator: *Dr Samantha Kanza & Mr Steve Brewer*

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1. Summary

Applicants are invited to apply for one of the three strands of our landscape report. This report will ultimately provide the roadmap of developing new digital health systems to support real-time blood monitoring, self-management and timely intervention in community health and care. Each report will include a systematic review of the key literature and involve interviewing key stakeholders to establish the current picture and identify the gaps.

All projects must comply with every aspect of the URKI project guidelines:
https://www.ukri.org/files/legacy/news/grant-fec-tcs-january-2018-v1-pdf/

2. Report Streams

The report will have three main streams. You can apply to cover a stream in its entirety (for the full funding amount), or you can apply to cover a specific topic within a stream (for reduced funding). For example, you could apply for the full ICT, Data, Analytics and AI stream for £25,000 or just apply to cover AI from that stream for part of that funding.

- **Future blood testing in healthcare practice:** For example, but not limited to: clinical needs, early adopters, challenges and opportunities, regulations, buy-in, user acceptance, existing and potential use cases for healthcare professionals and hospitals, clinical researchers, patients, laboratories etc
- **Remote blood processing and monitoring:** For example, but not limited to: sensing, imaging, point of care blood testing, portability and affordability, non-invasive methods, and other promising technologies for detecting blood biomarkers outside clinical settings
- **ICT, Data, Analytics and AI:** For example, but not limited to: challenges and opportunities in entire data lifecycle from point of testing/monitoring through to integration with NHS systems (including electronic health records and clinical decision support) and other healthcare systems including aspects of ICT infrastructure, data security, trust, ethics, data quality, provenance etc, and the AI technologies and analytics methods required to create the personalised analytics in patient pathways

3. Project Criteria

- Individual projects can request up to £20,000 funding (total spend up to £25,000 as per UKRI 80% FEC funding rules). The amount requested should reflect the level of coverage of the stream you are applying for (e.g. if you are only applying to cover a specific part of one stream e.g. AI then we would not expect you to apply for the full amount of funding). We reserve the right to offer adjusted funding amounts based on the proposed coverage and depth.
- Applicants will be awarded 80% of the full cost, and the institution receiving the award is responsible for the remaining 20%. When invoices are submitted, they should be for 80% of the full cost and a statement should also be submitted showing the full cost. Please note equipment purchase costs are ineligible. For further details on costings and overheads see EPSRC's Full Economic Costing (FEC) Guides:
  https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/applicationprocess/fundingguide/resources/
- Projects are expected to have a maximum duration of 18 months. There is no minimum length for the projects, but applicants must be available to work within our timelines and attend the review meetings for the different iterations of the report. Applications should demonstrate

how these timelines can be met via the inclusion of a Gantt Chart. NB: We expect applicants to be available to attend our review workshops and speak at them about their work. Receiving the funding is conditional on meeting these milestones.

- o May 2022: All projects MUST start by 1st May 2022
- o Nov 2022: 1st iteration of landscape report due
- o Mar 2023: 2nd iteration of landscape report due
- o Nov 2023: Final version of landscape report due

- Applications should demonstrate how the overall team has the required skills to produce both the systematic review in their area of chosen expertise, but also to conduct the interviews and analyse them.
- Applications should detail who the applicants are planning to interview if they are funded. We strongly encourage including interview letters or emails of intent to demonstrate who would be willing to be interviewed by them. (NB: These can be attached to the submission or emailed to s.kanza@reading.ac.uk).
- Obtaining ethics approval to conduct the interviews is a condition of receiving this funding. Applications should demonstrate how they are planning to do this. NB: Members of the Future Blood Testing Network Team will be available to provide advice on this.
- Applications must be made on the Future Blood Testing Network application form, and must not exceed 7 pages, using 11pt Arial Font, with no adjustments to margins. They must be accompanied by a 1 page Gantt chart style project plan.

4. Applicant Criteria & Descriptions

- **PI's:** PI's **must** be eligible for EPSRC funding. For information on the eligibility of organisations and individuals to receive this funding, see the EPSRC Funding Guide: https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/applicationprocess/fundingguide/. As this call is a targeted funding opportunity provided via EPSRC funding, higher education institutions, and some research institutes and independent research organisations are eligible to apply including NHS bodies with research capabilities. A list of eligible organisations to apply to EPSRC is provided at: https://www.ukri.org/councils/epsrc/guidance-for-applicants/check-if-you-are-eligible-for-funding/.
- **Project Partners:** Projects may also include collaborators referred to as Project Partners. Project Partners are defined as collaborating organisations who will have an integral role in the proposed research. This may include in-kind or cash contributions such as expertise, staff time, use of facilities, etc. Project Partners cannot receive funding directly from the grant; the only exception to this is where a Project Partner is providing services that will go through a formal procurement process audited by the host research organisation. The Project Partner cannot receive any other funds from the grant, such as travel and subsistence. Letters of support can be included to demonstrate project partner support.
- **Staff:** If you are requesting salary for a person either currently working for (or to be hired by the academic institutes of the PI/Co-I) then this person will be considered staff in your application. These would typically be post-docs, although PhD students can be permitted where appropriate but in line with EPSRC rules we cannot fund a PhD Student to do work that could be perceived as a continuation of their PhD.

- **Sub-Contractors:** If you have tendered the position required for your project and ascertained that the best person for the job is someone from a commercial company then this person will be considered a sub-contractor in your application.
- **Collaboration Agreements:** In addition to a contract with the PI institution, we require agreements to be made on GDPR compliant policies and Data Processing Agreements between the applying institution and their collaborators. If these cannot be agreed within a certain timeframe we reserve the right to cease the contract process and choose another application.

5. Assessment Process

Proposals will be assessed in two stages:

Stage 1: Network+ team sift.
All applications will initially be checked by the Network coordinator and Central Management Team to ensure they meet the application criteria (e.g. funding eligibility, timelines, budgets, finance sign off etc) before further processing by review panels.

Stage 2: Peer Review of selected proposals:
Review panels will be established to assess the quality of proposals and make funding decisions. Panel members will be drawn from the Network community and will include clinicians, academic researchers, patient representatives and industrialists. Each landscape report proposal will be assigned a first and second reviewer in the field to give an in-depth appraisal. The applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

- **Topic Coverage & Breadth:** The importance of the topics identified for the selected report stream (or part of the stream), and their timeliness to future blood testing approach. The appropriateness and relevance of sources selected.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** The identification and planned engagement with relevant stakeholders including evidence of having a suitable network of relevant contacts to undertake these investigations.
- **Quality & Depth:** The overall depth and quality of the proposed analysis and evaluation, and how the analysis will lead to meaningful findings of gaps, opportunities and recommendations on how to address these gaps moving forward.
- **Planning & Management:** The team's ability to deliver the proposed project within budget, in time (including aligning to our timelines) will also be assessed, including evaluating whether the budget requested is appropriate for the level of work proposed. Evidence of a planning and management process for the duration of the project will be required.
- Each application that meets the application criteria will receive at least two reviews from impartial reviewers, and applicants may request feedback if they wish to do so.

6. Project Management and Expectations

The Future Blood Testing Network+ coordinator Dr Samantha Kanza will liaise between the Future Blood Testing Network Central Management Team and the successful landscape report teams. The teams will be required to keep the FBTN informed of progress and will be expected to attend the review workshops that will align with the report milestones, and take part in Network+ activities as appropriate to the project. Projects will need to submit three iterations of their report (iteration 1 – Nov 2022, iteration 2 – March 2023, and the final version – Nov 2023). Project teams will be sent report templates to complete these reports with.

7. Funding Contract Details

The funding will be awarded via a Future Blood Testing Network+ Award agreement from the University of Reading with the Research Organisation that leads on the proposal. If the application includes more than one research organisation and/or other project partners, the main applying Research Organisation must have their own formal collaboration agreements in place to set out the basis of collaboration including ownership or intellectual property and rights to exploitation.

8. Publications

The Future Blood Testing Network intend to compile these landscape reports into the Networks final report which will set out the roadmap for the future of blood testing, and also intend to create summary publications of this material giving due credit to all authors where appropriate. Any other publications or outputs/dissemination resulting from work carried out under this grant must include acknowledgement of the Network+ funding by including the statement *"This work has been supported by the Future Blood Testing Network+, which has been funded by EPSRC under grant number: EP/ W000652/1"*. These publications (including the required project report) must adhere to UKRI Open access requirements. Funded projects will be expected to present a summary of their work at the Network+ conferences and review workshops.

9. Key Dates

- Call formally announced – 3rd February 2022
- Deadline for applications submitted by e-mail to the Network+ Coordinator: s.kanza@reading.ac.uk 10th March 2022
- Successful applicants will be notified by 7th April 2022
- Successful projects should be prepared to start as soon as possible from when the announcement is made, preferably before 1st May 2022, subject to completing the Future Blood Testing Network+ Award Agreement.
- Projects will be expected to report on progress at the review workshops in November 2022, March 2023 and November 2023.

10. Contacts

For more information on the Future Blood Testing Network+ visit our website: www.futurebloodtesting.org

For specific information about this funding call visit: https://futurebloodtesting.org/2021/12/07/funding-call-1-landscape-report/

If you have any questions please contact our Network+ Coordinator Dr Samantha Kanza on s.kanza@reading.ac.uk

11. GDPR Statement

The Future Blood Testing Network+ is hosted at the University of Reading and their privacy statement can be found here: https://www.reading.ac.uk/imps/data-protection/privacy-notices

Please be aware that we will be retaining the information about applicant institutions and the domains in which the applicants work for the duration of the network in order to create statistics on engagement with our funding call.