

Connected Everything & eFutures Enabling Digital Manufacturing Technologies to Evolve

Call for small grant proposals

Closing date: Monday 6 September 2021 at 5pm

Background

As digital technology advances, the manufacturing sector must evolve and respond to a great number of drivers and barriers. Key to addressing these challenges will be a strongly cross-disciplinary approach, facilitated through the EPSRC-funded Connected Everything and eFutures Networks of academics and industry partners.

In order to harness the potential from these challenges, the changes in human skills, capabilities and working environments need to be considered, alongside the development and change in business models that underpin industry and innovation.

Small grant funding call

Connected Everything and eFutures are looking to fund a number of small projects with a **specific focus on Enabling Digital Manufacturing Technologies to Evolve**.

As a result of consultation with the potential applicants, examples of such projects could be (but not limited to):

- Transfer of concepts from other domains to manufacturing
- Collaborations with Industry (demonstrator testing for example)
- Proof (or dis-proof) of concept work
- Workshops to exploring solutions with industry
- Computational simulation development
- Software purchases
- Buying time to use specialise equipment

We want to fund as many high-quality applications as possible. Up to 4 projects will be funded to a maximum value of £7,500 at full Economic Cost (fEC). Funding will be awarded at 80% fEC (total project funding request cannot exceed £6,000).

Projects can be between 2 and 4 months in length and must complete before 18 March 2022.

It would be advantageous that applications reflect one of the Connected Everything [7 themes](#).

Both Connected Everything and eFutures are funded by EPSRC. Our focuses include fundamental ideas that have potential to be developed into future applications, or concepts that can be implemented within Digital Manufacturing. Therefore, proposals should address challenges at [low Technology Readiness Levels](#) (TRLs 1-3).

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.

What is the aim of the funding?

The aim of the small grant funding is to enable cross-disciplinary, foresight, speculative and risky early-stage research. Applications will be led by early career researchers. We are keen to support collaborations that would otherwise not happen, and welcome applications with participation from people drawn from non-traditional manufacturing disciplines. The small grant should result in increased confidence which then has potential to attract further investment.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

Connected Everything and eFutures are committed to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. We particularly welcome applications from teams which are diverse in terms of protected characteristics and disciplinary areas. We know that diverse teams deliver high quality research outcomes. Furthermore, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion approaches lead to happy and healthy research teams. We want to encourage, support and respect ideas from everyone and ensure our inclusive activities are representative of our network's community. You can read more about Connected Everything's EDI principles on our [website](#). We want to understand how you have considered this in your application.

Upon receipt of a proposal we will ask the PI to voluntarily complete an anonymous EDI monitoring form for their team so we can learn how we can support increasing diversity in our activities.

We particularly recognise the impact of engaging with community-building activities such as networks 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.

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 a shortlisting panel. Please make every effort to ensure that **no identifying content is included in Part 2** (e.g. host institution). This will enable proposals to be considered without members of the panel having knowledge of the applicant's identity or affiliations.

Responsible Innovation

[Responsible Innovation](#) is a process that seeks to promote creativity and opportunities for science and innovation that are socially desirable and undertaken in the public interest. Responsible Innovation acknowledges that innovation can raise questions and dilemmas, is often ambiguous in terms of purposes and motivations and unpredictable in terms of impacts, beneficial or otherwise. We want 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 projects 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.

Application Process

Proposals will be submitted via a short written application.

Successful applicants will have participated in the **Skills Building Programme** events which have been designed to support early career researchers form new relationships and learn / share their skills. We will be asking for feedback on these events in the funding application form.

Successful grant applicants will be expected to present their work at network events and will be required to present project updates at annual conferences.

Selection criteria

The following criteria will be used by the review panel when assessing the proposals:

- Led by a team of multidisciplinary and/ or cross institutional early career researchers;
- Demonstration of transfer of concepts from other domains to manufacturing;
- Potential for development of future funding applications
- Potential for future collaboration with industry.
- Clear link to funding theme of **Enabling Digital Manufacturing Technologies to Evolve** and it would be advantageous to have a link to the [Connected Everything themes](#).
- Evidence of participation in aspects of the Skills Building programme.

Key dates

6 May 2021	Pre-announcement of call
26 May 2021	Call documents available
May - August 2021	Skills building programme: A programme of webinars and network opportunities to help you develop your collaborative proposal.
6 September 2021	Submission deadline for proposals (5pm)
w/c 13 September 2021	Shortlisted proposals go to panel
w/c 20 September 2021	Panel meets to agree proposal funding
w/c 27 September 2021	Outcome of proposals communicated to applicants
1 November 2021	Funded work starts
18 March 2022	All funded activity completed and invoice submitted.
May 2022	Posters of work submitted for Connected Everything and eFutures' events / conferences.

Eligibility

Guidelines on eligibility can be found [here](#). 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](#).

What can the funding be used for?

The budget outline for the proposal can include travel and subsistence appropriate to delivery of the project and consumables. In kind costs can contribute to the remaining 20% costs such as supervision time, technician and lab support. Eligible expenditure could be consumables, equipment, software, travel, event expenses. We will not fund researcher time.

As the grant holders, Queens University Belfast / the University of Nottingham is responsible for allocating funding to successful proposals and will reimburse subcontracting organisations at 80% full economic costing. Academic institutions will be required to itemise bills based on 100% FEC and then invoice at 80% FEC.

Submitting proposals

Applications should be submitted, using the application form provided, via email to debra.fearnshaw@nottingham.ac.uk by 5pm on Monday 6 September.

As you will see from the application form, proposals should include the following content:

Part One

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

Part Two

- Context, aims and objectives, and benefits of the proposed work.
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion considerations.
- An outline project plan
- What are the tangible deliverables of the project?
- How could further funding in this area be obtained?
- Feedback on the skills building programme.
- Budget

References can be included as an appendix and not counted in the page count. Please complete the form in Arial 11. All application form templates can be downloaded at: connectedeverything.ac.uk/small-grant-and-skills-building-programme/

Further Information

If you have any questions regarding this call for proposals, please contact the Connected Everything II Network Plus Manager, Debra Fearnshaw email: debra.fearnshaw@nottingham.ac.uk, telephone: 0115 84 66238 or the eFutures Network Plus Manager, Beth McEvoy, email: beth.mcevoy@qub.ac.uk