



Future Open Networks Research Challenge

Full Guidance for Applicants



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1. Background

5G Supply Chain Diversification Strategy

The [5G Supply Chain Diversification Strategy \(2020\)](#) sets out the government's long-term vision for the telecoms access supply market: one where competition and innovation bring forward new deployment models based on open interfaces and interoperable standards, with flexible networks and comprising an array of suppliers. This is because such a market increases competition and choice, and ultimately introduces interchangeability of equipment into the supply chain, boosting resilience.

The Telecoms Diversification Taskforce Recommendation: 'Long-Term Research and Innovation'

The Telecoms Diversification Taskforce was appointed by the government in 2020 to look at where the government should target measures to ensure effective, accelerated and sustainable diversification in the telecoms supply chain. The Taskforce was composed of leading figures across industry and academia, chaired by ex-BT CEO Lord Ian Livingston of Parkhead, and has been providing important, expert, independent advice and scrutiny to the government as it takes action to rebalance the supply chain.

The Telecoms Diversification Taskforce Recommendations and Report (see [Taskforce Report](#)) called on the government to invest in R&D to accelerate the development and deployment of Open RAN in the short term, but to also invest in long-term R&D on future generations of networks to build UK competitive advantage and ensure that high levels of security, openness and competition are central to the technology roadmap. The taskforce suggested that the government develop a programme on research and development of future networks, and for future 'network-of-networks' in partnership with industry - operators and suppliers, academia, SMEs and start-ups, and to build on the UK's existing world leading academic research base and research laboratories.

The UK Government 'Open RAN Principles'

In December 2021, the government and the UK's Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) announced a [joint ambition](#) for 35% of the UK's mobile network traffic to be carried over open and interoperable Radio Access Network (RAN) architectures by 2030. In April 2022, the government published a policy paper, the 'Open RAN Principles', which set out the characteristics that open-interface solutions, such as Open RAN, should possess in order to deliver on the UK's 5G Supply Chain Diversification Strategy's goals for resilient and secure networks with competitive and innovative supply chains.

We believe that to ensure that Open RAN achieves its potential, it needs to be defined by four core principles:

- open disaggregation



- standards-based compliance
- demonstrated interoperability and integration capability.
- implementation neutrality.

Suppliers and network builders adhering to these Principles will ensure that Open RAN solutions deliver on their promise for minimal friction when swapping suppliers critical to creating a competitive supply market, and ultimately building resilience into our networks, whilst not compromising on first-rate security.

These Principles will form the bedrock of future government investment in Open RAN, as set out in the Strategy, ensuring our R&D efforts are well targeted to give the taxpayer the best value for money. Any project as part of this programme should demonstrate how it will strive towards products and solutions that adhere to these Principles.

The Diversification Open Networks R&D Fund

The government's Diversification Strategy was backed by the £250 million Open Networks R&D Fund, which will run until April 2025. The fund will finance targeted activity, based in the UK, to support three objectives to:

- accelerate the development of open networking technology from its infancy to commercial viability
- incentivise and reduce the risks of deploying open networks technology in the UK at pace, to encourage network operators to accelerate its adoption and deployment, and
- develop an internationally recognised UK telecoms ecosystem, to position the UK as a leading market for research in open network technologies.

The investment will be delivered primarily in the form of competed grants to consortia of capable businesses, academic institutions, and public sector organisations who will deliver R&D projects to suit the objectives of the Fund.

The government is currently undertaking a number of interventions to accelerate maturity of open network technology. This includes the Future Radio Access Network Competition (FRANC), which aims to accelerate the development of high-performance 5G Open RAN solutions that meet UK dense urban requirements by 2025. It will also attract new 5G RAN suppliers to conduct R&D in the UK and foster professional collaborations between potential new entrants into the UK's public network. The government has also invested in the SmartRAN Open Network Interoperability Centre (SONIC) Labs, an independent telecoms laboratory delivered by Digital Catapult working with Ofcom. This project aims to provide professional, end-to-end testing for groups of telecoms equipment vendors and their products in various ways to better understand the challenges and possibilities of OpenRAN.

The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy

The [Integrated Review](#) also laid clear the need to innovate. Keeping the UK's place at the leading edge of science and technology will be essential to our prosperity and competitiveness in the digital age. Our aim is to have secured our status as a Science and Technology (S&T) Superpower by 2030, by redoubling our commitment to research and



development, bolstering our global network of innovation partnerships, and improving our national skills. We will lay the foundations for long-term prosperity, establishing the UK as a global services, digital and data hub by drawing on our nation's great strengths in digital technologies, and attracting inward investment.

The government's Evolving 6G Vision and Strategy, UK Capability in Future Telecoms

The government is keen to support the development of future telecoms and recognises the exciting opportunities it presents for UK industry, academia and consumers. We appreciate that the future telecoms landscape will be broad and varied, encompassing a range of emerging technologies including sixth-generation wireless (6G), quantum communication/quantum internet, next generation space-based communications, cloud communications and associated infrastructure, edge computing, and advances such as network virtualisation and fibre optics. Successful application of future telecoms will rely on a number of key enablers in other fields, in particular AI and semiconductors (with the government's approach to the latter due to be set out in the forthcoming semiconductors strategy).

We want to embrace the opportunities presented by future telecoms to strengthen the UK's excellent telecoms research base, support collaboration between industry and academia, and increase the UK's influence on the world stage. This means ensuring the UK takes a leading role in early stage research and guiding the development of technology standards, alongside key industry and international partners.

We will set out further details of our 6G strategy later this year.



2. Introduction

The government's Open Networks R&D Fund (ONF), announced on 26th July 2022, will deliver on the government's £250m Open Networks R&D Fund through a range of telecoms R&D projects.

The ONF Strategy aims to promote openness and interoperability in 5G telecoms networks to deliver security, resilience, competition and innovation benefits. However, it is vital that the benefits delivered through the strategy are sustained in future network architectures (such as 6G). A healthy and diverse market in the next generation of networks in the UK is not guaranteed. There is a risk that – despite various government interventions – vendor lock-in and a lack of openness could return to UK networks in future iterations of telecoms network architecture, sustaining vendor dominance in supply chains and posing resilience and security risks.

There is therefore an urgent need for the government to fund research which can build stronger relationships between large vendors, emerging players in the telecoms market and R&D ecosystem in the UK to ensure diversity benefits are sustained. To address this, the Future Open Networks Research Challenge ('the Challenge') will bring together leading figures in academia and industry to conduct future-focussed research and development in a neutral academic environment that will drive the openness and interoperability of future network architectures.

The Challenge will support academic institutions and industry to work together to co-create future-facing telecoms technologies that are open and interoperable by default. These technologies will need to be commercially attractive to large vendors, MNOs and Venture Capitalists, and promote diversification in future network architectures.

The UK's research capability in telecoms is a national strength and of great value in the telecoms industry, with a number of UK institutions recognised globally as leaders in telecoms R&D. The government is currently seeking to strengthen the UK's position as a global destination for major industrial investment in telecoms R&D. The diversification of network architectures - and interventions such as the Challenge - are at the forefront of these efforts.



3. Challenge Outline

With 'the Challenge', DCMS is making funding from the Open Networks R&D Fund available to UK-university led consortia with large RAN equipment vendor participation. Their goal will be to conduct research aimed at identifying solutions for the challenge of sustaining openness and interoperability in future networks architectures, technologies and solutions. They will work towards safeguarding the security, resilience, competition, innovation and economic efficiency benefits of diverse telecoms supply chains, without compromising on the performance, features or efficiency of networks.

As the technology for future network generations including 6G is being developed right now, there is a pressing need to ensure that a vision of openness and interoperability, consistent with our [Open RAN Principles](#) (2022), is embedded from the beginning in the creation of network architectures, interfaces and technologies. This is to create the conditions for the sustainability of a diverse telecoms supply market as set out in the Diversification Strategy in the long term - in turn ensuring that the benefits for security, resilience and innovation brought by a diverse supply chain are sustained beyond the 5G era.

We recognise that this is a task for the entire telecoms R&D ecosystem, which cannot be undertaken by any single player alone. Research achieving DCMS's objectives of sustaining openness and interoperability in future networks will require the world-leading telecoms research capability of UK universities, but also the expertise in building, managing and maintaining (interoperable) networks provided by large RAN equipment vendors and network operators, as well as the perspectives of network operators, SMEs and wider industry. This is why DCMS has designed the Challenge to be led by UK universities, but requiring input from established RAN equipment vendors, and strongly encouraging the participation of network operators, SMEs and wider industry.

RAN Equipment Vendor Involvement

The aim of the Challenge is to cement the security, resilience, competition and innovation benefits of vendor diversity, which the government is currently promoting through the 5G Diversification Strategy, in future networks.

However, even as the government seeks to increase vendor diversity and support market trends towards greater openness and interoperability, DCMS has been clear that large RAN equipment vendors - both those that are currently deployed in UK mobile operator networks and those who have the capacity to deploy into the UK's public network at scale- will continue to play an important role as part of a healthy and diverse market. Supporting especially the incumbent vendors is one of the three strands of the 5G Diversification Strategy.

Large RAN vendors are already defining the shape of future networks, including 6G, through R&D activities and will be significant contributors to the standards underpinning future networks. It is therefore critical that we work with established telecoms vendors as they



develop their future networks equipment and technologies, to ensure that these support openness and interoperability, and will work in a performant, secure and efficient way, alongside alternative and complementary solutions developed by new and emerging vendors. At the same time, the involvement of large RAN equipment vendors will ensure that concepts and solutions developed by consortia under the Challenge can be effectively embedded in future network architectures and technologies as they are further developed for the market.

The research to be funded under the Challenge, as set out in the sections below, does not have to focus solely on the RAN, but should also take other network elements and the network as a whole under consideration. However, **the involvement of a large RAN vendor will be a requirement for funding**. Involvement, for the purposes of this competition, can be either as consortium member, consortium partner, sub-contractor or involvement in any other way constituting vendor support for the project's research.

3.1 Scope

Future networks and the technologies and solutions that will make up coming generations of telecoms architectures have already begun to be developed. Which technologies from previous and current generations of telecoms networks will be fundamental to future networks, and which new and emerging technologies will play important roles, remains to be decided. This is why DCMS is taking a principles-based approach to this Challenge, which allows academia and industry to determine which research areas and projects are best suited to meet the objectives and outcomes of the Challenge as set out below.

Identifying research that will achieve these objectives and outcomes, create mechanisms for commercialisation and influence standards development will help to ensure that the security, resilience and innovation benefits of openness and interoperability are sustained in future networks. In order to do so, proposals must:

- Aim to conduct research in [TRLs](#) 1-5. A low but wide range of TRLs has been chosen as preferred. DCMS envisages that proposals will primarily encompass early-stage research, but also encourages projects to take applied research close to development.
- As a guideline, research areas should place greater emphasis on the network rather than applications.
- Seek to enhance the performance and manageability of existing elements when deployed in an open interoperable framework and/or consider impacts of open disaggregation of existing/evolving elements in future networks in 5G and previous generations.
- Suggest research that abides by and advances the [Open RAN Principles \(2022\)](#) set out by DCMS, which characterise the principles that open and interoperable network solutions should possess to support the delivery of the UK telecoms diversification objectives. Where suggested research does not focus on the RAN, proposals should



demonstrate how the principles are translated into their suggested research areas. The principles are:

- **Open disaggregation**, allowing elements of the RAN to be sourced from different suppliers and implemented in new ways.
- **Standards-based compliance**, allowing all suppliers to test solutions against standards in an open, neutral environment.
- **Demonstrated interoperability**, ensuring disaggregated elements work together as a fully functional system — at a minimum matching the performance and security of current solutions.
- **Implementation neutrality**, allowing suppliers to innovate and differentiate on the features and performance of their products.

Applicants may also wish to consider the following broad areas of technologies in their proposed research: cloud infrastructure, decentralised architectures, artificial intelligence / machine learning, fixed and wireless convergence, radio frequency system and subsystem design, photonics, satellite / space technologies, systems integration, security, network management and quantum technologies.

It is expected that research undertaken under this Challenge will primarily be impactful in future network generations. However, demonstrable impact in the shorter-term on a 5G-evolution timeframe will be considered favourably in the assessment process.

3.1.1 Objectives

Until March 2025, applicants in receipt of this funding will work to:

- **Conduct research impacting future technology roadmaps with the goal that openness and interoperability are embedded in future network architectures and systems by default.** To achieve this, applicants will demonstrate:
 - How their research enables the delivery of the security, resilience, and innovation and competition benefits of openness and interoperability;
 - How their research aligns with, promotes, and further develops the principles of openness as outlined in the government's Open RAN Principles - however, applicants are encouraged to not limit themselves solely to the RAN.
- **Contribute to the strengthening of UK influence in Standards Development Organisations (SDOs).** To achieve this, applicants will:
 - Develop standards for open and interoperable future network architectures, and ensure that these principles are sustained as the industry develops the next generations of telecoms technologies.
 - Generate open and interoperable technologies which can play a role in standards development for future telecoms infrastructure.



- Commit to ensuring the work carried out continually works in line with relevant SDOs, and to actively participate in the associated working groups and fora to ensure the work is presented in the correct avenues.
- **Strengthen the UK telecoms R&D ecosystem and telecoms capability.** To achieve this, applicants will:
 - Secure participation from a large RAN equipment vendor as a consortium partner or subcontractor (see section 4.1.1 for further details).
 - Involve other stakeholders from across the telecoms and wider digital ecosystem in their research, such as network operators, SMEs, other research organisations and wider industry.
 - Accelerate the generation of Intellectual Property in the UK and commercialisation of research outputs.
 - Build skills for designing, deploying and operating UK telecoms networks sustainably over the long term.
- **Engage with DCMS, UKRI/EPSC, the UK Telecoms Innovation Network ¹ (UKTIN), SONIC Labs and the UK Telecommunications Laboratory (UKTL) and other future relevant government initiatives where appropriate, and actively contribute to the UK's evolving future networks and 6G vision.**

3.1.2 Outcomes

The outcomes listed below are most likely to support achievement of the objectives described in Section 3.1.1.

- Universities should establish themselves as leading research entities for future open and interoperable telecoms technology R&D.
- An increase in the level of maturity of future-facing technologies which can form part of future telecoms architectures, and which are open and interoperable by default.
- A number of open and interoperable products and solutions move up the TRL scale (1-5), and have potential that industrial partners (e.g. large RAN equipment vendors, operators or SMEs) or university spin-outs will invest further in development and commercialisation.
- Consortia will have established links with relevant other future networks initiatives, and will have contributed to the strategy, vision formulation in these bodies, and further development of research areas.

¹ If possible - the UK Telecoms Innovation Network may not be operating within the timescales of this competition.



- A greater number of telecoms patents are created, which are then utilised to support the development of a more robust R&D sector and a growing domestic telecoms industry.
- Collaboration between researchers and vendors of all sizes on open and interoperable networks to have taken place.
- Increased skills developed in telecoms research and network design and operation in the UK, including but not limited to PhDs and post-doctoral researchers.
- Increased retention of PhDs and post-doctoral researchers working within the UK telecoms industry.
- Greater domestic and international investment in telecoms R&D in the UK.
- Greater engagement and participation within Standards Bodies from UK companies and academic institutions. This could involve the challenge participants actively attending SDOs, forums and working groups.
- Participants of the challenge to demonstrate how they will contribute to at least one relevant standards activity.
- Participants to produce documentation of know-how generated to ensure the dissemination of knowledge into standard setting activities.
- Participants identify the current state of the art, in terms of academic research, competitor activity and the development of relevant standards. Where relevant standards exist, proposed work should build upon relevant standards. Alternatively, proposals may explain why divergence from current standards development is justified.

3.1.3 Potential Outputs

- This Challenge does not define specific outputs. Applicants can propose any research projects across TRLs 1-5 that adhere to and advance the Open RAN principles. This means that the research outputs can take any given form. Defining specific outputs will therefore be part of the GFA negotiations. This process will also include defining milestones to be achieved throughout the course of the project.
- Outputs could take the form of open and interoperable future network architectures, concepts, technologies, prototypes, improvements of existing systems for 5G evolution or 6G timeframes, or others.
- This approach reflects the view that academia and industry partnerships are best placed to identify outputs that are both of research/academic relevance and produce truly innovative solutions, but are also relevant to future telecoms networks and the market. DCMS will not prescribe how university and industry partners should strike this balance, but will evaluate their proposals against their ability to achieve the Challenge objectives and desired outcomes.



3.2 Standards

A technical standard is an agreed or established technical description of an idea, product or way of doing things where it is necessary to share the understanding with others. Standards can encourage greater transparency, interoperability and enable global adoption of technologies and network equipment, which is why participating in and shaping technical standards development should be considered as an integral part of R&D activities.

The global SDO ecosystem is complex and crowded, which can make it difficult for innovators and SMEs to know where and how to contribute to relevant standards activities and represent their interests. We want to improve representation in telecoms standards activities to shape technical standards development in line with UK objectives. This is why participants have an important role to play in ensuring that the knowledge, know-how and IP generated through R&D activities contribute to and build upon relevant standards, and improve UK representation in key SDOs and activities.

Over the grant funding period, the requirements for standards may change depending on the current state of play within the wider standards ecosystem. This could include more technical requirements and questions, as well as considering the possibility of the participants showcasing their work at relevant working groups and forums within SDOs.

3.2.1 IP and Patents

Presently, evidence shows that while the UK produces a high number and quality of research publications in future telecoms, the UK is less successful at both patent filing and specialisation in future telecoms. This struggle to commercialise and mature leading research and retain intellectual property in the UK hinders the position of the UK within the global telecoms ecosystem. Ensuring that the UK builds up and retains high value IP, and is able to protect it, will help to develop a competitive advantage for the UK in telecoms. These actions will also serve to extend the UK's influence over global standards-setting bodies and enable the UK to collaborate more meaningfully with international partners.

Projects funded under the Challenge are expected to contribute to meeting the Challenge's objectives (as set out at 3.1.1 above) by putting a greater emphasis on the translation of research findings into industrial commercialisation efforts, and the generation of IP. In order to achieve this, consortia are expected to:

1. Develop a plan for intellectual property creation, retention, and dissemination ('IP Plan') and how this plan will help to achieve the Challenge's objectives, in particular the promotion of the UK's telecoms ecosystem and role in standards-setting. IP plans should consider the interests of all stakeholders involved in the research in a balanced manner and be agreed - at least in preliminary form - as part of any



collaboration agreement.² However, if Projects intend to file patents this will have to be done without the support of grant funding, and Projects must instead rely on the resources of stakeholders to file patents. Consideration should be given to mechanisms for the translation and commercialisation of innovations stemming from the funded research, and how these will aid the project to meet the objectives of the Challenge.

2. Comply with relevant legislation and subsidy control rules regarding intellectual property in R&D collaborations as those evolve.
3. Demonstrate their ability to protect the integrity of intellectual property and sensitive information, including by following the [Trusted Research principles](#) outlined by the Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure (CPNI).
4. Actively engage with government-sponsored research translation and commercialisation efforts, both when these are established and as they evolve. Such efforts could be coordinated via [UKTIN](#) or other future networks research governance structures set up by bodies such as EPSRC and DCMS, when in operation. Such engagement should work towards the goal to advance the UK telecoms ecosystem and the UK's footprint in international standards-setting for telecoms.

It is acknowledged that those conducting the research and creating the products that will together form the foundation of our future networks are best placed to determine which IP models best serve the above purposes, and that these may be subject to change. For the purpose of this funding opportunity, we ask that consortia do so in accordance with the goal and evolving strategy to increase UK capability in telecoms and influence over global standards-setting bodies.

It is important to note that DCMS's approach to IP retention in the Open Networks R&D Fund is still evolving and may potentially change over the course of the grant funding period.

3.3 Funding

There is up to **£25m** available from DCMS in this Challenge, from the date that a grant funding agreement is signed to 31 March 2025. DCMS will make available grant funding ranging from £4 million to £12 million to individual projects, **lasting no more than 24 months**. DCMS also reserves the right to vary the funding awarded to successful applicants depending on factors such as the number and quality of proposals received.

The start date for DCMS funding is subject to satisfactory completion of a set up and pre-grant requirements, DCMS due diligence and signing a Grant Funding Agreement. For planning purposes, please note that DCMS expects to enter into a Grant Funding Agreement with successful applicants 8-10 weeks from notification of award. DCMS funding must end by 31 March 2025 at the latest.

² The Intellectual Property Office (IPO) has guidance on IP agreements for research collaborations between universities and business available in the form of the [Lambert Toolkit](#).



3.3.1 Subsidy Control

Following the end of the transition period on the 31st December 2020, and as of 1 January 2021 the UK must follow its international obligations on subsidy control. This includes commitments arising from the World Trade Organisation's Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures, and obligations set out in Chapter 3 of Title XI of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) between the European Union and the United Kingdom. Applicants are also advised to be aware of the potential relevance of the various non-binding (Joint) Declarations, made by the UK and the EU, which were published on 24th December 2020. The UK Subsidy Control Act 2022 (SCA 2022) received Royal Assent in April 2022, and will come into force at a date yet to be announced.

Subsidy Control Eligibility; and Acceptance Of DCMS Grant Terms

The TCA established the UK's subsidy control arrangements, and DCMS has reflected upon how best to demonstrate its compliance with the principles for the purpose of this competition. **Applicants will be required to obtain their own independent subsidy control legal advice and, when requested to do so, commit to sharing that advice with DCMS and its professional advisers.**

If an applicant receives a subsidy in breach of the TCA, and when fully enacted the SCA 2022, that applicant may be required to repay any subsidy received to the value of the gross grant equivalent of the subsidy, plus interest.

Further Information On Subsidy Control

The Subsidy Control team at the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) has lead responsibility within the UK for coordination and development of policy on subsidy control. BEIS has published guidance for public authorities which can be found on the government website, see [Complying with the UK's international obligations on subsidy control](#).

Funding Rules

DCMS will provide a quarterly grant in arrears, based on delivery of milestones and for costs incurred for work that has been undertaken. This will be paid to the lead partner of the selected organisation(s) until 31 March 2025 who are successful in this competition, subject to timely, satisfactory set up and DCMS due diligence, and once a Grant Funding Agreement is agreed. DCMS has clarified, however, that funds must be used in accordance with the no-subsidy approach, as described above.

Grant recipients will be required to confirm that the costs they wish to claim for are capitalised and/or treated as capital expenditure in line with UK GAAP.



3.3.2 Project Set Up and Grant Funding Agreement

Upon being notified of success in the challenge, successful applicants should be prepared to mobilise quickly.

You will need to provide a range of detailed planning, finance, commercial and subsidy control information to enable DCMS due diligence and preparation to enter into a Grant Funding Agreement (GFA). This will determine when DCMS funding starts and can take several months from receiving notification of success. DCMS aims to complete this as quickly as possible and within 10 weeks of notification of success.

You will need to demonstrate that you have resources in place to lead the pre-grant mobilisation process. You must identify your pre-grant mobilisation team including the Senior Responsible Owner (SRO), Project Manager and Finance Lead as part of the supplementary information form.

3.3.3 Eligible Cost and Funding Allocations

Eligible costs are costs that you incur whilst delivering the project- including the costs of your labour, overheads, materials, subcontracts and travel and subsistence (T&S) among others.

Costs incurred during bidding and in reaching grant funding agreement are not recoverable.

Eligible costs are intended to cover all activities directly associated with carrying out the activities of this project. Please see the DCMS - Eligible Costs Guidance document for full details and explanation. Sample evidence of these costs being incurred will be required as part of the grant claims process. Universities apply through the JES (see guidance) - this allows recovery on a full economic cost basis. The subsidy intensity is dependent upon the subsidy control regime the project chooses, which may be up to 100% subsidy.

Within your proposal, there must be a lead partner³ who will be the accountable body and recipient of any DCMS grant awarded. They will also be responsible for managing the distribution of DCMS funds to any consortium partners, as set out in the consortium's Collaboration Agreement, a template for which can be found in Annex 3 of the Grant Funding Agreement. Please note that Grant Funding is **paid quarterly and in arrears**.

The projects selected at the end of this challenge will need to follow the process and criteria that will be set out in the DCMS Grant Funding Agreement to access funding.

3.4 Application Process

The Future Open Networks Research Challenge application window will begin with an optional Expression of Interest (EOI) to which interested parties are invited.

³ Please refer to section 4 for definition of eligible bodies that can apply



DCMS has chosen to adopt this approach in order for potential partners to co-create and collaborate on shared solutions to the Challenge set in this guidance and submit high level approaches **ahead of a formal bid**, to ensure alignment with the objectives of the Challenge, to reduce duplication and provide the greatest chance at success.

3.4.1 Expressions of Interest (EOI)

The first submission of the application window is an **optional Expression of Interest (EOI)** in which interested participants are invited to submit high-level proposals outlining how they plan to address the challenge of ensuring the openness and interoperability of future network architectures, providing a high level overview of their chosen area of research to meet the challenge.

Within the response to the EOI potential applicants should detail:

- which partners and subcontractors might form part of their project
- what research they aim to carry out and how it meets the objectives and outcomes of the challenge
- an approximate figure of required funding and the funding profile over the relevant fiscal periods
- an indication of how much time would be required to deliver the proposal

Please note that, whilst having a large RAN equipment vendor as either a partner, subcontractor or otherwise involved in the project, is a condition of the final challenge, such an agreement with a vendor is not a requirement at the EOI stage but is expected to be provided with the full proposal.

Once EOIs have been received, DCMS will review and provide high-level written feedback. Participants will then be invited to attend individual verbal feedback sessions with a panel of representatives from DCMS.

The intent of the EOI, review and feedback process is to ensure that early-stage thinking regarding the make up and strategic direction of proposals, which may later develop into consortium bids, is properly aligned with the scope and objectives of the Challenge.

Participants should note that feedback received during these sessions is designed to be suggestive and is not designed to be indicative of either a positive or negative outcome of any application in the formal Challenge application window.

Applicants are able to submit a full proposal even if they have not participated in the EOI. Applicants may utilise the entire period to develop their full proposal.

3.4.2 Full Proposals



At full submission, applicants will provide detail of the chosen areas of research, outlining how this will achieve the objectives of the challenge and various other questions outlined in section 8.

Applicants are able to submit a full proposal even if they have not previously submitted an EOI. Applicants may utilise the entire challenge window to develop their full proposal.

Please note that on submission of full proposals, applicants will be expected to provide details of their vendor agreement, including the names of the vendor(s) who will be part of, or working with, the applicants as well as outlining the role of vendor(s) within the project and their proposed contribution to the project's chosen area of research.



4. Eligibility criteria

The applicant must demonstrate clearly in their application how they meet all the eligibility criteria set out in this section.

4.1 Eligible Applicants

This challenge is open to applications from **UK based organisations**.

Specific eligibility criteria for the challenge are below:

- Applications may be from a **single university** or a **consortium composed of a university and any other UK-registered organisations**. If the application is from a consortium, there must be an agreed lead applicant who will be the prime recipient of grant funding and who will be responsible for managing the consortium's activities and for allocation of grant funding to other consortium members.
- The lead applicant **must** be a UK university.
- Individual people are not eligible applicants.
- The grant amount for any individual consortium partner must not represent more than 50% of each non-academic consortium partner's annual income.
- Consortium partners will need to have signed a collaboration agreement between themselves prior to any claim to DCMS for grant funding for the organisation.
- Companies that are not UK-registered are not eligible to receive grant funding from DCMS (Non-UK organisations may participate but will not receive grant funding).
- High risk vendors (HRVs) are not permitted to participate in projects either as a consortium partner or supplier. See [NCSC Advice](#) for more information on HRVs. Public funds must not be used to pay for any HRV products or services through the competition. We understand that in the case of Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) for example, with pre-existing HRV equipment in their networks, these networks may reasonably be used to build testbeds. However, funding must not be used to buy additional equipment or services from HRVs.
- The lead applicant and/or consortium should be able to demonstrate delivery at an international level.
- The lead applicant and/or consortium will need to demonstrate sufficient technical knowledge and skills to deliver the required outcomes or be able to sub-contract sufficiently for this criteria.
- Applicants must provide an appendix in your response to Section E separately identifying the following:



- The estimated cost for each work package described in your responses to Section C. Make clear the level of any contribution from each Consortium Partner and the level of grant funding requested from DCMS.
- The spend profile by month for year 1, and by quarter for years 2 and 3, linking the profile to milestones and deliverables as needed.
- Individual organisations **are allowed** to apply as part of more than one consortia bid.
- All grant awards will be made subject to successful due diligence checks.
- Lead applicants and consortia will be required to submit their own independent written legal advice of their compliance - further detail on subsidy control is above.

4.1.1 Project Partners

In order for the funding available in the Challenge to meet the objectives and outcomes, DCMS is specifying some of the partners which must form part of each of the projects applying for funding.

Required as lead partner for the overall project to receive funding, as mentioned above:

- A UK university. Please note that applications are welcome from a single university (i.e. not part of a consortium), provided a large RAN equipment vendor is at least subcontracted by the university, as explained below.

Required as either as a consortium partner or subcontracted by the lead partner or consortium, for the overall consortium to receive funding:

- Large RAN equipment vendor

Other partners, non-partners and subcontractors are encouraged to participate in proposals. An **indicative** list of the types of organisations that **may** want to participate are below:

- Mobile Network Operators (MNOs)
- Small and medium sized telecoms equipment and software vendors
- Systems Integrators
- Catapults
- Other relevant organisations



4.1.2 Spectrum

The project must have access to the spectrum and network capabilities required to deliver the project, or have a clear plan to acquire or build them in a timely manner. This may be in the form of an agreement with an existing network provider, or through the deployment of new network infrastructure, in addition to any required connections to existing or third-party infrastructure.

Spectrum may be commercially licensed, by using an Ofcom Innovation and Trial Licence or by making use of Ofcom Shared Access licensing approach to provide localised access to spectrum bands that can support mobile technology.

4.2 Roles

You should specify the following roles in your proposal, as applicable:

Organisation Role	Notes:
(Consortium) Lead Partner	If part of a consortium, the proposal should make it clear why the lead university is the most appropriate organisation for the lead role.
Consortium Partner	These are any other organisations which are receiving grant funding from DCMS via the Consortium Lead Partner under this grant and which will undertake important activities during delivery. These organisations may be involved in the consortium governance as appropriate.
Project Members	These are any other organisations contributing to the consortium with funding or in-kind contributions but are not receiving funding from DCMS under this grant. These organisations may be identified at the proposal stage, or could be added at a later date.
Key Project Suppliers	These are known key suppliers, if any, who are providing products and/or services that delivery will rely on. They will not be involved in consortium governance.



4.3 Collaboration

Consortium members are expected to work together collaboratively. Where there are topics of shared interest, the consortium is expected to take advantage of any opportunities for mutually beneficial inter-working with other projects and/or participation through ecosystem partners' channels, as well as with the wider ecosystem.

All projects are required to take part in activities such as:

- Production of lessons learnt materials for publication such as reports, case studies etc.
- Collaborate with the wider ecosystem through attendance and involvement at DMCS led collaboration events with other projects in the Open Networks Programme receiving DCMS grant funding.
- collaboration, knowledge sharing workshops and trade events
- Sharing of media and publicity products for use in DCMS media channels

The aim is that by combining the efforts and knowledge base, producing tangible and useful outputs that can be shared and demonstrated, the collaboration activities will help to foster the ecosystem. DCMS will facilitate partnerships and support these efforts where relevant. Potential areas for collaboration activity include key cross-cutting strategic issues outlined in section 2.2 (Scope). The selected project must also sign up to the Participation Agreement, which is included in the supporting documents on gov.uk, as part of the application process. This outlines how members of the ecosystem should collaborate, share knowledge and join-up through the five Programme Participation Principles.



5. Further General Guidelines

5.1 Benefits and Key Findings

We expect consortia to focus particularly on the key findings (lessons learned) and impact of standards that will arise from their work as part of delivering the required outcomes above.

Benefits

In bids we expect to see quantitative and qualitative estimates of these impacts, how they will be measured and evidenced throughout and after the projects. The reporting framework for benefits realisation will be issued by DCMS officials at the start of the project's onboarding phase. Once started, projects will be required to agree benefits metrics with DCMS, focusing on the positive outcomes of the project, and monitor and report these to the Department.

These metrics may include:

- Amount funded (£)
- Private sector Investment (£)
- Number of new collaborations
- Number of patents and IP generated from projects
- Number of telecoms related Masters/PhDs related to projects
- Number of staff working on standards
- New inward investment stimulated by the activity
- Number of relevant academic papers authored or co-authored by UK-based academics involved in the consortia
- Number of OpenRAN Standards Essential Patents (SEPs) filed, as a result of the project, for which a UK entity is the main beneficiary
- Capital raised by OpenRAN-focused university spin-outs involved in the project

As part of their application (Phase 2), projects are expected to create project specific SMART objectives which will be agreed with DCMS and included in their work plan annexed to the signed GFA. Projects will be expected to report on these objectives at regular intervals to DCMS. If these are not followed through appropriately we hold the option to refuse payment.

Moreover, we will require the project to report on Technology Readiness Level (TRL) increases, investment in each consortium partner and a range of other information to be agreed with projects once selected. This will include, but will not be limited to, updates on and discussions of the technical findings and data produced by the projects.



Lessons Learned

A key area for reporting will be lessons learnt and the knowledge dissemination activities undertaken by the project. Project reporting will be on a quarterly basis, with occasional monthly discussions when required. This will form part of the deliverables that the project is expected to achieve in order to access grant funding. Lessons should be captured throughout the project's lifecycle, as they happen. This will culminate in a final report summarising the findings of the project at the end of its cycle. It is important to note that DCMS expects the project to appoint a resource who is responsible for the benefits and lessons learned monitoring and reporting and allocate specific time to undertake this work. They will be responsible for updating DCMS officials as part of the regular reporting process.

Evaluation Activities

In addition, project partners will be expected to participate in occasional programme evaluation activities, e.g. surveys and interviews of grant recipients, which will be conducted by DCMS or a third party acting on its behalf to assess the outcomes of the Open Networks R&D Fund and its constituent projects, and other relevant government strategies. Evaluation activities are expected to be undertaken both during and after the lifetime of the project.

5.2 Wider collaboration across the ecosystem

- The successful applicant(s) will be expected to work with UKTIN⁴ and DCMS technical/programme leads to participate in collaboration and knowledge sharing activities across relevant publicly funded projects where agreed with DCMS (and which may include projects funded by public organisations other than DCMS). This will include the dissemination and celebration of findings across the ecosystem (with appropriate consultation and reference to IP restrictions).

⁴ If possible - the UK Telecoms Innovation Network may not be operating within the timescales of this competition.



6. Challenge Process and Dates

6.1 Challenge Process and Key Dates

The challenge process will follow the following steps:

- Interested applicants are invited to submit high-level proposals in response to the Expression Of Interest (EOI) (**optional**).
- Responses to the EOI will be reviewed by DCMS, who will provide written and verbal feedback at a one to one session with a panel of representatives from DCMS.
- Applicants will then have until the end of the application window to submit their full applications.
- Assessment of the proposals will then be conducted by a panel of experts at DCMS.
- *No interviews will be held as part of the assessment process.*
- Following this assessment and moderation by the panel, the highest scoring applications will be selected as preferred applicants.
- The lead organisation will be notified of the funding decision.
- All applications will receive assessor feedback upon request.
- DCMS may also exercise its discretion to provide further opportunities to apply for funding after the application window for this call closes. This will be announced in due course if applicable.

Event	Date/Deadline
Challenge opens	26/07/2022
EOI submission deadline (optional)	Noon 12/08/2022
DCMS review and feedback of EOIs	15/08/2022 - 26/08/2022
Challenge closes	Noon 03/10/2022



Event	Date/Deadline
Assessment (no interviews)	04/10/2022 to 14/10/2022
Notification to successful projects	Week commencing 31/10/2022
Grant Funding Agreements signed	10 weeks from notification
Delivery of projects to commence <i>(please use this delivery date in applications/ delivery/project plans that you submit to DCMS)</i>	January 2023



7. How To Apply

You must submit your application (with all of the required documents) to the email address **ONP.enquiries@dcms.gov.uk** by the date set out in section 6.1. You will receive an email acknowledgement of your application.

We strongly advise submitting well in advance of the deadline (i.e. days before) as there is always a risk that IT issues prevent you submitting promptly (e.g. issues sending large files).

For Phase 1, potential applicants may submit a document answering the points set out in Section 3.4.1 above.

For Phase 2, applicants should submit an application following the guidance set out in the remainder of this challenge guidance.

The Lead Organisation must submit the following **mandatory documents**:

1. Your **Application Form**, with all questions answered, within the word count, plus any allowed appendices. You must also complete the Supplementary Information section, including:
 - a. **A Finance Summary** table, and
 - b. the **Confirmation of Grant Agreement Terms** table.
2. **Finance Form** (for each partner (including the lead partner) covering all proposed costs - these should cover the full grant term. These documents are used to
3. understand how you have estimated your costs - see **Eligible Costs Guidance** for further guidance.
4. **Two Years of Latest Accounts** (in .pdf format) for the lead organisation or each Consortium Partner.
5. **A Delivery Plan** that demonstrates a robust approach to controlling the project that is proportionate to the funding levels sought, as per the requirement in section D of the application form.
6. **Resourcing Plan**, as per the requirement in section E of the application form.
7. **IP Plan**, as per section 3.2.1 of this guidance.
8. A proposal regarding priority/resourcing at your organisation on how you intend to enter into a Grant Funding Agreement with DCMS **within an 8-10 week timeframe**, after notification of award.
9. A vendor agreement as per section 3.4.2 of this guidance.



7.1 Application Format

You can only use the application form and templates provided. They contain specific guidance on information you must provide. There are two exceptions: the Initial Delivery Plan and the Resource plan where no template is provided, but specific guidance is written into the question.

The application form and templates contain specific fields. It is important that you complete each field and submit a fully completed form and templates. Incomplete applications may be considered ineligible and not sent for assessment.

The application form and templates must not be altered, converted or submitted as a different file type.

DCMS reserves the right to ask for additional information, clarifications and corrections following the submission deadline. Additional information submitted at the request of DCMS must meet any timing, format and length requirements we may specify at the time.

In evaluating your responses we value brevity and the maximum word limit is fixed. Tables will not be included in this word limit but should be only used where necessary. The submission must conform to the maximum length specifications stated in the “Challenge questions” section below. Information in excess of this will be disregarded, from the first word after the maximum.

DCMS does not encourage applicants to submit any additional supporting information with the required application form and templates. Any such information that is submitted may be disregarded during the assessment of applications.

Your response should provide sufficient evidence to support any assertions made and state any underlying principles or assumptions. You should not include commercial sales messages about products or services being proposed.



8. Application and Assessment

8.1 Application Structure

The structure for applications is as follows:

8.1.1 Applicant information (not assessed)

- Name of application lead organisation (Project/Consortium Lead)
- Contact details for application lead organisation
- Name(s) of additional organisation(s) forming part of this application
- Contact details for additional organisations (Project/Consortium Partners)
- Description of the consortium suitable for public release

8.1.2 Evaluated Questions

Responses will be evaluated using the general weighting scheme set out in the following table. Supporting questions, detailed marking and associated reasoning are set out in subsequent sections.

Section	Weighting
A. Vision and Strategic Approach	22.5%
B. Organisation(s) Suitability and Management	20%
C. Outcomes, Engagement and Benefits	22.5%
D. Delivery Plan	20%
E. Financial and Commercial	15%

Section A. Vision and Strategic Approach (22.5%)

This section is for applicants to demonstrate suitable ambition and credibility for how the Future Open Networks Research Challenge will provide leadership, direction and momentum to be effective. A clear description of the project, stating its aims, its objectives and expected outcomes should be given. You should describe what you expect to achieve by the end of March 2025, and the potential for how the project could continue to develop beyond that.

A1: Describe the project's strategic aims highlighting which Open Networks challenges you plan to address? Including reference to challenge objectives (10% - maximum 1000 words).



- Describe the main motivation for the project and the open networks challenges the project will address. Your description must identify genuine commercial drivers for success and the particular challenges that could be met using future network capabilities, and highlight innovative aspects.
- How will your solution impact the global and UK markets for open networks? How will it be differentiated from competing products or solutions?
- State, in simple terms, what you will deliver in your project and how this will achieve the objectives of the Future Open Networks Research Challenge.
- Identify where direct involvement with standards organisations will be required.

A2: Describe, in technical terms, the system architecture and major technological components and innovations of your proposal including a diagram(s). (7.5% - maximum 900 words).

- Describe as part of this how you will ensure your project will be safe and secure, conforming to telecoms and cyber security best practice.

A3: Describe your approach to how the project will be financially sustainable beyond the grant funding period. (5% - maximum 500 words).

- Outline the activities that will be undertaken to ensure sustainability;
- how they will be funded; and
- how these activities support the sustainability of industry involvement and the progression of research commercialisation.

Section B. Organisation(s) Suitability and Management (20%)

This section is for applicants to demonstrate a clear overview of the organisations involved in the project organisations, their level of skills and experience in delivering a requirement such as this, management and governance, and the roles of specified key personnel.

B1: Describe the roles and responsibilities of the organisations taking part in your proposal; and outline the resourcing, management and governance arrangements for delivery of the Future Open Networks Research Challenge by the project (10% - maximum 1000 words).

- Confirm the large RAN equipment vendor(s) who will be involved in delivering your proposal, and whether they will be a consortium partner or will be subcontracted by the consortium.
- Describe the details of any vital external parties, including sub-contractors, who you will need to work with to successfully carry out the project.
- Describe your proposed project management processes and governance structures.

B2: Describe the type and level of experience of each partner in delivering related work to their proposed outputs and activities (5% - maximum 750 words).



- Describe the skills and experience of all partners that are relevant to the approach you will be taking.

B3: Identify the key personnel for your project who are responsible for managing delivery of its activities, their main responsibilities and describe their relevant skills and experience (5% - maximum 500 words).

- Identify the participant(s) who will be responsible for the management and delivery of your proposed work, and why they have the right skills and capabilities to deliver this.
- Describe how these organisations achieve more working together than if they were working individually?
- If applying as a consortium, explain why the project lead is best placed to undertake this role.

Section C. Outcomes, Engagement and Benefits (22.5%)

This section is for applicants to describe what specific activities you are proposing to undertake to deliver the outcomes as set out in Section 3.1 above, your engagement plans, and the benefits of your project.

DCMS would expect these to be appropriately ambitious.

C1: Explain what activities you will undertake to fulfil the outcomes as set out in Section 3 above: (10% - maximum 1000 words)

- Core activities, which should include the minimum viable set of activities to meet the outcomes.
- Extended activities, which should include potential additional activities to achieve greater levels against the Future Open Networks Research Challenge objectives and outcomes.

C2: Provide an indicative overview of your stakeholder engagement plans which should link in to key activities you are proposing to undertake where stakeholders are important to achieving the Challenge objectives and outcomes (5% - maximum 500 words).

C3: Outline the key benefits you will achieve; and your approach to measuring and monitoring these (7.5% - maximum 900 words).

- Outline in simple terms the key benefits expected from your activities. Be specific about the impact of these benefits and how they will align with the Challenge outcomes set out in section 3.
- Provide information on how your deliverables will result in these anticipated benefits and outcomes. What is the connection between your outputs, benefits and outcomes?



- Provide clarity on the mechanisms used to track the impact of changes and how they lead to benefits. Be specific about frequency of measurement, how you will monitor progress and who is responsible for this activity.
- Provide indication of metrics, including baselines, targets and how you will monitor progress of these. Please be specific about how you know a benefit has been achieved (are their absolute metrics, or tolerance levels?)
- Provide a target on the number of scientific articles, papers you plan to publish in your chosen area of work throughout the project.

Section D. Delivery Plan (20%)

This section is for applicants to provide a plan for their delivery of Future Open Networks Research Challenge. A good response will provide evidence that: the applicants can deliver their proposal (set out in responses to the preceding questions) on time, within the budget, achieving high quality and the Challenge's intended outcomes and benefits; and that there is a robust approach to controlling the project and its activities. The plan and approach will be suitable and proportionate for the proposal and funding levels sought. It is likely that applicants will have more certainty and detail for year 1 (GFA signing up to March 2023), and higher-level plans for years 2 and 3.

For planning purposes, assume that DCMS grant funding could start 10 weeks after DCMS notification of success. (Subject to timely, satisfactory completion of set up requirements and DCMS due diligence). **Maximum time allowed for projects is 24 months** and must complete no later than **31st March 2025**

D1: Describe your initial delivery plans for utilising the DCMS grant (15% - maximum 1000 words, excluding the supporting appendices).

Provide a supporting, 'start to finish' Gantt chart appendix. Format: document, spreadsheet or .pdf. Must be easily accessible and all content readable.

For your plan, please outline the following:

- Phases of work. Target timing.
- Key events. Including completion of pre-grant 'mobilisation', specific delivery milestones linked to claiming DCMS grant funding, setting up the Future Open Networks Research Challenge, development review points and target timing.
- The main activities to be undertaken and deliverables to be completed to achieve the key events and milestones.
- A summary description of the key dependencies related to achieving specific milestones.
- Identification of which activities are on a Critical Path to determine key activities to project completion and scheduling flexibilities.



D2: Describe the most significant risks, uncertainties and dependencies to the successful delivery of the Future Open Networks Research Challenge and how each will be managed (5% - maximum 500 words).

Provide a supporting, 'start to finish' Risk Register appendix. Format: document, spreadsheet or .pdf. Must be easily accessible and all content readable.

- Identify the main risks and uncertainties (please rank in order of probability/impact) for delivering the Future Open Networks Research Challenge and your mitigations.
- Identify the key internal and external (third party) dependencies, support or engagement required to successfully deliver. (Examples: suppliers, sub-contractors, stakeholders whose participation is needed; any legal/regulatory requirements, agreements or consents). Indicate what is agreed at the time of your application, what has yet to be agreed and how this will be managed.

Section E. Financial and Commercial (15%)

This section is for applicants to give: a clear overview and explanation of the costs of delivery that can be related to the proposed delivery plan; and confidence that financial management and control of the project will deliver good value for money.

The detail of the responses should be clearly linked to activities described under your responses to sections B (organisation(s)), C (activities, outputs, outcomes) and to the delivery plan and milestones described under your response to section D. Note that in the Grant Funding Agreement (see Annex 5 of the draft agreement) milestones should be linked to specific deliverables, and the grant claimed on a specific date may relate to multiple milestones.

As with section D, for planning purposes, assume that DCMS grant funding could start 10 weeks after DCMS notification of success. (Subject to timely, satisfactory completion of set up requirements and DCMS due diligence). DCMS funding must end by 31 March 2025 at the latest.

E1: Identify the major cost components and explain how these represent value for money. (10% - maximum 800 words):

- Provide a narrative description summarising what each organisation will be delivering (linked to your response to section B) and the costs associated.
- Describe any contributions in kind from each organisation.
- Provide a cost breakdown of forecast expenditure for the project by partner, with more detailed costs for year 1 and outline costs for each of years 2 and 3. Explain how the costs have been calculated.
- Confirm that all grant funding claims do not extend beyond 31 March 2025.



- Identify the amount of DCMS grant and other funding you will set aside for working with the Open Networks ecosystem, this should include costs of working with standards groups. A minimum of 2-4% of grant funding is required.
- Provide an appendix separately identifying the following:
 - **A resource Plan** that consolidates the information to show the full labour requirement for the consortium, based on your proposal. Use this to explain the level of resourcing required and indicate where roles are filled using known individuals or where recruitment is required. Format: document, spreadsheet or .pdf. Must be easily accessible and all content readable. Please include:
 - Role Salary (1 FTE) (£)
 - Deliverables (linked to the delivery plan)
 - FTE for each year of the Future Open Networks Research Challenge
 - Set up and operation period
 - Total FTE
 - The estimated cost for each milestone described in your responses to Section D. Make clear the level of any contribution from each organisation and the level of grant funding requested from DCMS.
 - The spend profile by month for year 1, and by quarter for years 2 and 3, linking the profile to milestones and deliverables as needed. This should be fully consistent with the dates you have specified in the delivery plan in your response to section D.

E2: Explain how you will ensure value for money through your delivery and sourcing approach (5% - maximum 400 words):

- Explain your sourcing approach and any controls you have, or plan to have in place for supply chain management.
- Confirm that the grant amount requested includes any irrecoverable VAT, all fees and charges, and appropriate allowance has been made for any price inflation during the grant period.
- Note: As part of assessment of Sections C and D, Assessors need to be confident the proposal is good value and can be delivered to the stated cost. They will consider:
 - The response to these questions and the supporting financial information provided
 - The suitability of the proposed costs - costs considered excessive will be a cause for serious concern
 - The total amount of grant funding requested from DCMS



- Whether there is an appropriate level of contributions from public sector organisations who are consortium partners

8.2 Supplementary Information

The application form contains two parts within the Supplementary Information section. The first part contains a Finance Summary table which must be filled out to represent your spending proposal. The second part contains a table which must be filled out, stating that the organisation accepts various aspects of the Grant Agreement terms. Both parts of this section are mandatory. Information provided here will be used to aid understanding of the (above) assessed responses.

Ref	Question/Request	Applicant Response
1	Please complete the finance summary table for your proposed delivery plans.	Complete the table in the Application Form
2	Please confirm that the organisation(s) in your project have reviewed and understands the Subsidy Control approach under which you intend to receive grant funding; and that your application complies with said rules, and that you will take independent legal advice and share that advice with DCMS upon request.	Please state: 'Yes' or 'No'
3	Please confirm that the organisation(s) involved have obtained a legal opinion and this application complies with the no-subsidy approach. [Please note successful applicants will be required to submit their written legal advice to DCMS on request]	Please state: 'Yes' or 'No', If No, when would this be expected to occur?
4	Please provide the addresses of the key locations in which grant funded activities will take place.	Location & address <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content;">[Insert location name and address]</div>
5	Please confirm that the grant amount requested from DCMS includes any irrecoverable VAT, all fees and charges, and appropriate allowance has been made for any price inflation during the grant claim period.	[Enter 'Confirmed']



Ref	Question/Request	Applicant Response
6	<p>Please confirm that the Lead Partner has accepted the terms and conditions in the draft grant funding agreement provided?</p> <p>We expect the Lead Partner to sign the agreement after notification of success and to ensure satisfactory completion of DCMS pre-grant project set-up requirements and information for DCMS due diligence. DCMS reserves the right to rescind offers of funding, for example if this is delayed.</p> <p>The terms and conditions set out in the GFA are non-negotiable and are available on the gov.uk challenge website. We recommend that you review this with your legal advisors and raise any queries you may have with DCMS before submitting your application.</p>	[Enter 'Confirmed']
7	<p>Please confirm that all organisation(s) involved have accepted the Terms and Conditions of the Grant Funding Agreement.</p> <p>The terms and conditions set out in the GFA are non-negotiable and are available on the gov.uk challenge website. We recommend that you review this with your legal advisors and raise any queries you may have with DCMS before submitting your application.</p>	[Enter 'Confirmed' and partner name]
8	<p>Please confirm whether the organisation(s) involved have provided a letter of support or commitment to the proposal.</p> <p>Please submit a copy of such letters in PDF format.</p>	[Enter 'Confirmed' and partner name]
9	<p>Please identify your pre-grant mobilisation team including the Senior Responsible Owner (SRO), Project Manager and Finance Lead.</p>	



8.3 Scoring

Individual responses to each question will be scored in line with the following scheme. The assessors will score your answers to these questions. Each question will be given a score 0-10:

- 0-1 – Serious concerns: for example, does not meet requirements, and/or raises serious concerns.
- 2-3 – Some concerns: for example, meets some requirements but with gaps and/or some concerns.
- 4-5 – Adequate confidence: for example, meets most/all requirements, but lacks sufficient detail in some areas.
- 6-7 – Good confidence: for example, meets most/all requirements and provides a response that demonstrates a good understanding of the requirements.
- 8-9 – Very good confidence: for example, meets all requirements and provides a detailed response that also exceeds expectations in some areas and/or demonstrates a strong understanding of the requirements.
- 10 - Outstandingly good confidence: for example, meets all requirements and exceptional detail that exceeds expectations in many areas and demonstrates excellent understanding of the requirements.

Scores for each question will be weighted by the amount indicated against each question. Your application's total score will be the sum of the weighted scores.

8.4 Quality Threshold

Following evaluation of the applications and moderation of scores, any application with an unweighted score of 1 or below (serious concerns) against any individual challenge question, including where an error has been made by the applicant, will not be considered further

All remaining applications with an average evaluation score against all challenge questions (i.e. the weighted score across all challenge questions) of 4 and above will be considered further.

DCMS also reserves the right to consider applications that do not meet the threshold above in the following cases:



- If an application fails to meet the threshold by a narrow margin as a result of the range of scoring by individual assessors being of significant variance from the average score for one or more challenge questions for that application (“an outlier”). The application may be considered following a review of the outlier assessor's comments and approach if the outlier score may reasonably be eliminated and the average assessment score that is recalculated falls within the threshold above.
- If there is a very low volume of applications in respect of grant funding available, DCMS may lower the threshold. This will be on the grounds that DCMS will not want grant funding to be unallocated if there is a realistic prospect of individual applicants/consortia being able to improve their assessment score to a satisfactory level.

9. Additional Information

9.1 Additional Documents

The following additional documents are available at [Future Open Networks Research Challenge competition](#):

- Application form / challenge questions
- Eligible costs guidance
- General guidance for grant applicants
- Conditional grant offer letter
- Project Participation agreement
- Grant Funding Agreement
- Finance form
- EOI Application Form

Should you have any queries, please contact us at onp.enquiries@dcms.gov.uk.

9.2 Notices

We reserve the right to undertake a detailed financial and technical appraisal of each applicant and their proposal and for this process to continue up to the award of any grant funding. Any such appraisal will be conducted in line with government policy at the time of assessment. Further appraisal may continue if required through the duration of the grant funding period.

No representation, warranty or undertaking, express or implied, is or will be given by DCMS or any of its agents or advisers with respect to the information contained in the challenge material, including with respect to its accuracy, adequacy or completeness.



Information provided in response to this document, including personal information, may be published or disclosed in accordance with access to information regimes, primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

If you would want the information that you provide to be treated confidentially, please be aware that, in accordance with the FOIA, public sector organisations are required to comply with a statutory code of practice which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence. In view of this, it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you wish that information to be treated confidentially. If we receive a request for disclosure of that information, we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances.

DCMS will process your personal data in accordance with the DPA and the GDPR and, in the majority of circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport www.gov.uk/dcms