



**FAST Digital Health for Remote Monitoring and Self-Management:
A Call for Discipline-Bridging Initiator Project Proposals
(Call 5)**

March 2019

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Summary

Healthcare delivery is changing rapidly. Current NHS patterns of provision are now thought to be unsustainable and policy makers call for radical transformation. Such transformation is likely to include the use of digital technologies acting as enabling technologies that can lead to changes in care pathways, the transfer of care from hospital settings to the community and even to patients' homes. More care will be provided outside the traditional healthcare settings but these 'digitally enabled' changes in patient pathways will require considerable re-engineering as well as re-training of healthcare staff. Based on the results of a workshop organised by the EPSRC FAST Healthcare NetworksPlus, a roadmap for engineering and physical sciences research to address digital health opportunities to improve remote monitoring and self-management has been produced, and may be downloaded from the Network's website ¹.

The aim of this Call is to build new research collaborations across disciplines and organisations which address the specific Roadmap for Digital Health Research which the FAST NetworksPlus has produced. This should lead on to a more substantial research programme which enhances research in the UK that aligns with the EPSRC's Healthcare Technologies Theme ².

Awards are limited to a maximum of £40,000 (based on a funding rate of 80% of full economic cost) and should last no more than 12 months. It is expected that typical proposals will be for a duration of around 6 months, and the Management Committee expect to make up to two awards.

About the FAST Healthcare NetworksPlus

NHS England produced a publication in its 65th anniversary year (2013) entitled *'The NHS Belongs to the People: A Call to Action'*³. It articulates the aspiration to deliver the very highest standards of patient care against the reality that the projected total cost of running NHS England will rise from £95 Bn in 2013 to £137 Bn in 2020, whilst the resource will only rise to £108 Bn in the same period. There is a number of factors that are leading to rising costs, and the Call to Action highlights poorly joined-up care between adult social care, community services and hospitals as one of these.

The *EPSRC Fast Assessment and Treatment in Healthcare (FAST Healthcare) NetworksPlus* is a response by the Engineering and Physical Sciences (EPS) community to this call. We are a network of academics with clinical, industrial and charity partners who are working to optimise

¹ <http://www.fast-healthcare.org.uk/digital-health-workshop/>

² <https://www.epsrc.ac.uk/research/ourportfolio/themes/healthcaretechnologies/strategy/>

³ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/nhs-belongs.pdf>

treatment processes in public healthcare using an engineering methodology to develop practical solutions which can be realistically implemented. Our ability to achieve this is enabled by four years of funding from the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC). This is allowing us to run a series of events to bring together key stakeholders in the provision of public healthcare with members of the academic EPS and clinical communities leading to small-scale collaborative projects to seed-fund transformative research.

What We Want to Fund

The purpose of the EPSRC's NetworksPlus within its Healthcare Technologies Theme is to kick-start new research collaborations which address the EPSRC's overarching strategy for funding research in this area ². Specifically, the FAST Healthcare NetworksPlus seeks to establish new research communities around the 'Optimising Treatment' Grand Challenge. Part of this is to encourage early-career researchers to work in this area, both with each other and with more established academics. We also want to enable engineering and physical sciences researchers to work more closely with clinicians to tackle real (rather than perceived) clinical challenges, as well as business, patient groups and policy makers in this area.

For this Call, we are specifically looking for proposals which address the Roadmap for engineering and physical sciences research in the area of digital health for remote monitoring and self-management that emerged from our previous Workshop. A full copy of the Roadmap is available on the FAST Healthcare website for download ¹, and applicants should familiarise themselves with this. However, this is abstracted into the figure on page 28 of the workshop report, whose structure is based upon the 'Three-Plane Diagram' developed by the National Science Foundation's Engineering Research Centers ⁴. It aims to show how fundamental technology couples directly with enabling engineering to address specific clinical drivers, and we expect applicants to be able to demonstrate such a coupling mapped onto this Roadmap.

Who Can Apply

Applications can only be submitted by academic and postdoctoral research staff at UK universities and associated research institutions that are eligible to receive EPSRC funding; applications by early career researchers are particularly welcome. Participation of industrial, clinical and other partners is encouraged, but they cannot receive grant funding. **All of the Investigators in a proposal must have registered as members of the FAST Healthcare NetworksPlus before submitting their application.** Membership is free and you can join using the FAST Healthcare NetworksPlus website ⁵.

What We Fund

Awards are limited to a maximum value of £40,000 (at 80% of full economic cost) and must have a duration of no more than 12 months. Smaller and shorter projects are welcomed. Value for money will be one of the selection criteria, and applicants are expected to demonstrate

⁴ <http://erc-assoc.org/content/three-plane-diagram>

⁵ <http://www.fast-healthcare.org.uk/join-our-network/>

this in their proposal. The funding is intended to cover the cost of employing a post-doctoral research associate for up to ~6 months full time equivalent with a small additional budget for consumables and reasonable travel costs associated with building a new research collaboration. Items of equipment costing more than £10,000 (including VAT) cannot be funded from the grant. There is very limited funding available to support directly allocated staff costs. Proposals should enable a **new** research collaboration to form between participants who have not been able to formally work together before. Investigators must therefore be from different disciplines and/or different institutions. Proposals must not be dependent on other funding that has not been secured at the time of application.

How We Will Select the Project

Proposals that are within the scope of this Call (as determined by the FAST Healthcare Management Committee) will be assessed by a panel of Network members. The assessment criteria include:

- Fit with the FAST Healthcare Digital Health Research Roadmap ¹
 - Evidence that the project addresses a real clinical opportunity through engineering and physical sciences research
- Fit with the overall aims of the FAST Healthcare NetworksPlus
 - The formation of **new** research collaborations
 - The engagement of early-career researchers
 - To make a positive impact on the economics and clinical outcomes of public healthcare provision
- The credibility that the project would lead on to a lasting collaborative research activity involving the participants
- The academic quality of the proposal
 - Clarity of the proposal in terms of work plan and deliverables
 - Realism of the project's objectives given the scale of the project
 - Value for money
 - Ability of the academic team to deliver the project

Selected Projects

The projects that are selected for funding will form part of the EPSRC FAST Healthcare NetworksPlus project portfolio, and the Investigators, researchers and project will be listed on the FAST Healthcare website. To ensure the maximum impact from each grant awarded, the FAST Healthcare NetworksPlus will appoint an Evaluation Panel and Action Team to support the transfer of the project into a long-term collaborative research programme. The FAST Healthcare NetworksPlus will enter into a specific collaboration agreement including mutually agreed IP arrangements for each project.

Key Dates

- Call launch: Friday, 1st March 2019

- Closing date for applications: 5:00 pm on Monday, 8th April 2019
- Award announced: June 2019
- Projects are expected to start in August 2019

Further Information

For more details about the FAST Healthcare NetworksPlus, visit the website at www.fast-healthcare.org.uk .

How to Apply

To apply, please complete an application form and return it to info@fast-healthcare.org.uk by **5:00pm on Monday, 8th April 2019**. Copies of the application form are available by contacting the same e-mail address or via the FAST Healthcare website ⁶.

⁶ <http://www.fast-healthcare.org.uk/open-digital-call/>