The FlexFund – for Agile Innovation

The GB Chemicals Centre represents a national-level systems approach to industrial defossilisation, decarbonisation and Resource Efficiency. It builds on the recognition that the UK's chemical supply chains are central to the economy but also deeply embedded in fossil dependency. The consortium is committed to reimagining these supply chains right across the chemical using industries in line with circular economy principles, where prosperity is balanced with environmental responsibility and social inclusion. Because GBC aims to build a community around sustainable chemicals, a considerable proportion of the requested funding will be allocated to peer assessed projects from the community, that evolve as time progresses.

Our long-term vision is to facilitate a continuous pipeline of innovative technologies that unlock value from waste resources (Figure 1). The breadth of expertise of the industrial partners provides a pathway from the lab-scale to demonstrators, through to application and exploitation across the value chain. We will utilise the £7.8m **FlexFund** to strategically develop this pipeline, advancing scalable innovations with commercial potential, via co-creation and co-delivery with wider stakeholders from the full suite of foundation industries. Our stakeholder forum and Strategic Advisory Board will be used to guide how we should best target the **FlexFund** and future Wave funding. The **FlexFund** will augment and enhance core activities. This will include support for Technology Transfer in emerging research areas over the duration of the project and to facilitate co-creation with industry, encourage entrepreneurship (see People theme) and drive impact outcomes. This will be managed with co-funding from the industries involved. Industrial partners (both founding and new) will be asked to provide matched funding for participation in **FlexFund** projects on a scale appropriate to the company size.

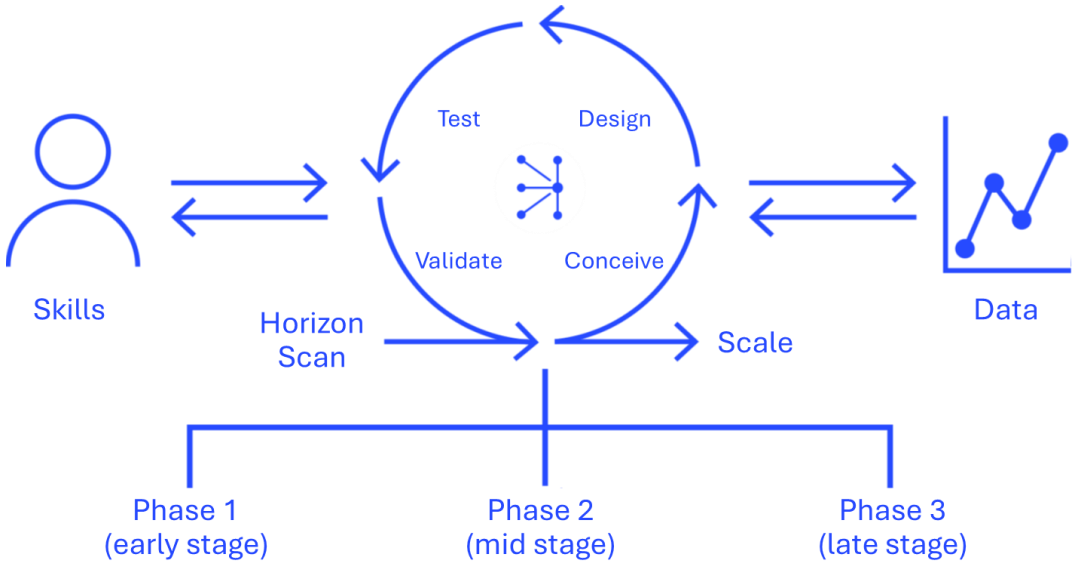

Figure 1. The Great British Chemicals Framework to pull through technologies for "Defossilising" chemical supply chains.

GBC interventions will focus on 3 phases as summarised below:

- **Phase 1** (early stage) - identify high-potential research innovations and assess their industry applicability through feasibility studies, market analysis, and project prioritisation based on scalability and readiness.
- **Phase 2** (mid stage) – advance prioritised projects to validated tools/services by supporting development, industry collaborations for real-world testing, and technical and commercial validation.
- **Phase 3** (late stage) –facilitate full-scale deployment by ensuring technologies are finalised to industry standards, promoting their adoption through pilot programmes, and creating sustainable commercial pathways for long-term industry uptake.

Our inclusive **FlexFund** is specially designed for co-creation with various users and stakeholders, enabling them to shape the technology innovation, and co-develop technology and share IP. It is important to create a pipeline of technologies that meet the needs of a diversity of stakeholders, including impactful outputs. We will encourage new stakeholders to engage with GBC through the **FlexFund** (and later Wave funding) to address gaps in the proposed supply chains, especially where interdisciplinary approaches can add value to the process. These funds are staged to promote and innovation ecosystem from early to mid – late phase (depending on their TRL/SRL) and to de-risk investments at an early stage in the development and assessment cycle. We will enhance the **FlexFund** spending power by requiring stakeholders to co-fund projects with a sliding scale from large companies to SMEs and start-ups. The Partnership Manager at Newcastle will be a point of contact for Stakeholders to support relationship building throughout the lifetime of GBC and beyond. They will also provide guidance for applying to the FlexFund.

Figure 2. GBC Sustainability Themes

People theme: This theme prioritises skills, culture, capacity and leadership development and will respond to new ideas in a way which is inclusive, collaborative, and ethically motivated. Activities will be designed to deliver sustainable impact at pace by putting people at the heart of the transition to defossilisation. Early career researcher and technical staff will be prioritised. Funds will also be available to host meetings for co-creation and development of new and existing areas.

Planet theme: This theme integrates quantitative supply chain data with qualitative inputs to identify efficiency opportunities and environmental challenges that may hinder sustainability. Activities will accelerate the translation of research innovation ideas into economic, environmental, regulatory and societally relevant actions at different points on the Technological Readiness Level

(TRL), Societal Readiness Level (SRL) and Adoption Readiness Level (ARL) pathways. Life-cycle assessment (LCA) and techno-economic assessment (TEA) feature heavily within this stream.

Prosperity theme: This theme emphasizes strong engagement with industries, corporations, and SMEs to analyse business models, supply chains, corporate structures, risks, strategies, and targets. The goal is to bridge research findings with practical applications, addressing key commercial questions and enabling successful translation into business in practice.

For Planet and Prosperity, a structured pipeline of investments at different TRL/SRL will de-risk investment in innovation and impact generation by operating as a staged portfolio: a larger number of smaller, higher-risk awards targeted at TRL/SRL 1–3 (circa £30k) to test feasibility and novel partnerships, and a smaller number of larger, lower-risk demonstrations at TRL/SRL 6–7 (up to £ 100k) focused on standards alignment and pilot adoption. This approach will maximise overall impact, address key performance challenges, and generates exemplars of national and global significance, while recognising that FlexFund outcomes are catalytic seeds from which can lead to follow-on large-scale projects.

Approach

We will invite collaborative research and innovation projects to focus on accelerating the feasibility of new technologies as well as the deployment of existing technologies in novel ways promoting partnerships between academia, industry, the public sector and non-profit organisations. The calls will be open to UK academics as project leads with different value scales to entice industry, build relationships and maintain links. IP arrangements will be supported on a tailored basis by specialist staff and could be owned by a Partner, university or jointly. The inclusion of secondments will be recommended, where appropriate. Funded projects will benefit from the interdisciplinary, technology agnostic function streams in addition to the platforms developed in the work streams. Lessons learned will inform Wave 2 and 3 FlexFund calls and workstreams and will enhance applicants' readiness through improved evidence, collaborations, and impact planning for seeking future opportunities within EU programmes, venture-capital investment, impact accelerators, and other external schemes. Further information is set out in the justification of resources.

Applications should explain how the proposed projects align with the Themes and GBC's ethos:

Mission

To catalyse bold and disruptive solutions that defossilise the chemical industry, demonstrating the environmental, social, and economic value of circular chemistry, and fostering a culture of risk-taking, collaboration, and evidence-based impact.

Vision

A thriving UK industry where chemistry underpins prosperity and wellbeing, where waste becomes resource, innovation is courageous, and policy, people, and industry align to build a cleaner, fairer, and more resilient society.

Ambitions

- Transform the UK chemical industry to thrive within a decarbonised and circular economy.
- Leave UK chemistry in a stronger position through innovation, resilience, and skills.

● Make CCU and carbon-negative emission technologies transformational and demonstrably viable.
● Establish effective knowledge exchange, evidence-based policy, and strong community building.
● Pursue courageous, disruptive innovation to break free of conventional thinking.
● Develop resource and chemical resilience within a sound financial framework.

Goals & Objectives

● To provide a framework to accelerate the translation sustainable chemistry from lab to industry at scale (TRL progression to TRL9 and high manufacturing readiness levels).
● Demonstrate social economic and environmental value (LCA, TEA, standards).
● Scale pilots and proof-of-concepts while reducing CAPEX over traditional approaches.
● Build resilient workforce pipelines and communities of practice.
● Secure well-allocated funding and investment.

Consortium Support Offer

● **Technical:** consortium platforms for materials characterisation, reaction-kinetics and catalytic testing, spectroscopy, digital-AI for data interpretation, and environmental/techno-economic assessment via technology-agnostic facilities and specialist staff.
● **Translational**: entrepreneurship, policy engagement, industry partnerships, advocacy.
● **Educational:** workforce development, leadership, mentorship.
● **Strategic:** industrial hubs, national and regional networks, investment leverage.

The **FlexFund** mechanism will be equally accessible for project activities driven by technical, social, environmental and economic research needs, ensuring environmental sustainability research and innovation is appropriately resourced. This is in recognition that NERC is co-funding the bid with EPSRC and the increasing industrial and voluntary/regulatory drivers with regard to environmental sustainability (e.g. disclosure requirements in line with Task Force for Nature Related Financial Disclosures (TCFD), Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CS3D), Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD)). This will help to embed the transdisciplinary nature of GBC to be maintained throughout the lifetime of the project.

Resource Allocation

The FlexFund is designed to turn academic research into real-world impact. It brings together universities, industry, government, and communities to accelerate innovation and translation. The Prosperity, Planet, and People funds support projects that are ready to scale, create lasting value, and help the UK lead the way toward a more sustainable, inclusive future.

Prosperity and Planet Themes:

Phase 1 (early stage) – **Two calls per year** for ~ 5 projects each, of up to £30k (total) and up to six months duration to support the translation of high-potential research towards commercialisation and/or policy development. These will target high-potential, co-created projects for early-stage research (TRL/SRL of 1 to 3) with a non-academic partner. Activities will include feasibility studies, prototyping, proof of concept and market analysis based and should lead to outputs that evidence

scalability, readiness and economic, environmental and societal benefits. Preference will be given to projects which include in-kind/cash. Partner contributions at a value that is appropriate for the innovation stage of the research and Partner stake in the IP.

Phase 2 (mid stage) – **Two calls per year** for ~ 3 projects each, of up to £50k and up to twelve months to advance the development of innovative research (TRL/SRL 4-5) and promote economic growth. Activities could include knowledge exchange, validation and standardisation of tools/services by fostering industry collaborations for real-world testing, technical and commercial validation, policy development and delivery, market assessments, skill, capacity and capability development. Intended outputs will be policy deployment, licensable technology, spin-out opportunity, or products/processes new to the Partner, SME, supply chain, job and investment impact and evidence of clear commercial/environmental/societal benefit. These projects will require 10-50% in-kind/cash contributions from a Partner as appropriate for the stake the partner will have in the IP.

Phase 3 (late stage) – **One call per year** for ~ 2 projects of up to £100k and up to twelve months to support technology demonstration (TRL 6-7), accelerating full-scale deployment by finalising development to industry standards, supporting adoption through pilot programmes, and establishing commercialisation pathways for long-term industry uptake with quantifiable commercial/environmental/societal benefit. Due to the nature of these projects, at least 50% cash and additional in-kind contribution of 50% of the total project would be expected from the Partner.

Phase	Calls per Year	Portfolio Mix & Risk	GBC contribution (Total)	Duration	Partner Contribution Expectation
Phase 1 (Early Stage)	2 calls, ~5 projects each	More awards, higher risk – TRL/SRL 1–3	Up to £30k	Up to 6 months	Cash & in-kind desirable; proportionate to stage & IP stake
Phase 2 (Mid Stage)	2 calls, ~3 projects each	Fewer awards, medium risk – TRL/SRL 4–5	Up to £50k	Up to 12 months	10–50% combined cash/in-kind as appropriate for Partner IP stake
Phase 3 (Late Stage)	1 call, ~2 projects	Very few awards, lower risk – TRL/SRL 6–7	Up to £100k	Up to 12 months	At least 50% cash (plus at least £200k total value)

People theme:

A total budget of £200k/ka will be ringfenced on a rolling basis, to respond to specific Stakeholder needs and engage with new and existing partners and the public. We will invite proposals from the community to access some of these funds for knowledge exchange, participatory research and horizon scanning which would provide valuable feedback for policy development and deployment, and social acceptance of innovation and infrastructure development. Activities could include undergraduate student internships, focus groups, sandpits/hackathons, workshops, training and secondments (incoming or outgoing, < 3 month), access to GBC events (5% of budget, e.g. travel

or caring fund for stakeholders from under-represented groups or who may otherwise be excluded from participation due to their personal circumstances).

Application and Award Process

We are inviting partners from every corner; industry leaders, researchers, innovators, investors, and policymakers to help shape and support this national mission, while confirming that eligibility to apply for FlexFund awards rests with academic institutions as project leads and that these partners will not receive funding directly. The FlexFund process and roles are outlined in Figure 3. Funding will be at 80% FEC and end of project reports will be collated and details shared (within the rules of confidentiality) with UKRI in the Annual Reports.

The call for proposals will be hosted on the GBC Website, together with guidance for applicants and the application portal. For submission and management of the Flex Fund, we will use Newcastle University's unique software which was developed for co-created research under our EPSRC IAA and PB-IAA, with the ability to identify and assign KPIs in minutes. The application portal includes the GBC project proposal form, which has been tested with the fast-start Core and Moonshot projects. All applications will be evaluated by the Core Team in the first instance. They will be evaluated and scored in alignment with EPSRC processes, with research and partnership quality being the major criteria. Feedback will be provided. The funding assessment panels (FAP) will be chaired by a member of the Principal Leads and supported by the Project Manager, Partnership Manager and Administrator.

The calls will be staggered throughout the year as outlined above, with the People fund being open all year round. The balance and prioritisation of funding will be reviewed annually, with guidance from the AB and UKRI. The scheduling of calls will ensure inclusivity and diversity, and applications will need to outline mechanisms to ensure RR&I, EDI and TR are embedded in the project/activity.

Financial and in-kind contributions from Partners will be accepted in accordance with the budget holder's (Sheffield) Ethics Policy. We will promote activities in inclusive ways to help balance the portfolio and diversity of award holders. The Principal Leads will review the award value and Partner financial/in-kind contributions, based on an assessment of the Partner's size and profitability to ensure a fair and equitable distribution of resources, a wider regional impact footprint, and strengthened societal value. Resource spending will be monitored on a quarterly basis by the Management team at Sheffield and discussed at Management Group meetings. This will include retrospective spend reporting for the previous quarter and an ongoing forecast for the following quarter and predictive forecasts for the subsequent year and will form the rationale behind FlexFund allocation and potential for re-profiling. Any re-profiling will be approved by the SAB.

Under the terms of the award, studentships and student-incurred expenses cannot be supported; all applicants must be based at a UK research organisation eligible to receive funding from EPSRC and/or NERC and are expected to demonstrate appropriate employment status, research excellence, and ethics due-diligence requirements in accordance with EPSRC and NERC eligibility rules.

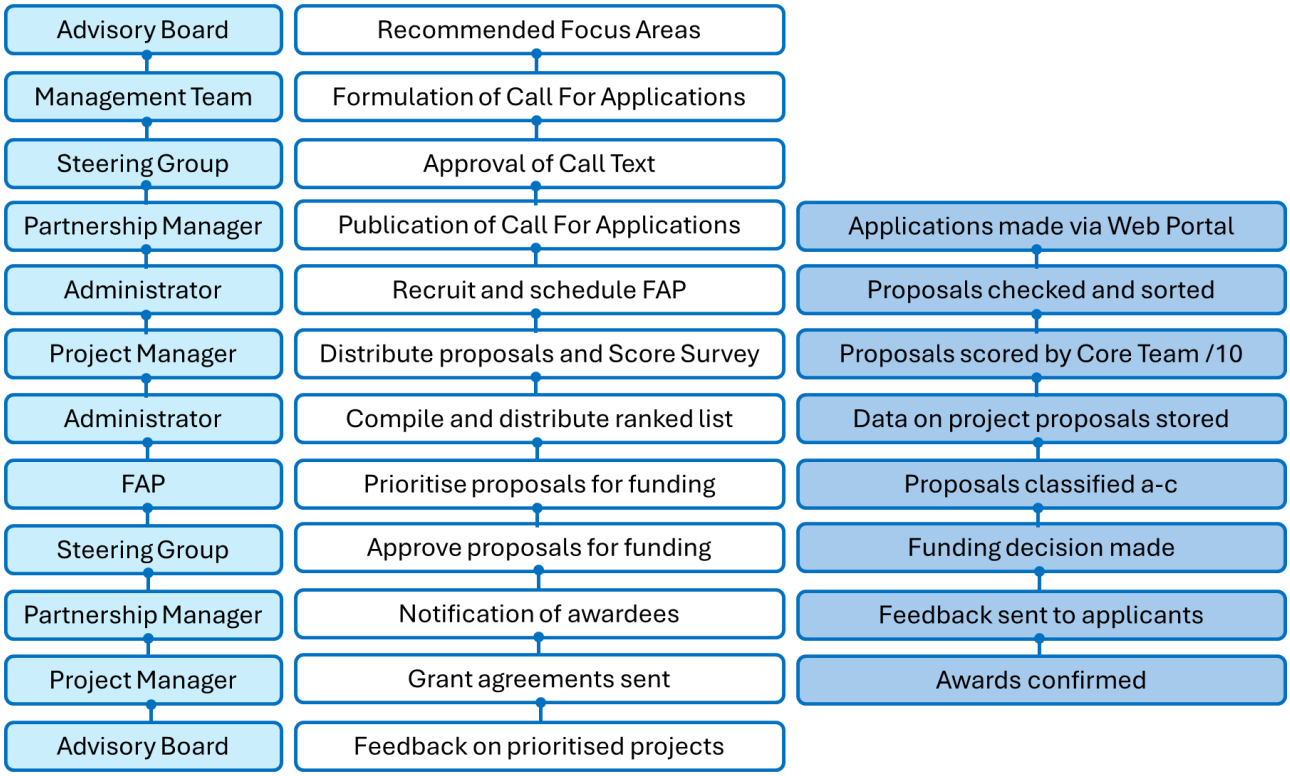

Figure 3. Application process for the GBC FlexFund

Application form

The Project Proposal form provides a template for applications but also a means of collecting KPIs at both the application and project review and reporting stages. The data pertinent to the KPIs will be stored in a database to enable rapid reporting on demand and longitudinal monitoring of progress over the 7-year programme. Stakeholders will be encouraged to register on the GBC funding portal, linked from the GBC website. This will enable us to gather data on the protected characteristics for our EDI KPIs and background of the applicants (career stage, expertise area, employer) and ORCID ID (for reporting via ResearchFish). The applicants will then have a userID which can be attached to applications to facilitate peer review.

Figure 4. The GBC project outline form fields for completion by applicants.

The applicants are requested to complete the information regarding the aims and approach, management of risk, ethics, RRI and EDI, and identify appropriate EPSRC and NERC KPIs for their outputs and outcomes. The University of Nottingham is a founding signatory of the Technician Commitment, and GBC will encourage a commitment to visibility, recognition, career development and sustainability for our technical professionals. An IP management section is provided for the applicants to identify the potential route to market for their project. It is intended that the host TTO complete this section on behalf of the applicant, check for any potential Trusted Research issues, and the responses will be reviewed by the Partnership Manager to ensure that the appropriate support is in place, including appropriate collaboration agreements once awarded. They will also highlight where opportunities may arise to add value/impact to the project using consortium activities and partnerships.

Scoring

GBC will prioritise applications in line with EPSRC peer review and panel processes to allocate the Flex funding. The project forms will be reviewed by non-conflicted[1] members of the Core Team. At least 3 reviews per application will be sought. A reviewer form will be provided, and the reviewers will assign scores (1-10) against each criteria. The **Scoring range definitions** are in the appendix below. The scores and comments will be provided to the FAP at least 1 week before the FAP meeting. The **Fund Assessment Panel (FAP),** a subset of the academic and non-academic Core Team and Partners, will assess the applications and rank them on the basis of both the scores and

[1] Those who have not applied to this round of flexi funding or are involved in the proposals they reviewed.

comments from the reviewers. The FAP will be chaired by a member of the Management Group and will be comprised of 4 external experts from the advisory board (or their nominees) and one member of the core team. They will meet in line with funding calls to review all project/activity applications received. They will be responsible for scoring and approving applications in accordance with defined guidance from the Steering Group. The FAP will vote using Teams to classify the proposals A (priority for funding), B (fundable but not a priority) and C (not fundable). Those scored a B may be funded if sufficient resources are available or may asked to resubmit their proposals after responding to specific calls for clarification by the FAP. Proposals scored A will be provided with an award letter by the Project Manager and signed by the PI within 2 weeks of the FAP. This award letter will confirm the start date for the project and reporting requirements.

The Project Manager will be responsible for creating and managing a repository of GBC-related documents for reporting to the **Strategic Advisory Board**, **Steering Group**, **Funding Assessment Panel** and external stakeholders following General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

By submitting an application, you agree to take part in the review process for this FlexFund round and review the proposals allocated to you by the specified deadline. Non-compliance may limit eligibility for future funding rounds.

Project Review

Great British Chemicals will help UK industries use fewer resources, generate fewer emissions, and produce **better outcomes for people and the planet**, by embracing waste valorisation, process optimisation, and digital innovation. We will use the flexible fund for collaborative work to create **new, circular chemical supply chains** and quantify their impact in:

- Dramatically reducing carbon emissions—aligned with the UK's 78% reduction target by 2035.
- Enhancing energy security by reducing dependence on imports and volatile fossil fuel markets.
- Fuelling a **green economy**, opening new revenue streams for UK industries and attracting global investment.
- Supporting inclusive economic growth by creating jobs in science, engineering, digital, and green technologies.
- Provide actionable recommendations for meeting future demand with minimal environmental impact, based on life cycle thinking.

A monthly light-touch review of the projects will be conducted by the Partnership Manager, where the progress against the proposed workplan and KPIs will be assessed and the project forms updated accordingly.

It is expected that FlexFund outcomes will be shared through peer-reviewed publications, conferences, and Stakeholder engagement and lead to new IP. We will author and publish a regular case study and reports which include qualitative and quantitative assessments of the

proposed solutions for the energy intensive industries. The multi-disciplinary expertise in the Core Team will enable these reports to be written from a whole-systems perspective which considers the benefits/competition with other sectors and potential environmental benefits beyond decarbonisation, such as biodiversity net gain. Guidance will be provided to investigators on commencement of the projects to enable them to gather the relevant information and establish the required cross-disciplinary collaborations.

Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

We will act in a way which is inclusive, collaborative, and ethically motivated. Our activities will improve our ability to deliver sustainable impact at pace by putting people at the heart of the transition to defossilisation. The review panel noted that *"It is good to see that EDI will be considered for FlexFund and if successful securing this grant that it is given the priority that is needed and not yet achieved by most existing centres."* The EDI leads will be involved in the process. Early Career Researchers and applicants from under-represented groups will be provided with mentorship for **FlexFund** applications.

Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) will be embedded within the FlexFund process and awarded research activities, to ensure a just and inclusive transition. GBC EDI action plan sets out our approach to ensure inclusion by design and the project manager and administrator will conduct impact assessments of the FlexFund activities. These will account for the specific EDI context and challenges within GBC's research area and community (e.g. access to skills and resources, diversity of Stakeholders etc.).

We will monitor the protected characteristics of all applicants, awardees, reviewers and FAP members taking steps to ensure a balance of gender and ethnicity in the decision making process to ensure that we are representative of the community we serve. Financial and in-kind contributions from Partners will be accepted in accordance with the budget holder's (Sheffield) Ethics Policy. We will promote activities in inclusive ways to help balance the portfolio and diversity of award holders.

GBC firmly believes that everyone has a right to be treated with dignity and respect, and to be provided with equal opportunities to flourish and succeed in an environment that enables them to do so. We also value diversity of thought and experience within inclusive groups, organisations and the wider community.

As the recipient of a substantial publicly funded research award, *GBC* is in a unique position to model EDI principles in our own actions and behaviours and take a strategic lead in promoting EDI in the research and innovation landscape, nationally and internationally.

Evidence of significant consideration and committed action towards EDI activities is a core criterion which the reviewers will assess, using UKRI's Commitment as a guide. Inadequate evidence of EDI incorporation may contribute to your application not receiving funding. To assist with completing your FlexFund application, and particularly the EDI section, we encourage you to review the following links. These are by no means an exhaustive list but provide the basis from which GBC draws its expectations.

UKRI's Commitment

EPSRC Expectations for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Newcastle University EDI Toolkit

EPSRC Grant Funding: Statistical Analysis of Diversity in the Portfolio and Peer Review

The EDI Cube

There is an expectation for inclusion in all consortium projects and we are determined to embed equality, equity, diversity and inclusion in all that we do.

Trusted Research

Oversight of Trusted Research for GBC will be provided through the three-tier governance and management system (Advisory Board; Steering Group; Funding Assessment Panel) put in place to deliver the programme objectives. The inclusive constitution of these boards will facilitate the synthesis of Trusted Research approaches from across organizations funded by GBC and external validation of our policies and processes by local and combined authorities, public and private sector stakeholders, and partner universities.

All Core Team members within GBC have their institution-specific systems and processes for assurance that Trusted Research principles are adhered to. It will be the responsibility of all organizations funded by the GBC to undertake the necessary due diligence to ensure that the research complies with the UKRI principles of Trusted Research (TR). They are expected to record details of international partners, the countries where they are based, the discipline area of the research. Funding applications will include an indication of what measures have been taken to comply with TR principles with links to relevant internal policies and systems provided as well as the outcome of the TR and RRI assessments in the applications.

The SAB will be provided with a summary report, from the Steering Group, of TR assessments for all awards made from GBC, including information on changes to collaborative relationships during the lifetime of the award. This will be reviewed at SAB meetings and will be a standing item on the SAB Agenda. The Steering Group will ensure policies and procedures are in legal compliance with the National Security and Investment Act 2021 and the Data Protection Act 2018 and will conduct biennial reviews with the grant holder's compliance team to ensure procedures are robust and provide summary reports on TR compliance to the SAB. All applications submitted to GBC for funding will be reviewed by the FAP that will include consideration of TR in making funding decisions.

Awardees will be expected to give due consideration to the nature of proposed activities and envisaged outputs, regarding the potential for dual-use and unethical application and provide additional support information to comply with existing legislation (i.e. National Security and Investment Act 2021 and the Data Protection Act 2018) and this information will be included in applications for review by the FAP.

Due diligence will be conducted by the applicant/awardee's institution for all international collaborations to ensure compliance with the National Protective Security Authority's (NPSA)

guidance, inclusive of relevant legislation (e.g. **Export Control**[2]). Conflicts of interest will be identified and managed under each participating university's policy on declarations of external interest and reported to the Fund Assessment Panel for consideration and action.

The **Advisory Board**, **Steering Group** or **Funding Assessment Panel** can, on request, obtain information on TR risks of collaborators identified on research applications, from the Partnership Manager. The information requested will be collected and reported using the Xapien system (https://xapien.com/) used by Newcastle University to support management of Trusted Research.

The grant holder will refer any issues raised to Sheffield University's Research Compliance and Governance Manager.

Resources and Support for TR

In addition to funded organizations' own internal systems for TR, the grant holder (Sheffield University) will provide access to their Trusted Research guidance to participating stakeholders to ensure the protection of intellectual property, sensitive research, people and infrastructure from potential theft, misuse and exploitation by hostile actors. Additional guidance will also be provided within the collaboration agreement signed by all participating universities. A business development manager (BDM) (or equivalent role) from the participating universities provide advice on compliance with legislation relevant to TR (i.e. National Security and Investment Act 2021 and the Data Protection Act 2018) and advise sub-agreements with external project partners (if required) to ensure that sensitive data and any intellectual assets including intellectual property rights derived from the project are appropriately managed.

The Project Manager and Partnership Manager will be trained to provide awardees with access and support to:

- provide safe and secure data storage for GBC documentation (including Cyber Essentials);
- protect both background and arising intellectual property and sensitive research;
- identify and mitigate the risk of hostile interference;
- ensure collaborative research is delivered safely, securely, ethically and transparently;
- support ATAS applications where required;
- provide a clear and agile communication protocol for staff to report concerns.

Participating universities will be responsible for ensuring that processes comply with their own internal cyber-security requirements. Newcastle University will manage the processing of applications using a robust application process that is supported by the university's information security management system. GBC has a data management plan which outlines how data will be handled and stored safely and only shared with authorised parties.

The collaborative and inclusive governance structure implemented to manage the GBC will facilitate enduring relationships to develop and implement the GBC programme in partnership with a myriad of stakeholders from local government, community, and social enterprise as well as the private and third sector, inclusive of SMEs.

[2] Export Control. https://www.ncl.ac.uk/research/researchgovernance/export/

There will be mandatory TR training/awareness as part of the induction processes for the Project Manager and Partnership Manager. The Steering Group will be mandated to embed TR within the governance, management and reporting mechanisms of GBC and support processes.

The GBC TR Toolkit, formed by combining institution-specific Trusted-Research and ethics frameworks will be made available on the website. Applicants should consider the following factors, at a minimum, and use the application-form check button to confirm that these and equivalent ethics requirements have been completed:

- International collaboration with partners based in a country included in the UK Sanctions Regime list;[3]
- Project partners or visiting researchers based in a country for which the UK currently has active trade sanctions, arms embargos, or other trade restrictions;[4]
- Companies that have majority ownership based in a country on the above lists, even if located in the UK.
- Does the proposed activity support research and innovation collaboration focusing on one or more of the 17 areas of the **NSI Act**?[5]
- Does the proposed activity have any **Export Control**[6] or **ATAS**[7] requirements?
- Could the proposed activity present a TR risk to the UK, the university, or to the individuals involved?
- What is the nature of the collaboration and how will the partner(s) interact with the project?
- How will IP or data be protected from use by potentially malign actors?
- Will the partner(s) or visiting researcher(s) have access to:
    - UK based infrastructures e.g. facilities or laboratory space?
    - Data or data resources, particularly personal or sensitive data?
- Will students or staff spend time overseas in universities or business environments?

Project awardees are expected to report any changes to the collaborations that may be relevant to TR to their institution's Programme Team member (e.g. a change in international partner or a change in majority ownership of a partner company that places them on an above list).

[3] https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-sanctions-regimes-under-the-sanctions-act
[4] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/current-arms-embargoes-and-other-restrictions
[5] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-security-and-investment-act-guidance-on-notifiable-acquisitions/national-security-and-investment-act-guidance-on-notifiable-acquisitions
[6] https://www.ncl.ac.uk/research/researchgovernance/export/
[7] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/find-out-if-you-require-an-atas-certificate

TR will be considered regularly throughout the duration of the award, and the TR Plan and management will be revised by the Steering Group where necessary as the grant proceeds.

Scoring range definitions

10 **Exceptional:** the application is outstanding. It very strongly meets all of the assessment criteria and meets them to an exceptional level. It is difficult to articulate how the application could be improved.

9 **Outstanding:** the application is outstanding. It very strongly meets all of the assessment criteria and meets them to an outstanding level.

8 **Excellent:** the application is very high quality. It strongly meets all of the assessment criteria and meets them to an excellent level. There are very minor weaknesses.

7 **Very Good:** the application demonstrates considerable quality. It meets most of the assessment criteria to a high level. There are some minor weaknesses/limitations.

6 **Good:** the application is of good quality. It meets most of the assessment criteria well, but not across all aspects of the proposed activities. There are a few clear weaknesses/limitations.

5 **Adequate:** the application is good. It meets the assessment criteria to an acceptable level, but not across all aspects of the proposed activities. There are multiple weaknesses/limitations.

4 **Weak:** the application is not sufficiently competitive. It meets the assessment criteria to an adequate level. There are, however, significant weaknesses/limitations.

3 **Poor:** the application is not sufficiently competitive. It meets some of the assessment criteria to an adequate level. There are, however, major weaknesses/limitations.

2 **Unsatisfactory:** the application is flawed or of unsuitable quality for funding. It does not meet one or more of the assessment criteria.

1 **Not Suitable:** the application is it does not meet any of the assessment criteria.