

Impact Innovation Fund

CALL GUIDANCE

The IMPACT+ Network is funded by the UKRI Circular Fashion and Textile programme: NetworkPlus, part of 2-year, £15 million trilateral investment from NERC (Natural Environment Research Council), Innovate UK and AHRC (Arts and Humanities Research Council). Collaboratively, the research councils have built a coalition with industry, government and the third sector to co-create a 10-year vision to action circularity across the sector.

IMPACT+ (environmental Index Measures Promoting Assessment and Circular Transparency in fashion), led by Northumbria University, adopts a multi-disciplinary approach, drawing on expertise from the fields of design, environmental science (atmospheric, aquatic, and terrestrial) and forensic science. The Network also has two partner institutions that act as regional hubs for the project, Loughborough University and Kings College London.

Additionally, the Network are proud to be supported by 12 project partners who form the Independent Advisory Board (IAB) and bring a wealth of knowledge and expertise from across the fashion and textile industries. Their role is to support, guide and advise the direction of the work being conducted, with the opportunity to access and implement insights generated from project activities. The aim is to continue the growth of the Network, developing further associate project partners throughout the duration of the project and helping to build the legacy of the Network beyond the duration of the funding.

The Aim of the Network is to challenge how environmental impact is measured and assessed across all phases of the product lifecycle. It questions the reliability, authenticity and usability of data currently generated, exploring how existing methods of quantification could be having a detrimental effect on sustainable development across the sector. The IMPACT+ Network addresses these identified issues by critically analysing existing tools, methods, and metrics to improve the collation, analysis and assessment of environmental impact data. Assembling knowledge across multiple disciplines and stakeholders is critical and can ensure that evidence based scientific data informs future innovation in the design and development of products, processes, and behaviours.

Priority Areas for the Impact Innovation Funds have been identified as a reflection of current gaps in knowledge, unmet industry needs or inadequate datasets. We are looking to fund a range of short to mid-term, cross-disciplinary innovation projects addressing the challenges in the measuring environmental impact across the fashion and textiles value chain (materials, manufacturing, consumer use, end-of-life).

Priority Areas include:

- + **Beyond Lifecycle Analysis (LCA)** – addressing the short-comings of existing metrics, with a specific focus on unmeasured environmental impacts and overlooked phases within the fashion and textile value chain.
- + **Transparent Pathways** – enabling inclusive and accessible routes to accurate, reliable, and authentic sources of environmental impact data relating to global production systems at all tiers, specifically in the context of emerging legislation and geographically dispersed supply chains.
- + **Circular Knowledge Systems** – forging cross-disciplinary collaborations to enable evidenced-based scientific data to inform future design innovation in materials and processes.
- + **Equitable Partnerships** – overcoming perceived knowledge/action gaps through communication efficiency, breaking down relationship barriers across the value chain and empowering stakeholders.

The Impact Innovation Fund will award a total of £475,000 to projects up to the value of £100,000 across a duration of 3 -12 months. One call is planned, but additional calls may be released should not all funding be distributed.

The Application Eligibility Criteria is inclusive of any UK-based member of the IMPACT+ Network (joining is free of charge, and registration is available via the 'Contact' page on our website). Applicants can be academic, industrial, business, third-sector or government organisations. Academic-industry collaboration is encouraged to ensure outcomes are focused on real-world challenges and technical delivery is viable and economically feasible. Any applications from non-academic organisations are required to have an academic partner.

Eligible Expenditure includes costs that directly contribute to the delivery of project outcomes only. The full economic cost (FEC) of your project can be up to £100,000. The University of Northumbria will fund academic institutions at 80% FEC (please contact your institutional pre-award team to have your project costed). Business, third-sector or government organisations will be provided with 80% of total project costs, so there will be a need for 20% match funding. Applications will be judged on how closely they meet the call criteria, their feasibility and value for money. Please consider carefully what level of funding is required to deliver your project. Applications where new staff members are to be recruited will only be considered if the timeframe is feasible; typically, 6 months is required to run selection and allow any notice period to be worked.

Applications will be made through 2 stage process:

Stage 1 - the provision of a project summary (no more than 250 words) sent via email to impact.plusnetwork@northumbria.ac.uk outlining:

- + the aims of the project
- + proposed project duration
- + approximate costs

In collaboration with:



Northumbria University
NEWCASTLE



Loughborough University



Funded by:



Natural Environment
Research Council



Arts and
Humanities
Research Council



Innovate
UK

Stage 2 - once your summary has been assessed and suitability confirmed, a member of the team will be in touch with a copy of the application form and any initial comments/guidance. Only applications submitted on the form provided will be accepted. Along with your completed application form, you will need to submit a letter of support from each project partner. Letters of support will need to outline the partner's role in the project and a statement of the in-kind and/or matched support, including but not limited to staff time, access to equipment, and provision of data, software and materials. The letter should be on headed paper and signed by a senior manager at the partner organisation. The letter should be A4 and no more than two pages in length.

The Funding Criteria for the applications received will be reviewed by the IMPACT+ Investment Board and assessed based on the following key points:

Alignment

- + Degree of affiliation with one or more of the identified priority areas
- + Relevance of proposed outcomes to the IMPACT+ Network and the wider NetworkPlus programme

Innovation

- + Potential to impact future sectoral development through novel and innovative propositions
- + Legacy of the project through opportunities for follow-on activity – either through other external funding or market exploitation of results

Feasibility

- + Proposed activities to be value for money and achievable within the proposed time frame
- + Quality and breadth of the proposed dissemination and impact plan

The board of interdisciplinary experts will review and score applications against the specified criteria and rank them alongside other applications. The panel will take a portfolio approach to ensure a breadth of proposals are supported where the quality of applications allows. The decision of the IMPACT+ Investment Board is final.

Key Dates

Opening Date: Monday 8th April 2024 12:00pm UK time

Closing Date: Thursday 30th May 2024 4:00pm UK time

Awarded: July 2024

Project Start Date: From Monday 5th August 2024 (earliest start date)

Project End Date: By Monday 30th September 2025 (latest completion date)

The IMPACT+ Network must receive your application by Thursday 30th May 2024 4:00pm UK time. You will not be able to apply after this time. Academic applicants will need to make sure they are aware of and follow any internal institutional deadlines.

Following the submission of your application, your application cannot be changed, and applications will not be returned for amendment. If your application does not follow the guidance, it may be rejected.

In collaboration with:



Northumbria University
NEWCASTLE



Loughborough University



Funded by:



Natural Environment
Research Council



Arts and Humanities
Research Council



Innovate
UK

Successful Applicant Expectations

- + Engagement with the wider IMPACT+ Network events including attendance of meetings and participation in dissemination events (costs to attend events can be included in the application)
- + Sharing of research insights with the Network Leadership Team and the Impact Innovation Fund teams to enable the development of *circular knowledge systems* (utilising evidenced-based, scientific data to inform future innovation in the design and development of products, processes and behaviours), and foster future collaborative opportunities
- + Provision of project updates for publication on the IMPACT+ website and social media when requested (where IP considerations allow), including a 90-second film summarising the project (costs for this can be included in the application)
- + Assistance with the collection of project-generated impact information to facilitate reporting to NERC (Natural Environment Research Council)
- + Ensure that the work is acknowledged as being supported by NERC and IMPACT+ (branding should be visibly included) in all project communication (articles, papers, presentations, internal/external media, or interviews)
- + Project planning should be realistic considering lead times for project set-up (recruitment, contract negotiation, ethical approval, and procurement), and be reflective of achievable outcomes for the time and resources requested
- + Ensure all expenditure is complete by Monday 30 September 2025
- + Production and submission of an end-of-project report to the IMPACT+ Network Manager by Monday 25 November 2025
- + Project leads and their partners are required to engage in end-of-project interviews to help in the evaluation of IMPACT+ and the wider NetworkPlus Programme.
- + Project leads are required to report back to IMPACT+ on any ongoing outcomes of their projects on an annual basis for a five-year period from the project end date to enable us to track the long-term impacts of projects.

Post-award Requirements

Awardees will receive a formal award letter from Northumbria University which will lay out the terms of the grant. A separate collaboration agreement will then need to be developed with any partner organisations.

Funds will be paid in arrears at regular intervals and will be dependent on project length.

Publication of Outcomes

Northumbria University will publish the outcomes of this funding opportunity on the IMPACT+ Network website.

Further Information

For additional information on the IMPACT+ Network, visit our website:

<https://bit.ly/impactplusnetwork>

For help or advice on the Impact and Innovation Fund, please contact the team via email: impact.plus.network@northumbria.ac.uk

In collaboration with:



Northumbria University
NEWCASTLE



Loughborough University



Funded by:



Natural Environment Research Council



Arts and Humanities Research Council



Innovate UK