

EPIC Futures NI Policy Commissioning Call

Phase 1. Guidance

Open. Friday 18th October 2024

Closes. Monday 18th November 2024, 12pm



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EPIC Futures NI Policy Commissioning Call

| Key milestones | Date |
|--|--|
| Call Opens: | Friday 18 th October 2024 |
| Clarification and questions deadline: | Friday 1 st November 2024, 12pm |
| Deadline for applications: | Monday 18 th November 2024, 12pm |
| Eligibility and Assessment Process: | Tuesday 19 th November – Wednesday 18 th December 2024 |
| Award Notification date: | Week commencing 6 th January 2025 |
| Grant Funding Agreement and supporting papers complete: | Friday 24 th January 2025 |
| Project Start Date: | By 17 th February 2025 |
| Progress Updates: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Monthly meeting- Midpoint reporting – short report and 10 min presentation to EPIC Futures NI Co-director Team- Present Findings at Commissioning Call Policy Workshop – first week of September, tentatively 4th September 2025.- End of project reporting on milestones aligned to financial payments. |
| Projects End Date/ Spend Incurred: | 31 st August 2025 |
| Final reports due: | 15 th September 2025 |
| Invoiced submitted by: | 31 st October 2025 |

EPIC Futures NI Funding Summary

EPIC Futures NI is a Local Policy Partnership (LPIP) hub, led by Ulster University and funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and Innovate UK.

EPIC Futures NI has been allocated £4.8 million to help reduce regional disparities in economic, social and environmental challenges faced by local communities.

EPIC Futures NI aims to contribute towards a prosperous and sustainable future for Northern Ireland. By working in partnership with academia, policy, community and voluntary sector to jointly co-design policy and programmes that will help remove the barriers that people face to fair and meaningful employment.

£1 million has been allocated to the EPIC Futures Policy Commissioning Fund. The call will be managed in two phases.

Phase 1. Up to £30,000 (Oct-Nov 2024 application process) with a maximum spend of £250k.

Phase 2. May-June 2025 application process with an estimated spend of £750k¹. Threshold limit to be confirmed before Phase 2 call.

¹ This is subject to change depending on total amount of funding allocated in phase 1.

Background

Northern Ireland (NI) has a long history of lagging behind other regions in the UK across a range of economic performance indicators. The challenges which the NI economy faces are multifaceted, however, skills and labour deficits are contributing to NI's lagging performance against other UK regions.

NI has a complex supply ecosystem, with the lowest unemployment rate (currently at 1.9%) and the highest level of economic inactivity (currently 27.5%) across the four UK regions. NI's economic inactivity rate is also 19% higher than the Republic of Ireland. This represents a very challenging labour market for businesses seeking qualified labour to sustain their business, and to become more productive and innovative to compete on a global stage.

Recent research by the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre and EPIC Futures NI (2024)² highlights that there is spare capacity, beyond the unemployed, in the NI labour market. These additional forms of spare capacity are 1) the 'hidden unemployed' and 2) the 'underemployed'. The hidden unemployed comprise of individuals who are economically inactive but can and do wish to work if additional supports are provided, and individuals on government training programmes. In NI, the largest hidden unemployed groups are women, individuals with disabilities and individuals who are over 50. However, there are many other hidden unemployed groups facing disadvantages, impacting their ability to enter the labour market.

EPIC Futures NI

EPIC Futures NI stands for: Economic and Social Partnering for Inclusive Innovation and Collaboration (EPIC), which contributes towards a prosperous and sustainable future for Northern Ireland (NI). Led by Ulster University, the co-investigators of the partnership span academia, policy, community and voluntary sector and business representatives.

EPIC Futures NI is a pioneering research and action group, which brings together diverse stakeholders and actors in an open forum, in order to jointly co-design research and interventions to tackle NI's most pressing challenges. Our primary focus is providing an evidence base for policy and programmes aimed at targeting the 'hidden unemployed' within the economically inactive population. We also seek to develop new collaborations and help remove the barriers that people face to accessing fair and meaningful employment.

EPIC Futures NI is one of four Local Policy Partnership's (LPIP) across the UK, alongside a central strategic co-ordination hub. EPIC Futures NI is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), Innovate UK and the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). The £23 million LPIPs programme is a 'place-based' call, which has been designed to support local and national policymakers in tackling levelling up challenges which are unique to their place and in turn driving sustainable and inclusive economic growth, and reducing regional disparities in the UK.

² https://www.ulster.ac.uk/epc/pdf/2024/spare-capacity-in-the-northern-ireland-labour-market/NI-spare-capacity_Real-unempt_2024.pdf
https://www.ulster.ac.uk/epc/pdf/2024/spare-capacity-in-the-northern-ireland-labour-market/NI-spare-capacity_In-work_2024.pdf
https://www.ulster.ac.uk/epc/pdf/2024/spare-capacity-in-the-northern-ireland-labour-market/NI-spare-capacity_Hours-based_2024.pdf

Aim of this commissioning call

EPIC Futures are launching an open commissioning call seeking proposals to examine a range of thematic issues related to economic activity and topics more broadly which have relevance for the NI skills and employability landscape.

The overall aim of this commissioning call is to build a robust evidence base exploring key themes that can contribute towards a more inclusive and sustainable labour market in Northern Ireland.

Collaboration

We strongly encourage proposals which are in collaboration with stakeholders from different backgrounds and disciplines. We also seek proposals which bring unique and innovative approaches to place based challenges and provide insights into the lived experiences of individuals facing skills and employability challenges.

Themes for Phase 1. Policy Commissioning Call

The call will cover 9 key themes that have been identified through the consultation and co-design process with stakeholders. The call is seeking all types of explorative approaches to the 9 themes including scoping studies, literature reviews, benchmarking, and empirical data(quantitative and qualitative). Pilot studies, in preparation for potential Call 2 applications will also be considered.

We suggest that applicants may wish to cover one topic within one theme in their proposal. There will be cross cutting elements to some themes. Applicants may decide to cover more than one topic in their proposal however, this is at the discretion of the applicant.

- **Theme 1.** Understanding how to better support individuals with disabilities
- **Theme 2.** Pathways to work
- **Theme 3.** Knowing what works
- **Theme 4.** The caring economy
- **Theme 5.** Quantifying the benefits of work
- **Theme 6.** The role of employers
- **Theme 7.** The role of 'place'
- **Theme 8.** Health and work
- **Theme 9.** Inclusivity and Green Sector Skills

Any policy benchmarking studies commissioned by EPIC Futures NI, must have a particular reference to areas where policy is set by devolved institutions and can therefore contribute to the evidence base for local NI stakeholders with policy responsibilities.

Policy Commissioning Call Themes

Theme 1. Understanding how to better support individuals with disabilities

Persons with disabilities account for over one in four of Northern Ireland's working age population. However, Northern Ireland not only has the lowest employment rate for disabled people of any UK region, it also has the largest gap between the employment rates of disabled and non-disabled people. This underutilisation of talent represents both an economic and social cost. A deeper understanding of the challenges can inform the development of policy aimed at developing a more inclusive labour market.

We are particularly keen to receive proposals with a focus in the following areas:

- Understanding the labour market barriers facing people with mental health challenges and exploring potential policy interventions that would help people return to work and prevent those in work from becoming economically inactive.
- Examining transitions from education to the labour market for young people with disabilities, and identifying barriers within current available pathways.
- Considering the role of employers (private and/ or public) in supporting labour market inclusion for disabled persons and preventing those in employment from becoming permanently detached following a period of absence from work due to sickness and/or disability.

Theme 2. Pathways to work

The early years are crucial determinants of an individuals' long-term labour market prospects, particularly those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. There is a need for further insights into a range of issues within this theme including:

- How to identify alternative educational routes that are most effective in the journey from education to the labour market. This could include, but is not limited to exploring the changing culture and narrative around the hierarchy of pathways and strengthening the position of routes that fulfil the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) article 29, which focuses on the aims of education.
- Mapping the transitions of individuals with additional needs and/or disabilities through all layers of the education system to the labour market. This mapping should identify key points through the education lifecycle where individuals are at risk of becoming detached from the labour market.
- Profiling young people who may be traditionally defined as 'vulnerable' to identify how they become detached from education and the labour market, and exploring potential policy support to realise their full potential. This can include but is not limited to young people on the edge of care and those who have experienced the care system and/ or the youth justice system.

- Exploring the potential for entrepreneurial activity amongst those from socioeconomically deprived backgrounds, and identifying place-based barriers to business start-up. The potential for business-start up from young people qualifying from non-tertiary qualifications is of particular interest.
- Exploring any link between workless families and one person households and the pathways for their children. These families and households are more likely to be in persistent low income and make up a significant proportion of those living in poverty. Are there good practice examples of whole family approaches that can be developed and expanded to include skills and employability partners and support for parents, while ensuring the children are simultaneously supported on the appropriate educational pathway?

Theme 3. Knowing what works

There is no single economy which shares the exact circumstances of NI and can provide a direct comparator to benchmark the welfare, skills and employability policy frameworks. However, many of the issues facing NI are shared by similar nations/regions, and there are examples of successful programmes and policy implementation from which local policymakers can learn.

There are several policy areas where examples of best practice would be particularly useful, including:

- How do other nations/regions engage with economically inactive individuals? Successful approaches engaging ‘hard to reach’ groups outside a traditional Job Centre type environment are of particular interest.
- Examples of interventions that have successfully helped key groups return to the labour market following a period of economic inactivity. Studies which focusses on those with health problems, older persons, women, people living in a rural location and those with low level qualifications are particularly welcomed.
- How have other regions/nations responded to the rising incidence of mental health conditions both within the workforce and amongst those out of work?
- Are best practice examples available from which NI can learn for successfully raising labour market participation through an integrated health and employability policy?
- A high proportion of economically inactive persons have relatively low-level qualifications that are misaligned to labour market demand. What can NI learn from approaches taken internationally to encourage similar groups to participate in upskilling initiatives?
- How does NI compare in job movement/ progression in comparison to other nations/ regions. For example, if more people in employment were supported to retrain without short-term financial impact/ loss of earnings, could this support step up into higher level employment and free up lower level positions for those entering the labour market?

Theme 4. The caring economy

Approximately one in twenty people in Northern Ireland's working age population are inactive due to caring reasons. This is a combination of those with childcare responsibilities and adult carers. The burden of care predominately falls upon women, who account for over four-fifths of those economically inactive due to caring reasons. Addressing the challenges facing the caring economy has the potential to engage large groups who are currently outside the labour market. Proposals are welcomed in the following areas:

- Understanding the profile of adult carers, labour market barriers and alternative systems of support that could encourage employment. This workstream should recognise the vital role played by those providing unpaid care and the wider socio-economic impacts. Alternative systems of support should include but is not limited to flexible and staged threshold models of support that are responsive to individual needs and should not focus exclusively on economic benefit.
- How to meet the future skill needs of the caring economy, and assess whether current recruitment, progression pathways, workplace environment, recognition processes and pay scales are consistent with the long-term sustainability of the sector.
- A deeper understanding of the labour market challenges facing young carers alongside the adoption of a strengths based approach to the resilience, strength and skills young carers develop. Better aligning this with employer needs and the transversal skills agenda.
- Quantifying the economic and social impacts of achieving a more inclusive labour market for NI's working-age carers.
- Understanding current levels of awareness of childcare support that is available to assist parents in their skills development, and to understand the impact that it has on those who avail of it.
- Exploring innovative models, bespoke strategies and affordability schemes across other countries and regions that may make high-quality childcare affordable for all families including those with special educational needs and disabilities.

Theme 5. Quantifying the benefits of work

The 'make work pay' agenda has existed for decades with the twin aims of 'making work pay by more than not working' and 'making work pay enough to help families avoid poverty'. Policies such as tax credits, the living wage, alterations to taxation thresholds and welfare reform have all represented policy efforts in this area in recent decades. However, fiscal transfers can still skew the decision-making process for individuals when deciding whether to work, and how many hours to work. It is important for policymakers to understand individual 'better-off calculations' and the potential economic and social impacts if policy can be successful in influencing behavioural change. There are a number of areas in this theme that are useful additions to the policy evidence base, including:

- An assessment of the potential additional income needed for key groups in the benefit caseload which would influence them to enter employment. Stylised examples to demonstrate income incentive effects and marginal rates of taxation for different types of claimants on key benefit combinations are particularly useful.
- Identifying international examples of best practice which have successfully illustrated how relatively low work incentives can be addressed.
- Modelling the fiscal and social impact of moving a higher proportion of the economically inactive out-of-work benefit caseload into sustained employment. An improved understanding of the impact across different client groups to highlight where policy intervention could be most impactful is considered of value.
- Providing evidence for the wider and longer-term benefits of reducing economic inactivity. This could include a focus on health outcomes, poverty, well-being, social inclusion, child development and pressure on public services.

Theme 6. The role of employers

To meet their skills challenges employers (private and/ or public) must ensure they adopt inclusive practice to attract and retain talent from all areas of society. Employers can play a role in reducing economic inactivity in several ways including through job design, flexible working practices, occupational health support, return to work policies and making reasonable adjustments to accommodate workers with health problems. EPIC Futures is interested in receiving proposals under this theme in a number of areas, including:

- What are the financial and non-financial barriers to recruiting economically inactive persons facing Small and Medium sized Enterprises? How do these challenges differ in comparison to Large Enterprises.
- What approaches are employers taking to ensure they are recruiting from a more diverse pool to meet their labour challenges?
- Are there examples of effective practice amongst employers which have been successful in ‘stemming the flow’ of people leaving the workplace due to ill health?
- What approaches do employers take to support staff with caring responsibilities?
- Can Northern Ireland learn from approaches in other countries that manage the transition from education to employer-based training for those with disabilities.

Theme 7. The role of 'place'

It is widely acknowledged that there are sub-regional disparities across Northern Ireland which impacts a wide range of socio-economic factors. This disparity can differ even within close proximities. Furthermore, labour markets are institutional and social constructs, shaped by lived traditions within localities, which can change over time. There is a need for projects which explore how 'place' impacts economic inactivity and labour market behaviour.

- What are the multi-dimensional factors across 'places' which influence patterns of inter-generational joblessness and economic inactivity? This might include how family, social support systems and communities and/or institutional systems influence an individual's labour market participation. Projects could also explore how social and religious divisions play a prominent role in decisions to avail of training and employment opportunities.
- To analyse how lived traditions within communities and localities' may impact labour market behaviour.
- To explore if subjective and perceptual barriers influence the distance which someone would travel to access training or employment opportunities (across the economically inactive or young people).
- To explore the factors which have helped some regions to improve while other regions stay deprived. This could be across NI or in other regions which have learnings for NI.
- To provide a granular view of the interdependency of factors which influence economic inactivity within Areas of Social Deprivation.
- To explore how women, persons with disabilities or long-term health conditions who are living in rural, peripheral and border areas, can be better supported.
- To understand how border regions may present unique labour market and skills-based opportunities and challenges for both individuals living there and firms located in those regions.

Theme 8. Health and work

More than one in ten (12%) of all working age individuals in Northern Ireland are economically inactive due to ill health. Evidence suggests that work can lead to improved physical and mental health outcomes and in turn, unemployment can often lead to the deterioration of someone's health. However, economic inactivity due to ill health has multiple economic, social and health impacts alongside fiscal costs for the economy. This theme is complex and multi-layered, therefore there is a pressing need for data and to learn from best practice. This theme includes, but is not limited to proposals which explore:

- How to capture and effectively communicate the health benefits of working for the economically inactive/unemployed in Northern Ireland. What mechanisms and practices may influence economically inactive persons to improve their health and well-being through work?

- How to facilitate data linkage to explore relationships between health and employment status change over time.
- A review which explores the relationship between employment and other social determinants of health (SDH). These determinants can include the healthcare system, community and social contexts, neighbourhood and physical environments, and other forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life.
- Examples of best practice employability and skills development models which support and capture health and well-being outcomes, alongside employability.
- What can we learn from other regions who have joined up approaches to tackling employability, skills and health outcomes?

Theme 9. Inclusivity and Green Sector Skills

Evidence suggests that there are significant gaps in the skills need and supply for a transition to an advanced zero emission and circular economy in Northern Ireland. A move to a net zero carbon economy will open up opportunities for green jobs and skills. However, it is suggested that there are challenges to the inclusivity of green jobs, particularly to women and young people. Further knowledge is needed on the following topics:

- What best practices, models and mechanisms can help foster inclusive green employment for all individuals through an improved equality, diversity and inclusion agenda. This could include exploring how technical, soft, hard skills or leadership competencies can be fostered to reach people from a variety of diverse backgrounds.
- To explore how underrepresented groups, such as women returning to the workforce, can be better supported to work in the green economy. This could include how to encourage more underrepresented groups including women to choose green skills pathways and reskill.
- How to enhance accessibility to funding for green startups.

Application

How to Apply

Applications should be submitted via the website www.ulster.ac.uk/epic by **Monday 18th November 2024, 12pm.**

The online application must be completed in one sitting by the Lead Applicant. If there is more than one individual/organisation collaborating, the name and affiliate organisation of all applicants needs to be included in the appropriate sections.

Applicants must fill in the online form and include a maximum of 4 attachments.

- 1) Case for support
 - a. Max 8 pages
 - b. This should cover all areas noted in the scoring criteria below and where relevant, include considerations of equality, diversity and inclusion and environmental sustainability
 - c. Pictures and images are allowed
 - d. Where relevant, references should be included in the 8 pages.
 - e. Do not include hyperlinks to other documents or pages.
- 2) Justification of resources
 - a. Max 1 page
 - b. Use the headings as specified in Appendix 1.
- 3) Applicant CV(s)
 - a. Max 2 pages for each team member, appended into one document
- 4) Letters of support from partners (max 1 page per partner, appended into one document).

Attachments should be in docx or PDF format (odt files are not accepted). Text in documents should be in font size 11 with 2cm margins (recommended font type; Arial, Garamond or similar).

Missing documentation will rule the application as ineligible and the application will not be scored by the assessment panel.

Who can Apply?

Applications are welcome from all types of organisations as noted below, providing they fulfil all of the eligibility criteria identified in this call specification and in the call governance document:

- Research Organisations
- University Researchers / Academics
- Community Interest Company (CIC)
- Social Enterprises
- 'Not for Profit' Community and Voluntary Organisations
- Registered Charities or Charitable Incorporated Organisations
- Sole Traders or Private Businesses/ companies (VAT registered).

Collaboration with statutory/ government organisations is strongly encouraged. However, as per UKRI rules, government organisations are limited in regards to the costs which can be

claimed. Therefore, it would be difficult within government procurement rules to deliver effectively within the six month timeframe for this phase 1 call³.

“PcLs from UK businesses or government organisations cannot claim overheads and other indirect costs on any element of the grant”.

UKRI funding guidelines outline eligible costs as noted in table 1.

Reference table 1. Outline eligible costs for non-higher education organisations.

| | Business and Third Sector in Receipt of a Subsidy* | Third Sector | Government |
|---------------------------|---|---------------------|-------------------|
| Staff-Salary | Yes | Yes | No |
| Staff-NI Superann | No | Yes | No |
| T&S | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Other Direct Costs | No | Yes | No |
| Overheads | No | Yes | No |

If a statutory/government organisation feels they can lead and deliver on a project within the 6 month time frame and within the eligible funding guidelines, then this will be permitted and the application will be scored. However, the application will need to justify how this will be achieved in the case for support and justification for resources sections.

The Lead Applicant for the Commissioning Call Grant needs to:

- Be based within (live in or have a business address) the UK⁴
- Be at least 18 years old.

Important information for individuals:

- If you are applying as a sole trader on behalf of your business or company you will need a UK individual or business bank account in the exact name you’re applying.

Important information for organisations:

- Organisations must have a governing document.
- All organisations need to have a UK bank account in the name you’re applying in (the organisation’s name), with two signatories. A signatory is someone that is authorised to make transactions and manage an account, for example can sign cheques.
- Limited companies and registered charities need to have a registered office in the UK.
- For non-constituted consortiums or groups, one organisation must act as the lead organisation. If the application is successful, this organisation will be accountable for the grant.

³ Guidance updated and published on 01.11.24 to confirm that statutory/ government organisations can be a lead applicant if they can justify how the funding will be allocated and spent within the 6 month delivery timeframe.

⁴ Members of the team may reside outside the UK but funds need to be administered through a UK lead applicant. We do welcome collaborations across the Island of Ireland and beyond, where learning can be gained for Northern Ireland.

Important information for all applicants:

- If the proposal is a collaboration, a letter of support must be submitted from each partner organisation and attached to the application by the lead applicant.
- The lead applicant or a named member of the team must be available to attend the EPIC Futures Commissioning Call Policy workshop which will take place the first week of September 2025 (tentative date 4th September 2025).

Who can not apply

No named individuals who are an investigator on EPIC Futures NI are eligible to apply for this funding. However, other individuals within their respective organisations are eligible to apply. A strict conflict of interest policy will be followed during the review process. A list of the named co-investigators can be requested from EPICFutures@ulster.ac.uk.

Eligible costs

Eligible costs must follow the [UKRI Research Funding Guide](#) (see pages 27-34) . Only eligible costs can be claimed. Examples:

Directly Incurred

- New staff costs (including researchers)
- Travel and subsistence
- Communication, advertising, printing and publications
- Professional services.

Directly allocated

- Investigators (Principal and co-investigators time charge)
- Estates (premises, utilities, clerical).

Other directly allocated

- Share resources (pooled staff and equipment).

Partner costs

- Partner time and resources.

All costs submitted must be VAT Inclusive amounts.

Assessment Process

- A three stage process will be adopted.
 - Stage 1. Eligibility Screening based on eligibility criteria (Ulster University EPIC Futures Team)
 - Stage 2. Scored independent assessment (2 policy experts and 2 academic reviewers)
 - Stage 3. Reviewer panel assessment
- All reviewers will rate the applications independently in line with the scoring criteria outlined at application stage before attending the panel assessment for peer review and consensus.

Scoring Criteria

| | | |
|---|--|------------|
| <p>Relevance to policy and practice related to employability and skills</p> | <p>Identification of a clear need for the proposal to advance knowledge within the employability, skills and labour market landscape.</p> <p>Demonstratable evidence of relevance to UK, NI and/or Cross Border key policy agendas.</p> <p>There must be reference to how findings/outputs will have relevance for NI stakeholders with policy responsibilities and/ or for strengthening policy in practice.</p> | <p>40%</p> |
| <p>Methodology and Approach</p> | <p>Demonstrate an understanding of the EPIC Futures NI theme(s) being addressed.</p> <p>Identification of knowledge gaps related to theme(s).</p> <p>Identification of the approach. This will include key stages, milestones, deliverables, outputs and timelines.</p> <p>A detailed overview of the proposed methodology. Depending on the type of proposal, this may/should include, the data being used/collected, sampling and access.</p> <p>Data management and ethics (if applicable).</p> <p>Engagement, dissemination and impact strategy.</p> | <p>40%</p> |
| <p>Lead/Team, experience and collaboration</p> | <p>Outline how the skills and experience of the Lead/Team align with the proposed project.</p> <p>If relevant, outline team composition and dynamics.</p> <p>Demonstrate ability to develop policy orientated knowledge and outputs.</p> <p>Demonstrate track record of collaboration.</p> <p>Outline recruitment process for any new team members hired to ensure it will be within timeframe.</p> | <p>20%</p> |

- Considerations of equality, diversity and inclusion and environmental sustainability are an important element within all applications and will be assessed within the criteria set out above.
- Reviewers will also consider the appropriateness of costs sought.
- Applications which pass eligibility checks and score over a minimum threshold will be recommended for funding. Funding will be awarded up to a maximum of £30K per project, until the £250k funding pot for phase 1 is allocated⁵. If the full funding pot is not allocated due to not enough projects meeting the threshold, the remaining funding will roll over into phase 2. In instances where scores align and funding is limited, projects may be partially funded. This decision will rest with the assessment panel.
- The panel may request minor changes to the methods or scope (if relevant) which if offered funding, would be a condition of acceptance.
- Pre-award checks will be completed with successful applicants.

Governance and Ethics (Methodology, Approach)

The EPIC Futures NI Policy Commissioning Call Funding can be awarded to organisations that work outside of an Academic Ethics Framework Environment.

Any proposals which seek to collect empirical data with human participants that does not have an existing ethics framework will be required to work to the standards laid out by Ulster University's Governance and Ethical Standards.

Dissemination and Impact

It is expected that projects funded will have implications for policy and practice across Northern Ireland. It is important that the outputs of projects are widely disseminated to a range of audiences. Engagement, dissemination and impact activities must be captured, to report on the value of this fund. This should be detailed in the proposal.

All projects funded will be profiled on the EPIC Futures NI social media pages, website and relevant reporting requirements by the funder.

Branding

All outputs should acknowledge funding by EPIC Futures NI and UKRI and be co-branded. Branding guidelines will be shared with successful applicants.

⁵ Your proposal could score over the threshold but due to other projects scoring higher and the allocations of funds, it may not get funded.

Post Award Process

Letter of Offer

- The Letter of Offer will be issued on the week commencing 6th January 2025.

Grant Funding Agreement

- The Grant Funding Agreement and supporting paperwork must be completed by 24th January 2025.

Expenditure

- All projects must have started delivery before 17th February 2025.
- All claims will be paid quarterly in arrears in line with your project start/end date upon successful completion of project milestones as verified by a member of the EPIC Futures NI Team.
- The project must finish delivery no later than the 31st August 2025. All costs must have incurred by this date.
- Summary reports must be made available prior to the project workshop which will take place on the 1st week of September (tentative date 4th September).
- Final reports must be submitted by 15th September.
- Invoices must be submitted by 31st October 2025.

Appendix 1. Justification of Resources Template

See EPIC Futures NI Guidance (pages 11-12) and [UKRI Research Funding Guide](#) (pages 27-34)

| Breakdown of cost | Total (VAT Inclusive – max £30k) |
|--------------------------|---|
| Directly incurred | £ |
| Directly allocated | £ |
| Other directly allocated | £ |
| Partner costs | £ |
| Total | £ |

| Justification of cost |
|------------------------------|
| Directly incurred |
| Directly allocated |
| Other directly allocated |
| Partner Costs |

Reminder: Justification of resources template should not exceed 1 page.