

Methane Network

NERC Announcement of opportunity to establish a network to improve coordination and collaboration of methane research activities.

Deadline for submission of applications 16:00, 10 March 2009 via the Research Council Joint Electronic Submission System (Je-S).

1. Introduction

The [NERC Strategy](#) identifies the various challenges associated with the Earth System Science Theme and these are expanded on in the [Earth System Science Theme Action Plan](#). One of the actions to support these challenges is the development of a methane network.

There is significant research activity within the UK concerning methane hydrates and the contemporary methane cycle, however there is limited collaboration between research groups and also limited links to relevant [Living With Environmental Change](#) (LWEC) and industry partners. To address this, NERC is to commission a three year methane network, with funding of up to £300k available. The network will improve the coordination and collaboration of methane research activities, seek to identify the key uncertainties in our knowledge to facilitate the development of innovative scientific outputs, and provide added value to existing investments. Key requirements will be the inclusion of expertise from across both the scientific and the wider communities, placing the network within the international context, and detailing a clear programme of activities for the network utilising appropriate and varied communication methods.

A single NERC research grant will be awarded (expected to start summer 2009).

2. Requirements

The network must improve co-ordination and collaboration of methane research activities, focussing on meeting the NERC Strategy Challenges of the Earth System Science and Sustainable Use of Natural Resources Themes. The activities of the network should seek to identify the key uncertainties in our understanding of these issues, with a view towards developing innovative scientific outputs and provide added value to existing investments.

The network will be required to:

- Be inclusive within the research community, across both methane hydrate and broader methane cycle researchers;

- Make links to ongoing research, for example QUEST, the Integrated Ocean Drilling Programme and existing NERC national capability;
- Stimulate collaboration between NERC Centres and HEIs;
- Make key links to the wider community (particularly with LWEC partners) for example:
 - government departments and agencies (e.g. Defra, DECC and BERR)
 - the Hadley Centre
 - the Tyndall Centre
 - UK Energy Research Centre
 - the Energy Technologies Institute
 - relevant industry (including waste management, landfill, methane capture and transport, instrumentation, anaerobic digestion);
- Place the UK activities within an international context;
- Operate for three years.

The organisation/person leading the network should:

- Have a clear programme plan that covers both resources and activities, accepting that some flexibility for future activities and developments will be required;
- Detail how economic impact can be maximised;
- Utilise a range of communication methods, bearing in mind the desirability of a low carbon footprint, including a network website;
- Identify any other networks/activities in this area and how the proposed network can provide added value;
- Allow for activities across the whole network and within sub groups, with at least one major event per annum;
- Detail if the network aims to operate beyond the funding providing by NERC and if so how this will be achieved.

The network is not expected to include research or training activities.

Key milestones:

- 1 month: Establishment of network website
- 2 months: Finalisation of detailed network programme/plan for first 18 months
- 3 months: Kick off event
- 12 months: 1st annual report, detailing activities to date and plans for next 12 months
- 12-24 months: 2nd major event
- 24 months: 2nd annual report, detailing activities to date and plans for next 12 months
- 24-36 months: 3rd major event
- 36 months: Final report

3. Management

Governance – The network supported will be expected to adhere to the principles of the NERC [Governing and Managing Investments Policy](#) and to adopt appropriate practices.

The Network Principal Investigator will act as Senior Responsible Officer, responsible to NERC. They may wish to form a network management board to support their activities as appropriate.

Performance Management - In order for NERC to manage performance against its Strategic Objectives and Delivery Plan and report to NERC Council and DIUS, we need our suppliers of strategic activities to report regularly on the outputs and outcomes that they have been commissioned to deliver. The project(s) supported will be required to provide:

- Annual and Quarterly progress reports. These should identify targets and key milestones with details of progress against them and future plans. The reports should also capture any key achievements or highlights and any additional required performance management information specified by NERC.
- Output and Performance Measures (OPMs). Currently collected annually, through the NERC Research Outputs Database (ROD).
- Final Report – as per standard NERC terms & conditions.

4. Eligibility

This opportunity is open to individuals and organisations eligible for NERC research grant funding i.e. applicants based in UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), NERC Research & Collaborative Centres, and Independent Research Organisations (IROs) approved by NERC. Please refer to the NERC [Research Grants Handbook](#) for details. Potential applicants should contact NERC well in advance of the submission deadline if they have any queries concerning their eligibility.

Individuals may submit no more than one application as Principal or a Co-Investigator to this call.

5. Funding

Funding of up to £300k is available over three years for a single network award. The NERC contribution will be 80% of the fEC costing.

6. How to Apply

The closing date for receipt of proposals will be: 16:00, 10th March 2009

Applications must be submitted using the Research Councils Joint Electronic Submission system (Je-S).

Please select the Scheme – ‘Directed’ and the Call – ‘Methane Network’

To use this system, the applicant’s Research Organisation must be registered as a Je-S user. Full details are available on the Je-S website at <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/je-s/>. Further information can also be obtained by contacting the Je-S Helpdesk by email at JeSHelp@rcuk.ac.uk or by telephone on 01793 44 4164.

Applicants must ensure that their application is received by NERC by 16:00 on the closing date. Applicants should leave enough time for their application to pass through their organisation’s Je-S submission route before this date. Any application that is received after the closing date, is incomplete, or does not meet NERC’s eligibility criteria, will be returned to the applicant and will not be considered.

7. Format and content of response

The Principal Investigator must submit form Je-SRP1 (NERC) detailing the financial request, together with the Case for Support.

The Case for Support should comprise:

Previous Track Record not exceeding 2 sides of A4, covering the following points:

- The specific expertise available for the network at the host organisation and that of any associated organisations and beneficiaries. This may include the type of information for Principal Investigators and Co-Investigators that would normally be shown on CVs;
- Provide a summary of the results and conclusions of recent work in the technological/scientific area that is covered by the network. Include reference to both NERC and non- NERC funded work. Details of any relevant past collaborative work with other beneficiaries should also be given.

Description of the Proposed Network, not exceeding 8 sides of A4 (including all necessary tables, references and figures), addressing the following points:

- Specific objectives of the network, including their potential relevance to UK and international research work in the field, relevance to the specification, and anticipated achievements and outputs. How the network will complement existing activity and add value. How the network will engage with the LWEC programme;
- Programme and/or plan of network and management of both project and resources. Staff roles e.g. network coordinator/administrator, specific

activities envisaged, engagement plan, network core membership and network operation;

- Relevance and links to users and the potential scientific, practical and socio-economic benefits.

Justification of Resources up to 1 side of A4 submitted as a separate attachment in the JeS system. It should include justification for all Directly Incurred Costs, Investigator effort, use of pool staff resources and any access to shared facilities and equipment being sought. No justification for Directly Allocated Estates and Indirect Costs is required. It should be noted that if resources are not fully justified, they will be subject to reduction

Letters of support from any named Project Partners (up to 2 sides A4 each)

All attachments submitted through the JeS system, including the Case for Support, must be completed in single-spaced typescript of minimum font size 11 point, Arial font with margins of at least 2cm. References can be presented in a smaller font size provided it is sufficiently clear to ensure good quality reproductions. Applicants referring to websites should note that referees may choose not to use them. Any proposal in which the Case for Support does not comply with these specifications will be rejected. Applicants should avoid the use of colour graphs or pictures, which NERC cannot guarantee will be reproduced in colour.

For joint applications the following information should be common to all application pro-formas:

- Title of proposal
- Type of proposal
- Objectives
- Summary
- Beneficiaries

The following should be included in the lead Research Organisation application pro-forma or submitted as attachments by the lead Research Organisation application only:

- Project Partners.
- Letters of support from Project Partners.
- Previous Track Record (up to 2 sides A4).
- Description of the Proposed Network (up to 8 sides A4)
- Justification of Resources (up to 1 side A4).

For further details please refer to the NERC [Research Grants Handbook](#) and the guidelines for standard grant applications.

8. Assessment

The network proposals will be assessed against the following criteria:

- Fit to Specification (Requirements)
- Excellence under the Knowledge Exchange Funding category

- Risk-Reward
- Cost Effectiveness

Applications will be reviewed and ranked by selection panel. Due to the one-stage process there will not be the opportunity for PIs to respond to comments.

9. Contact Information

Any enquiries regarding this call should be addressed to:

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