



# Funding opportunity for DARE UK Transformational Programme: TRE early adoption

November 2024



## Version 1.1

\*\*Updated on 28/11/2024 - See Section 6, Selection Criteria (page 4) for changes.

# 1. Background

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DARE UK was established with the vision for all research and innovation to benefit from seamless, secure use of diverse sensitive data at a pace, efficiency and scale that revolutionises research productivity and accelerates research to deliver public good. DARE UK's mission is to put the UK at the forefront of sensitive data research and innovation by assembling the tools, technologies and standards needed to streamline secure data linkage and use.

DARE UK Phase 2 will unite Trusted Research Environments (TREs) across the UK to build a connected national network of secure data research infrastructures, enabling better, faster, and safer sensitive data research. Built on the foundations of Phase 1, the aim is to start assembling and testing the digital infrastructure required for research to tackle complex societal challenges. As DARE UK's [previous work](#) has shown, this can deliver new insights into challenges such as long-term unemployment, children's mental health, childhood obesity and transforming the food economy. Phase 2 will support researchers using TREs to do faster and safer research with sensitive data, for example, through new capabilities in federated analysis and safe training of AI models. The programme will continue to work with and convene stakeholders across the research ecosystem to deliver this in Phase 2.

For researchers, a successful Phase 2 will mean:

- The ability to answer new research questions through new data linkages and analyses at scale
- New support for cutting-edge research using sensitive data, such as training AI/ML models
- Reduced time to safely access different types of sensitive data across the UK
- Reduced time to safely export the results of their research for publishing
- Improved user experience when moving from one TRE to another
- Reduced costs of doing research using linked sensitive data

The DARE UK Transformational Programme will build new capabilities to support sensitive data research across the UK, support the testing and adoption of these capabilities by TREs, and demonstrate real-world scientific impact using these capabilities. These capabilities are:

### Federated analysis

The execution of analysis across data resources held in physically or organisationally separated TREs.

As a measure of success, researchers will be able to execute rapid analysis of distributed data by sending algorithms to remote, disparate datasets without the need for data to be marshalled in advance or log into a single TRE and access (pre-approved) data from many other TREs or both. Where additional third-party software services are involved, researchers will be able to upload complex analysis workflows to appropriate hosting services and then be able to invoke these workflows from jobs submitted to one or more remote TREs.

For more details, please reach out to Phil Quinlan ([svzpq@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:svzpq@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk)), Carole Goble ([carole.goble@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:carole.goble@manchester.ac.uk)), Simon Thompson ([simon@chi.swan.ac.uk](mailto:simon@chi.swan.ac.uk)).

### AI and semi-automated output checking

Enhanced TRE disclosure control capabilities through semi-automated tooling, as well as testing and incorporating AI and machine learning model recommendations to support the safe 'release' of models trained on sensitive data.

As a measure of success, researchers will receive research outputs with improved wait times for successful disclosure control and increasingly be able to train and export AI models safely and efficiently from TREs while maintaining privacy protection of the data on which the model has been trained. UK TREs will be able to test and adopt semi-automated disclosure control toolkit(s) to support safe, efficient sensitive data research while relieving the administrative overhead on TRE output checking staff.

For more details, please reach out to Jim Smith ([james.smith@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:james.smith@uwe.ac.uk)).

### TRE reference architecture and implementations

Develop 'infrastructure-as-code' (ideally platform agnostic) versions of the SATRE specification to enable automated deployment of software-defined TREs. Extend the SATRE specification to include new capabilities developed through DARE UK or out with the programme as part of the UK TRE ecosystem, iteratively refine the SATRE specification as the ecosystem evolves and enhance the SATRE TRE evaluation process to support ease of benchmarking against the specification.

As a measure of success, researchers will have greater transparency across the UK TRE ecosystem in terms of the availability and quality of TRE services, a better understanding of the maturity of those services, and a more consistent user experience when working across TRE services in the UK. UK (and international) TREs will increasingly evaluate themselves against the SATRE specification and the UK sensitive data research community will actively engage with maintaining the specification as the TRE ecosystem evolves.

For more details, please reach out to Chris Cole ([c.cole@dundee.ac.uk](mailto:c.cole@dundee.ac.uk)).

## 2. Purpose of this funding opportunity

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As part of the Phase 2 Transformational Programme, this rapid funding opportunity aims to support TRE early adoption efforts of the Transformational Programme capabilities: federated analysis, AI and semi-automated output checking, and TRE reference architecture and implementations (see Background for more details and contact information for the leads of each).

This could include (but is not limited to):

- Technical feasibility testing to identify routes to solution(s) viability
- Technical feasibility testing to validate solution(s) viability
- Early operational feasibility analysis to identify routes to operational viability (for example refining operational requirements or scoping impacts/adjustments on/to standard operating procedures)
- Early operational feasibility analysis to validate operational viability
- Early information governance feasibility analysis to identify routes to operational viability
- Early information governance feasibility analysis to validate operational viability

- Piloting of one or more solution(s)

This is a rapid funding opportunity; it is intended to support TRE 'early adopter' activities that could be delivered between January 2025 and 31 March 2026. Please note, delivery can **start from 6 January 2025** but **no later than 17 February 2025** and must be completed by **no later than 31 March 2026**.

Given the rapid nature of this opportunity, we strongly encourage applications that would complement existing or already planned activities aligned with the scope of this opportunity.

Please note, there may be further funding opportunities to support TRE adoption of the Transformational Programme capabilities dependent on the outcomes of this opportunity.

### 3. Funding opportunity

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Rapid funds of up to £400,000 per application are now being made available out of a maximum total fund of £1,850,000. The spend profile of the £1,850,000 is not evenly distributed: a maximum of £500,000 is available within the financial year 24/25 ending 31 March 2025, and a maximum of £1,350,00 is available in the financial year 25/26 ending 31 March 2026. There is no possibility of shifting funds across the financial year boundary. Front loading of activities is advisable.

Funding is provided only for activities to be undertaken between January 2025 and the end of March 2026 and could be requested for activities such as the following:

- a contribution to the salary of the project lead and co-leads
- support for other posts, such as research and technical staff
- research consumables, including cloud computing
- travel costs
- data preservation and data sharing
- knowledge mobilisation and dissemination costs, such as conferences and seminars for a policy or practice audience or pursuit and development of new user contacts
- estates and indirect costs
- costs to support the use and development of open-source software for project delivery
- costs for public involvement and engagement (PIE) activities

Given the rapid nature of this funding call we expect requests for funding to be reasonable and feasible, ideally complementing existing or already planned efforts by TREs aligned with the scope of this opportunity. There is no minimum limit for requests for funding, we expect the scale of submitted applications to vary.

Given fiscal year boundary constraints for this funding, applications that can start delivery and utilise available funding as early as possible will be prioritised for funding by the review panel.

### 4. Eligibility

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Funding is available at 80% full Economic Cost (fEC) for all eligible organisations. More information on organisation eligibility can be found on the [UKRI website](#).

If your organisation is NOT on the UKRI list of eligible organisations, please contact the DARE UK Delivery Team prior to starting your submission via email at [enquiries@dareuk.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@dareuk.org.uk), with

[procurement@hdruk.ac.uk](mailto:procurement@hdruk.ac.uk) in cc and the subject title: 'DARE UK TRE Adoption Funding Opportunity Submission'.

## 5. How to apply

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Applicants for funding will need to complete an [application form](#). Please note, given the rapid nature of the funding opportunity, this is a light-touch application form and word counts are provided as guidance on maximum limits. There is no explicit expectation or requirement to reach those maximum limits.

All applications must be submitted by **09:00 on 10 December 2024** to [enquiries@dareuk.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@dareuk.org.uk), with [procurement@hdruk.ac.uk](mailto:procurement@hdruk.ac.uk) in cc and the subject title: 'DARE UK TRE Adoption Funding Opportunity Submission'.

## 6. Selection criteria

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Applications will be reviewed by a panel. Teams must be able to commence as early as 6 January 2025 but no later than 17 February 2025 and complete all funded activities by no later than 31 March 2026.

Questions to be used by the selection committee for assessment are listed in the relevant section of the funding application form and will be assessed according to the [scoring criteria](#).

Selection will be based on the scoring criteria until the maximum funding is allocated, taking into account the portfolio of proposals with a balanced overall spread across the strategic capabilities outlined above as well as the feasibility of delivery given the rapid nature of the opportunity.

Given fiscal year boundary constraints for this funding, applications that can start delivery and utilise available funding as early as possible will be prioritised for funding by the review panel.

### \*\*Update - 28/11/2024

Due to the rapid nature of this call, we **no longer expect applicants to have discussed their proposal with the lead(s) of the DARE UK Transformational prior to submission.**

The previous requirement to include a **Letter of Support** from the relevant lead(s) of the DARE UK Transformational Programme as part of your application **is no longer a pre-requisite for funding.**

Applicants DO NOT need to provide a letter of support with their application.

## 7. Public involvement and engagement

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DARE UK is committed to meaningful public involvement and engagement (PIE). Given the rapid nature of this funding opportunity please consider carefully how you would feasibly integrate meaningful public involvement and engagement in your application, if and where appropriate.

[See the DARE UK PIE guidelines for more information on how to meaningfully involve the public in research.](#)

While PIE plans are not mandatory for a successful application, there will be significant PIE activities as part of the DARE UK Transformational Programme (see Background) and, more broadly, in Phase 2 of the programme. We expect successful applicants to commit to engaging with those activities where appropriate.

If you have PIE plans, these should be clearly embedded into project timelines and fully costed into project proposals. There is no upper limit for the proportion of the award that can be dedicated to public involvement and engagement.

## 8. Timeline

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- 14 November 2024: Funding opportunity opens.
- 19 November 2024: [Applicant webinar](#).
- 10 December 2024: Funding opportunity closes.
- 20 December 2024: Funding decisions communicated to applicants (latest).
- 6 January 2025: Funded projects commence (earliest).
- 17 February 2025: Funded projects commence (latest).
- 31 March 2026: Funded activities end (latest).
- 31 March 2026: Final report and outputs due (latest).

## 9. Enquiries

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Please submit any enquiries or clarifications to [enquiries@dareuk.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@dareuk.org.uk) and [procurement@hdrug.ac.uk](mailto:procurement@hdrug.ac.uk), with the subject title: 'DARE UK TRE early adoption funding opportunity'

## 10. Terms and conditions

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This award will be subject to the [UKRI standard terms and conditions for research grants](#) and the [MRC Additional Terms and Conditions](#), as well as additional terms and conditions set out in the [award letter](#) (see [template award letter](#) for reference).