



Funding opportunity for DARE UK Community Groups: Interest group bootstrapping, management and networking

June 2025



1. Background

DARE UK Community Groups are collaborative environments established under the DARE UK programme's Community building, engagement & standards workstream to encourage different communities within the UK sensitive data research landscape to co-create components and pieces of work that align with the DARE UK programme's vision. With a focus on open communication and fostering the sharing of information and best practices, these groups will look to enhance sensitive data research and practice in the UK.

DARE UK Community Groups are modelled after similar groups at the [Research Data Alliance](#) and [IETF](#) and are established according to a charter outlined by the group conveners, which covers the 'why', 'what', and 'how' of each group. Each group will be subject to an [endorsement](#) process prior to set-up and will be guided by a [code of conduct](#) to ensure that community management best practices are upheld. The DARE UK Community Groups are open to anyone to propose, join and/or contribute to, and they each serve a unique purpose.

There are two community group categories we fund: Interest Groups and Working Groups.

- **Interest Groups** are open-ended and focus on a broad-based challenge within the programme's scope. These groups will motivate Working Groups to address specific pieces of work. Illustrative examples of DARE UK Interest Groups include the [UK TRE Community Management and Engagement Interest Group](#) and [Public Engagement in Data Research Initiative \(PEDRI\)](#).
- **Working Groups**, on the other hand, are short-term (typically one year) in terms of their longevity and focus on specific, tractable pieces of work. The [AI Risk Evaluation Working Group](#) is one example of a DARE UK Working Group, producing [a report on the development of safe AI in sensitive healthcare data](#). They are generally linked to an Interest Group but may come from anywhere, provided they are within the scope of the programme and the sensitive data research landscape the programme is aiming to serve.

With funding from UKRI, the DARE UK programme is making available funds of up to £112,500 to enable capacity to support the community engagement, management and networking activities of DARE UK Interest Groups for an 18-month period from October 2025 to the end of March 2027.

Additional funding is also being made available to support Working Group activities in a separate call. Please see [our website](#) for more details.

2. Purpose of DARE UK Interest Groups

Drawing together a diverse network of researchers and relevant stakeholders, DARE UK Interest Groups work together to:

- Propose community-based solutions to address identified technical and governance barriers to enable better data connectivity and cross-domain analysis, which can be taken forward by Working Groups.
- Scope and coalesce consensus for community needs around different tools and technologies, data standards, or governance models for more secure and efficient cross-domain linkage and analysis of sensitive data.
- Support the sustainability of software and technologies and drive community adoption and integration of technology prototypes by community testing, feedback and integration of tools produced by Working Groups and other relevant data research infrastructure work.

- Develop community resource hubs that gather, curate, and share information and best practice in different domains across the sensitive data ecosystem.
- Organise community events and conferences to enable knowledge exchange and catalyse new collaborations, for example, new Working Groups.
- Carry out activities to connect the public, industry and other stakeholders with the sensitive data infrastructure and research base.
- Shape future research directions enabled by connecting different kinds of sensitive data at scale.

DARE UK Interest Groups may develop into virtual hubs of excellence, providing a critical mass of community expertise in their domain. Interest Group activities will often lead to the formation of Working Groups to produce specific, well-defined, community-led outputs.

We invite all those interested in sensitive data research to propose new Interest Groups to help grow a collaborative UK sensitive data research community.

3. Funding opportunity

New DARE UK Interest Groups can apply for up to **£140,625** funding to support ongoing community engagement, management, and networking activities. Funding will be provided at 80% of the full economic cost, up to a maximum of **£112,500**.

Funding will be provided only for activities taking place within the 18-month period from October 2025 to the end of March 2027, and may be requested for activities such as the following:

- Salaries and overheads for community management, coordination, and administration.
- Workshops, conferences and events, including venue hire, travel, and subsistence.
- Support for communications and engagement activities for monitoring and dissemination of community group outputs, including website development and maintenance and software licenses.

4. Eligibility

Funding is available at 80% of the full Economic Cost (fEC) for all eligible organisations, up to a maximum of **£112,500**.

While anyone may propose the formation of a DARE UK Interest Group, **only individuals affiliated with eligible organisations may apply for funding**. For full details on organisation eligibility, please refer to the [UKRI website](#).

Please note that [active Interest Groups](#) that **currently** receive DARE UK funding are not eligible to apply. Interest Groups that do not currently receive funding are welcome to apply.

5. How to apply

DARE UK Interest Groups seeking funding to support their activities must complete an [Interest Group Charter](#) and a [funding application form](#). Detailed guidance on what to include in these is provided in the charter template and funding application form.

Proposals for **new Interest Groups** must include a completed [Interest Group Charter](#). These will be reviewed by DARE UK and programme leadership and will be endorsed where they align with the

programme's overall vision and objectives, and do not duplicate existing work. Existing Interest Groups seeking funding are only required to submit the completed [funding application form](#).

All applications must be submitted by **18:00 on 4 August 2025** to communities@dareuk.org.uk, with procurement@hdruk.ac.uk in cc and the subject title: 'Interest Group Funding Opportunity Submission'.

6. Selection criteria

Funding will be prioritised to Interest Groups that bring together a new, diverse, and inclusive network of researchers and relevant stakeholders to achieve their goals through partnership working, evidenced by the inclusion of **co-chairs from multiple organisations** (at least two, but usually more) and including **at least one public contributor** (see Section 7 below) as well as broad-based representation amongst the wider group membership in the Interest Group charter. Although the charter and funding application can be led by a subset of the group membership (for example, the co-chairs), we expect the plans to be co-developed with all members of the Interest Group. Only applications that all members of the Interest Group have been consulted on and support (please confirm at the end of Q1 of the funding application form) will be considered for funding.

In addition to the need to demonstrate broad-based representation in the Interest Group charter, we are particularly interested in funding applications that support partnerships working to address needs in areas including, **but not limited to**, the following:

- Linkage of sensitive datasets (by person, by place, etc.) in the context of multiple Trusted Research Environments (TREs)
- Machine learning and AI in multi-TRE settings
- Privacy protection during data ingress
- Output checking and statistical disclosure control in multi-TRE settings
- Data standards in multi-TRE and cross-domain settings (e.g. open metadata for automated discovery; cross-domain data interoperability)
- Governance models (e.g. standardising researcher or TRE accreditation; risk tiering of TREs managing multi-TRE federations)
- Cost-recovery and other funding models for TREs
- Effective public engagement strategies around building and running secure, trustworthy infrastructure and conducting open, transparent research using sensitive data.

Teams must be able to commence in October 2025 at the earliest and complete all funded activities by the end of March 2027 at the latest (although the Interest Group can continue operating unfunded after this date). As the Interest Group funding period spans two fiscal years (October 2025 to March 2026, and April 2026 to March 2027), please ensure this cost allocation is clearly explained in Section 5 of the funding application form. We encourage applicants to front-load as much of the costs as feasible into the fiscal year ending 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 Interest Group funding proposals with a balanced overall spread across the strategic themes, such as those outlined above.

7. Public involvement and engagement

DARE UK is committed to meaningful public involvement and engagement. For DARE UK-funded Interest Groups, this **must include** public involvement in Interest Group governance structures, with at **least one public contributor** to participate as an Interest Group co-chair.

Interest Groups **may also include plans**, where appropriate, to undertake other kinds of public involvement and engagement activities, such as:

- workshops and focus groups with members of the public to seek public input into the Interest Group's activities
- input of public contributors to review Interest Group activity descriptions and outputs

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

Public involvement and engagement (PIE) plans 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, with a typical expectation of ~10% allocation to PIE, depending on the nature of the work being undertaken.

8. Timeline

- 9 June 2025: Funding opportunity opens.
- 16 July 2025: Public webinar and Q&A about the funding opportunity.
- 4 August 2025: Funding opportunity closes.
- w/c 15 September 2025: Funding decisions communicated to applicants.
- 6 October 2025: Funded Interest Group activities commence (earliest).
- July 2026: Mid-point project report and check-in meeting to discuss progress and identify any bottlenecks.
- March 2026: DARE UK Community Group annual plenary event.
- 31 March 2027: Final short report due detailing Interest Group progress and outputs.
- 31 March 2027: Funded Interest Group activities end (latest).

9. Enquiries

Please submit any enquiries or clarifications to enquiries@dareuk.org.uk and procurement@hdruk.ac.uk, with the subject title: 'Interest Groups Funding Query'.

10. Terms and conditions

This award will be subject to the [UKRI standard terms and conditions for research grants](#), as well as the [MRC Additional Terms and Conditions](#). This award will also be subject to the [DARE UK Community Groups Code of Conduct](#) and any additional requirements outlined in the award letter.

11. Future funding opportunities for DARE UK community groups

DARE UK will likely run an additional funding call for community groups between 2026 and 2027. Indicative timelines for these funding calls and funding periods are below, but are subject to change.

Follow us on [LinkedIn](#) and [X \(formerly Twitter\)](#) and [subscribe to our monthly newsletter](#) to stay informed about future funding opportunities and programme developments.