DecarboN8 EPSRC Network Plus
Seedcorn Funding Application Guidance
Round 2 (2021-2022)

Contents

1. Timeline

09 December 2020:	Sandpit Registration opens
19 January 2021:	**5pm deadline for sandpit registration**
19 January 2021:	Asynchronous Online Activities begin
02 February 2021:	Online Workshop 1 (provisional date)
10 February 2021:	**5pm deadline for intention to submit**
12 February 2021:	Online Workshop 2 (provisional date)
11 March 2021:	**5pm deadline for 500-word project summary**
March 2021:	Regional Youth Climate Assembly online interviews (dates TBC)
29 April 2021:	**5pm deadline for full applications**
10 May 2021:	Decisions announced
01 July 2021:	Earliest project start date

2. Funding Available

This document relates to Round 3 for which up to £250,000 (£200,000 at 80% fEC) is available. Proposals are invited for projects of **up to 6 months** duration.

We encourage applications for activities such as:

- Exploratory research studies
- Secondary data analysis
- Comparative case study research
- Interdisciplinary activities such as workshops

As this is seedcorn funding, we do not anticipate funding a small number of very high value bids. Whilst we are not setting a maximum value, applicants should be aware that **we expect to share the £250,000 between up to 5 projects**.

Our aim is to support research that demonstrates a credible path to larger funding applications to the Research Councils, InnovateUK, or other sources. We are particularly keen to encourage new inter- and multi-disciplinary collaborations and to support the development of Early Career Researchers in this area.

3. Research Areas

DecarboN8 welcomes applications from teams from across the UK. We encourage applications that utilise a place-based approach: reflecting the diversity of people, places, and journeys, currently under-served by the dominant focus on city-centres and commuter travel. Our focus is on developing the North of England as a learning environment for carbon and transport research and proposals must support this goal.

In all the work we fund, we encourage applicants to integrate understandings of societal readiness. So, whilst there are some important more socially oriented research questions, we wish to avoid the artificial technology/society divide and have integration in the projects.

Working with our regional partners we have identified a list of indicative topic areas, which align with our thematic priorities.

The list is not prioritised in order of importance nor is it intended to be comprehensive or restrictive in nature and <u>we actively encourage ideas in areas not listed</u>.

- What approaches are needed to convert a Paris-Compliant carbon budget to transport carbon budgets at a sub-national scale?

- What do we understand about car-dependent areas? What is different about options, attitudes and appetite for change? How can these areas be encouraged to set targets and decarbonise more quickly?

- How should we electrify transport? This might include questions of the fleet size, vehicle right sizing, urban realm and housing stock considerations and the equity implications of different approaches. Interactions with local electricity network capacity and models for funding upgrades and use may also be in scope. We are interested in different electrification scenarios which look at shared futures and how it will interact with other modes. Projects

might look at different use cases and place combinations. *Note that electrification is the core focus of the DTE Network+ and we will only consider specifically place-based proposals.*

- Is there a case for accelerated adoption of hydrogen for heavy vehicles in the North? What aspects of geography or activity mix, fleet structure and usage *pa*tterns make hydrogen adoption more important and where might electrification fit better? How important is multi-modal adoption (e.g. rail and ports) to the case? *Note that hydrogen is the core focus of the H2 Network+ and we will only consider specifically place-based proposals.*

- How can we incorporate an understanding the embodied energy of transport infrastructure investment and maintenance programmes and vehicle construction and maintenance into decision-making? How can these emissions be reduced? For vehicles how can different fleet mixes of bikes, e-bikes and scooters contribute to lower overall embodied emissions?

- What innovations are necessary to incorporate micro-logistics (e.g. cargo bikes, micro consolidation, micro rail freight) into the delivery chain? How else can last-mile delivery be tackled through changes to planning and regulation of the sector?

- What rapid decarbonisation options exist for rural areas? Is there potential for a rural MaaS service? How should areas with significant visitor travel such as National Parks respond?

- What urban interventions can stimulate a reduction in total vehicle ownership and an increase in non-motorised modes? This might include research into the role of 15-minute neighbourhoods, step-change investments in active modes or new mobility services. How do we understand more about the variation in uptake between different communities and different authorities?

- What are the impacts of better active travel provision on economic vitality of an area? How important are road-space reallocations which to non-motorised modes? How do places that reduce parking compare with places which refuse to take out parking? In what kinds of places does this matter most?

- What innovations could cut carbon through a more activity or community-led approach? Whilst workplace and school travel planning is widespread, this is less true of other activities, yet they comprise around 70% of all transport carbon emissions – is this an opportunity?

- What could accelerate a return to public transport in the North after Covid19?

- Who wins and who loses in different transport decarbonisation strategies? What are the distributional impacts of decarbonisation and how do these vary spatially and by community, class, gender, race, age, dis/ability, etc? What can be done to deliver a just transition?

Within these topics we recognise there may be scope for:

- Interpreting new data sources to provide carbon insights

- Developing open access tools or activities which communicate transport decarbonisation policy options and trade-offs to different audiences

- Understanding barriers to uptake and action amongst citizens, businesses, and government stakeholders.

4. Sandpit Process

This is a challenge-based call and will involve a multi-stage sandpit process and engagement with DecarboN8 stakeholders. The aim of this is to support applicants to co-design high quality research projects which respond directly to real-world transport decarbonisation challenges in the North, building in local knowledge and resources.

To be kept updated about all stages of the sandpit process, you must complete this expression of interest by 5pm on 19th January 2021. You should complete this form even if you do not expect to be able to attend the 2 online workshops.

If you have already missed the registration deadline, please email DecarboN8@leeds.ac.uk to discuss options for joining the sandpit process.

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Asynchronous Online Activities

Between 19th January and Workshop 2, you will be asked to complete a series of short online tasks relating to the call. These tasks will involve post-it style exercises using online platforms, to develop your ideas around the research areas. You can complete these exercises at any time. You will be emailed instructions on how to complete the activities on the 19th January (so long as you have completed the expression of interest).

Online Workshops

In February, you will be invited to participate in 2 online workshops, where you will hear from the DecarboN8 team and some of our key stakeholders. You will have the opportunity to ask questions about the call and will participate in exercises designed to help you better understand the challenges our stakeholders face in decarbonising transport, with view to enhancing the quality of your proposal.

Intention to submit

The intention to submit online form will open after the first online workshop and close at **5pm on 10th February 2021**. If you are sure you will be submitting a bid but will not be available in February to complete the intention to submit form, please email DecarboN8@leeds.ac.uk to let us

know. **Applications from project teams who do not notify us of their intention to submit will not be eligible**.

Project Summary
You should submit a 500-word project summary by **5pm on 11th March 2021**. The summary should be written in plain English and be easy for a general audience, including the Regional Youth Climate Assembly, to understand.

Regional Youth Climate Assembly online interviews
Members of the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Youth Climate Assembly will conduct 'Dragon's Den' style interviews applicants in the lead up to the final deadline. They will review your 500-word project summary and you will be given a short appointment which you or a member of your project team must attend to give a **3-minute pitch** about your proposal, answer questions about your project, and receive feedback. Your full stage application will include a response so the panel can understand whether and how you addressed RYCA's feedback.

Full Stage Applications
Applicants who were successful at the sifting stage will be invited to submit full stage applications. Applications from those who did not submit a 500-word project summary at the sifting stage will not be eligible for consideration. Full stage applications should be submitted via email to DecarboN8@leeds.ac.uk by **5pm on 29th April 2021**.

Sandpit Process FAQ:

Are the online workshops compulsory?
Even if you are unable attend one or both of the online workshops, you can still apply for DecarboN8 funding. To be kept updated about all stages of the sandpit process, you must complete this expression of interest by **5pm on 19th January 2021**. You should complete this form even if you do not expect to be able to attend the 2 online workshops. Please make time to watch the recordings from the events (these will be uploaded to our website), engage with the asynchronous online activities, and complete the intention to submit online form by **5pm on 10th February 2021**.

Why are the online workshop dates provisional?
Unfortunately, we will not know the availability of many key members of the DecarboN8 team until their universities confirm their teaching timetables for term 2. As such, we are unable to provide exact dates for the online workshops until early January. We have provided provisional dates to assist in your planning, but **these are subject to change**. Since attendance is not compulsory, this uncertainty should not exclude anyone from participating in the process.

5. Definitions and Eligibility

5.1 Defining the North of England

DecarboN8 welcomes applications from teams from across the UK; however, our focus is on developing the North of England as a learning environment for carbon and transport research and proposals must support this goal. By the North of England, we refer to the NUTS statistical regions of North West England, North East England, and Yorkshire and the Humber.

5.2 Who can be a Principal Investigator (PI)?

- All projects must be led by an academic at a UKRI-registered UK Research Organisation

- At least half of the projects we fund will be led by early career researchers (ECRs). We define an early career researcher as any academic who has been awarded a PhD but has not yet held a research grant of £100,000 (at 100% fEC) or more.

- Applications are encouraged for projects led by ECRs and academics from groups that are under-represented in transport and climate related disciplines (i.e. women, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities).

- We recognise that many ECRs are on fixed-term 'researcher' as opposed to tenured 'academic' contracts, and that this often presents a barrier to applying for grants. ECRs in this position are welcome to apply. Such applications must include in their **letter of support** confirmation:

    - That the ECR's employment contract will outlast the period of the proposed project. Alternatively, that if the grant is awarded, the contract will be extended to cover the period of the grant.

    - That if securing the grant will take their FTE over 100%, they can be released as appropriate from their duties on their other project(s) to dedicate the time required.

    - If the organisation requires that all grants be led by a tenured PI, such applications may cost 1 hour per month for a tenured academic to act as PI and mentor to the ECR applicant. The letter of support must indicate if this arrangement applies.

5.3 Project Teams

- Collaboration and co-design with local authorities, industry and community groups are strongly encouraged.

- Interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, participatory, and collaborative proposals are welcome.

- We recognise the importance of the social sciences, arts, and humanities in the development of carbon literacy, social acceptability and societal readiness for decarbonising transport. Applications from all disciplines are welcome.

- **Staff**: If you are requesting salary for a person either currently working for (or to be hired by the academic institutes of the PI/Co-I) then this person will be considered **staff** in your application. These would typically be post-docs, although salary costs for other types of project support, for example administrators, can be requested where justified.

- **Project Partners** are defined as non-academic organisations who will play a supporting role in the proposed research. This may include in-kind or cash contributions such as expertise, staff time, use of facilities, etc. Project Partners cannot receive salary and overhead funding from

the grant. Travel and Subsistence costs essential to Project Partner participation in the project may be requested. **Letters of support** should be included to demonstrate Project Partner support.

- **Subcontractors**: If a non-academic organisation (or individual) will play an essential role in the project, substantial enough to require costs, they should be included as a Subcontractor. Subcontractors must be engaged in line with the tendering thresholds and processes of the lead organisation. The lead organisation is responsible for putting plans in place to manage any actual, perceived or potential conflicts of interest.

6. Eligible Costs

We encourage all applicants to contact their university/faculty research office as early as possible for support with costing. Salary costing in particular is not straightforward, so to ensure all your costs are properly covered, please take a moment now to email your administrative colleagues and inform them of your intention to submit an application to this scheme.

Funding is offered at 80% full economic cost (fEC) and may be used to cover any research related activity. Indexation should be included in the costing, as this will not be applied upon award. Projects may be up to 6 months in duration. The following categories are eligible:

Directly Allocated
- Investigators (PI and Co-Is)
- 1 hour per month 'Principle Investigator' time for supervision of ECR (if required)
- Estates costs
- Other Directly Allocated (i.e. infrastructure technicians)
- Indirect costs

Directly Incurred
- Staff (i.e. researchers, administrators)
- Travel and subsistence
- Consumables
- Other (i.e. equipment under £10,000; subcontracts; fees)

What is not eligible?
- Projects that are not led by a UK Research Organisation
- Activities that contain no element of new research
- Fees for individuals to undertake university undergraduate or postgraduate courses
- Capital or infrastructure-led projects
- Publication costs for peer review journal articles and peer reviewed conference papers

Further requirements

- You must be willing to contribute to the overall aims of DecarboN8, disseminating your findings via our project website and at our network events, as well as through other appropriate means, and engaging in building the DecarboN8 ethos into your project.

- Applications will be reviewed not only by the DecarboN8 Panel, but also by DecarboN8's Stakeholder Reference Group, and our partner organisation, the Connected Places Catapult. You should be willing to engage with these bodies and the feedback they will provide.

- Applicants should declare any links they have with the DecarboN8 management group or advisory board.

- **Collaboration Agreements**: We require agreements to be made on GDPR compliant policies and Data Processing Agreements between the lead institution and their collaborators. If these cannot be agreed within a reasonable timeframe, we reserve the right to cease the contract process and offer the funds to another applicant.

- Successful applicants will be required to submit a final report within one month of their grant ending and a final statement of expenditure within three months of their grant ending.

7. Assessment

All our panellists have undergone unconscious bias training. Furthermore, DecarboN8 uses a **double-blind peer review** process, which is designed to eliminate bias from the selection process as far as possible, to encourage applications from early career researchers and academics from underrepresented groups, and to ensure that applications are evaluated purely based on the research proposed.

Full Stage Applications will be assessed in two stages:

Stage 1: Eligibility check
The DecarboN8 Network Coordinator will perform an initial review of the applications against the eligibility criteria e.g. correct completion of the application form, focus on the North of England, and PI and Co-I eligibility. The Network Coordinator will remove sections 1 and 6 of the application pack before sharing sections 2 to 5 with the panel.

Stage 2: Blind Peer Review of eligible applications
Reviewers will be members of the DecarboN8 Management Group, the DecarboN8 Stakeholder Reference Group, and the Connected Places Catapult.

All reviewers will declare any conflicts of interest up front and will only be assigned to review applications that they can judge impartially.

Applications will be assessed on the following:
- Scientific quality of the proposed research / innovation project.
- Novelty, ambition, and value for money.

- Alignment with the mission of the DecarboN8 Network, and the research areas outlined in section 3 above.
- Demonstrable support for social acceptance and societal readiness.
- Vision for research and innovation that could result from the seedcorn funding.

Review Criteria

Fit
- How does the proposal advance decarbonisation of transport in the North?
- How well does the proposal embed a place-based approach?
- How well embedded is social acceptance and societal readiness in the proposal?
- Does the proposal meet the definition of seed funding, i.e. will the funding provided for the project, if successful, lead onto further funding, or implementation?

Impact, Importance and Engagement (Secondary)
- Does the proposal have (actual or potential) national/international importance?
- Are the (potential) beneficiaries outlined clearly, and is there a clear plan for how impact to beneficiaries can be realised?
- Is an appropriate engagement strategy clearly outlined?
- Does the proposal have a defined next step articulated clearly?

Resources and Management (Secondary)
- Do the resources requested seem appropriate for the project?
- Is the planning/management structure sufficient/appropriate for the proposed work?
- Is there an appreciation of the risk associated with the project and a plan to minimised and manage risk?

Applicants will be informed of the outcome by **Monday 10th May 2021**. Feedback will be provided to unsuccessful applicants.

8. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

DecarboN8 is committed to fostering and strengthening equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). The processes outlined above are intended to support ECRs and academics from groups that are under-represented in transport and climate related disciplines (i.e. women, ethnic minorities, and people with disabilities) to develop high quality proposals and to build connections with potential collaborators and project partners. Our use of double-blind peer review is also intended to remove bias from the assessment process.

To check that these measures are working in practice, we need to monitor, evaluate and report on our progress. To support this, we have created an online Equality, Diversity and Inclusion monitoring survey, which forms part of this application. Completing this survey is optional but encouraged.

The information you provide will be strictly confidential. Individuals will not be identified; data will only be analysed and reported at aggregated levels and individual data will not be made available to anyone involved in the selection process. Only the DecarboN8 Network Administration Assistant will access the individual level data.

In order to delete your data we will need your randomly generated **receipt number**, so please make a note of this, even if you choose not to include it in your application form. You can ask us to delete your data at any time by emailing your receipt number to DecarboN8@leeds.ac.uk.

The process for how this data will be used is as follows:

Award Stage: After the awards have been accepted by successful applicants, the DecarboN8 Network Administration Assistant use the receipt number (where provided) to produce an aggregated report of the diversity of the pool of award holders. This report will be shared with the DecarboN8 Management Group and Advisory Board, and our funder (EPSRC). Individual level data will not be included in this report.

Who should complete the EDI survey?
The **lead applicant** should complete this survey with their own details. In some cases, the lead applicant is not the PI, because they are a non-tenured early career researcher (ECR), and the PI is their mentor. In this case, the **lead applicant (i.e. the ECR)** should be the one to complete this survey about themselves.

Lead applicants should complete the survey **in private** in order to ensure confidentiality, even if completing the application collaboratively.

Why these characteristics?
Our funder currently gathers data on four protected characteristics:

- Gender
- Age
- Disability
- Ethnicity

We are collecting data on these characteristics in order to contextualise our progress against UKRI as a national benchmark.

We have also included questions to monitor these additional characteristics, with view to fostering greater equality, diversity and inclusion:

- Caring responsibilities
- Sexual orientation
- Religion or belief
- Gender reassignment
- Marital status

The aim of collecting this data is to help drive a strategic approach to maximising the diversity and inclusivity of the DecarboN8 Research Network. If there is anything we can do to make our funding and network more inclusive, please let us know.

9. FAQ and Contact Us

We will be publishing (anonymised) answers to all questions that applicants ask us on our website.

If you have a question, please email DecarboN8@leeds.ac.uk.

10. Applicant Checklist

Read the guidance notes carefully to ensure that your proposal is eligible for DecarboN8 grant and that you have completed the application form correctly.

If you are submitting your authorised application as a **PDF**, please also include a completed **WORD** version in your submission.

Application form completed	
Application authorised by applicant's department	
Letter(s) of Support from all organisations involved	
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) monitoring online form completed*	

* This is optional, is stored separately from your application, and will not be made available anyone involved in the selection process.