

## CLOSED-LOOP NEURAL INTERFACE TECHNOLOGIES (CLOSENIT) NETWORK PLUS GUIDANCE NOTES 2022

PLEASE READ THE WHOLE GUIDANCE DOCUMENT CAREFULLY BEFORE APPLYING

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The CloseNIT Network will fund diverse teams to conduct proof of concept studies that demonstrate technological solutions, scientific principles and clinical applications for closed-loop neural interfaces. Proposed projects are expected to cost no more than £50k at 100% fEC and will be awarded at 80% fEC. It is anticipated that these studies will be distributed evenly across the CloseNIT workstreams (WS1 Sensing and stimulation, WS2 Computation and control, WS3 The brain in the loop, WS4 Real-time systems, WS5 Transforming therapies, WS6 Closed-loop horizons) but applicants will be expected also to address the cross-cutting themes (CC1 Responsible research, CC2 User involvement, CC3 Public engagement, CC4 Diversity, inclusivity and openness) wherever appropriate. Funds will support investigators wishing to pursue blue-skies, high-risk high-reward ideas that will form the foundations for future collaborative grant proposals.

### 2. ELIGIBILITY, SCOPE AND FUNDING LIMITS

**Eligibility:** Applications are accepted from UK teams of researchers, academics (including NHS staff with honorary University contracts), basic scientists, engineers, ethicists and clinician scientists. International and industry partners can be included in applications, but funding must be distributed in accordance with UKRI rules. Applications from early career researchers are encouraged but please note funds cannot be used to support PhD students. A 1-page CV for the lead investigator must be included in the application.

**Scope:** Applications relevant to any of the CloseNIT workstreams (WS1 Sensing and stimulation, WS2 Computation and control, WS3 The brain in the loop, WS4 Real-time systems, WS5 Transforming therapies, WS6 Closed-loop horizons) will be considered. Applicants will be expected also to address the cross-cutting themes (CC1 Responsible research, CC2 User involvement, CC3 Public engagement, CC4 Diversity, inclusivity and openness) where appropriate. Priority will be given to projects that have the greatest potential to forward the translation of closed-loop neural interfaces to transformative therapies for neurological injuries and disease.

The award **will not** fund:

- Admin costs
- Industrial partner costs
- PhD studentships
- Continuation of normal research grants
- Costs related to the protection of IP
- Staff exchange into a spin-out company

Whilst the scheme encourages collaboration with industry, applications should not seek to undertake research prescribed by/on behalf of the company.

**Duration:** Projects should be no more than 12 months in duration and must **finish by July 2024** (extensions beyond this date will **not** be permitted).

**Value:** Up to £50k at 100% fEC and awarded at 80% fEC.

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**3. APPLICATION AND ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

Applications should be submitted on the CloseNIT application form to [closeNIT@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:closeNIT@newcastle.ac.uk) by 5 PM on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2022.

The CloseNIT steering group will form the application review panel. The members of the steering group are Professor Andrew Jackson (Chair), Professor Tamar Makin, Dr Alex Casson, Professor Andrew Sharott, Dr Nir Grossman, Dr Yujiang Wang, Professor Huiling Tan and Dr Mark Baker. Full applications will be reviewed by the panel members, with external invited input where necessary. Panel members will ensure that the contents of CloseNIT applications are considered in confidence.

Details of the following must be included:

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Content	
<b>Project summary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Summarise the proposed project in no more than 200 words</li> </ul>
<b>Case for support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A one A4 page project outline to include background, aims, objectives and project plan.</li> <li>Diagrams can be included in addition to the one page project outline to a maximum of one additional page.</li> <li>Font must be Arial, 11pt and the document must have 2cm margins</li> </ul>
<b>CloseNIT workstreams and/ or cross-cutting themes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relevance to the CloseNIT workstreams and/ or cross-cutting themes (explaining how the proposed project will address these). The word limit is 200 words for each of these sections.</li> </ul>
<b>Ethical, animal and GM review</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ethical, animal and genetically modified review requirements and status. Where ethical approvals are required funds will not be released until these approvals are in place. Word limit up to 400 words.</li> </ul>
<b>Costing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applicants must complete their institutions standard costing form (for Newcastle University applicants this is <b>Project Initiation Form</b> <a href="https://www.cognitofrms.com/NewcastleUniversity1/NewcastleUniversityNuTHProjectInitiationFormV2">https://www.cognitofrms.com/NewcastleUniversity1/NewcastleUniversityNuTHProjectInitiationFormV2</a>) This will determine the level of costing required for the project proposal. Costs must be provided at 100% fEC but will be awarded at 80% fEC.</li> <li>An <b>estimated</b> cost breakdown should be provided for directly incurred costs, all of which must be explained and justified. Budget lines without a reasonable justification will not be approved and successful applicants may be asked to adjust the budget after the full application panel meeting. Other costs can be outlined, plus any financial contribution from the applicant's Institute and/or collaborative partner(s).</li> <li>Word limit for justification is up to 400 words.</li> </ul>

The deadline for applications is the **9<sup>th</sup> December 2022**. To apply please email the completed application form, together with the case for support (1-page text and up to 1-page for diagrams) and a 1-page CV for the lead investigator, to [closeNIT@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:closeNIT@newcastle.ac.uk). **Applications received after the 9<sup>th</sup> December 2022 will not be considered.** Outcomes will be notified via email by the end of February 2023.

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### 4. POST-AWARD MANAGEMENT AND REVIEW

Following confirmation of a project's funding award, a project set-up meeting will be arranged to review the finances of the project, ensure any ethical approvals are in place and discuss reporting details. The meeting will be attended by the investigative team, at least one panel member, a CloseNIT project manager, and others as deemed necessary.

All required approvals must be in place before funded projects can start.

A schedule of meetings to monitor the progress of the award will also be agreed at the set-up meeting. These meetings will be attended by the PI and project team, a CloseNIT project manager, and others as required.

Project funding may be withheld, or projects terminated, if awardees do not engage in this process

### 5. EVALUATION/REPORTING

Project teams will be required to provide information at specific points during the project and for several years after its completion (as required by EPSRC and MRC who fund the CloseNIT award). Reporting requirements include:

- Quarterly financial reporting.
- A project completion report and presentation of findings to CloseNIT Network.
- Annual updates on outputs, follow-on funding applications (submitted/awarded), publications, patents (applications/published), impact activities, industrial collaborations, and spin-out companies that are directly related to the project. N.B This information is required by EPSRC and MRC to be included in the CloseNIT award's annual Researchfish submission as well as for the annual funding renewal application).
- Written case studies (as requested internally and/or by the EPSRC and MRC).

If awardees do not contribute to the reporting requirements, they will not be eligible to apply for CloseNIT funding in future award years.

### 6. ENQUIRIES

If you have any questions about the scheme, please direct these in the first instance to the CloseNIT project manager: [closeNIT@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:closeNIT@newcastle.ac.uk).

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**7. FLOWCHART**

