



Security, Privacy, Identity, Trust,  
Engagement, NetworkPlus

## Call for Participants in the SPRITE+ Virtual Sandpit

Closing date: 19 May 2021

SPRITE+ is pleased to invite Members and Expert Fellows to apply to attend an online sandpit on **Digital Vulnerabilities**. Up to £160k of SPRITE+ funding will be made available to fund interdisciplinary projects arising from this sandpit.

### Background

SPRITE+ is the EPSRC-funded (grant reference EP/S035869/1) NetworkPlus for Trust, Identity, Privacy, and Security (TIPS). We work with academic and non-academic stakeholders to build and strengthen the TIPS community and identify requirements and promising new directions for research. We have a 'pump-priming' budget to fund activities that explore and test new ideas, and that create new collaborations between academic disciplines, and between academic and non-academic partners.

### The research challenge

The theme of this Sandpit is "Future Digital Vulnerabilities". This is one of our four [Challenge Themes](#), identified by our Expert Fellows Community. In our sandpit we will co-create innovative interdisciplinary projects to explore aspects of digital vulnerability from technical, social, and socio-technical perspectives.

Some of the questions we might consider include:

- How should we conceptualise, identify, and assess vulnerabilities to future digital harm?
- How might we protect networks, hardware, individuals, communities, organisations and nation states from increasingly complex harms and/or make them resilient in the face of harm?
- What roles will technology, people, organisations, governments, and societies play both in enabling and reducing digital risks and harms?

**Every academic discipline is or could be relevant to developing innovative ideas to explore this topic and we welcome applications from researchers across STEM, Arts and Humanities, and Social and Behavioural Sciences.** We welcome applications from scholars who have not previously worked on digital security as well as those with an established track record in TIPS topics.

### Sandpit outputs

Up to £160k of SPRITE+ funding will be made available to fund interdisciplinary projects arising from this sandpit.

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Successful projects will explore Digital Vulnerabilities from novel, interdisciplinary perspectives. Funding might cover the costs of conducting scoping studies, research engagement with organisations and/or the public, feasibility studies, and demonstrators. The aim is to explore promising 'proof of concept' ideas that could be developed into further, more ambitious funding proposals (e.g., to UKRI, Innovate UK, or other funds).

The timescale for each project will be no longer than four months, and each project funded is expected to be between £12,500 and £37,500 (at 100% full Economic Cost (fEC)), of which SPRITE+ will fund 80% fEC (in line with UKRI rules). In practical terms, this means that SPRITE+ will fund 80% of the total costs outlined in successful proposals. For example, if your proposal is costed at £37,500 (100% fEC), SPRITE+ will fund £30,000 (80% fEC). Project Partners and non-academic Members may contribute in-kind resources.

### Expected commitment from participants

The sandpit will be run entirely online at the following dates and times in July 2021:

- Friday 02 July, 13.00 – 14.30: Sandpit session 0, orientation and pre-meet for participants
- Monday 05 July, 13.00 – 16.30: Sandpit session 1, exploring the challenge area
- Wednesday 07 July, 13.00 – 16.30: Sandpit session 2, research teams start to form
- Monday 12 July, 13.00 – 16.30: Sandpit session 3, work in progress presentations and peer review
- Thursday 15 July, 13.00 – 16.30: Sandpit session 4, presentation to the Funding Panel

**Participants must attend every session in full and will be expected to engage with each other and with Project Partners in between the formal sessions**, to develop and refine their ideas. Suggested reading and videos may be provided before and during the workshop and participants are encouraged to explore relevant research and grey literature.

In total, we estimate participants will need to commit between 25 and 35 hours before, during and after the sandpit.

**An application to attend will be taken to mean you are available for these dates and able to engage fully.**

The short application form can be found [here](#).

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## Further details

### What can I expect?

Our first online sandpit in July 2020 ran very smoothly and resulted in some terrific ideas for [new short projects](#). Here's some of the feedback from last year's participants:

*"The sandpit brought people together which would have never met otherwise. I met fantastic colleagues and am very grateful for this opportunity. It was a focused and well-structured event which was also exceptionally well organised and facilitated. Thank you!"*

*"An excellent experience and one that I would highly recommend. Rather than having months to plan and think about a project it forces you to think creatively and strategically, taking on board other interests and feedback."*

*"My whole virtual sandpit experience has been very positive. I attended a 'normal' sandpit a few years back and I can say that I found the virtual sandpit a lot more inclusive, with participants regardless of seniority, title, gender and ethnicity actively participating. The facilitators were great and always responding to any queries."*

### How will the sandpit work?

Our approach to the sandpit is similar to the [UKRI sandpit](#) approach. A sandpit is highly interactive and involves participants from different disciplines and backgrounds exploring and developing innovative approaches to a challenge. UKRI sandpits traditionally take place in person between two and five days, to allow participants to immerse themselves fully in collaborative thinking.

However, as in-person events are currently impossible, we will be running the workshop entirely online via Zoom. Full-day online interactions can be tiring for participants and may be difficult to manage for those with caring responsibilities and/or with children at home. We are thus running the sandpit over five half-day sessions in July. In between the formal sessions we encourage and expect participants to explore ideas together informally.

This approach worked extremely well in our 2020 sandpit, and resulted in several new project teams and ideas, most of which were funded.

The sandpit process can be broken down into several stages:

- Defining the scope of the challenge
- Evolving common languages and terminologies amongst people from a diverse range of backgrounds and disciplines
- Sharing understandings of the challenges, and the expertise brought by the participants to the sandpit
- Break-out sessions focused on the challenges, using creative thinking techniques
- Capturing the outputs in the form of highly innovative research projects

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At the end of the sandpit, project proposals will be presented to a funding panel which will include members drawn from our [Advisory Board](#), [Expert Fellows](#) group, [Project Partners](#), and other stakeholders. The Panel will recommend proposals for funding and those involved will be given time to prepare a brief written proposal covering their intended activities, with costings (at 80% FEC). The deadline for submission of written proposals generated at the sandpit will be 20 August 2020. Further guidance on this part of the process will be available at the sandpit event.

After satisfactorily completing normal contract and due diligence procedures with University of Manchester, projects can start. All grant holders will be expected to complete a short end of project report within 1 month of project completion. Successful project teams may also be invited to present their findings at a SPRITE+ Showcase event.

### Who should attend?

We anticipate that approximately two thirds of places will be filled by academic researchers and one third by non-academic research users.

We want to bring people together who would not normally interact and particularly welcome applications from individuals who have not previously engaged in the 'TIPS' community. We encourage applications from individuals working in SMEs and third sector organisations, and from academic researchers from all disciplines, including engineering, physical sciences, life sciences, the social sciences, and the arts and humanities. **Participants from academia are welcomed at any stage of their research career if they meet [UKRI eligibility requirements](#) to receive grant funding.** If you have any questions about your eligibility, please get in touch at [admin@spritehub.org](mailto:admin@spritehub.org).

### What funding is available?

Up to £160k of SPRITE+ funding will be made available to fund interdisciplinary projects arising from this sandpit. The timescale for each project will be no longer than four months, and each project funded is expected to be between £12,500 and £37,500 (100% FEC figure).

Whilst we expect proposals to be co-created with non-academic stakeholders for maximum impact, funding can only be allocated directly to eligible academic researchers as described in [UKRI's Eligibility Guide](#). This means that although costs associated with the contributions of non-academic partners can be included in successful proposals, non-academic participants cannot lead projects.

Funds will be awarded at 80% FEC in accordance with normal UKRI practices. In practical terms, this means that SPRITE+ will fund 80% of the total costs outlined in successful proposals. Funds awarded will be subject to standard [UKRI grant terms and conditions](#), which are non-negotiable.

The duration of work funded by this sandpit should not last more than four months and should commence no later than 1 November 2021, and finish by 31 March 2022.

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**Please note that attendance at the Sandpit does not guarantee funding.** Teams with projects that are not funded from SPRITE+ funds may nevertheless decide to develop their proposals into bids to other funding calls. For instance, in 2020, one of the unfunded Sandpit projects went on to do well in another funding call.

### Access and inclusion

We recognise that some potential participants may face barriers to online participation, including poor connection speeds, additional childcare costs, or the need for BSL interpreters, captioning, or audio description. We are committed to doing what we can to help participants overcome such barriers. Successful applicants will be eligible to apply for support through our SPRITE+ access fund to help them participate fully and effectively in sandpit activities. Please contact [admin@spritehub.org](mailto:admin@spritehub.org) to arrange a discussion (in confidence) if you want to explore what could be available to you.

### How to apply

Applications are invited from SPRITE+ Members and Expert Fellows from:

- Academia (applicants must be eligible to receive UKRI funding, please see the [UKRI Eligibility Guide](#))
- Professional practice (non-academic)

All applicants should be registered members of SPRITE+. You can apply for membership (which is free of charge) [here](#).

Applicants should complete the short application form [here](#) and submit to [admin@spritehub.org](mailto:admin@spritehub.org) by **19 May**.

### Assessment criteria

Proposals will be reviewed against the following selection criteria:

- The ability to develop novel and adventurous research ideas
- The potential to contribute to research at the interface between disciplines
- The ability to work in a team
- The ability to engage productively with people from a range of backgrounds within and outside your sector

Please note:

- We do not assess your academic publication or research track record as part of the process. We are more interested in your ability to engage creatively and constructively in a multidisciplinary environment to generate novel ideas, and the way in which you demonstrate an appreciation of the challenges of digital vulnerability.

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- You should approach the sandpit without a specific research project in mind. Novel ideas are co-created by sandpit participants from scratch.
- We will select participants based on the information in the application form and will endeavour to achieve a diverse spread of participants from across disciplines, experience and backgrounds.

### Key dates

21 April 2021	Applications open
14 May 2021	Deadline for queries
19 May 2021	Applications close
11 June 2021	Applicants notified of decision
02 July 2021	Sandpit session 0 (pre-meet for participants get to know each other)
05 July 2021	Sandpit session 1
07 July 2021	Sandpit session 2
12 July 2021	Sandpit session 3
15 July 2021	Sandpit session 4 (Funding panel)
19 July 2021	Funding Panel give in-principle decision
20 August 2021	Deadline for written proposals
End August 2021 onwards	SPRITE+ team will work with the PIs' research support offices to complete contractual work asap. Projects can start as soon as contracts are in place.
01 November 2021	Latest date by which projects should start
31 March 2021	Deadline for project completion
Within 1 month of project completion	Submission of end of project report

### Privacy notice

SPRITE+ is fully compliant with GDPR. We will treat proposals as confidential and share only with the Management Team and peer reviewers. Copies of unsuccessful applications will be destroyed after the evaluation process. Copies of successful applications will be destroyed within 3 months of the sandpit. Anonymised statistics will be recorded to inform the organisation of future Sandpits and to monitor efforts to attract applicants from diverse backgrounds.

Please note that the information you provide in sections 1, 2, 3 and 6 of your application form may be shared with other participants prior to the sandpit.

For details of how SPRITE+ handles Members' data more generally, see our [Privacy Policy](#).

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### A note about Zoom

Organising an online sandpit is a complex affair, involving switches between breakout groups and plenary sessions, and the use of virtual flipcharts and post-it notes. The process will be expertly handled by our facilitation partners Know Innovation.

We will be using Zoom but we recognise that some potential participants will have security and privacy-related concerns about using this platform. We will take the following actions to ensure the security of our meetings:

- A unique Zoom meeting room number and password will be used for each session
- The Zoom 'waiting room' feature will be used, and participants will be admitted to the meeting following a cross-check of their details with our records, to ensure they are expected
- Once all attendees have arrived, the Zoom meeting will be 'locked'
- Only the meeting host and their designees will be allowed to share screens or content

### Further information

You can read our FAQs document [here](https://spritehub.org/) (to be updated until 14 May 2021).

If you have any further questions regarding this call, please contact Natalie Theodoulou (SPRITE+ Network Manager) [admin@spritehub.org](mailto:admin@spritehub.org).

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