

Future Live Fan Experiences Research and Development (R&D) Challenge

Briefing

22 April 2026

xR Network+

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Agenda

Future Live Fan Experiences Research and Development (R&D) Challenge Briefing

- ▶ About XR Network +, MusicFutures & Liverpool Experience Campus
- ▶ About the R&D Challenge
- ▶ Applying - Scope, Criteria & Eligibility
- ▶ Q&A

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xR Network+

Virtual Production in the Digital Economy





A five-year £3.3m EPSRC funded project to establish a ten-year research agenda for VR/XR related content creation and consumption for the creative and digital economies.



We are building a community of academic research and industry R&D at the convergence of ideas, technologies and creative practice in VP/XR to deliver impact and opportunity for the whole of the digital economy.

MUSIC FUTURES

SHAPING THE
FUTURE OF MUSIC
THROUGH
INNOVATION



A large outdoor music festival at dusk. A stage is illuminated with purple and blue lights, and a large crowd of people is gathered in front of it. The sky is dark with some clouds. The text is overlaid on the image.

MusicFutures is a £7.2M UKRI - AHRC funded Creative Cluster driving innovation and growth in the music sector. A flagship 5 year UKRI programme backed by 27+ Regional & National Industry Partners.

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Working on R&D collaboration designed to test and scale new models of sector led collaboration, research, and IP commercialisation in the Liverpool City Region music and music adjacent sectors.

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LIVERPOOL EXPERIENCE CAMPUS



The Liverpool Experience Campus, formerly known as ACC Liverpool, is an interconnected arena, convention and exhibition centre which has hosted over 10 million visitors and 9000 events since opening in 2008.

Staging a wide array of national and international events, from shows to conventions, business gatherings to showcase exhibitions.



Future Live Fan Experiences

About the R&D Challenge



R&D Challenge Purpose and Scope

- **Context:** Potential for rapid sector transformation through advances in immersive technology (XR), artificial intelligence (AI), and connectivity.
- **Goal:** To prototype and test the next wave of live fan experiences using creative technology.
- **Sector Focus:** Enhancing fan experiences across live music, sport, and cultural events.
- **Target Audience Expectation:** Highly interactive, participatory, and personalised experiences.

Key differences in projects

Music Futures

SME-led

2 x £25K projects (awarded at 100% costs)

XR Network+

University-led

2 x £25k projects (awarded at 80% of FEC = £20k)

Key Areas of Focus

We are seeking R&D projects that demonstrate innovative solutions to transform fan experiences, including:

- Immersive & extended reality (XR) experiences (e.g., enabled by high-capacity 5G).
- AI & XR driven audience participation (e.g., real-time feedback, adaptive content).
- Novel approaches to fan engagement and fan co-creation (before, during, and after events).
- Operational innovation that enhances the overall event journey (e.g., safety, inclusivity, customer experience).
- Scalable participatory technologies for medium venues and large-scale arenas.
- Solutions for distributed and hybrid in-person and remote live experiences.

Timeline

- Information webinar: 22 April 2026 (1:00 pm to 2:00 pm)
- Deadline for Applications: 29 May 2026 (1.00pm)
- Selected Applicants Notified: July 2026
- Project Start Date: 1 October 2026
- Project End Date: 31 March 2027 (duration 6 months)

Selection Criteria

- **Innovation and relevance:** Novelty in the application of immersive and extended reality (XR) technologies in the context of live events.
- **Quality of collaboration:** Constructive engagement between proposed project partners.
- **Impact:** To industry / the live sector, to skills and knowledge development.
- **Feasibility:** Realism of the timeline, budget, and proposed technical execution for a six-month R&D project.
- **Diversity and inclusion:** Demonstration of inclusive and accessible approaches throughout the project.
- **Sustainability:** Demonstration of responsible and sustainable practices, including measures to minimise environmental impact.

XR Network+ Projects Eligibility

- Open to: Researchers, research technicians, and technology developers.
- Lead Organisation: Project leads must be based at a UK research organisation eligible for UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) funding.
- Collaboration: Collaborations across industry and academia are encouraged.
- Note: XR Network+ funding cannot be **directly** awarded to industry partners or any organisation not eligible for UKRI funding.
- Requirements:
 - Demonstrate capacity to deliver R&D projects that can be prototyped and tested within the programme timeframe.
 - Adherence to standard ethical procedures and approvals at the applicant's institution.

XR Network+ Expected Outputs

- Development and testing of a technical prototype.
- Project documentation and visual assets clearly articulating the prototype's purpose and impacts.
- Internal mid-project and end-of-project reports.
- Contribution to at least one XR Network+ event.
- Projects should prioritise the development of open-source standards and protocols where appropriate for wider adoption.

XR Network+ Questions & Application Support

- For queries about academic-led projects, please contact the XR Network+ team at enquiries@xrstories.co.uk.
- We encourage applications from first-time grant applicants.
- If you require any adjustments or feel you would be disadvantaged by a written application (e.g., prefer video submission), please contact the XR Network+ team.

MusicFutures Project Eligibility

- Project leads must be a UK registered company.
- In addition, SME project leads must be registered, or significantly based, in the Liverpool City Region and have a project idea focused on music fan experiences.

Project funding will be administered by University of Liverpool through subgrant agreement (standard terms at <https://musicfutures.co.uk/opportunities/future-live-fan-experiences-call/>).

- SME Projects are funded at 100% of project costs, inclusive of VAT.
- Equipment costs — maximum of 20% of project grant for equipment and capital purchase costs.
- Subcontracting— up to 70% maximum subcontracting costs, with a maximum 30% outside of Liverpool City Region
- We are keen to see projects that demonstrate additional co-investment/in kind contributions at application stage.
- Projects must comply with Minimal Financial Assistance subsidy controls.

MusicFutures Expected Outputs

- Development and testing of a music fan experience prototype.
- Project documentation and visual assets about the project
- Internal mid-project and end-of-project reports, and attendance at regular progress meetings.
- Contribution to future events and showcasing opportunities.



MusicFutures - Applying

<https://musicfutures.co.uk/opportunities/future-live-fan-experiences-call/>

Please read through all the supporting information, including:

- Applicant Eligibility and Guidance
- Subgrant Terms and Conditions

Required submission documents include:

- Application form.
- Additional supporting information (visual decks, other supporting info etc).
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion form.

If you require any adjustments to complete your application, or if you feel you would be disadvantaged by a written application (e.g., preference for a video submission), please contact the MusicFutures team on musicfutures@liverpool.ac.uk for SME-led projects.

Questions

