

Balance Network: 'Work-Life Balance' in the Digital Age
Funding available for activities supporting collaboration, impact and network legacy
March 2016

Background: Digital technologies are part of how we work, rest and play in the 21st century. The rapid pace of technological change has seen both intentional shifts in, and unintended consequences for, our patterns of working and home life, with wide-ranging economic and social impacts. The EPSRC-funded [Balance Network](#) aims to link academics with business, policy and user groups interested in the role that digital technologies are playing in (re)shaping our work and home lives. Within this context, the Network aims to support **collaboration** between academics, industry, policymakers and the public, and to increase direct societal **impact** over and above what may be possible for any individual academic or research project (including feeding research into business development and informing policy). We are now inviting applications for the funding of activities which further these aims, and which also help support a legacy for the network beyond January 2017 (the end date of EPSRC funding for the project).

What themes does the Balance Network cover? The Balance Network is associated with three founding research projects, [Digital Brain Switch](#), [Digital Epiphanies](#), and [Family Rituals 2.0](#). Potential themes for network activities are drawn from across these projects, and include:

- new patterns of working and family life;
- email and social media usage, and their implications for time management;
- attempts to separate life domains, and role switching strategies;
- the emergence of new integration practices, mixing 'work' with 'pleasure';
- the impacts of hypermobility on family life;
- re-examining the concept of 'work-life balance', have we moved beyond this?;
- the everyday use of digital technologies in family life;
- novel research methods, for exploring technology use and domestic life (including mobile methods).

These suggested themes are illustrative rather than prescriptive, and the network is open to all applications addressing any area of the relationship between its core themes of work-life balance and digital technologies. In our previous round of funding, for activities taking place between September 2015 and April 2016, the network supported a wide range of topics and disciplines, including design, gender studies human-computer interaction, psychology, ICT, business, management, tourism, human health, mental health, ageing, energy, sustainability.

What type of activity can be funded? Funding is available for organising a range of activities. Examples include but are not restricted to: collaborative meetings to work on funding proposals which aim to continue work on the themes of the network; collaborative publications such as journal special issues, collections, books, or writings aimed at non-academic audiences such as policy or industry briefings; series of seminars and/or webinars; creation of online resources and communications and accompanying dissemination strategies for those resources; events. Our purpose is to facilitate networking and collaboration, rather than fund core research costs. We are happy to respond to specific

queries about appropriate types of activity under this funding stream. Any events we fund must take place in the UK (or online, but be disseminated by a UK-based institution), and expenses must be spent and claimed by the end of December 2016.

Legacy of the network: Core EPSRC funding for the Balance Network runs until the end of January 2017. We are therefore interested in proposals that continue the legacy of the Network beyond this date. For example, you might use your Balance Network funding to pay for a face-to-face seminar in 2016 which is then followed by two webinars in 2017; or for a meeting to bring together a consortium around a specific funding proposal to be submitted (which if successful would further develop work on the network's themes). We will look positively on proposals that suggest innovative ideas which build positively on the existing momentum of the Network. For information, the Balance Network website will remain live for several years beyond Jan 2017, and we anticipate the mailing list will at that point become a self-sustaining jisc mail list (with the option of course for existing members to unsubscribe). We also highlight that the ESRC is currently exploring the possibility of a Centres and/or Large Grants competition in the area of [new ways of living and working in the digital age](#) which the Balance Network could directly feed into.

Previous Balance Network activities: You may be interested in looking at what we have [funded previously](#), but we are looking for new ideas, rather than activities that duplicate what has been done already.

How much funding is available? The maximum that can be applied for within each application is £2.5k. A maximum of £25k will be awarded in total. Subject to the quality of applications, we are looking to allocate 25-60% of funds prior to Beyond Balance on 27 June. Please note we reserve the right to offer funding at a lower level than requested where this is deemed appropriate.

What items can be funded? Travel, subsistence and event related costs (e.g. venue, catering, reasonable speaker fees, audio/visual support, materials, advertising) can be applied for, but not salaries or purchased equipment (equipment hire in support of events is fine). Costs must be incurred by a UK-based higher education institution for claim purposes. A budget where international travel expenses form a significant proportion of total costs would need to be clearly justified.

Who is eligible to apply? Application leads must be academic/postdoctoral staff or PhD students, based at a UK higher education institution, however non-academic and international partners are welcome. As an interdisciplinary network, we welcome applications from any field. We aim to fund at least one activity led by an early career researcher (within 5 years of completing PhD, or a current PhD student). Note that applications led by a student must include a named member of academic staff who will act as project mentor.

BEYOND BALANCE: *how digital technologies are affecting our work, our homes, and everything in between.* On 27 June 2016, the Balance Network is holding a one-day network event, co-hosted by the Institution of Engineering & Technology at Savoy Place in London, bringing together leading thinkers and practitioners. The day will include presentations from the organisers of eight previous Balance Network activities, as well as keynote sessions from Oliver Burkeman (Guardian journalist) and Claire Fox (Int'l HR Director at Save the Children). We encourage prospective applicants to register and come along to Beyond Balance to find out more about the network. For latest details of the event, see [this page](#). **Note that the early registration fee rate of £10 will run til 30 April 2016. [Register here](#).**

Final report: All funded events will be required to produce a 2-4 page report (including 200 word summary) by 23 Dec 2016, detailing the aims of the event, what happened, key findings, impacts and key outputs. These will be published online. The suggested structure of the report will be sent with offer letters.

How do I apply? To request an application form please email stephanie.cziczo@anglia.ac.uk. The completed form should be signed by your Head of Department and submitted, together with any accompanying letters of support. Applications can be submitted anytime up until 5pm on 29 July 2016. We aim to get back to you with the outcome of your application within 6 weeks. The application form has an (approximately) 2000-word limit and asks for: lead applicant/collaborator details; a 100 word overview of the proposed activity; further details including committed dates, expertise of the organising team and key organisational milestones; details of the intended audience and advertising strategy; budget; expected outcomes, in particular relating to *collaboration*, *impact* and *legacy*; dissemination strategy for any outputs, and evaluation.

Please note that, as detailed in the application form, if your proposal is approved, the lead applicant is responsible for having a collaboration agreement signed by his/her institution – a personalised version of which will be sent with successful outcome notification. If the institution requires any revisions to this document, the lead applicant is responsible for gathering all changes into one communication to the Balance Network and submitting that document to the Balance Network within two weeks of receiving the personalised collaboration agreement (or, if no revisions are required, submitting a signed version). Once any revisions are incorporated, the lead applicant must have this signed by his/her institution within one week of receiving a new personalised version. A template of the collaboration agreement is available on the Balance Network website.

What is the review process? Each application will first be reviewed for suitability by the Balance Network project team. All applications that meet the minimum criteria will then be peer reviewed by a reviewer outside the Balance Network team. The criteria used during the review process will be: 1) relevance to network's themes and academic grounding; 2) relevant expertise and track record of organising team (relative to career stage); 3) clear identification of audience and evidence of demand for activity; 4) how activity will build collaborations and/or achieve impact (e.g. societal, economic, policy related); 5) strength and clarity of outputs; 6) how the activity will build on Balance Network momentum into 2017; and 7) realistic budget which reflects value for money. If your application is promising, but not quite strong enough to guarantee funding, we may offer to look at it again after the final application deadline.

Timeline:

Invitation launched – **29 March 2016**

Applications can then be submitted anytime up to the deadline and we aim to get you a response within 6 weeks

Beyond Balance event – **27 June 2016**

Final deadline for applications – **5pm 29 July 2016**

Final date for expenses and activity report to be submitted – **23 December 2016**

The [Balance Network](#) sends out monthly updates on funding opportunities, news, events and publications. To join the mailing list, send an email with your name and organisation to stephanie.cziczo@anglia.ac.uk. We will add those that enquire about an application to the mailing list; you can unsubscribe at any time.

